

We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ
Session 4 of the Nicene Creed

Welcome back to our study of the Nicene Creed – that great declaration of the belief of the Christian church regarding the person and nature of God. My name is Jeff Gregory, pastor of Good Shepherd Church, a Baptist Reformed Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, in the United States.

Why am I leading us in a study of an ancient document written some 1,700 years ago? What possible use could such an old piece of literature have for us modern people in the year 2020?

Well, if we think we can't learn anything from what people have thought and written in the past, we are displaying our ignorance. The intellectual and spiritual quality of many of those ancient people would far exceed many of us. And their understanding of the Word of God, the Bible, often reveals a deep and penetrating understanding that could teach us much.

Join me if you would like as we ask God's blessing on our session today. Let us pray: "Gracious Father in heaven, bless our study together that we might grow in our understanding of you, the true and living God, and of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

This ancient confession of faith, The Nicene Creed, this statement of fundamental Christian beliefs, lays out for us some of the most fundamental truths regarding who God is. Actually, the study of God is the most important study a man or woman could ever undertake. Why is that? It's because what you or I believe, or do not believe, about God determines everything else about our lives. It determines how we value other humans, how we relate to them; it determines our view of morality – what is right and what is wrong in our human behavior, it governs all our inner motivations and attitudes, and it molds our view of history and where we think history is going.

The Christian church back 1,700 years ago was under attack by a false teaching led by a man named Arius. He taught that Jesus Christ was not fully God but a lesser being whom God had created at a point in time. This teaching was, in fact, a total undermining of the Christian faith.

If Jesus Christ was not God in the flesh, he would not have been able to bear the sins of millions of his people over the centuries. He would have been unable to endure the wrath of God against those sins. Only a divine person, the God-man, could do these things. So the issue at stake here is no less than our salvation itself. I have told people whom I have witnessed to, whom I have shared the Gospel with, that I am a great sinner with many sins and if the one who died on the cross was not God in the flesh, then I have no hope of forgiveness, *nor* do they.

Last time we studied the previous phrase in the Nicene Creed which states,

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

We learned that the Bible emphasizes that God the Father has all power in heaven and earth, and he is the mighty Creator of all there is. By the word of his command he brought forth out of nothing, out of nothingness, the whole universe, the earth, and all that inhabits the earth – man and beasts. And God rules in sovereignty over this whole creation – nothing escapes his rule and authority. All that we see around us, all the beauty and intricacies of nature, are the result of his power and will. He is to be worshipped as the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

But then the Nicene Creed states this: “We believe in One Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God...”. Today we will consider this statement:

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ...”

So all of a sudden, we are confronted with the Christian belief in one Lord, Jesus Christ. ***Why does the Creed declare the Christian belief in “one God, the Father” and then immediately declare the Christian belief in “one Lord, Jesus Christ”?***

One of the main reasons it does this is because ***this is what the Bible does!*** If you have a Bible, please turn to 1 Corinthians 8:6 in the New Testament. Here we read:

6 yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

This is an amazing statement. Did you catch it? This verse is saying, that first of all, the one God, the Father, brought all things into being. And in fact, everything that exists. exists for him, for his benefit, for his glory. Not for our benefit, but for His benefit. Then immediately the text says that there is “one Lord, Jesus Christ,” and it is through him that all things came into being and it is through him that we exist, that we have life.

So this verse is saying that both the Father, who is God, and the Son, who is the Lord, are the source of all that exists, and each of them has the attributes of deity – and we have our existence through each of them. The Father and the Son are displaying essentially the same prerogatives, the same powers of deity. Both are to be worshipped and glorified. But again, we do not have two gods, but one God in two persons – in the Father and in the Son. Then there is the Holy Spirit who is also God, so actually there are three eternal persons in the one God. So we say that God is a Trinity. But today we will focus only on the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the Scriptures present this careful balance of presenting both God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as the source, the origin of all that exists. And all things are thus

subject to their will and purpose. The two persons of the one God work in concert with one another. The Bible's revelation of the nature of God is vast and intricate, and not easy for us humans in our limited knowledge to grasp and understand. But what God has revealed about himself we must receive and be grateful for it.

What we are talking about here is God the Father, the great Creator, and Jesus Christ the great Lord.

Let's look at another key verse as we consider the "Lordship" of Jesus Christ – why he is called "Lord" in the Bible.

In Phil. 2:8-11 we read about Jesus Christ:

Christ Jesus,^[a] 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,^[b] 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant,^[c] being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

In this passage we see the glorious action of Jesus Christ – he existed as God for all eternity, but he humbled himself by coming to earth and taking to himself our full humanity; yet he lost none of his deity. In his humanity he suffered and died on the cross for the sins of his people. Then God raised him from the dead and crowned him with glory and honor so that at the name of Jesus Christ all should bow and confess that he is Lord.

The name "Lord," the name that God bestowed on Jesus, is extremely significant. It is a title of deity – the one bearing that name is no less than God himself. During the early days of the Church, the Roman emperor declared that he was Lord and demanded that all his subjects in the empire offer him worship. The Christians refused to do this -they would not offer a pinch of incense to Caesar and call him Lord because Jesus alone was Lord. As a result, they were persecuted.

