

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 9

The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 8

This post will continue our closer look at the **Apostles' Creed** to learn more about what we affirm that we believe.

AND IN JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S ONLY SON, OUR LORD:

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again from the dead.

**He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

He Ascended into Heaven and Is Seated at The Right Hand of The Father

Early **Believers** proclaimed a **Gospel** of **Yeshua's** bodily incarnation, bodily suffering, bodily death, bodily resurrection, and bodily ascension. The faith of the ancient **Kehillah** was not about spiritual escape but about the redemption and transfiguration of human life in its fullness, including the life of the body. As Irenaeus said it in the second century, the **Son of God** "*did not reject human nature or exalt himself above it,*" but united Himself with our nature in order to unite us to **God**.

When the **Brit Hadashah** writers speak of the ascension, they are not describing **Yeshua's** absence but his sovereign presence throughout creation. He has not gone away but has become even more fully present. His ascent to *the right hand of the Father* is His public enthronement over all worldly power. No scriptural passage is quoted so often in the **Brit Hadashah** as *Adonai says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool."* ~ Psalm 110:1 (CJB).

The earliest **Believers** proclaimed that **Yeshua** had been enthroned as the universal Lord and **Messiah**. The exalted **Messiah** has *entered His glory* (Luke 24:26; 1 Tim 3:16). From now on, *all things are subject to* His authority (Phil 3:21; Heb 2:8). Because He is ascended, His life is universally available. His loving authority extends over the whole creation and is present wherever **Believers** assemble (Eph 1:20-23). *He has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.* (1 Pet 3:22).

So, the ascension is not meant to make us wonder where **Yeshua** has gone. Instead, it ought to elicit the psalmist's question: *Where can I go to escape your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?* ~ Ps 139:7.

And through our union with **Yeshua**, we share also in His ascension. When **Yeshua** ascends to the Father, He takes our humanity with Him. To quote Irenaeus again, because **Yeshua** has ascended we also "*ascend through the Spirit to the Son, and through the Son to the Father.*" In **Yeshua**, our nature has taken up residence in the presence of God.

He Will Come Again to Judge the Living and The Dead

To judge is to discriminate, to separate one thing from another. The Gospel of John portrays **Yeshua** as the *light of the world*. The same light shines on everyone, but there are different ways of responding to it. Some walk gladly into the light while others screw their eyes shut and remain in darkness. *Now this is the*

judgment: the light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness rather than the light. Why? Because their actions were wicked. (John 3:19). That is what it means for **Yeshua** to bring judgment. It is not that He is gracious to some and angry toward others. **Yeshua** is ***full of grace and truth*** (John 1:14).

The judgment that **Yeshua** brings, moreover, is not just a division between two kinds of people. When **Believers** light shines into our lives, it creates a division within ourselves. None of us is entirely good or entirely bad. Each of us is a mixture. The bad grows up in our lives like weeds among the wheat, and the two are so closely entwined that in this life we cannot easily tell the difference (see Matt 13:24-30). Sometimes our worst mistakes turn out to produce good fruit. And sometimes we discover that our virtues have produced unforeseen collateral damage. Our lives are not transparent to ourselves. We cannot easily tell where the bad ends and the good begins.

So, it is a comfort to know that one day someone will come and lovingly separate the good from the bad in our lives. The confession that **Yeshua** will come as judge is not an expression of terror and doom. It is part of the good news of the gospel. It is a joy to know that there is someone who understands all the complexities and ambiguities of our lives. It is a joy to know that this one - the only one who is truly competent to judge - is ***full of grace and truth*** (John 1:14). He comes to save, not to destroy, and He saves us by His judgment.

Yeshua will come to judge ***the living and the dead***. That will be the best thing that ever happens to us. On that day, the weeds in each of us will be separated from the wheat. It will hurt - no doubt it will hurt - when our self-deceptions are burned away. But the pain of truth heals; it does not destroy. On our judgment day we will be able for the first time to see the truth of our lives, when we see ourselves as loved. ¹

In my next post, we will begin to unpack the third article of our faith in the **Ruach HaKodesh** (Holy Spirit) in the **Apostle's Creed**.

¹ The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.