

The Apostles' Creed: I believe in Jesus Christ... (6)

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord

*Who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary
He 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 is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty

He will come again 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

- As we transition in this study from the first section concerning God the Father to the second section concerning God the Son, we want to remember the significance of saying “I believe”. That is, we need to remember that we are not merely checking off a list of correct doctrinal propositions. Rather, when we say, “I believe” we are more fully saying, “I **rely** upon... I am **staking my eternal destiny** upon... For life and salvation, I am **depending** upon... *God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.*”
- Therefore, as we move into this second section of the Creed, we need to again own and take to heart the fact that as we begin a consideration of this next section of the Creed—the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ—we are saying, “I am looking to, rely upon, and staking my destiny upon, *Jesus Christ...*”
- Now this section is clearly linked to the preceding section by way of the continuation of the subject in this first line here: *I believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord.* In other words, “Whose only begotten Son?” God the Father Almighty’s Son.
- Entering the second section of the Creed brings us to the heart of the Creed and the heart of the Christian Faith, for it brings us to the Savior of Mankind, the promised Prophet, Priest, and King, and the One who is the ultimate revelation of God... Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as Christianity without Christ, there is no such thing as a relationship with God outside of Jesus Christ, and therefore there is no salvation in any other name than His. Thus this section is necessarily very important and critical to biblical religion.
- Pierre Ch. Marcel (great French Calvinist theologian of last century), summarizes this section as: “It teaches that the Son of God is our only Savior and shows the means by which He redeemed us from death and purchased eternal life for us.” (p. 32).
- Our Savior has a complex name: *Jesus Christ...our Lord.* Each part of His name is significant and we will look at each of them in this study.
- **JESUS**—The name “Jesus” is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew name “Joshua” (which, interestingly means that there is an OT book that we could rightly refer to as “The Book of Jesus”).
- The name Jesus means “Savior” and that is why an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying (Matt. 1:20-21), “*Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*” The significance of this name is not lost on the Apostles after His resurrection and we find Peter and John before the Jewish council preaching (Acts 4:11-12), “*This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is **no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.***”
- As this latter passage makes clear, we are not to seek salvation in any other name than in the name of Jesus. Thus, neither saints nor our own merits can fit in with this confession of reliance upon Jesus for salvation. And, on the other hand, we are to fully rest in Jesus, for in Him alone there is total and complete salvation: *...and you are complete in Him* (Col. 2:10)
- **CHRIST**—The name “Christ” is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew word for “Messiah” or “Anointed One”. This references the fact that Jesus is the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King—offices that all required an anointing to occupy. When a man was anointed to serve in the office of prophet, priest, or king, the act was to be symbolic of God supplying him or enduing him with skills, wisdom, and gifts to carry out his office to the glory of God and the

good of the people.

- Thus, as the weaknesses of the prophets, priests, and kings of old showed a great gap between the symbol and reality, there was a longing among the people—along with prophecies from God—that One would come, upon whom the true and full anointing would fall. This One would fulfill all the offices and discharge them all perfectly to the glory of God and the good of the people. This was the great Messianic hope of the OT. This was the hope that Jesus fulfilled. And therefore that is why we call Jesus “the Christ” or “Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus”, which all mean, “the Messiah, Jesus.”
- Our Shorter Catechism lays all this out very clearly:

Q. 23. *What offices doth Christ execute as our Redeemer? A. Christ, as our Redeemer, executeth the offices of a prophet, of a priest, and of a king, both in his estate of humiliation and exaltation.*

Q. 24. *How doth Christ execute the office of a prophet? A. Christ executeth the office of a prophet, in revealing to us, by his Word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.*

Q. 25. *How doth Christ execute the office of a priest? A. Christ executeth the office of a priest, in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us.*

Q. 26. *How doth Christ execute the office of a king? A. Christ executeth the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.*

- **ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**—When we confess here that we *believe in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son...*, we are reminded of the Fatherhood of God, but also, the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. We are sons of God **by adoption** (see the previous study); He is the Son of God **by nature**. Thus, the key to this statement here is the word “begotten”. In later creeds, “begotten” is contrasted with “made”. For instance, the Nicene Creed (381AD):

“...the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the 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.”

- The word for “only” is *monogeneses* and reflects what we read in the Bible about the absolute uniqueness of Jesus in passages like John 1:14, 18 and 3:16. Indeed, as John 1:18 makes clear (particularly in the NASV) this is a reference to the fact that Jesus is God: *No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him*. Therefore, this reference to Jesus Christ means that He too, along with the Father, is true God from all eternity. Normally, we refer to the eternal Sonship of Jesus as His being “eternally begotten of the Father.” Thus there was never a time when the Father was not “Father” and the Son not “Son”.
- **OUR LORD**—The final identification of Jesus here is that we confess Him as “our Lord”. To confess Jesus as Lord means three significant things: **First**, it means that He has ownership of us. This is a wonderful truth that means that He cares for us and that we can look to Him for protection and deliverance (1 Pet. 1:18-20). **Secondly**, it means that we owe Him obedience. We have been bought with a price and therefore, we must serve Him and obey Him in anything that He asks of us (1 Cor. 7:23; Gal. 2:20). **Thirdly**, it means that He is the living and true God and this is another underscoring of the Trinitarian teaching of the Creed. “Lord” is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew for God’s divine name “Yahweh”. As C. E. B. Cranfield (British NT Scholar) notes: “...on a number of occasions Paul applies to Christ Old Testament verses or phrases in which it is clear that “the Lord” is God himself (for example, Romans 10:13 [Joel 2:32]; 1 Thessalonians 5:2 [Mal. 4:5]...)” (p. 24)
- Casper Olevianus (1536-1587) ends his comments on this line of the Creed saying,

What all believers have with God...is not an ordinary covenant but an extraordinary one, in that God wants to regard His covenant partners as children, making them members of His only begotten Son, from whom they are never torn away, and regenerating and renewing them through His Spirit. This covenant...is in every way so eminent and extraordinary that we can freely say with the apostle...*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how can it be that He shall not together with Him give us all things?* [Rom. 8:32]. Indeed, this covenant is also grounded in so excellent a love of God towards us and is so firm and unchanging that we can further say...*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* [Rom. 8:38-39]. (p. 63)