God the Father declared that Jesus Christ is Lord of all the universe. He was the victorious warrior from heaven who came to bear the sins of his people and do battle with death, Satan, and hell. He obeyed the Father's will perfectly and conquered all these enemies at the price of unimaginable personal suffering. But he endured and conquered, and God the Father declared that he alone is Lord and is to be submitted to by all people everywhere.

So the Father is God and Jesus Christ is Lord. The Father sent the Son to rescue his people from their sins and the Son came and suffered and rose and won glory and honor and Lordship over all creation. So the Nicene Creed is not bashful to declare that

Jesus Christ is Lord, which is a title of full and total deity, that is, of what makes God to be God.

Let's look at another scripture that declares this parallel deity, that is, the God-ness of both the Father and the Son. Let's go to Ephesians 4:4-6:

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Here the Apostle Paul is stressing the need for Christian unity among believers. Among all of us, no matter what our background or our ethnicity or our gender, there is only one body – the church – and it is made up of true believers, no matter Christian denomination they may belong to. And among all of us there is only one Spirit – the Holy Spirit. And all of us share in one hope – that is, the hope of eternal life through Christ. And we all have one Lord – that is Jesus Christ. And we have a common faith – we believe in and trust in the same God. And all of us were baptized in water as an expression of our faith. And we all bow before one God and Father. So in this passage we see two of the persons of God – the Father, who is God, and Jesus Christ, who is the Lord. So the Nicene Creed is faithful to the Biblical revelation in giving equal weight to the deity and honor due both the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Creed states that we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ. He is called Jesus because this was the name given to him by God before he was born. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, who was to be the husband of Mary, and told him what to name the child that she would bear: “ ...you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” So the name “Jesus” means “Savior from sin.” He is the Lord because he came and saved his people from their sins.

And he is called “Christ.” This is the Greek equivalent for “Messiah” in the Old Testament. The Messiah means the one anointed with the Holy Spirit who would arrive in human history in order to deliver God's people from their enslavement to sin, establish the visible Kingdom of God, and bring his people into never-ending fellowship with God.

So the Creed declares that Christians believe in “one Lord Jesus Christ.” He is the Lord who would save his people from their sins by means of his own sacrificial suffering and death. He is the one anointed with the Spirit, the Christ, who came to heal and save and deliver his people in the power of the Spirit.

We are dealing with God here, with God himself, with God almighty. He does not fit into our mold. We cannot construct God as we may think he should be – a God that we can tame and put on a leash and lead about at our command to do our bidding.

No, he is God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen. We cannot fully comprehend the depth and the person of God. But we are indebted to God for the revelation of himself that he has given us in His Word.

Romans 14:9 says “for to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living”. Let me ask you this question: “Is Jesus Christ your Lord?” Do you bow before him and confess him as your Lord and Savior?

When the apostle Thomas was confronted with the risen Jesus Christ and saw the wounds in his resurrected body from his crucifixion, he fell down before him and cried out, “My Lord and my God!” Have you joined the apostle Thomas, as well as Christ’s people of all ages, in declaring that he is your own personal Lord and God?

After Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and then ascended back to heaven, God through Christ poured out his Spirit on his gathered disciples on the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. The leader of the apostles, Peter, stood up and preached to a great crowd of the inhabitants of Jerusalem as we read in **Acts 2:36**. He concluded his message like this: - ³⁶ **Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.**”

Christ was crucified by wicked men but God overruled their wicked scheme and raised his Son from the dead and declared that he is both Lord and Christ.

In the Book of the Revelation we see the glorified Christ, returning to bring judgment on the wicked people and everlasting life to his people. We read about him in Revelation 19:14:

“On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords.**”

Jesus Christ is Lord of Lords and King of kings. We must take him as our Lord and King now, or sadly, we will face him as our Judge at his return at the end of history.

How can we come to know him as our own Lord, and the Savior from our sins? In the Book of Romans in the New Testament we read this in chapter 10, verses 9 and 10:

“...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.”

Do you believe that God raised his Son from the dead and made him Lord? You must believe this in your heart, in the depths of your being, and then you must declare your belief in Christ, the risen Lord, as your Lord, with your mouth, with your own words. And the Lord’s promise is that he will save you.

So I invite you to join in with the confession of the Nicene Creed and declare with fellow Christians down through the centuries that “We believe in one God, the Father, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And we believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ.”

Indeed, Jesus is Lord. The shortest, most concise declaration of what Christians believe about Christ is this, "Jesus is Lord." Won't you make this confession today and live out your life in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ? It will be the best decision you ever make.

I invite you to join me in prayer:

"Father God, thank you that you raised your Son Jesus from the dead and made him both Lord and Christ. Enable us to bow before his Lordship and confess him as our king, that we may be glad all our days and rejoice to see his coming to receive us into his everlasting fellowship. Amen."

Next time we get together on this channel I plan to instruct us in the next phrase in the Nicene Creed, "We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, *eternally begotten of the Father...*" We'll look at this phrase, "the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father."

When I began this series I planned to produce a new video every week by Wednesday morning but it has proved to be much more time-consuming than I had thought. So I'll make a new one as often as I can. Please check back later to see a new video as we study together our great God as he is revealed in the Bible.

If you'd like to know more about our church, please go to our website at www.gsccdalas.org, or call me at 214-730-0114.

Thank you for joining with us today.

And now hear the benediction of the Lord from Revelation 1:4-5:

"Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. Amen."