

The Apostles' Creed

Part 4

His only Son, Our Lord;

John 1:18; John 3:16; John 3:18; John 5:17, 18; John 13:13

With Study Questions

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No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him* (John 1:18).

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18).

But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." ¹⁸ Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God (John 5:17, 18).

You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am (John 13:13).

Review

We began our study of the Apostles' Creed with a brief discussion of *Credo en Deum*, or "I believe in God." The very first word, *Credo* (two words in English – I believe), I had indicated to be one of the most dangerous words on earth. It's dangerous because, like so many words (choice, tolerance, discrimination, and diversity) it has no content in and of itself. Belief/faith is an instrument connecting us to life or death. It is like a bridge, or a tunnel or a pathway, which is itself not the destination but the means by which the destination is reached.

When the Christian says "I believe in God," he is stating the source of all he holds to be true. This, of course, makes that definition of God critical; hence the creed continues in its explanation. The God in whom the

Christian believes is a personal God whom He calls Father. But this God is also the Almighty God whose powers know no boundaries; the initial display of that power being His creating of heaven and earth out of nothing.

I spent many years not being a father. At the birth of our first child I became a father. But God did not become a Father at the creation of man. God is the eternal Father and has always been a Father to His Son, who has eternally been His Son. There would come a time when His Son would become flesh and restore the broken relationship between a holy God and sinful men – the Lion’s share of the Apostles’ Creed focuses upon that. Peace with our Maker comes through belief in Jesus Christ.

Jesus is Greek for Joshua, meaning “God is Savior” or “Jehovah is Salvation.” Christ is a word corresponding to the word Messiah, meaning anointed. Jesus was anointed by the Father to accomplish the work of redemption as our Prophet by revealing the Father’s will; our Priest by satisfying God’s justice; and our King by protecting and leading God’s people. We now continue with the next two statements about Jesus – **“His only Son, Our Lord.”**

His Only Son

One of the displays of God’s love that cause the Apostle John to pause and say “Wow” or (Behold – *idete*) is that **“we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1)**. Yet here in the Apostles’ Creed we read that God has only one Son – Jesus Christ. So which is it?

The singularity of Jesus as the Father’s only Son is found numerous times in the Bible. We read a few of them at the beginning of the message (John 1:18; John 3:16; John 3:18; John 5:17, 18; John 13:13). We also hear at the baptism of Jesus and at the Transfiguration, the Father saying **“This is My beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5)**. But am I not also God’s beloved son?

There seems to be something unique about the son-ship of Jesus that can only be applied to Him. The claim Jesus made of being the Son of God led His contemporaries to the conclusion that such a claim made Him **“equal to God” (John 5:17)** – especially when Jesus would refer to the Father as **“My Father” (John 5:17)** in the first person singular rather than **“Our Father” (Matthew 6:9)** which is how He taught us to pray.

When siblings are speaking of their mutual parents they will either say “our mom” or “our dad” or just refer to them as “mom” or “dad.” It would be quite unnatural for two children of the same parents to refer to them, while speaking to each other, as “my mom/ dad.”

There is one true God (monotheism) who has one true Son (*monogenes*) who is Himself God and brings the full force of God’s love, authority, righteousness and faithfulness. There are many passages in Scripture which attest to this. In the first chapter of Hebrews we read of the Father referring to Jesus as “**My Son**” in verse 5 then addressing Jesus in verse 8 “**Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.**” It is this unique truth claim that has been the source of offense and stumbling to those who desire themselves to be, or establish, what is to be the fountain of authority, righteousness, and so on.

Moreover Jesus taught that no one knows “**the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him**” (Matthew 11:27). According to Jesus all efforts of men, whether religious, intellectual, moral, creative, etc fall short of obtaining true knowledge of God. The test of a person’s response to God is their response to God’s only Son.

It is in light of this truth that Jesus tells the Parable of the Landowner where he leased his vineyard to vinedressers. At vintage-time he sent servants (who we would understand as prophets) who they beat, killed and stoned. Then he finally sent his son and they killed his son that they might seize his inheritance (Matthew 21:33-39). This parable was spoken in the presence of priests who perceived that Jesus was speaking of them. It may be religious leaders, above all, who seek to hide or hijack true redemption.

It is in light of Jesus being God’s one true Son that we can understand how well Joseph and his brothers serve to illustrate the uniqueness of Christ. Joseph was Jacob’s favorite son (Genesis 37:3) and Joseph had prophetic dreams of his brothers, mother and father all bowing before him (Genesis 37:7, 9, 10). This angered his brothers to jealousy and treachery against Joseph. But later, when the sad reality of their desperate condition became a stark reality (they were about to starve) they had little problem bowing before their only source of life – who dealt with them lovingly and bountifully.

