

Affirming the Essentials of Our Faith

A Study of the Apostles Creed

All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

His Only Son, Our Lord

Fully God

The early Christians (3rd-4th cen. AD) spent much time debating who Jesus Christ was. Some sincere, genuine people, in an attempt to understand who Jesus was, began teaching what was not *affirmed* in Scripture, and several councils of the Church were held in order to correct them.

Q – What are probably the most debated issues regarding Jesus Christ?

- Jesus is the **ONLY** way!
- Jesus is God!
- Jesus performed miracles and was a miracle (virgin birth, resurrection, etc.)!

Some of the same issues we have today, if not all, have already been discussed. There is nothing new under the sun (Ecc. 1:9).

- **Tri-theism** – belief that there are three gods and not One!
- **Unitarianism** – A type of “Christian” belief system that rejects the doctrine of the Trinity and the Divinity of Jesus in favor of the unipersonality of God.
- **Arianism** (4th Cen. AD, i.e. Jehovah Witnesses) – They believe Jesus was created, but he is first and finest of all creatures, called “god” by courtesy because he is far above men.

While the Apostles Creed does not make this explicit, it is implicitly meant by the statement “His Only Son.” The Nicene Creed states it more clearly:

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”

“His Only Son” in the Creed affirms Jesus’ deity. Jesus was not just a God-inspired man. He was not a super-angel, or first and finest of all creatures, called “god” by courtesy because he is far above men – this is what Arians said in the fourth century, and Jehovah’s Witnesses say today.

John 1:1–3, 14 ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God.** ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Q – Who is the Word? When did the Word exist?

- The Word was *in the beginning*, The Word was *with* God, The Word *was* God!
- In the beginning, Jesus *was* the Word, and then *became* flesh.
- The eternal Word existed in intimate union with God – “The Word was with God.”

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Colossians 2:9 For in him the **whole fullness** of deity dwells bodily,

Q – How much “Godness” (divinity) does Jesus possess?

- Jesus was, and remains, God’s only Son, as truly and fully God as His Father is.

Q – If Jesus is God, how is He the Son of God? How is He separate from the Father?

There is a relationship within the Godhead between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Jesus called God “my Father,” and himself “*the* Son,” not “*a* Son.” Jesus spoke of a unique and eternal Father-Son relationship, into which he had come to bring others.

Matthew 11:27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows **the Son** except the Father, and no one knows the Father except **the Son** and anyone to whom **the Son** chooses to reveal him.

Only Begotten

Q – What is the significance of Jesus being “only begotten” or “one and only”?

- Not made! Not created! No beginning!
- Jesus is the same substance or essence as the Father.
- The Nicene Creed states the following:

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, 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.”

This is the language of fourth-century debate. The point is that though the Son lives his life in dependence on the Father, because that is his nature (“I live because of the Father,” John 6:57), he is in himself divine and eternal, and is **not a created being**. Jesus came from the Father, but He did not originate from the Father **or** after the Father. Jesus is not less than the Father.

John 17:4–5 ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence **with the glory that I had with you before the world existed**.

In fact Jesus, God the Son, was instrumental in the creation:

John 1:1–3 ¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ **All things were made through him**, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Q – How much of creation did Jesus make? (All of it!)

Colossians 1:15–16 ¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ **For by him all things were created**, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,

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whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—**all things were created through him and for him.**

Note: Jesus was instrumental in the creation of everything AND everything was created *for Him!*

Q – What does firstborn of all creation mean?

- Not that Jesus had a physical origin or was somehow created (the classic Arian heresy).
- Jesus existed eternally as the Son, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the Godhead.
- This probably means the rights and privileges of a *firstborn son*, especially the son of a monarch who would inherit ruling sovereignty. This is how the expression is used of David.

Psalm 89:27 “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth”

Only Begotten (Greek: *monogenes*) pertaining to what is unique in the sense of being the only one of the same kind or class—‘unique, only.’

Note: The “begetting” should be thought of not as a momentary event whereby God, after being singular, became plural, but as an **eternal relationship** whereby one Person is always Father to the Son and another Person is always Son to the Father. “Only begotten” does not imply Jesus “began” at some point in time. There is the sense of God “begetting” the Son to the throne of His kingdom (Psalm 2:7, Acts, 13:33).

Acts 13:32–33 ³² And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, ³³ this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus, as also it is written in the second Psalm, “ ‘You are my Son, today I have begotten you.’ ”

Two Natures, One Person

Jesus is both divine and human. He has two natures.

Q – What does it matter whether Jesus was fully God and fully man *at the same time*? What are the issues?

- Who has the **authority** to save us?
- Who has the **power** to save us?
- Who can **represent** mankind?
- Who is uniquely **qualified** to make atonement for man’s sin?
- The God-man Jesus!

