

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.

I Believe in Jesus Christ

Q – What was the reason the church formulated a creed?

History – Marcion rejected “the God of the OT” – OT God was judgmental, NT God was giving/forgiving. He rejected or reinterpreted what the creation, incarnation and resurrection of Jesus. He founded his own church with his own scriptures. His list of “scripture” was the first attempt to put together a NT canon.

The Apostles’ Creed provides the **main points** of Christian belief and was used to identify “true” Christians from the heretics. It is **Trinitarian** – It can be separated by statements about God the Father, the Son (larger), and the Holy Spirit. It may have also been used during **baptisms**, as a form of **examination**. Believers are baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It can help new believers to go through the Creed, as both a **preliminary orientation** to the Bible (the statements are based on Scripture!) and a **preliminary analysis** of the convictions on which faith in Christ must rest. The creed also explains in detail certain beliefs about Jesus. More details are stated in later creeds, which are responses to heretical teachings about Jesus.

Q – Imagine you are an early Christian with no Bible. How do you know about Jesus?

Q – How is a belief in Jesus Christ different from other religions?

- When the Creed called God “**maker of heaven and earth**,” it parted company with Hinduism and Eastern faiths generally.
- When the Creed speaks of Jesus Christ, it parts company with Judaism and Islam and stands quite alone.

The “creedal” belief in Jesus is both the foundation of Christianity and what makes it unique.

Q – What are some beliefs about Jesus that are not orthodox (traditional)?

The New Testament was written to **make a claim** about Jesus and **justify that claim**. The NT was written by eyewitnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who are commissioned to make disciples of all nations.

John 20:30–31 ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these are written so that *you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus is **central to our faith**. The Creed states a belief in Jesus Christ that is central to the Creed. The Creed provides **more detail** about Jesus than anything else, with a long section on Jesus (**the Son**) between the two shorter sections on the **Father** and the **Spirit**.

Without Jesus Christ, we would not know about the following:

- The Trinity, Salvation by grace, Resurrection (of Jesus and ourselves!), life everlasting.

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.

Preeminence of Jesus

Q – What is the difference between Jesus and persons/prophets from other religions?

- Moses, Elijah, Buddha, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, David Koresh
- *Solus Christus* – In Christ Alone!

“When man will not accept the absolute and objective standard for salvation in "Christ Alone", he will create **his own truth** and his own **subjective standard** of morality and salvation. He will, in essence, **become a god** unto himself and will worship his own personal standard of righteousness.” – Author unknown

Q – Why does the Creed say so much about Jesus?

- Who we believe Jesus is, is extremely important!

Matthew 16:15–16 ¹⁵ [Jesus] said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The creed focuses so much on Jesus because the Bible focuses so much on Him.

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.

Colossians 1:17–20 ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the **head of the body**, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything **he might be preeminent**. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, **making peace by the blood of his cross**.

The Creed presents our Savior with **two names**:

Jesus (Greek for Joshua, meaning “God is Savior, God is Salvation or God will save”) is his proper name. It identifies him as a historical person who lived over 2000 years ago, the son of a woman named Mary from Nazareth in Galilee, a Jewish ex-carpenter who worked for three years as a rural rabbi and was then put to death by the Roman authorities about 30A.D. Jesus is a real, historical person who lived and died. Scripture testifies to the **historicity** of Jesus. The four Gospel letters describe his ministry. When we read Scripture, we read about the events of a real person who lived and ministered to people in the area of Galilee.

Q – Do you think most people have trouble believing Jesus existed?

- Most people probably affirm the historicity of Jesus, but err on WHO Jesus is!

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.

Christ (literally, “the Anointed One”) is not a surname, like Smith, Jones, or Brown. “Christ” is what some may call an “office-title.” It identifies Jesus as God’s appointed Savior-King for whom the Jews had long been waiting. Since the Christ was expected to set up God’s reign and be hailed as Lord throughout the world, to call Jesus *Christ* was to claim for him a decisive place in history and a universal dominion that all men everywhere must acknowledge. This is where many err – they do not acknowledge Jesus as God’s Messiah to mankind!

Q – What should the title “Christ” have meant to a *waiting* Jewish people? What should it mean to us?

John 4:25–26 ²⁵ The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” ²⁶ Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

The title *Christ* also expresses the **three ministries** Jesus fulfilled for which men were anointed in the Old Testament:

- **Prophet** (One who speaks the message of God) – Teacher
- **Priest** (One who mediates with God for us by sacrifice) – Sin-Bearer
- **King** (One to whom we serve and owe our allegiance) – Ruler

The first Christians preached the **historicity** and **preeminence** of Jesus Christ quite freely. We see it in speeches recorded in **Acts** (see 2:22–36; 3:12–26; 5:29–32; 10:34–43; 13:26–41).

Acts 2:22–36 – Peter’s First Sermon ²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know, ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men... ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are **witnesses**. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing... 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.”

Acts 10:34–43 – Peter’s Witness to Cornelius ³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality... ³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (**he is Lord of all**),... ³⁹ And **we are witnesses** of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God **as witnesses**, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ To him all the prophets bear witness that **everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.**”