

## V. The Apostles' Creed in Biblical Perspective

*"I Believe..."*

"I Believe in Jesus Christ His Only Son, Our Lord"

John 3:16

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As we look at this second affirmation of the Apostles' Creed we will be looking at two passages of Scripture. One is very familiar. So let's start with John 3:16 which says [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.* The second passage is Acts 2. Here Peter is preaching the Gospel and in the middle of it, to this Jewish congregation that has assembled on this Feast Day, he comes forth on Pentecost day to proclaim the Gospel and makes this clarion statement to them. Acts 2:36 says [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

If you perchance were living in the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> century after the Reformation and you were aware of what church buildings looked like and how they were put together before the Reformation, then went into a church building of a church that was serious about God, worship, fulfilling the Great Commission, evangelism and discipleship and teaching the whole counsel of God so that God's people might be salt to the earth and light to the world, you would probably have two observations.

One observation would be what has happened to the statutes and the icons because they're all gone. In their place, instead of human revelation is Divine revelation. The Word of God is paramount – it is read, confessed, sung, preached, and prayed. The second observation is from a distillation of truth from that Word you would be confronted with something else which is likely, not in every case but many cases, a church that was committed to the reclamation of truth of the reformation which would have cleansed the sanctuary of any idolatry of making graven images but they would put up murals, likely being three of them, for books were expensive then.

One of the murals would have been the law of God – the Great Commandment – you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself and then those Ten statements (Commandments) of ethical truth would be given because it was crucial for worship, evangelism and discipleship. It was absolutely essential to understand it and it would do three things. One it would tell you that you were a sinner, you can't save yourself and send you to Jesus, who the Lawgiver became the Lawkeeper and died on the cross for law breakers that we might the blessings of eternal through His perfect obedience. Secondly, the law would be used to point you as to how to live for Christ because you love Him – not how to live to be loved by Him but how to live for Him who has loved you. Because He says 'if you love Me you will keep My commandments.' The third use of it as it was embraced by love it would restrain sin society. It would redeem people, necessarily, but would restrain sin as that law was lived and loved by God's people. So it would be part of an instrument for evangelism and discipleship.

A second mural would have had the Lord's Prayer which is more aptly and rightly said as the Disciple's prayer. Jesus taught His Disciples to pray by saying from Matthew 6:9–13, [9] *Pray then like this:*

*“Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
[10] Your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
[11] Give us this day our daily bread,  
[12] and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
[13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
(For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever, Amen.)*

That would also be a discipleship tool to teach people how to pray. Thirdly, God has spoken to us in a distillation of essential truths. All of the essential truths of Christianity are not in the Apostles’ Creed but while you will believe more than what is in the Apostles’ Creed you will not believe less. So the third mural would be of the Apostles’ Creed which now has stood a stead of 1800 years, not as a comprehensive, but as a statement of essentials that are foundational to the work of discipleship in the life of a believer.

Perhaps you would be sitting in one of those churches with those murals hanging on the wall and you got a little distracted during the sermon you may have wandered to that Apostles’ Creed or maybe you were looking at it as part of your preparation for the service that was about to start, you might have observed something. You may have thought, ‘this distinguishes Christianity from pantheism, polytheism or cultic Christianity (cults of Christianity) or monotheistic religions like Islam and Judaism.’ It’s Trinitarian – I believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – one God, Being – three Persons.

Then a second thing would strike you. Christianity is all about the prepositions. You would see ‘I believe **in** God the Father, I believe **in** Jesus Christ, I believe **in** the Holy Spirit...’ not about but in. It’s a personal, trusting, committed, intentional relationship between me and the God of glory by His grace.

The third thing you may have thought about was the apostrophe in the title of the creed. The apostrophe is not in front of the ‘s’ but behind the ‘s’ and if the apostrophe had been in front of the ‘s’ it would mean the creed had come from the Apostles themselves – it would have been Apostolic ownership. So the apostrophe reveals that the Apostles didn’t write it but those who wrote it wrote what the Apostles had taught. It is a distillation of the New Testament truths of Christianity that reveal the prophecies, the symbols, the types, the shadows, everything in the Old Testament has found its fulfillment in the Promised One – Jesus Christ. Bible creeds are true but creeds that were made by men of truth from the Bible are only so good as they are faithful to the Bible. So those writing this creed are not only faithful to the Bible but they were very specific to what the Apostles wrote in the Bible so go check out the truths in this creed from the Bible.