Because of the incarnation, God becoming man:

- We can know God – anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9).
- Redemption is available – The death of Christ was the only sufficient payment for our sin.

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- God and humanity have been united – God Himself crosses the chasm created by sin.
- Jesus is the High Priest of mankind – He represents us before God and sacrifices for our sin.

Q – Was Jesus just as human as we are? Was He more human?

- All of us are broken. Our human nature, that which God created, has been spoiled by sin.
- Maybe, only three truly human beings ever existed: Adam and Eve (before Fall), and Jesus.

Mystery

You do not need to know how God became man in order to know Christ! Understand it or not, the fact remains that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14)

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The incarnation was a supreme, mind-blowing miracle – God became a man! Love prompted it, and we should not scale it down, but to wonder and adore and love and exalt “Jesus Christ.”

A **mystery!** – We can’t explain it, but I believe it.

- A mystery is a concept we believe to be true but cannot explain why it is true.
- A contradiction is a concept that is not consistently logical.

Mystery (Greek: *musterion*): the content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to a group —‘secret, mystery.’ In many instances μυστήριον is translated by a phrase meaning ‘that which was not known before,’ with the implication of its being revealed at least to some persons, or at some time.

A Father’s Love

Q – What does it convey when a father declares “my only son?” (Affection!)

John 3:16, 18 ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

Jesus, as God’s only Son, enjoys his Father’s dearest love. God said so himself when speaking from heaven to identify Jesus at his baptism and transfiguration:

Matthew 3:17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is **my beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased.”

Matthew 17:5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them,

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and a voice from the cloud said, “This is **my beloved Son**, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.”

God the Father refers to Jesus as “My Beloved Son.” This ought to cause us to pause and think about how **great a love** God had **for us** and for **His glory!**

Q – How many parents love their children? How many parents are willing to sacrifice their children for another, or for themselves?

John 3:16 (NLT) ¹⁶ “For God **loved the world** so much that he gave...

The Father’s love is expressed for both His Son Jesus and for His creation.

Lord

Q – What does the title “Lord” mean? (One in authority, master, ruler, etc.)

- One who possesses and exercises power and authority and to whom respect is due.

The title “Lord” in the English Bible is the rendering of the Hebrew word *adonai* or the Greek word *kurios*. God’s name, Yahweh is usually rendered “LORD”. In the Bible, “Lord” is usually one who exercises supernatural authority over mankind – Ruler, One who commands. God’s rule and authority as Lord rests ultimately upon his creation and ownership of all things and people.

Matthew 28:18–20 ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Hebrews 1:1–4 ¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed **the heir of all things**, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

To Jewish minds, the title “Lord” had messianic overtones of kingship and authority, offending both Jews and Romans. Politically, “Lord” was a title claimed by Caesar. It is significant that Jesus is called “King of kings and Lord of lords” when worship of Caesar was mandated (Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

The title “Lord” is Paul’s preferred title for Jesus. Paul was aware that the pagan religions in Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt called their gods and goddesses lord. The Roman emperors were also called lord. For the Christian, however, there is only one Lord:

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1 Corinthians 8:5–6 ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—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.

Therefore, Paul recognizes that there may be other “so-called” gods and other “lords”, but there is one God, and one Lord.

Q – Why can Jesus rightfully claim authority to rule your life? (He is Lord, Savior, God!)

Daniel 7:13–14 ¹³ “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ **And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him;** his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Romans 14:8–9 ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, **we are the Lord’s.** ⁹ For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

Revelation 19:11–16 ¹¹ Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is **The Word of God.** ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and **he will rule them** with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, **King of kings and Lord of lords.**

Knowing that Jesus is Lord demands a response from us.

Q – What should our response be to the realization of Jesus Christ as Lord?

Acts 2:36–39 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.” ³⁷ Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” ³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

Philippians 2:9–11 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

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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.

Q – What are the implications of Jesus being Lord?

1. Salvation is dependent on our acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus.

Romans 10:9 ...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.

2. Jesus' Lordship demands our submission and obedience to Him.

Luke 6:46 “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

3. Jesus' Lordship demands our faithfulness to Him.

1 Corinthians 8:5–6 ⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—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.

Q – What does it mean to be a Christian?

- It doesn't mean you are a good person.
- It doesn't mean you believe Jesus.
- It does mean you believe in Jesus – you place your trust in Him.
- It does mean you follow Jesus.
 - Jesus as our Lord means He is leading us. We obey Him. We do what He wants, not what we want. We exist to serve Him.

It is not enough to say, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” The Bible asks, “What do you believe about Him? Why did He come in the flesh? What is the meaning of His death? Do you surrender your life to Him? Is He Lord of your life?”

He is Lord of all creation whether we believe it or not!