

## The Nicene Creed

New Life Fellowship Church  
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We believe<sup>1</sup> in one God,  
the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,  
the only son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,<sup>2</sup>  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father<sup>3</sup>.  
Through him all things were made.  
For us and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven:  
by the power of the Holy Spirit  
he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,  
and was made man.<sup>4</sup>  
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.  
On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father [and the Son].<sup>5</sup>  
With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.<sup>6</sup>  
He has spoken through the Prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.<sup>7</sup>  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.<sup>8</sup>  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. AMEN.

## Introduction

For the first three centuries, the church found itself in a hostile environment, threatened both by persecution from the outside and ideas from within that were in conflict with Scripture. In the New Testament, for example, we observe Paul exhorting Timothy to “keep the pattern of sound teaching” he had received (2 Tim. 1:13) and to protect the truth from error. This developed in the first three centuries into a variety of creeds, the most famous being *The Apostle’s Creed*.

When Constantine became emperor in 312 AD, he discovered that the empire was fractured by theological disputes, especially conflicts over the nature of Jesus Christ. Arius, a priest of the church in Alexandria, had argued that Jesus was created by God and not fully God. This began to split the church and thus the empire. As a result, Constantine summoned bishops from all over the empire to a council at Nicaea to settle doctrine for the entire church. This resulted in the Nicene Creed of A.D. 325. A second council of bishops met at Constantinople (present day Istanbul) in A.D. 381 to revise and expand this document and to affirm what we now know as the final version of the Nicene Creed.

What makes the Nicene Creed so important is that it has defined orthodox Christian faith for over 1600 years. The three main branches of the Christian Church – Protestant, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic – agree that this “rule of faith” outlines the boundaries of Christian belief and provides a measure, or rule, for the proper reading of Scripture.

Every day millions of Christians recite this exceptionally compressed creed where each word was intentionally chosen and packed with meaning. The Nicene Creed invites us to reflect on the radical nature of what we truly believe about our God and to gain an ever deepening appreciation of richness of our salvation in Christ.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> “*We believe*” – This says that in the creed we profess the convictions that bind us together as a community. We stand together and recite them. We are a people defined by these words and truths.

<sup>2</sup> “*eternally begotten of the Father*” – From this point, the language about Jesus is directed to clarify that He was, in the fullest sense of the word, God. They piled phrase upon phrase, most drawn from Scripture, but some not, to assert a simple, but infinitely difficult truth. Jesus is the “*only-begotten Son*” of God.” This language and understanding comes out of John 1:1,2,14, that Jesus was not made by the Father as part of creation, but is rather an extension of the Father’s own existence. This is not a making by God but a sharing by the Father out of Himself.

<sup>3</sup> “*one in being*” asserting the essential unity of the Father and the Son

<sup>4</sup> This is the heart of the creed, that the all powerful Creator of the universe entered our humanity and our history – for our salvation.

<sup>5</sup> “*Who proceeds from the Father and the Son*” – this short statement continues to be a source of tension between the Eastern and Western church. It was one of the explicit causes of the schism between Catholic and Orthodox Christians in A.D. 1054.

<sup>6</sup> “*The Holy Spirit*” is also worshipped and glorified. He is not only a power but a person, and is to be thought of in the same manner as the Father and the Son.

<sup>7</sup> “*one holy catholic and apostolic church*” – The word *catholic* means *universal* (not the Roman Catholic church). It refers to the reality that the church of Jesus exists around the world and not simply in one denomination or local church.

<sup>8</sup> “*one baptism for the forgiveness of sins*” – Eph. 4:4-5 states there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism;” While salvation is by grace through faith alone, from the beginning, baptism has been an essential mark of leaving the world, receiving forgiveness and becoming part of the church of Jesus Christ.