As I prepare for each study I go to almost every text from the Bible that undergirds, defines and distills the affirmation we’re looking at. So where would you have gone for this second affirmation of faith we are looking at in this study? In the first four studies of this creed we looked at the affirmation of ‘I believe in God the Father Almighty.’ Now we are looking at the second affirmation of ‘I believe in Jesus Christ is only Son our Lord.’ I immediately went to John 3:16 which says ‘I believe in His only Son’ which is quite a claim to make if it’s not Biblical. He is Christ the Savior whose name is Jesus which we see from Matthew 1:21 which says [21] *She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.* Or in Luke 2:11 which says [11] *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* Or Romans 10:9 which says [9] *because, 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.* Or the Acts 2:36 passage I read at the beginning of this study.

So throughout the Scriptures the question is not is what we are confessing today Biblical but what are we actually confessing? I continue to pray for those reading this that don't yet know Him will come to know Him and those of you who do know that the next time you do the Apostles' Creed in worship, you won't be able to mumble through this. I pray you say '*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord*' boldly.

You may have also noticed in this creed that there seems to be a disproportionate amount of content given to Jesus in light of the equality of the doctrine of the Trinity. The Apostles' Creed goes as follows;

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

***I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.***

***He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.***

***He descended to the dead.***

***On the third day he rose again.***

***He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.***

***He will come again to judge the living and the dead.***

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of the saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The lines in italics are the only lines given to God the Father. Is there more that could be said about God the Father? Yes, but that is all that is said in this essential doctrine/statement/creed. There is only one line given for the Holy Spirit which is given in just bold above with some of the blessings of the Spirit to follow, but it's simply said and more could have been said about Him. The lines about Jesus are given in bold and italics above. So there seems to be more given to the second Person of the Trinity, Jesus.

Perhaps the last observation you might have had while looking at that Apostles' Creed is wondering why it didn't have anything that Jesus taught. There are six sermons of Jesus recorded in the Bible. There are other statements He made and then there are the parables He taught, along with His aphorisms. So there is nothing in the creed that Jesus taught. Why not? They had 1800 years to edit this creed. The proportionality has not been changed but I want us to get to this by what we have just affirmed as we walk our way through this second affirmation.

First is, I believe in Jesus. If you had lived during the days of the Old Testament the Hebrew word for Jesus would have been Joshua. It literally means Jehovah saves, Yahweh saves, God saves. Immanuel – God with us. God has come to save us – Yeshua. When people have a baby these days they talk at lengths about what they want to name the baby but Mary and Joseph didn't do that. That Name came from heaven directly from the angel – Matthew 1:21, you shall call His name Jesus. Why? For He shall save His people from their sins, who now has

an adopted father, Joseph and a mother by the miracle conception that we look at in the next study.

By saying 'I believe in Jesus' you have distinguished Christianity. Christianity is not a philosophical speculation. It is rooted in time and history. I believe in Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago, a Sojourner in Egypt, raised in Nazareth, Son of a carpenter, baptized at age 30 in obedience to the Word of God as He begins His Messianic ministry, goes into the wilderness, teaches in Galilee, went to the cross, died for my sins, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and all that I am about to confess in this next paragraph is Jesus – a true, historical Person. In saying this you have not only distinguished yourself from cultural unbelief but many professing Christian churches who deny the historical Jesus. So when you confess this, don't mumble it. He bears the Name appropriate with why He came – Yeshua, God saves.

Secondly, this is the Christ – Jesus Christ. Christ was not His last name. It wasn't Joseph and Mary Christ had Jesus. That's not the way this works. This is a title. Interestingly, when Paul writes about the risen Savior's triumphant, he reverses them and calls Him Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ is His title and it's Messiah in the Old Testament. It means Anointed One. Between God and man by God's grace so that we can have a relationship with Him, God has established three mediatorial offices – Prophet, Priest and King. In the Old Testament there are multiple Prophets, Priests and Kings as types of the Messiah. In fact, there is one Prophet above all the other Prophets that points to Christ and his name is Moses, who says 'there is a Prophet coming who is greater than me.' All of these Priests in the Old Testament stand in submission to the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek who is Jesus, the greater Prophet, the greater Priest, and the greater King. A Messiah is coming through Israel, through the tribe of Judah and He will be greater than the line of David and David himself.

Now all of those mediatorial offices are all in One – this is not the first time but the second time. They were all in one in the first Adam. God's Word came to Adam and he was to be the Prophet. Adam was to be God's mediatorial Priest through all of his seed and where Adam went they went, what Adam did they did. And Adam was King. He was to subdue the earth and have dominion but Adam in the temptation in the garden said 'no' to God's call and 'yes' to taking the lie that he could be like God in His place. Now we have a Second Adam who is the last Adam. This Adam is ordained as Messiah, the Anointed One in obedience to Numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 He is baptized in the River Jordan and as the water is poured upon Him, sprinkled clean, comes up out of the river from the heavens the Father says 'This is My Son, in whom I am well pleased' and He is ordained into His Messianic ministry. Then where does He go? He goes, led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted but as Prophet, Priest and King He says 'no' to sin and 'yes' to the glory of the Father and to the salvation of His people. He is faithful in the house of the Lord as the Anointed One. He is the Christ, the Prophet, Priest and King therefore He can and is the Redeemer of His people.

