

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

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

Resources

Because the Apostles' Creed is ancient and has been the primary liturgical form of confessing the faith for nearly 2000 years, there are many good resources available.

Among the reformers, Calvin's exposition, which is found in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, is excellent. The least expensive and best source for this is the Chapter 2, Part B of the 1536 edition by Ford Lewis Battles, which is available on Amazon.

Shortly after the Reformation era, two other authors published works on the Creed which have remained popular among the Reformed:

An Exposition of the Apostles' Creed by Caspar Olevianus

Sacred Dissertations on the Apostles' Creed by Herman Witsius

More modern works on the Creed which are excellent include:

Affirming the Apostles' Creed by JI Packer

What We Believe by RC Sproul

All of these works together form an excellent library on the Apostles' Creed, and are good devotional reading as well (Calvin and Packer, especially).

For a single-volume work on creeds throughout Christian history, *Creeds of the Churches* by John Leith in its 3rd edition is probably the best resource.

Authorship, Date, and Composition

The Apostles' Creed was not composed by a single author. Rather, churches throughout the 1st and 2nd century world each had a creed used primarily as a baptismal formula and these creeds were largely the same from one city to another. There were minor differences (not in conflict with one another, but one credal form including this truth and another that), but they were all Trinitarian in form and focused on the person and work of Christ, in particular.

We find the basic formula as early as AD 215 in the Interrogatory Creed of Hippolytus' *Apostolic Tradition*, below. This formula was originally composed in Greek, then translated into Latin and used in Rome and is believed to be the basis upon which the later and final form of the Creed was based.

Do you believe in God the Father All Governing?

Do you believe in Christ Jesus, the Son of God, Who was begotten by the Holy Spirit from the virgin Mary, Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and died (and was buried) and rose the third day living from the dead, and ascended into the heavens, and sat down on the right hand of the Father, and will come to judge the living and the dead?

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, in the holy Church, and (in the resurrection of the body)?

By about AD 400 this formula is nearly identical with our current form. The earliest manuscript of our current form, however, is from around AD 710. Shortly after this, Rome made this form the standard form for the entire Western Church, and it has served as such ever since.

Authority

The question of authority is vital when we use or discuss any creedal or confessional formula. No creed or confession is, of itself, inerrant and authoritative. This is only true of Scripture which is alone the very Word of God. All creeds and confessions are therefore subordinate to Scripture, and derive their authority from their conformity to God's Word.

Having acknowledged that, the Apostles' Creed has been recognized by the Church – Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant, throughout history as being a faithful exposition of the truth revealed in God's Word. For this reason, the Creed is a standard of our faith and is to be believed and gladly affirmed.

Value

The Church throughout history has found creedal and confessional statements to be of great value, as long as they are subordinated to Scripture.

They are valuable as:

1. Summaries of the doctrine of the Bible (Apologia)
2. Aids to its sound understanding (Catechism)
3. Bonds of union among their professors (Doctrinal Unity)
4. Public standards and guards against false doctrine and practice (Purity of Doctrine)

Plan of Study

In the weeks to come we will begin to work our way through the Apostles' Creed. We will seek both to understand what each clause of the Creed means and also to test that statement against Scripture. Is it true? And if true, how should it shape our understanding of the triune God?

Latin	English	Greek
1. Credo in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, Creatorem caeli et terrae,	I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.	Πιστεύω εἰς θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς.
2. et in Iesum Christum, Filium Eius unicum, Dominum nostrum,	and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,	Καὶ εἰς Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν,
3. qui conceptus est de Spiritu Sancto, natus ex Maria Virgine,	who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary,	τὸν συλληφθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, γεννηθέντα ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου,
4. passus sub Pontio Pilato, crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus,	suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.	παθόντα ὑπὸ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, σταυρωθέντα, θανόντα, καὶ ταφέντα,
5. descendit ad inferos, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,	He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.	κατελθόντα εἰς τὰ κατώτατα, τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ ἀναστάντα ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν,
6. ascendit ad caelos, sedet ad dexteram Dei Patris omnipotentis,	He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,	ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ θεοῦ πατρὸς παντοδυνάμου,
7. inde venturus est iudicare vivos et mortuos.	From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.	ἐκεῖθεν ἐρχόμενον κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς.
8. Credo in Spiritum Sanctum,	I believe in the Holy Ghost,	Πιστεύω εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον,
9. sanctam Ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum communionem,	the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,	ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν, ἁγίων κοινωνίαν,
10. remissionem peccatorum,	the forgiveness of sins,	ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,
11. carnis resurrectionem,	the resurrection of the body,	σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν,
12. vitam aeternam. Amen.	and the life everlasting. Amen.	ζωὴν αἰώνιον. Ἀμήν.

