

The Apostles' Creed

Study Guide

LESSON
FIVE

THE CHURCH



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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Outline

- I. Introduction (1:01)
- II. Sanction (3:26)
 - A. Old Testament (6:18)
 - B. Jesus (12:42)
 - C. Implications (19:23)
 - 1. Purpose (20:28)
 - 2. Believers and Unbelievers (22:45)
 - 3. Obligations (24:55)
- III. Holy (31:52)
 - A. Definition (33:24)
 - B. People (40:41)
 - 1. Visible Church (43:02)
 - 2. Invisible Church (47:48)
- IV. Catholic (52:00)
 - A. Definition (52:21)
 - B. Visible Catholic Church (57:21)
 - C. Invisible Catholic Church (1:05:23)
 - 1. One Savior (1:06:04)
 - 2. One Religion (1:08:44)
- V. Communion (1:14:55)
 - A. Visible Church (1:16:41)
 - 1. Means of Grace (1:17:02)
 - 2. Spiritual Gifts (1:21:27)
 - 3. Material Goods (1:23:56)
 - B. Invisible Church (1:26:50)
 - 1. Union with Christ (1:27:01)
 - 2. Union with Believers (1:31:26)
- VI. Conclusion (1:35:11)

Notes

I. Introduction

In the Apostles' Creed, the word "church" refers first and foremost to the people of God.

When the Creed says, "we believe in the church" it does not mean that we trust the church for salvation.

II. Sanction

In the broadest sense, the church is:

- God's kingdom on earth
- The congregation of his special people
- The central means through which he dispenses grace
- Critical to establishing and maintaining our relationship with God

God created the church for a purpose and vested it with authority.

A. Old Testament

The concept of the church in the New Testament finds its roots in the Old Testament.

The assembly of Israel was the Old Testament equivalent of the New Testament church.

B. Jesus

Jesus built his church in a way that relied on but also advanced the Old Testament church.

Jesus came to rescue and restore Israel in the form of the New Testament church.

III. Holy

The words "holy," "sanctified" and "saints" come from the same word group.

A. Definition

Morally pure:

- free from sin and corruption

Set apart for use in special service to God:

- things can be holy even if they are not morally pure

B. People

The Bible refers to people as holy when they are set apart in order to be useful to God.

1. **Visible Church**

Everyone who is regularly part of the gathered church

- Confirmed in God's covenant
- Have or profess faith in Christ
- Submit to the teaching of the church
- Have a believing parent or spouse

2. **Invisible Church**

Those who have been united to Christ in salvation (true church)

Only God can identify the invisible church with full certainty.

The church needs to hear the gospel on a regular basis.

IV. Catholic

A. Definition

Catholic:

- Universal: including all Christians in all congregations
- From Latin "*catholicus*" (Greek: whole, complete)
- Not a reference to the Roman Catholic Church
- Description of unity that exists between all churches that faithfully follow Christ

The Apostles' Creed is talking about the unity of the Holy Spirit that exists between all legitimate Christian churches.

- inclusive

Later, the church was fragmented by divisions

- exclusive

B. Visible Catholic Church

Definition: One worldwide fellowship of all people in covenant with God under the headship of Christ.

Marks of the church:

- Word

- Sacraments

- Discipline

C. Invisible Catholic Church

Definition: all people from all ages who have been united to Christ for salvation.

1. One Savior

Jesus Christ is the only savior available to humanity.

2. One Religion

There is only one true religion that can lead us to Christ.

Salvation is not ordinarily possible for those outside the visible church.

V. Communion

Koinonia:

- the fellowship that exists between members of the church

- sharing
 - material goods and money

 - gospel (within the church)

Communion:

- Fellowship between members of the church
- sharing of things we possess in common
- mutual dependence

A. Visible Church

1. Means of Grace

Tools or mechanisms that God ordinarily uses to apply grace to his people:

- Word
- Sacraments
- Prayer

2. Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit uses all spiritual gifts for the purpose of building up the visible church.

Spiritual gifts are shared by the entire visible church.

- Public worship services
- Build up the entire church
- Sign for unbelievers
- Unbelievers are condemned

3. Material Goods

In the Bible and early church, Christians shared their material goods with others who were in need.

B. Invisible Church**1. Union with Christ**

Jesus dwells in believers and they dwell in him.

This union involves both our bodies and our spirits.

2. Union with Believers

Believers are united to one another in Christ.

Our union with the visible church is relational and experiential; our union with the invisible church is spiritual and ontological.

The communion of the invisible church is not limited to the church on earth.

Scripture draws many applications from the fact that believers are united in Christ.

VI. Conclusion

Application Questions

1. How is the church critical to maintaining a relationship to God?
2. In what ways have you experienced God's grace in the church community?
3. Some of us can be tempted to think of the church as being primarily a building. How ought the church, as the congregation of God's people, help us to avoid this problem?
4. In what ways can you participate in the purpose of the church to turn the world into God's earthly kingdom?
5. In what ways do you see that the church needs to be set apart (holy) from the world?
6. If only God ultimately knows who is in the invisible church, how should we treat those who are not yet believers?
7. Since the church is "catholic" or "universal" how should we think of other churches that hold to the Apostles' Creed?
8. What benefits can church discipline have in a congregation?
9. How have you experienced the fellowship of the church?
10. What are three ways you can use your gifts to benefit your church community?
11. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?