Thirdly, He is also God's Son. So now we just went from the historic Jesus to the eternal Son of God. Because Jesus is the historic Jesus He is the Son of Man and Jesus used that title more than anything else, from the book of Daniel – I am the Son of Man. He is also the Son of God who has become Man – 100 percent God, 100 percent Man. This Jesus who is the Christ, is the Christ because He doesn't come from Adam. He is another Adam for this is God having come in the flesh – Immanuel, God with us. Because this is God with us, this is God's Son and God lets you know that. As Jesus is baptized the Spirit of God is poured out upon Him as He comes out of the water and the Father says 'This Jesus is the Christ, is My beloved Son, the eternal Begotten, not made, in whom I am well pleased' – the deity of Christ.

When we do this Apostles' Creed we're not only swimming upstream in the culture but we're swimming upstream in much of professing Christianity that denies the historical Jesus – mainline churches, theological liberalism – which is not a subset of Christianity for it's a whole other religion. It denies that He is the Christ and God's Son.

Fourthly, He is God's *only* Son. God not only said this was His beloved Son at His baptism but God also says this when Jesus goes up to the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses, the Law pointing to Him, and Elijah, the Prophets pointing to Him. Peter, James and John as they witness this, are being prepared for the moment when Jesus will say 'My God, My God why has Thou forsaken Me' at the cross and they are told here by God 'to listen to Him.' This is Jesus, God's only Son. He has come with the title Christ which He is able to accomplish because He is not another son of Adam who needs his own Savior, but this is the new Adam, God's Son, God's only Son, which means He is the only One that can be Jesus Christ, Savior, eternally begotten.

Number five, He is our Lord. Just like Yeshua goes back to the Old Testament Joshua and Christas goes back to Messiah, here this is our Lord and it's the careful use of the word Kurios or Kyrios with its Old Testament counterpart being Adonai. This found in Psalm 8. It starts out in Psalm 8:1 saying *[1] O LORD (YAHWEH), our Lord (Adonai), how majestic is your name in all the earth!* He is our Lord, our King whom we surrender to. This would have been a very common word because if you lived in that day you would be under Roman rule. When a Roman magistrate had come in front of you to greet you, they would say 'Kyrios Casear!' which means Caesar is Lord. This I believe is the birth place of the Apostles' Creed because the Apostles would give the first creed for their answer to this greeting was 'Jesus is Lord!' at the risk of their lives and many would lose it.

Now that Apostolic doctrine gets distilled so this second affirmation now brings us to 'I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord (Adonai)' for that's the one whom we confess. So what are the implications of this? From all the passages I have used in this study that undergird this affirmation here is a takeaway I want you to take with you as we study this second affirmation of the Apostles' Creed. This affirmation declares the historical Jesus of Nazareth which is the Christ and the only Redeemer of any and all who receive Him as Lord and Savior by faith and repentance.

What word is it that stands out, is so confrontational in our day and time? It's the word *only*. We say many times 'have you offered them the Gospel, have you invited people to Christ?' I know why we say is, how we do it and how it's done and that's what I would offer any who are reading this now who don't know Jesus as Savior, but the fact is, when you look in the Bible Paul says this about what Jesus says in Acts 17:29–31, *[29] Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*

I know why we say 'offer' and 'invite' but sometimes I think we have to be clearer that this is call, a command. This isn't an option on the menu. This is it. This is who He is and what He has done. Now is He your Lord? When Thomas finally saw Jesus risen he said in John 20:28, *[28] Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"* What did John finally say? John 20:31 says *[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.* Do you believe He is Lord? There is nothing more important for me to ask you than that.

Why is there a disproportionate amount of material on Christ in the Apostles' Creed? It is because He has been sent by the Father and the Father has so revealed the preeminence and the prominence of the Son as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer and if you want to get to the Father you have to go through the One who the Father has sent. John 14:6 says [6] *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* The One who came for you was God the Father's only Son and He is the only way to get to the Father. He gave Him for you not because He needed you. In fact, He didn't need you.

Have you ever been asked by one of your children 'What was God doing before He ever created us or anything?' God is eternal so what was He doing before then? I'm going to quote Sinclair Ferguson on this one because he is right but when you first hear it, it doesn't sound like it ought to be right but it is right. Ferguson said 'God was having the time of His life.' There was nothing like Him. He made us for His glory and that we could have joy in His glory. There was nothing lacking between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Eternity is their life and there was nothing lacking in it.

