

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

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

And we believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all time; Light, from Light, true God from true God; begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father, through Whom all things were made; Who for us and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made a man. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose on the third day, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father. He shall come again with glory to judge the living and the dead; His kingdom shall have no end.

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and Son, and Who spoke through the Prophets.

And we believe that there is one holy, universal and apostolic church. We confess one baptism for the remission of sins, and we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

History of the Nicene Creed

What do you say when someone asks, "Who is Jesus Christ?" Maybe you answer, "Jesus is the Word who became flesh and died for sins once for all before God raised him from the dead on the third day" (John 1, 1 Peter 3, Acts 10). If this is your response, you join Christians who, throughout the centuries, have summarized their faith to proclaim the Gospel and to ensure that teaching in the church is thoroughly Biblical. These summaries are often called "creeds."

You may already be familiar with the Apostles' Creed, but the Nicene Creed of AD 325 is less well known. Its origin is interesting. A preacher named Arius began to teach false doctrine such as: 1) God the Father alone is God; 2) Jesus Christ is a created being; and 3) there was a time when Christ did not exist. About 220 elders gathered in the town of Nicaea (in modern-day Turkey) to address Arius' false teaching.

They wrote a brief statement, using biblical wording, to clarify that Christians believe Jesus Christ is fully God, and that those who believe and teach anything less lack Biblical faith. We have omitted one paragraph that condemns a particular false teaching of the time.

An Explanation of the Constantinople Addition (381 A.D.)

Belief in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is an essential part of biblical faith. Knowing God, and constantly affirming this faith, is part of what it means to be a Christian.

In 381 A.D., in the city of Constantinople, a group of elders formed a council to write a statement reaffirming their faith in Father, Son and Spirit. This statement, commonly known as the Nicene Creed of 381 A.D., declares Biblical truths such as 1) Jesus is God; 2) Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead; 3) the Holy Spirit is Lord as well; 4) there is one universal church; and 5) the dead will be resurrected. Later, this creed was amended to make clear that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The phrase, "We confess one baptism for the remission of sins," does not mean that baptism leads to forgiveness of sins but that the Christian gospel depicted by baptism is the only gospel that truly saves. This creed was an appropriate response to false teaching of the past, and it remains a useful means to guard against false teaching that might occur in the future.

A Note about the Toledo Acceptance (589 A.D.)

After the Synod of Toledo in Spain, the Nicene Creed was accepted by the Western churches with the addition of what's commonly called the "Filioque clause" which gets its name from the Latin word "filioque" which can be rendered "and the Son." The affirmation of this clause is that the Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. We understand the Bible to clearly imply this aspect of the eternal relationships of origin within the Triune God in passages such as John 15:26. The earthly missions of the Son in His incarnation and the Spirit in His indwelling flow from how the Father, Son, and Spirit exist from eternity.