**Church History Part 4a - The Creeds (By EHBC Church History Team - 0verseer: Pastor Ray Poutney)**

**What did the early Church believe and practice in their worship?**

**Background (taken from Church History Part 2):**

After Jesus' crucifixion His disciples (apostles) had to give account of their beliefs and claims. This was because the early Church was viewed as an upstart Sect of Judaism by Jews, Greeks and Romans alike. They were the very first witnesses to His miracles, teachings, lifestyle, character, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension into heaven. They soon realised that they had to reconcile their experience with their understanding of the scriptures current at the time. Jesus told them that when they were brought before others to give account for themselves that the Spirit of God will give them utterance (recounted in Matthew 10:19-20). We can see the evidence of this on the day of Pentecost, where the apostles spoke in languages unknown to themselves. They just opened their mouths and gave utterance. Likewise Peter on that day gave a powerful sermon on who Jesus was, including OT scriptures to support his speech in Acts 2. Additionally Stephen gave testimony of Jesus in Acts 7. Jesus also told them that the Comforter would come to teach them all things and to bring to memory all that He had said (recounted in John 14:26). The evidence of this is in the four gospels and the rest of the NT.

These unquestionable events and attributes of Jesus (miracles, teachings, lifestyle, etc) demanded that the early Church be grounded theologically on the fresh revelation of God revealed through His Son. The Church was forced by these things to accept the following concepts:

1) The absolute divinity and incarnation of Jesus Christ

2) His humanity in its fullness

3) the nature of the Trinity.

They did not always write anything down explicitly expounding these articles of faith (which became the bedrock of the creeds) but the evidence that the early Church believed them, worshipped by them, lived by them and died by them is seen in the writings of Apologists and the early Church Fathers to defend these beliefs to a sceptical and persecuting Empire.

**What are the creeds?**

The word creed is the Angloisation of the Latin 'credo', meaning, 'I believe'. They are statements of faith that were declared by church congregations as part of the liturgy (worship). They consist of a large body of precise theological information squeezed into as few words as possible. They were developed to defend the Church from false teachers and prophets.

They were NOT constructed to be pedantic statements by Church leaders in order to argue semantics between individual churches; despite the fact that they were used as such. We shall see this in a moment.

**List of important creeds?**

**"Jesus is Lord"** (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3) (Greek: *Kurios Iesous*) is the shortest credal affirmation found in the NT. It serves as a statement of faith for the majority of Christians who regard Jesus as both fully man and God.

**Pre-New Testament Creeds in the New Testament**

* 1 Timothy 2:5, For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus.
* Phil 2:5-11, 5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
* 14 These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; 15 but if I am delayed, *I write* so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. 1 Timothy 3:16)
* 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
* God was manifested in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit,
Seen by angels,
Preached among the Gentiles,
Believed on in the world,
Received up in glory.

**Ecumenical and Historic Christian Creeds:**

**The Apostles' Creed: 120-250 AD**

This creed was compiled before the NT was finally agreed and the Canon completed.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, (challenges the Marcion heresey)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, (speaks of divine intervention in the affairs of man)
born of the Virgin Mary, (speaks of divine intervention in the affairs of man)
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; (challenges Gnosticism/Docetism)
he descended to the dead. (challenges Gnosticism/Docetism)
On the third day he rose again; (challenges Gnosticism/Docetism)
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father, (challenges the Marcion heresey)
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, (challenges Montanism)
the communion of saints, (challenges Montanism)
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed was believed to have been compiled by them, with each of them submitting an article for inclusion.

**The Nicene Creed: 325 AD and the Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed: 381 AD**

"I believe..." verses "We believe..."