This is the God who has given His only Son. He had no obligation to do it. He had no need to do it. He loves you. My favorite word in John 3:16 is *God so loved the world that He gave His only Son* and He is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no man can come to the Father but through Him.

After I was married, saved, Christ brought me to Himself, and my wife finished college I went back to East Carolina. I hadn't been called to the ministry yet and I was struggling with what I was really going to do. Then I really got excited about law but I wasn't so excited about being a lawyer but I was really excited about law enforcement. At East Carolina they had a well-known criminology department so I changed my major to criminology. When I went back to Covenant I came back to my senses and went back to history and theology but the counselor at East Carolina told me I had to take psychology 101 when I changed my major to criminology.

There were a couple of reasons I didn't want to take psychology 101 but one of the reasons was because at a college with around 25000 students there would be 300 to 500 students in this type of class in this massive room. You are not taught by someone with a Phd but by a graduate assistant who is trying to impress the Phd who is sitting out there evaluating them. That's exactly what happened. I remember sitting there with hundreds of students around me and the graduate assistant said this; 'There is nothing more arrogant, more manipulative and more oppressive than religions with truth claims. There are no truth claims for truth is relative. You live in a society that believes in pluralism, right? Everyone has the right to believe what they want to.' Yes everyone has the right to believe what they want to but that does not mean what everyone believes is right. In that class everything was right and if you said something is right and something is wrong, you would be considered a manipulative, arrogant oppressor.

Then he said that there was no religion more oppressive than Christianity that says Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and you can't be saved unless you come to Jesus. Then he said 'I promise you won't get out of this class believing that.' What do you do if you're me? Number one I was afraid my mom and dad would find out that I didn't speak up. Number two I did not want to displease the Lord who is going to confess me and I want to confess Him, but I wasn't really equipped for this thing and I was intimidated.

Finally, my hand went up and I said 'I just want you to know I don't agree. Jesus is my Savior and Lord and I believe that is the biggest decision you will ever make in your life as to whether He is telling the truth or not.' Well, the avalanche fell and I was the personification of manipulation, oppression and arrogance. Thankfully the bell rung and I went out. Some days I still go to this psychology building at East Carolina which is still there. The fence where I was

after the class is still there and I go there to remember that moment when the hundreds came around me. Oh how I prayed that Josh McDowell would ride over the hill on a horse or something but he didn't come.

Oh years later I wished I had known what Van Til taught me to say back to that professor – wait just a minute, anyone who makes a truth claim of objective truth where somethings right and something wrong, is oppressive, manipulative and arrogant and that's what you want me to believe, right? Yes, that's what I want you to believe and anyone who does that is arrogant and then my next question would have been if I had already taken Mr. Van Til would have been, 'is that a truth claim and right now are you being manipulative, arrogant and oppressive with me?' I wished I had been trained in that before taking that class but I wasn't. I am going to help train you.

I wished I could have answered like R.C. Sproul and the way he had answered a similar situation as he told his professor, 'I'm not saying Jesus is the way, the truth and the life because he is my way for I'm saying He is the Way, the Truth and the Life because He said so and He did so and He is so.' If He is not the Way then there is no way and we're lost forever but He is the Way and He made that Way under no obligation because He loves you.

Now you can't say 'our Lord' until you first say 'my Lord and Savior.' Is He yours? If so, rejoice! He is the only Son who saved you as the Father sent Him and the Spirit brought you. If He isn't yours I call you to Him alone who can and will save you. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for all that You are and all that You do and all that we have through Your only Son, our Lord and Savior. Holy Spirit just speak to the hearts who are reading this now. Encourage Your people with the love of Christ. O the deep, deep, unfathomable, broad, expansive, life changing love of Your only Son, the Christ our Lord. Lord, we imperfectly follow You but we do want to obey You. Keep teaching us. Keep encouraging us. Keep exhorting us. Keep convicting us. Keep consoling us. Holy Spirit stay on us and I praise You that You're in us. If you come seeking today it's because He sought you and He sought you that you would seek Him. He says to you, 'if you seek Me you will find Me.' He just showed up for you today, now will you come to Him who will never cast you out? I pray this in Jesus' Name, our Savior, Christ alone, Amen.

### Power Point

#### AFFIRMATION #2

- I. Jesus
- II. Christ
- III. God's Son
- IV. God's Only Son
- V. Our Lord

#### LIFE TAKEAWAY

*The Second Affirmation of the Apostles' Creed declares the historical Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ and the only Redeemer of any and all who receive Him as Lord and Savior by faith and repentance.*