

SECTION 2 – THE CHRISTIAN FAITH (APOSTLES CREED)

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

*Catechist.*

Recite the Apostles' Creed, the Articles of your Belief.

*Answer.*

**I** BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried: He descended into hell; The third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholic Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.

*Note that the words in the Creed* He descended into hell *are considered as words of the same meaning as* He went into the place of departed spirits.

*Catechist.* What do you chiefly learn in these Articles of your Belief?

*Answer.* I learn to have faith in the one true God: in God the Father, who made me and all the world; in God the Son, who redeemed me and all mankind; and in God the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies me and all the people of God.

**Catechist.** What do you mean by ‘the people of God’?

**Answer.** I mean Christ’s holy Catholic Church into which I have been baptized.

*Then may all say:*

GLORY be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Last week we looked at the beginning of the catechism, **The Baptismal Covenant**.

**The first thing that happens after we say, “Yes, I am ready, and willing to live this sort of life, the Christian life” giving ourselves to God, then the catechism asks us, What do you believe? And what follows is the Apostles Creed.**

**Creeds** (*Where they came from and what their purpose is*)

**1. First Creed of the church was probably “Jesus is Lord”.** A creed is a statement of faith. The word “creed”, comes from the Latin *credo*, and means *I believe*. So, creeds begin with these “*I believe*” statements. **Now, creeds by nature are antagonistic (in the sense of creating “conflicts”)** because when you say you believe one thing, **at the same time you are saying that you don’t believe something else.**

**So, in the first century, early on in the church, we find basic creeds popping up – For example, when someone was baptized they would say, “I believe in God the Father, creator of heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, who died for my sin, and the Holy Spirit.”** – This early creed was called **The Roman Symbol**.

**What we see is the creed expanding – because Jesus is Lord is not enough –** it doesn’t speak about the Father, the Holy Spirit...a lot of things. Also, church leaders would get together when there were issues/disagreements about what we believe, and creeds were formed.

**Constantine:** Became emperor of Rome around 312 AD, he saw disagreements in the Christian world, and he wanted to get people together to settle it. **The major disagreement**

***then was that there was a priest named Arias (Egypt) going around saying the Father had created the Son.)***

By about 550 AD The Apostles creed was finished – based on Roman Symbol and Nicene Creed.

***That’s why we study it – The Apostles creed is a faith statement made at the time you were baptized and it contains statements of belief deemed necessary for salvation.***

**Creed defines us, and is a symbol of the faith, and it interprets scripture.**

Creeds are out of favor these days, because absolute truth and propositional truth is not in fashion. But, as Christians, we have to have some stuff *we know and mean* when we say “God” or “Jesus”. *Christianity is not whatever we want it to mean.*

**For example: GRAVITY. You know, that “force” that keeps you stuck to the ground? Objective truth would be: Gravity Exists (and the laws of gravity exist).** You might personally, or **subjectively** (what you think) believe that we are all living in a computer program, and gravity is a fake feeling generated by a computer programmer in another universe. **But that is subjective truth. Objective truth is: Gravity exists.**

The Apostles Creed is making an *objective* claim about the truth; about reality. It is not “opinion” as far as Christianity is concerned, but *reality*. So, **the creed is making a truth claim about God.** (it is not telling us everything about God, but the important stuff we believe – *necessary for salvation*).

**The Creed Is Theology** (Talking about God, and everything it says is based in the Bible).

**1. I believe in God** – The creed starts with the personal. **I Believe.** It is personal, but it is also corporate: WE (the whole church) BELIEVE.

**What do you believe?** I believe in God. Now, at this point, you leave behind literally ½ of all humanity **who do not have a theistic (one God exists) belief system.** (This is why creeds are

antagonistic – there are Hindus, atheists, Buddhists, and so on, who do not believe in one God or any God at all).

**2. The Father Almighty:** At this point, the creed is both *theistic* (there is a God), and *unique* (God is Father). God exists, is almighty, and is Father, a personal, familial term. “Father” is a family term, for one who protects, loves, cares for His children, and is also Almighty.

