



NICAENA 325

getting Jesus right

January 2026 | Vital Life

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.*

~

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God,
begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,
begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;*

*Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven,
and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man;
and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried;
and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory,
to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.*

~

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son;
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified;
Who spoke by the prophets; and we believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church;
we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins;
and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.*

Amen.

Nicaea 325

Session One: Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

Introduction

Class Overview

A Credulous Age



What do you believe, and why do you believe it?

What authority do you recognize and submit to?

A Received Faith

1 Corinthians 15:3–5 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

2 Timothy 1:12b–14 But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.

Jude 3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Biblicism

No creed but the Bible

Chronological Snobbery (and the Myth of Progress)

It is a good rule, after reading a new book, never to allow yourself another new one till you have read an old one in between. If that is too much for you, you should at least read one old one to three new ones.

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. . . . We may be sure that the characteristic blindness of the twentieth century - the blindness about which posterity will ask, "But how could they have thought that?" - lies where we have never suspected it, and concerns something about which there is untroubled agreement between Hitler and President Roosevelt or between Mr. H. G. Wells and Karl Barth. None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds and this can only be done by reading old books.

—CS Lewis¹

What occasioned creeds?

_____, _____, _____ error

What issue is most under attack in our day?

¹ See: See C. S. Lewis, "Introduction to Athanasius' *On the Incarnation of the Word*," <https://www.bhmc.org.uk/uploads/9/1/7/7/91773502/lewis-incarnation-intro.pdf>.

Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

What is a creed?

creed [kreed], noun²

1. any system, doctrine, or formula of religious belief, as of a denomination.
2. any system or codification of belief or of opinion.
3. an authoritative, formulated statement of the chief articles of Christian belief, as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, or the Athanasian Creed.
4. **the creed.** Apostles' Creed.

Synonyms: dogma, credo, conviction, faith

Comparison:

Creed—a relatively-brief summary of key Christian doctrines, generally concerning Theology Proper, Christology, and Soteriology.

Confession—a more developed statement of Christian doctrine that provides greater clarity and definition on distinctive teachings and differentiates a denomination from Rome and from other churches.

Catechism—a Q&A tool for teaching new converts and young children the basics of the Christian faith, especially from a denominational perspective.

All three are _____ to Scripture and are useful only to the extent that they _____ the teaching of Scripture itself.

There are 3 Ecumenical [worldwide, universal] Creeds that are widely accepted and used in churches around the world and throughout history: Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian.

The early church articulated the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*), which later became the basis of the Apostles' Creed.

Irenaeus (c. 103-202)³ The church, though dispersed throughout the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth . . . and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit . . . and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the

² <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/creed>

³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 10.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103110.htm>.

ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father to gather all things in one, and to raise up anew all flesh of the whole human race.

The Apostles' Creed (AD 340)⁴

Unknown author, but not an apostle. It is a summation of the apostolic faith. The most popular creed for use in Christian worship. Often used as a baptismal formula in the early church.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary;
suffered under Pontius Pilate;
was crucified, dead, and buried;
[*descendit*] he descended into hell;
the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and sits as the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall 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.

The Athanasian Creed (AD 450)⁵

Uncertain on authorship and date. Appeared ~100 years after Athanasius' death.

[1] Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith. [2] Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally.

⁴ Chad Van Dixhoorn, *Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms: A Reader's Edition* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), 13.

⁵ Van Dixhoorn, *Creeds*, 21-22.

[3] Now this is the catholic faith: that we worship one God in Trinity and the Trinity in unity, [4] neither confounding the persons nor dividing the essence. [5] For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Spirit still another. [6] But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. [7] Such as the Father is, such is the Son and such is the Holy Spirit. [8] The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated. [9] The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable. [10] The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal. [11] And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. [12] So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being. [13] Similarly, the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. [14] Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being. [15] Thus, the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. [16] Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God. [17] Thus, the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. [18] Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord. [19] Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as both God and Lord, [20] so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords. [21] The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone. [22] The Son was neither made nor created; he was begotten from the Father alone. [23] The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; he proceeds from the Father and the Son. [24] Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits. [25] None in this Trinity is before or after, none is greater or smaller; [26] in their entirety the three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other. [27] So in everything, as was said earlier, the unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity, is to be worshiped. [28] Anyone who then desires to be saved should think thus about the Trinity.

[29] But it is necessary for eternal salvation that one also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully. [30] Now this is the true faith: that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and man, equally. [31] He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is man from the essence of his mother, born in time; [32] completely God, completely man, with a rational soul and human flesh; [33] equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity. [34] Although he is God and man, yet Christ is not two, but one. [35] He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to himself. [36] He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person. [37] For just as one man is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and man. [38] He suffered for our salvation; he descended to hell; he arose from the dead on the third day; [39] he ascended to heaven; he is seated at the Father's right hand; [40] from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. [41] At his coming all people will arise bodily [42] and give an accounting of their own deeds. [43] Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

[44] This is the catholic faith: that one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.

The Chalcedonian Definition (AD 451)⁶

Chalcedon offers the fullest statement of Christology from the early church. It clearly presents Jesus Christ as one person in two natures (hypostatic union). It utilizes a number of negative statements (*apophatic*) in its definition, as much of what we can say about God is best expressed in what we *deny*.

Following the saintly fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity; like us in all respects except for sin; begotten before the ages from the Father as regards his divinity, and in the last days the same for us and for our salvation from Mary, the virgin God-bearer [*theotokos*], as regards his humanity; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; he is not parted or divided into two persons, but is one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ himself instructed us, and as the creed of the fathers handed it down to us.

⁶ Van Dixhoorn, *Creeeds*, 27.