It is in the light of Jesus being God’s one true Son that Jesus informs us that the gate is narrow and the wide gate leads to destruction (Matthew

7:13). We live in an increasingly religious pluralistic society. Our children will be chastised by their instructors and contemporaries for believing in truth and even more-so for believing in Christ – which is a redundancy. The gate is getting wider and wider.

I don't wish to digress but the arguments surrounding efforts to build a Mosque at Ground Zero serves well to illustrate my point. Certainly there is a good argument against based upon sensitivity to the victims of 9/11. But what we never hear-what is simply unacceptable to say – is that a Mosque houses a false religion offering no true peace with God – no atonement for sin. And continued alienation from God as redeemer is evidenced by continual alienation from God as Lord or Master which leads to our final point.

Our Lord

It is a sad reality how Christians have been seduced into rejection the lordship of Christ while false religions and empty humanistic, secular speculations demand that all men bow before their declarations. And most people don't even know that it's happening. A long-time well-educated friend of mine has made it clear that he doesn't wish to receive any correspondence, specifically when it comes to things I write regarding the law of God in society. But I think his mother cuts them out and sends to them him.

I received an e-mail that was a subtle jab, where he was seeking to show me the error of seeking to impose my religious ethics upon an unwilling culture. He wrote:

I hear that when Muslims have laws based on religion, they call it Sharia Law. I don't follow Sharia Law 'cause I'm not Muslim. What do Christians call laws based on religious beliefs?

He was appealing to the general American agreement that we should not impose Christian law any more than Sharia Law. This was my response:

Every law is based upon some immaterial presupposition, making all ethical laws a matter of faith. This is true for the

Muslim, Hebrew, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, Naturalist, Christian et al. Christians would probably call laws based upon religious beliefs, ethics. The real question is what religious belief informs your ethics. It's an unavoidable question.

To which he simply responded:

I can avoid it.

I didn't write him back. But I trust he must know that you can only avoid it by ignoring it.

Faith in Jesus as God's only Son, granting us peace with the Father through His atoning blood on the cross, is necessarily attached to an acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ as our Master. Evangelism is often presented as an invitation, where God is inviting men to come to faith. Men may rsvp in the affirmative or opt out at their leisure. But Paul presents the message a bit different in the 17th chapter of Acts.

Paul preached that God, **"commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30)**. And with that command comes a warning. Paul continues, **"because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained" (Acts 17:31)**.

We are commanded to repent for there will be a day of judgment and the judge will be Jesus Christ, the Man whom the Father has ordained. There was something about that message that made people want to kill Paul. We respond to that the way children might respond to parent's who demand obedience with an appeal to their being the parent. The rebellious child might say, "I never asked to be born."

There is an inspiring scene in Braveheart where the Scottish William Wallace is accused of treason against the king of England. Wallace responds to the accusation by stating, **"Never, in my whole life, did I swear allegiance to you king."** The Royal Magistrate responds, **"It matters not, he is thy king."** To which Wallace replies, **"...I cannot commit treason, if I have never been his subject."**

But of course Wallace's rebellion against the king of England was merely an allegiance to a higher king, a higher source of authority and righteousness. I am not offering what it might be (I would like to think to

Christ, the King of kings) but the point is we all have a master. And when the creed teaches **“And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord”** we are acknowledging the rightful place of Jesus as Master, King and Judge of all the earth. Paul teaches that either in this life or the next, **“every knee should bow...every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”** (Philippians 2:10, 11).

But Paul’s message did not end there. Jesus is not to be lined up with others who demand allegiance as if He is merely preferable measured by human sentiment. Paul preaches something of Jesus that cannot be preached about any other master. Paul continues, **“He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).**

A good king might demonstrate his valor by marching into battle with his warriors. But King Jesus was surrounded by no warriors – they scattered like sheep and on the cross He, by Himself, faced the wrath of a Holy God and conquered man’s greatest enemy – the devil and his death. He rose again from the dead, assuring us that He not only has the right to judge, but the power to save.

Questions for Study

1. What does *credo* mean and why is it important/dangerous (pages 2, 3)?
2. When a person says “I believe in God” what is he/she actually stating (pages 2, 3)?
3. When did God the Father become a father (page 3)?
4. Define what is meant by the name ‘Jesus’ and the title ‘Christ’ (page 3).
5. What is unique about the son-ship of Christ (pages 3, 4)?
6. What are some of the implications attached to Jesus being God’s only Son (pages 4, 5)?
7. What does the word ‘lord’ mean (page 5)?
8. Does everyone have a lord? Who is your lord (pages 5-7)?