Intro: I believe...

- Before we rush into the theological content of the Creed, we need to recognize the importance of these words, “I believe...”.
- Why don’t we say together, “We believe...”?
- What does it mean to believe?
 - “To consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust.” (BDAG 1)
 - “To entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence.” (BDAG 2)
 - It is to know not only the claim, but to believe the claim to be true, and to be willing to entrust yourself to the claim.
- The faith is something each of us holds individually, but in common. Reciting the creed together, but saying “I believe...” rather than “We believe...” is one way to express this.

1. ...in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

The first statement of the Creed opens with an affirmation of the first person of the Trinity, God the Father – his omnipotence and authority.

It affirms that he is...

- God
 - Not merely a lesser deity or an older deity, but God unqualified. THE God.
- Father
 - describes primarily his relationship to the Son – notice the parallel in the second paragraph, where Christ is first referred to as son. Rom 15:6, 2 Cor 1:3, 2 Cor 11:31, Eph 1:3, Col 1:3; Heb 1:5 (quoting Ps 2:7 and 2 Sam 7:14); 1 John 4:14
 - However, because we are in Christ, it also refers to all of us. The Lord's Prayer for example. **Rom 1:7** (1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Thes 1:3; 2 Thes 1:1-2; Philemon 3); **Rom 8:15** (Gal 4:6); 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 1:4; Phil 4:20; 1 Thes 3:11, 13; 2 Thes 2:16; **1 Pet 1:17**
 - The relationship of Father is one of love and care and even discipline. (Heb 12:7-9)
- Almighty
 - This term, together with the following, establish God's character as sovereign
 - He has both the power and the right to rule.
 - It is not just a term of extent – ruler of all – but asserts his absolute authority as well. That is, there is nothing else equal or greater to him in power.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:18 (Paul, quoting 2 Sam 7:14 and Is 43:6)
 - This is the Greek term in the LXX that translates Elohim Sabbaoth (Lord of Hosts) or YHWH Sabbaoth as well as El Shaddai (God Almighty)
- Maker of heaven and earth [Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24]
 - This is not simply a statement of fact, but is the evidence available to all people of his authority and power. (Rom 1:20)
 - All things are his because he made them – he has the right to rule over them and dispose of them as he pleases.

Though the Apostles' Creed doesn't go into detail about *how* God is triune, it is intentional in asserting *that* he is triune.

From the beginning Christianity understood that God exists as Father, Son, and Spirit. That these three are all God and yet there is only one God. Christianity has never been tri-theistic. But the tension in holding the deity of Christ and at the same time the deity of the Father while maintaining that there is only one God has been felt from the beginning. It was worked out carefully, through much theological conflict, by the fourth century.

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

- “And...”
 - I know it might seem silly, but this “and” is very important. It is what we call a coordinating conjunction. It connects one verb (believe) with two objects (grammatically speaking): The Father and the Son.
 - In other words, here the word “and” means, “I believe”.
 - As Christ is named in the Creed, it is as one in whom we also believe just as we believe in the Father.
 - It is not merely that we believe in them both, but that it is the same act of believing, or at least the very same kind of believing.
- “...in...”
 - We skipped over this in the first paragraph of the Creed, but what do we mean by “in”? “I believe *in* God the Father... and *in* Jesus Christ...”
 - This language (πιστεύω εἰς) is found in the New Testament in Matthew, Mark, and John’s gospel accounts, as well as Acts (interestingly since Luke doesn’t include it in his gospel), and the letters of Paul, Peter, and John .
 - “Actions or feelings directed in someone’s direction in hostile or friendly sense.” (BDAG, εἰς, 4, c, β)
 - In all of the above references the object of the belief is Christ.
 - Our belief – our faith – has Christ – his person and work – as its object
 - Said another way, our faith is directed toward Christ.
 - Remember what we said the Greek verb πιστεύω means above?
 - “To consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust.” (BDAG 1)
 - “To entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence.” (BDAG 2)
 - The “something” and “an entity” in those definitions is Jesus Christ. He is the one we “consider to be true and therefore worthy of our trust” and the entity to whom we “entrust [ourselves] in complete confidence.”
- “...Jesus Christ...”
 - “Jesus”
 - ...was his given name. In Greek, Ἰησοῦς, which is the Greek form of the Hebrew, Yeshua, which appears in our Old Testament translations as Joshua.
 - It means “YHWH is my help (or salvation)”
 - We are told in Matthew 1:21 about his name: “She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”
 - “Christ”
 - ...is not a name, though used with “Jesus” it has essentially become so.
 - Rather, it is the Greek word for “anointed one” and is carried over as a title from the Old Testament, where the Hebrew word is “mashiach”, from which we get Messiah.
 - In the Old Testament, one appointed by God, particularly to be a prophet, or a priest, or a king, was “anointed” with oil as a sign and known as “God’s anointed one.”
 - But this isn’t merely a pattern picked up on in the case of Christ. Rather, it always looks forward to the Anointed One who will come as the true prophet, priest, and king of God’s people – who will fulfill these offices perfectly – and who will never die, but always serve as God’s Anointed.