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| **First Council of Nicea (325)** | **First Council of Constantinople (381)** |
| We [believe in one God](/wiki/God_in_Christianity), [the Father Almighty](/wiki/God_the_Father), Maker of all things visible and invisible. | We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker *of [heaven](/wiki/Heaven_%28Christianity%29) and earth, and* of all things visible and invisible. |
| And in one [Lord](/wiki/Kyrios_%28biblical_term%29) Jesus Christ, the [Son of God](/wiki/Son_of_God), begotten of the Father [the [only-begotten](/wiki/Monogenes); that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God,] Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of [one substance with the Father](/wiki/Consubstantial); [The essence of Jesus being 'consubstantial' with that of the Father - being of the same substance as opposed to being the same substance, therefore distiguishing the Father and Son as individuals rather than precisely the same being. This also addressed the Sabellian heresy which said that God only appears to be 3 persons to the believer as opposed to being 3 persons.] | And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the *only-begotten* Son of God, begotten of the Father *[before all worlds](/wiki/Pre-existence_of_Christ) (æons)*, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; |
| By whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth]; | by whom all things were made; |
| Who for us men, and for our [salvation](/wiki/Salvation_in_Christianity), came down and was [incarnate](/wiki/Incarnation_%28Christianity%29) and was made man;  | who for us men, and for our salvation, came down *from heaven*, and was incarnate *by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary*, and was made man; [Challenges Appolinarnism - that Jesus had only one nature and not two, divine and human. This doctrine would mean that Jesus could not be found to be suitable or even eligible to die for our sins because His nature would not be either. It would be a completely new and different nature.] |
| [He suffered](/wiki/Passion_%28Christianity%29), and the third day [he rose again](/wiki/Resurrection_of_Jesus), ascended into heaven; | he *was [crucified](/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus) for us under Pontius Pilate, and* suffered, *and was [buried](/wiki/Entombment_of_Christ)*, and the third day he rose again, *according to the Scriptures, and* [ascended into heaven](/wiki/Ascension_of_Christ), *and [sitteth](/wiki/Session_of_Christ) on the [right hand of the Father](/wiki/Right_Hand_of_God)*; |
| From thence he shall [come](/wiki/Second_Coming_of_Christ) to [judge](/wiki/Final_Judgement) [the quick and the dead](/wiki/The_quick_and_the_dead_%28idiom%29). | from thence he shall come *again, with glory*, to judge [the quick and the dead](/wiki/The_quick_and_the_dead_%28idiom%29). ; |
|  | *whose [kingdom](/wiki/Kingdom_of_God_%28Christianity%29) shall have no end*. |
| And in the [Holy Ghost](/wiki/Holy_Ghost). | And in the Holy Ghost, *the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son], who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets.* |
|  | *In [one holy catholic and apostolic Church](/wiki/Four_Marks_of_the_Church); we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the [resurrection of the dead](/wiki/Resurrection_of_the_dead), and the life of the [world to come](/wiki/World_to_come). Amen.* |
| [But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'— they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.] |  |

The Niceno–Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 AD is generally viewed as a polishing of the Nicene Creed of 325 AD, and is confusingly labeled the Nicene Creed. For this reason the Nicene Creed is also known as the First Creed of Nicaea. It is the only authoritative *ecumenical* statement of the Christian faith accepted by the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox, Anglican and the major Protestant denominations.

**The Filioque**

The words "...and the Son," are known as the Filioque. They appeared for the first time in the 6th Century but were not ratified by any bishop until 1041 AD. The Eastern Orthodox Church has maintained that this doubling of the procession of the Holy Spirit is 1) not supported by scripture and is thus a heresy, and 2) it was ratified by the Bishop of Rome alone in 1041, which was contrary to the workings of the Church up to that date in holding councils. This was one of the issues that caused the cataclysmic schism of the Church into Roman Catholicism in the West and Christian Orthodoxy in the East in 1054 AD.

**The Chalcedonian Creed: 451 AD**

This council came about by human political machinations. There was great pride in the numerous centres of Christidom as too their own particular teachings. At the time Constantiople emphasised the humanity of Jesus and Alexandria emphasised the unity of the divine and human natures in Christ. In 448 AD a monk named Eutyches was excommunicated by the Patriarch of Constantiople, Flavian, because he was teaching that Jesus Christ had only one nature. Eutyches appealed to the Patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, to help him. Dioscorus requested that the emperor Theodosius II call a council in 449 AD to remedy this supposed injustice. Theodosius appointed Dioscorus as the president of the council. The Bishop of Rome, Leo I, was unable to attend but he sent a couple of representatives with a letter containing his views on the matter. Dioscorus refused this letter to be read out in the council. He commanded his personal guard to enter the chamber and physically beat Flavian. Some of the bishops present willingly signed for Flavian's excommunication and the re-instatement of Eutyches; some signed under threat of violence and some signatures were falsified afterwards. This has become known as the 2nd Council of Ephesus or the Robber Council.

**The Creed**

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to the manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the virgin Mary, the mother of God, according to the manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.