**Almighty:** We can say people are mighty (powerful, like a world leader, or an MMA fighter, or a comic book character). We know what might is and means. But when we describe God as having might, it is a different category altogether. This is the kind of power only God has.

**3. Creator of Heaven and earth.** He is so almighty, he created all things (See Genesis 1-2; John 1:1-3). Only God has this kind of power.

**4. I believe In Jesus Christ: Biggest part of creed. Why?** Because, we know God because of Jesus. (Hebrews 1:1-3). God revealed himself in and through creation, spoke to us through prophets (the Bible), and we know about God through conscience (in our minds, we know there is a God). **But the main way is in and through Jesus. *Ultimately, Christianity is about a relationship with a person who can be known. Jesus.***

**5. His only Son, Our Lord.** He is the *eternal* Son to God the Father. Jesus is divine, in the same way God is. He has always existed (the Son of God), and is the second *person* in the Godhead. There is Father, and Son, but they are the **same God**.

**6. Conceived by the Spirit, and Born of virgin Mary.** Jesus has no biological father. This is crucial, that the Son of God is 100% God and 100% man. **He is not just a spiritual man or a God pretending to be a man.**

**7. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was Crucified, Died and Buried.** Now, the creed doesn't go into all the teachings and things Jesus did – it skips His lifetime (You can read all about it in the Gospels). Instead, it cuts to the chase: the part of his life where he won our salvation. The eternal Son of God, became a man, suffered, and was crucified, and really died, and then was buried.

**8. Descended to the dead (hell). Originally it said “hades”.** This is the place of the dead – where dead people go. The grave.

*It is important to be aware that Jesus was totally human. Real man, real suffering, real death, real grave, and real soul in place of the dead. He can't save us if he was not a real man.*

**9. Third day He rose again:** St. Paul says, if Jesus was not raised (1 Cor.15) Christianity is done for. **The resurrection is *the essential Christian miracle*.** He didn't just come back to life – he was resurrected, never to die again.

**10. Ascended into heaven and sits at right hand of father.** What does this mean? We don't know exactly. He is now “where God dwells”; heaven. The disciples saw it happen (Acts 1:6-11) The Bible teaches that the same way he left, he will come back again.

**Good Christian theology still has Jesus in a body.** Jesus didn't lose it at the ascension, or resurrection. It is different, changed, but he has it forever. *God did not temporarily become a human being in Jesus.*

**11. He will come again to judge the living and the dead:** Jesus came first to save, last to judge, the living and dead!! No one escapes judgement. **But, in Christ we are forgiven.**

**12. I believe in the Holy Spirit:** In Apostles Creed doesn't say much about the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is also 100% God. Convicts of sin, speaks to us in prayer, opens hearts to God's word, moves among us, in us, in church, presence of God among us, gifts us, power of God present to us, healing and on and on. Also is a person, who's “job” is to glorify/testify of Jesus and the Father. ***He is a Person, not an it.***

**13. Holy Catholic Church:** Not the Roman Catholic Church, but the One Universal church; Holy – separate in the world.

**14. Communion of Saints.** We are in relationship with one another through Christ, living and dead – saints in heaven, and earth, united by the Holy Spirit.

**15. The forgiveness of sins:** Part of Christ's mission, the most important part, was his death on the cross for our sins. When we put our faith/trust in Christ, repent of sin and turn and follow him (baptism is the entry door), we are accepted into relationship with God through Jesus. There is no other name by which we can be saved, from our sins, the coming judgement, and enter eternal life.

**16. The resurrection of the body and life everlasting: Christianity does not teach that you die, something leaves your body (spirit) and goes to heaven forever.** We teach you die, something happens (your soul/spirit is with God in heaven), but on the day of the resurrection *you* are resurrected (physical, spiritual and eternal.). Whatever Jesus was when he came back from the grave, you will be, forever. (Rev. 21).

So, one day, when the Lord returns, he will bring into existence the new heaven and earth, and you, and I just like Jesus will come back from dead.

**\*\*Note, these things all come from scripture, and affirm what it is that God has said about himself there. Thus, it separates the Christian faith from all other religions (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).**