- “...his only Son...”
 - There is no other who is a Son to God like Jesus.
 - He is unique – one of a kind.
 - This pattern first appears in the Old Testament in Gen 22:2 and the sacrifice of Isaac, when God says to Abraham, “take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love...”
 - But Isaac *wasn't* Abraham's only son. Abraham already had Ishmael by this time.
 - In fact, in Gen 21:12-13, God acknowledges that Ishmael is Abraham's offspring and promises to make Ishmael a nation.
 - In what sense, then, was Isaac an only son? In the sense that it was through Isaac that Abraham's offspring would be named. Isaac is the covenant child of promise.
 - Throughout Abraham's story the question of the covenant child is raised. Abraham wonders how he can have a child with Sarah. He assumes (Gen 15) it will have to be another member of his household rather than his own child. Attempts lead to Ishmael being born, but he's not the one.
 - There is only one chosen by God to be the Son who establishes the covenant of grace – Jesus, the only Son of God.
- “...our Lord...”
 - This same Jesus – the one anointed by God, God's only Son, is our Lord.
 - This certainly points to no less than the office of King which Jesus holds – as Lord he is sovereign. He reigns. We owe him our obedience and allegiance.
 - Often in the New Testament, and likely here, it is also a further claim to divinity.
 - “Lord” is applied as a title to Christ in the New Testament as a reference to his divinity because the term was used in the Old Testament to refer to God.
 - The Hebrew word is “adonai”. In order to avoid any risk of taking the Lord's name (YHWH) in vain, the practice in Judaism has always been to use the word “adonai” (or sometimes elohim, but less often) in place of the divine name when reading Scripture aloud.
 - In fact, when Jewish scribes translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek – a translation we call the Septuagint, or LXX, they used this Greek word (κύριος) in place of YHWH.
 - This is why your English Bible translates YHWH in the Old Testament as “LORD”.
 - They use the word “Lord” because that is the word traditionally said aloud when reading YHWH and used to translate YHWH from Hebrew to Greek.
 - It is in “small caps” to indicate to you that the Hebrew is actually YHWH.
 - This practice (of reading “Lord” aloud for YHWH) was already an ancient practice in the time of Christ.
 - Not every use of the title “Lord” applied to just anyone implied deity.
 - In fact, it could simply be like saying “sir” today, and sometimes it is used this way of Christ, particularly in the Gospels.
 - But when the Apostles and later New Testament writers use it of Christ, they are ascribing deity.
 - This is often clear from context: 1 Pet 2:3 (Psalm 34:8)

Who do we believe this Jesus is? He is the messiah, the only Son of God, our King and God.

