

## **LESSON 33 - THE APOSTLE'S CREED**

### **What Beliefs Did The Early Christian Church Think Most Important?**

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**W**hat beliefs did the early Christian Church deem most important? In a separate lesson we looked at creeds and hymns so early they were first passed down orally and then later *quoted in* the New Testament, written down between 20-50 years after the resurrection. Early creeds focused mostly on the fundamental, central message of Jesus's original followers: Jesus's divine lordship and salvation through faith in His death and resurrection. As the Gospel spread and the Church grew, it encountered increasing opposition and challenges to its beliefs. By the mid-second century Christians had consolidated their most important beliefs into a single creed to clarify what they concluded Jesus's apostles and reliable eye witnesses actually believed and passed down. This was done in order to distinguish Jesus's true, *apostolic* Church from heretical (false) "Christian" teachings. This creed is known as *The Apostle's Creed*. This lesson I'll break it down and elaborate a bit on each point.

**Introduction to The Apostle's Creed.** After the New Testament, *The Apostle's Creed* is the earliest known formalized, written creed combining early Christian beliefs. It dates to AD 140-175. Though some claim it originated much later, references to, and quotations of similar statements, known as the "Rule of Faith," appear in early church father Irenaeus's book *Against Heresies* (AD 175). Creeds like these were primarily intended to protect the Church from early heresies and deviations from orthodox (straight) Christian doctrine. It was likely originally formulated to refute the claims of a mystic religion called Gnosticism, whose proponents sought to adopt and distort parts of Christianity to support to their false religion. The creed has a noticeably-trinitarian structure. This was likely intended to counter the teachings of Marcion, a false Christian teacher that taught that the Old Testament God—who was angry and vengeful—had nothing to do with the God of the New Testament—who is loving and forgiving. To do this he had to reject most books of the New Testament and all parts of the New Testament agreeing with, quoting, or referencing the Old Testament. He was condemned by church leaders around AD 144. This creed is one of the three great creeds of the ancient Christian Church, along with the Nicene Creed (AD 325) and the Athanasian Creed (AD 382), which were developed later to refute future heresies and clarify other beliefs. The Apostle's Creed is the oldest and most basic of the three.

**The Apostle's Creed.** "[I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER ALMIGHTY, MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH.](#)" Christianity is monotheistic. There is only one true eternal God in all of existence, at all places, at all times. He alone is the creator of everything. The Father, whom Jesus has more perfectly made known, is one and the same as God Almighty revealed throughout the Old Testament. "[I BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON, OUR LORD;](#)" Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, God's "Anointed One," and the fulfillment of

# The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, Our Lord;  
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
and 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 from the dead;  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father;  
From thence he will come to  
judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
The holy catholic church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

all Old Testament promises given to Abraham and David. He is the unique, only begotten Son of God, who is of the same divine nature as God. For 1,500 years the Jews called God "LORD" (instead of YHWH, Yahweh, the divine name) but God appointed Jesus as the Lord of all. "WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY;" Jesus is one-of-a-kind. He was not conceived naturally by coitus. Rather, He was supernaturally conceived in the womb, of a godly virgin named Mary, by the Spirit of God. He was *also* fully human, naturally born and raised. He did not inherit the sin nature like all humans since the Fall. "SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE, WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED." Pontius Pilate was the Roman prefect of Judea from AD 26-36. Jesus was crucified by him the day before Passover, Friday afternoon, at Golgotha in Jerusalem, ca. AD 33. He died and was buried in

Jerusalem, in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish council. "HE DESCENDED INTO HELL;" He did not go to Hell as in the "Lake of Fire" the destination of eternal punishment, or the Abyss, the spiritual realm where Satan/demons dwell. Jesus went to the realm of the dead, called Sheol/Hades, the place He referred to as "Abraham's Bosom," to give the good news to all God's faithful people that died prior to the Messiah. "ON THE THIRD DAY HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD;" The following Sunday God rose Him bodily from the dead. He wasn't just revived. He was raised in His same body, but His body was now transformed and eternal. He was the first to be resurrected and glorified. "HE ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN AND IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE FATHER;" After forty days, in front of many witnesses, He bodily ascended into Heaven. He now sits at the right hand of God the Father and reigns as Lord over Heaven and Earth. "FROM THENCE HE WILL COME TO JUDGE THE LIVING AND THE DEAD." Jesus will return and He will judge every single person; some will receive everlasting life, others everlasting death and torment. "I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT," The Spirit of God confirms the adoption of, indwells, guides, and supernaturally empowers every true believer. "THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH," There is only one true Church, of which Jesus is the head. It is universal, global, timeless, invisible, and set apart. It consists of everyone born of the Spirit of God. "THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS," Everyone born of God is a saint and priest in communion with one another in Spirit. "THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS," God forgives everyone who has put their faith in Jesus's death on behalf of their sins. "THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY, AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING. AMEN." All who belong to Jesus will also be bodily resurrected and receive eternal life.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, be glorified through my faith in Your Son. Jesus, my Lord and Savior, thank You for giving me eternal life. I eagerly await Your return! (Recite The Apostles Creed now)