

# The Apostles' Creed

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## Study Guide

LESSON  
ONE

## THE ARTICLES OF FAITH



THIRD MILLENNIUM  

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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, 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.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **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**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are 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.

## Notes

### **I. Introduction (1:01)**

The Apostles' Creed provides a useful summary of core Christian beliefs.

The Apostles' Creed was standardized by about A.D. 700.

### **II. History (3:49)**

#### **A. Development (4:13)**

The creed was a collective work that gradually developed over several centuries.

Rules of Faith: summaries of beliefs and practices:

- To preserve the teachings of the church and train its people (especially leaders)
- Varied from congregation to congregation
- Affirmed important doctrines
- Included moral teachings and traditions

Creeds: summaries of rules of faith

- Recited in liturgical settings
- Roman Creed
- Apostles' Creed
  - Could be later version of Roman Creed
  - Came into widespread use
  - Standardized in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century

**B. Purpose (9:07)**

The Apostles' Creed was created to help Christians learn and remain true to the teachings of the Bible.

**1. Scripture (10:12)**

- Basis of our doctrine.
- Word of Christ
- Source of all true doctrine
- Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone):
  - Only infallible rule of faith
  - Final arbiter in theological controversy

**2. Traditional Teachings (13:24)**

The early church depended on the traditional teachings of the church to summarize and protect the teachings of Scripture.

Christian leaders created summaries so that all Christians would know and affirm the basic content of the faith.

The ultimate authority rested in the New Testament, not in the church.

The goal of preserving the church's traditional teaching was to ensure that the churches did not stray from the original meaning of Scripture.

### **3. Apostles' Creed (22:06)**

The early church used creeds to train new believers in the basics of the faith.

The early church recognized the need for a creed that would be acceptable to every Christian congregation.

## **III. Overview (25:31)**

### **A. God (27:14)**

The doctrine of God is essential to everything in Christian belief and practice.

## 1. Trinity (27:25)

The Creed is based on the belief that there is only one God and that this God exists in three persons.

- Trinity: God has three persons, but only one essence.
  - Person: distinct, self-aware personality
  - Essence: fundamental nature, substance

The Trinity is one of the most important beliefs of Christianity.

- One essence: only one God.
  
- Three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit — distinct from one another.



## 2. Persons (33:43)

- **Father**

- Almighty
- Maker of heaven and earth

The Creed's description of the Father doesn't distinguish Christianity from other religions that express belief in a sovereign creator.

- **Son**

- Incarnation
- Suffering
- Death
- Burial
- Resurrection
- Ascension

Unbelievers have denied these basic facts since they took place.

- The one who will judge all humanity on the last day.

- **Holy Spirit**
  - Caused the Virgin Mary to become pregnant with Jesus
  - A distinct person of God.
  - Implicit: associated with the Church and with our experience of salvation

**B. Church (36:59)**

- The holy catholic church.
  
- The communion of saints.

**1. Participation (38:22)**

The Creed emphasizes the importance of participating in the church.

The Bible teaches Christians to form an actual physical community.

## 2. **Preservation (40:53)**

The Creed affirms the fact that Christ appointed his church in part to protect and proclaim the gospel and other truths.

It is still the job of the church to protect the truth.

## C. **Salvation (44:06)**

The last three articles of faith in the Creed deal with aspects of salvation.

- The forgiveness of sins
  
- The resurrection of the body
  
- The life everlasting

**IV. Importance (49:38)****A. Foundational (49:59)**

The Apostle's Creed is foundational to theology because it introduces us to the teachings of the apostles recorded in Scripture.

**1. Standard (57:37)**

The Apostles' Creed functions as a doctrinal standard because it presents several of the biggest, most important ideas of Christianity.

Using the Creed as a standard helps us remain faithful to Scripture.

**2. Logical Basis (57:43)**

Logically basic ideas are the source of other ideas.

The Creed provides the big doctrines so we can:

- See the relationship between the different beliefs in our theological systems
- Think about doctrines that are more remote from Scripture in ways that harmonize with our fundamental beliefs

## **B. Universal (1:01:25)**

The Apostles' Creed's doctrinal statements have always been affirmed by most Christians in most places.

### **1. New Testament (1:02:12)**

Despite the many false teachings that existed in the church, the New Testament exhibits unflinching doctrinal unity with itself.

When the New Testament affirms the articles of faith listed in the Apostles' Creed, it does so universally.

**2. Church History (1:05:42)**

The more central doctrines of Christianity, found in the Creed, were received and affirmed almost universally.

The Nicene Creed is largely an expansion and explanation of the Apostle's Creed, intended to clarify several of its ideas.

The Apostles' Creed has been viewed as the most basic and most ecumenical statement of the Christian faith.

**3. Present (1:10:36)**

The vast majority of churches that claim to be Christian affirm these doctrines.