3. ...who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary,

- One person, two natures
 - The first clause asserts both Christ's divinity and humanity, but focuses on the divinity.
 - The second clause asserts both his humanity and his divinity, but focuses on his humanity.
 - In a sense, the two clauses don't just assert two acts: conception and birth, but intertwine his two natures beautifully – one person, but two natures: divine and human.
 - His conception was both divine and human.
 - His birth was both divine and human.
 - We must not rush on without making this point: Jesus Christ is fully human, and must be in order to redeem fallen humanity.
 - *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm of Canterbury, c. AD 1100
 - Christ must be human to redeem humanity – ours is the guilt and so we must pay the debt.
 - Man is incapable of paying the debt, so Christ, being God, must become man to do so on our behalf.
- "...conceived by the Holy Ghost..."
 - Divine source, but human
 - Matthew 1:18, 20
 - Luke 1:35
 - Mark and John do not record the conception or birth of Christ.
 - Jesus was conceived – the biological process by which a human person begins to exist is true for Jesus, even though the ordinary mechanism by which this occurs did not take place.
 - Jesus was conceived, and as such human, but the one by whom he was conceived is God and the extraordinary means by which he was conceived were miraculous.
 - Jesus was divinely given, but as a human.
- "...born of the virgin Mary..."
 - Human source, but divine
 - Why a virgin birth?
 - It is a sign: Isaiah 7:14
 - Three things to which the sign of a virgin birth points:
 - Jesus' supernatural character
"...the virgin birth is posted on guard at the door of the mystery of Christmas; and none of us must think of hurrying past it. It stands on the threshold of the New Testament, blatantly supernatural, defying our rationalism, informing us that all that follows belongs to the same order as itself and that if we find it offensive there is no point in proceeding further." MacLeod, *The Person of Christ*, 37
 - God's judgment on human nature
 - The new beginning inaugurated by his birth – the divine intrusion
 - Donald McLeod, *The Person of Christ* in the Contours of Christian Theology series, page 37
 - Two final key elements inherent in the virgin character of his birth:
 - Divine Sonship
 - Luke 1:35

- Three difficulties in the absence of a virgin birth:
 - The alternative leads to adoptionism
 - The alternative creates a circumstance of double paternity
 - The alternative involves human initiative
- Christ's sinlessness
 - Christ's humanity is the product of the creative work of the Spirit and therefore, like all God's works of creation, is "very good."
 - It is NOT that sex is sinful.
 - Nor is it that sin is passed genetically.
 - Christ's humanity is the product of the creative work of the Spirit and therefore not subject to Adam's representation in the probation of the Garden.

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. His conception and birth are described in Scripture in such a way that asserts and defends both truths. We confess these truths, first because they are authoritatively revealed by God in his Word, but also because by them we understand that we have gained a sympathetic redeemer who knows our sorrows and suffering under the regime of sin and yet is all-powerful to deliver us from that regime.

4. ...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried.

- Historical Reality
 - Here we have a summary of at least the last 24 hours of the life of Christ leading up to and including his resting in the grave.
 - Together with the statement of his conception and birth, these clauses assert clearly and strongly the historical reality of these events.
 - Of course, the biblical basis for these events is found throughout the gospel accounts.
 - The naming of Pontius Pilate is entirely in the service of this point.
 - Jesus did not merely “suffer” and was not merely “crucified, dead, and buried” as though these actions might be understood or interpreted metaphorically.
 - These events aren’t helpful mythology.
 - You *cannot* have the faith and deny the historicity of these events. They are not fables meant to teach lessons. It is not true that “it doesn’t matter if it really happened as long as you learn from it.”
 - These events are to be understood as historical events tied to the period and government of one Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Judea – a specific man attested not only by Scripture but by the rest of the historical record.
 - If these events did not happen in history, then you have not been delivered from your sin and you – we all – stand condemned before an awful and righteous God.
- Redemptive Centrality
 - By selecting these events the early church was rightly recognizing that these are the central acts of redemption in history.
 - It is not simply that these events took place – but that they are necessary for our salvation and have been carried out in and by Jesus Christ.
 - Christ’s suffering, death, and burial (we will consider resurrection next week) are at the very heart of the good news – at the very heart of God’s plan of redemption.
 - Acts 2:22-23
- ...suffered...
 - The Old Testament foretold a suffering messiah – particularly in the Servant Songs of Isaiah
 - We affirm that Jesus is that suffering servant.
 - The word often used is “passion” which is from the Latin “passus” in the Latin version above.
 - The passion of the Christ does not refer to how much he cared (he was SO passionate!) but to his suffering.
 - There is a connection, by the way. One who is passionate about something is someone willing even to suffer for it, making sacrifices in order to obtain or keep it.
 - In this sense, we may say that Christ was passionate in the fullest sense of the term!
 - He was passionate first for the glory of the Father and his own glory.
 - He was passionate also for his people.
 - Though the Creed highlights the historical character of the suffering, it does not intend to do so by ignoring the reason he suffered.
- ...crucified...
 - Cursed is he who is hanged upon a tree.
 - Christ takes our curse upon himself.

