

What Does It Mean to Be a Christian?

The Creed 1

What is a Creed?

Creed comes from the Latin, *Credo*, which means “I believe.” When we confess a Creed, we are confessing the beliefs of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Christian Church. It is One, according to doctrine and lineage, Holy, because it contains the things of God (People and Holy Instruments), Catholic, because it is universally able to save all men and exist in all places, Apostolic, because Christ entrusted the Apostles with the saving doctrines, and Christian because it is Christ’s body. Church comes from the Old English *Kyrakon*, which means, “place of the Lord.” We have received three developed Creeds from the ancient church. However, as you will see below, the Fathers of the Faith (Apostolic and thereafter) were accustomed to writing canons (rules [like a ruler]) of Faith also called Creeds.

Creeds in the Bible

[**Deuteronomy 6:4-9** KJV] 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God [is] one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

[**John 1:49** KJV] 49 Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

[**1 Corinthians 15:1-8** KJV] 1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

[**1 Timothy 3:16** KJV] 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

Early Creeds

Ignatius' Letter to the Smyrnians (d. 108):

Chapter VI: Unbelievers in the Blood of Christ Shall Be Condemned

Let no man deceive himself. Unless he believes that Christ Jesus has lived in the flesh, and shall confess His cross and passion, and the blood which He shed for the salvation of the world, he shall not obtain eternal life, whether he be a king, or a priest, or a ruler, or a private person, a master or a servant, a man or a woman. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." Let no man's place, or dignity, or riches, puff him up; and let no man's low condition or poverty abase him. For the chief points are faith towards God, hope towards Christ, the enjoyment of those good things for which we look, and love towards God and our neighbour. For, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." And the Lord says, "This is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." And again, "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Do ye, therefore, notice those who preach other doctrines, how they affirm that the Father of Christ cannot be known, and how they exhibit enmity and deceit in their dealings with one another. They have no regard for love; they despise the good things we expect hereafter; they regard present things as if they were durable; they ridicule him that is in affliction; they laugh at him that is in bonds.

Ignatius' Letter to the Philadelphians (d. 108):

Chapter VIII: The same continued

I therefore did what belonged to me, as a man devoted to unity. For where there is division and wrath, God doth not dwell. To all them that repent, the Lord grants forgiveness, if they turn in penitence to the unity of God, and to communion with the bishop. I trust [as to you] in the grace of Jesus Christ, who shall free you from every bond. And I exhort you to do nothing out of strife, but according to the doctrine of Christ. When I heard some saying, If I do not find it in the ancient Scriptures, I will not believe the Gospel; on my saying to them, It is written, they answered me, That remains to be proved. But to me Jesus Christ is in the place of all that is ancient: His cross, and death, and resurrection, and the faith which is by Him, are undefiled monuments of antiquity; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be justified.

Augustine's Sermon 213 (369-430)

On the Handing on of the Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

Who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virigin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was

crucified and buried, on the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father, thence will come to judge the living and the dead;

And in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the flesh.

Cyril of Jerusalem (ca. 348)

Catecheses VI-XVIII

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, generated from the Father, true God before all the ages, through whom all things were made.

He came down, became flesh and was made man, was crucified and buried. He rose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended to the heavens, and took his seat at the right hand of the Father. He shall come in glory to judge the living and the dead to his kingdom there will be no end.

And in on Holy Spirit the Paraclete, who has spoken in the prophets, and in one baptism of conversion for the forgiveness of sins, and in one holy and catholic Church, and in the resurrection of the flesh, and the life everlasting.

Apostles' Creed: *Symbolum Apostolorum*

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

*and is seated at the right hand of God the Father
almighty.*

*From there he will come to judge the living and the
dead.*

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

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.*

*The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven*

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

How Does a Creed Function?

Ecclesiastically

Within the life of the Church, the Creed is used as a rule to both teach, guard, and unite Christians in the One True Faith. It also acts to exclude those who disagree with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Liturgically

The Creed is confessed within the Liturgy of the Holy Church prior to the preaching of the Sermon as a bridge between the reading of the Holy Gospel and the admonition and encouragement of the united Christian community.

Privately (At Home or Individually)

The Creed is also a prayer, as we will learn in studying the explanations in the Small Catechism. When used in devotion it is a tool that guides us into meditation on the persons of the Holy Trinity, their relationship to each other and us, and their Saving Actions done to us and on our behalf (Grace).

Must I Confess the Creed to be Saved?

You must confess the content of the Creeds to be saved. However, you are not required by God or this Church to confess their specific arrangements of Words.