Churches that deny these doctrines probably shouldn't be called "Christian."

**C. Unifying (1:14:07)**

The New Testament encourages the church to strive for doctrinal unity.

Doctrinal unity should be the goal of every Christian.

When we balance our concern for the details of theology with a concern for unity, doctrine can unite us rather than divide us.

The Apostles' Creed can help Christians differentiate between essential beliefs, and beliefs that are of secondary importance.

**V. Conclusion (1:20:43)**





3. Describe the Trinity in terms of persons and nature, and explain the different work attributed to each by the Apostles' Creed.

4. Why is it important to participate in the church and to preserve its central doctrines?

5. What elements of salvation does the Apostles' Creed mention, and why are these important?

6. In what ways is the Apostles' Creed foundational to Christian theology?

7. In what ways has the Apostles' Creed has been universally affirmed, and why is this important?

8. How can the Apostles' Creed have a unifying influence among believers, and why is this particularly valuable today?

## Application Questions

1. How does what we believe affect the way we live?
2. How can we properly use the Apostles' Creed without undermining the doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*?
3. How can the Apostles' Creed help us affirm the teachings of Scripture?
4. How can we call the church "catholic" or "universal" when there is so much disagreement among Christians today?
5. In what ways could the teachings of the Apostles' Creed bring unity within your church?
6. How can the Apostles' Creed help you relate to Christians from different backgrounds or beliefs?
7. How might the Apostles' Creed help us discern teachings that are not truly Christian?
8. How should the assurance of the forgiveness of sins impact our lives?
9. How should our hope in the future resurrection of the body impact the way we live in the present?
10. How can the hope of everlasting life help us face the sufferings and trials of life, including death?
11. How might churches beneficially use the Apostles' Creed in a worship service?
12. What do you believe to be the most important or inspiring part of the Creed, and why?
13. What portions of the Creed do you find most challenging or difficult to grasp?

## Glossary

**Apostles, the** – Jesus' original 12 disciples

**apostolic/apostolical** – Of or relating to the Apostles

**Augustine** – (A.D. 354-430) Bishop of Hippo who believed in the Scriptures as our final authority in doctrine and considered the creeds of the church to be helpful summaries of scriptural teaching; wrote *Confessions* and *The City of God*

**Basil of Caesarea** – (A.D. 330-379) Bishop of Caesarea elected in A.D. 370 who defended the Scriptures as the final authority in doctrine

**catholic** – Term meaning "universal"; used in the Apostles' Creed to describe the church as including all believers, from all places, throughout all of history

**Christ** – From the Greek word "*christos*" meaning "the anointed" or "anointed one"; closely tied to the Old Testament Hebrew term "messiah"

**Cyprian** – (ca. A.D. 200-258) Bishop of Carthage in the third century who wrote that traditional teachings of the church should not have more authority than the Scriptures

**Docetists** – Heretical sect that denied Christ's humanity and taught that Christ only appeared to be human but did not have a real, physical body

**ecclesiastical** – Relating to the church, especially as an established institution

**eternal life** – To know God and live forever in the full blessing of God

**Gnosticism** – Early heresy from the first centuries after Christ; believed that material things were evil, including the human body; therefore, God would never take on the form of human flesh, so Jesus was not both God and man

**Hippolytus** – (ca. A.D. 170-236) Theologian from Rome who wrote *Against the Heresy of One Noetus* in which he defended the Scriptures as the final authority in doctrine

**Irenaeus** – (ca. A.D. 130-202) Second-century bishop and early Christian writer who wrote *Against Heresies* in which he refuted Gnosticism and affirmed the validity of the four gospels

**Islam** – Monotheistic religion of Muslims that adheres to the words and teachings of Muhammad; believes, among other things, that Jesus was a true prophet of God, but he was not crucified or, resurrected or divine

**Nicene Creed** – Creed written by a council held in Nicaea in A.D. 325; an expansion of the Apostles' Creed that affirmed the doctrine of the Trinity and refuted Arianism

**Origen** – (ca. A.D. 185-254) Early Christian theologian from Alexandria; his works include: *On First Principles*, in which he defended the Scriptures as our final authority for Christian doctrine, and the *Hexapla*, a comparative study of various translations of the Old Testament

**Roman Creed/Old Roman Creed** – A creed used in the church of Rome in the early centuries after Christ; most likely the predecessor to the Apostles' Creed

**salvation** – Deliverance from the tyranny of evil and from God's judgment against sin through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

**Sola Scriptura** – Latin phrase meaning "Scripture alone"; the belief that the Scriptures stand as the supreme and final judge of all theological questions; one of the basic principles of the Reformation

**theology** – Any matter that refers directly to God or that describes subjects in relation to God

**Trinity** – Theological term used to express the fact that God is one essence in three persons