- While the suffering points to the depth of his love for the Father and for his people, the cross points to his vicarious atonement – he died as a judgment against our sin and in our place. He became a curse for us. (Gal 3:13)
- ...dead...
 - Jesus Christ did not swoon, but actually died.
 - He was not merely resuscitated after a brief time with no vital signs.
 - He fully died.
 - He did not exercise his divine prerogative and simply rescue himself, despite being tempted to do so (the cries of “let him bring himself down if he is the Son of God!”)
 - He FULLY accepted the penalty for sin, which is death.
 - Romans 6:23
 - Jesus Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:6).
 - Christ died for us (Rom 5:8).
 - Christ died and lived again (Rom 14:9).
 - Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3).
 - And if salvation is by works – if it depends upon me – the Paul teaches us that “Christ died for no purpose.” (Gal 2:21)
- ...buried...
 - As one who was dead, he was buried – signifying also that his followers knew him to be dead.
 - Let there be no mistake – Christ was fully dead – not just mostly dead (ha!)
 - Also a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy
 - you will not abandon my soul to sheol (death, the grave).
 - Psalm 16:10
 - Luke 23:53 and Isaiah 53:9

The person and work of Christ are historical in nature. Though the world (and even those among “the Church”) have tried to deny this, it is an unavoidable reality. Thanks be to God that in Jesus Christ he has executed judgment against our sin and delivered us from his wrath and into his fellowship.

5. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead.

- He descended into hell.
 - Though this phrase has been doubted on occasion by those in the Church, it has consistently and persistently been affirmed both by the overwhelming majority and throughout most of Church history.
 - It is based on Ephesians 4:9 (variously translated “descended into hell” or “descended into the lower regions of the earth”)
 - In Greek: εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς
 - In English: into the lower (s) [regions] of the earth
 - Notice that it doesn’t say “hell” or “hades”
 - The expression “descended into hell” doesn’t occur in Scripture.
 - What do we mean by this, then?
 - Daniel Hyde offers an excellent survey of the history of the text of the Creed.¹
 - In it, he points out that prior to a single unified text being used by all churches, some texts used the expression “crucified, dead, and buried,” and some used the expression “crucified, dead, and descended into hell.”
 - In 258, Cyprian believed the terms “buried” and “descended into hell” were interchangeable.
 - In 390 Rufinus said the same.
 - The manuscript evidence bears this out (the terms being used interchangeably).
 - Hyde concludes (rightly, in my opinion): “It is no stretch, then, to say that ancient, orthodox believers used the descent clause as another way of confessing that Christ was buried.” (17)
 - At some point, no later than AD 359 (the Dated Creed), the two terms are finally used together in a single credal statement.
 - All other attempts to explain the meaning of the descent clause are much later than this evidence and offer little value if we subscribe to authorial intent.
 - Though the Creed wasn’t authored in its current form by a single person, the use of the Church through the first few centuries bears out a single understanding: It simply means he continued under the power of death – ie he was buried.
 - Is this what Presbyterians believe? Confessionally, yes.
 - Westminster Larger Catechism Q&A 50: Wherein consisted Christ’s humiliation after his death? Christ’s humiliation after his death consisted in his being buried, and continuing in the state of the dead, and under the power of death until the third day; which hath been otherwise expressed in these words, *He descended into hell*.
 - If it is confusing and redundant, why not simply delete it?
 - The Church may have finally included both to press home that he was both “buried” and “continued under the power of death for a time”.
 - The nearly unanimous voice of the Church throughout so much of church history may be mistaken, but should not be lightly ignored – we need to come to the question with a healthy dose of humility.

¹ Daniel R. Hyde, *In Defense of the Descent: A Response to Contemporary Critics* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), 13-18.

- A decision to stop including it effectively undermines the unity which a corporately confessed Creed is intended to express. We make ourselves conspicuously “other” – a step not lightly taken.
 - The phrase, rightly understood, is true.
 - Having settled that, why does it matter that we confess that he continued under the power of death for a time (Shorter Catechism 27)?
 - It once again asserts the reality of his death – it wasn’t a swoon
 - His death, from a human perspective, came to the finality that all other human deaths come to.
 - We know that death is final, but in our human experience, the process of death doesn’t end for the ones left behind until the burial. This is, as events go, the real end.
 - Most who have buried a close loved one understand this.
 - Said another way, the process of death and observing death culturally was in no way interrupted in Christ’s death. He went all the way into the grave.
 - Death was given every opportunity to hold him – every opportunity to establish its grip.
 - So that when he was resurrected from the dead there was no question that death had been conquered.
- The third day he rose again from the dead.
 - With all of the emphasis on the certainty and completeness of his death, the assertion of his resurrection gains its fullest punch.
 - The resurrection declared him to be the Son of God (Rom 1:4)
 - Was a real resurrection from death to life and not a metaphor (1 Cor 15)
 - Is the foundation upon which the Christian faith stands (1 Cor 15:12ff)
 - Without it:
 - preaching is in vain
 - faith is in vain
 - We misrepresent God by claiming it’s true (again, if it is not true)
 - You are still in your sins
 - Those who have already died perished – there is no hope for them
 - We would have all our hope only in this life, and therefore...
 - ...would be of all people most to be pitied.

Jesus Christ entered into the grave fully deceased and gave death every chance to hold him by remaining in the grave for three days. His resurrection is the seal of the Father by the Spirit on his Sonship, and therefore the ground of our assurance that it is finished - Jesus Christ has done it.

6. He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,

- The Ascent of Christ
 - Biblical Support
 - Acts 1:6-11
 - Luke 24:50-53
 - John 20:17
 - Ephesians 4:8-10 (Psalm 68:18)
 - What does it mean and why is it important?
 - Christ's ascension is his enthronement
 - His ascent is "on high" – a reference to the throne of God
 - Job 16:19
 - Psalm 113:5
 - Jer 17:12
 - Jer 25:30
 - Heb 1:3
 - Christ ascends not only as a change in location, but as a change in status – he goes from being the Man to whom a kingdom has been promised to the Man who reigns as King.
 - There is no higher power or authority.
 - One final note – Christ's ascent was a bodily ascent – that is, Christ remains fully human, body and soul and shall remain so for eternity.
- The Place of Christ
 - Biblical Support
 - Psalm 110:1 (Matt 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Heb 1:13)
 - Acts 2:33-34 (Peter's Sermon at Pentecost)
 - Acts 5:31
 - Acts 7:54-56 (Stoning of Stephen – note on standing)
 - Matt 26:64 (Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69)
 - Romans 8:34
 - Eph 1:20 (Col 3:1)
 - Heb 1:3 (Heb 10:12)
 - Heb 8:1
 - Heb 12:2
 - 1 Pet 3:22
 - What does it mean and why is it important?
 - Just as the ascension is a reference to Christ ascending to his throne, the second clause is a more explicit reference to his authority and power.
 - The emphasis is not on a literal location (though Christ is fully human and therefore not physically ubiquitous) – but rather what that location means.
 - To be at God's right hand is to rule with God's authority and power.
 - If you do a study of all the references to God's right hand in Scripture you will find that it is described doing all of the things that Christ does as our Savior!
 - It is God's right hand that delivers, that judges, that protects, that defeats his enemies.
 - It is at the right hand that Christ stands as our intercessor.
 - The biblical language almost exclusively describes Christ as sitting – a reference to his finished work (see Hebrews, for example).

- The only reference I'm aware of to Christ standing at the right hand is at Stephen's stoning in Acts. Here it is perhaps intended to convey Christ's active work on behalf of Stephen in that moment.

Brothers and sisters, in these clauses we confess every Sunday that Jesus Christ is King and reigns with the full power and authority of God and in that power and might he intercedes for us, delivering us and defending us and striking down his enemies. There is no higher power or authority.

7. ...from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

- Christ is coming again
 - Second Coming
 - Key Passages:
 - Matthew 24-25 (Olivet Discourse, also Mark 13 and Luke 21)
 - John 14:3 (...and if I go... I will come again...)
 - Acts 1:11 (the ascension account)
 - 1 Thes 4:13-18 (the resurrection and Christ's return, including the "rapture")
- When he comes, he will execute judgment – no one will escape
 - The Formal Judgment
 - The Quick (the living)
 - The Dead (those who have already died)
 - The Resurrection as Judgment
 - Key Passages:
 - Matthew 25:31
 - There are many passages about the judgment, for example in Revelation 19 and the warning passages in Hebrews.
- Therefore we hope...
 - Hope in salvation...Christ has paid the penalty and we will not be condemned.
 - Hope in justice...God will set all things right and the guilty (those whose sins are not paid for by Christ) will by no means be cleared.
- And therefore we prepare...
 - As a bride adorned for her husband
 - If you are in Christ, you are called to pursue righteousness and flee from sin.
 - This is a work of the Spirit, making us more like Christ, in a process we call "progressive sanctification".
 - Or as a condemned person going before the judge
 - If you will not believe the gospel – place your hope in Christ and him alone – repent of your sin and grieve and hate your sin, before you die or Christ returns...
 - ...then Christ did not die for your sin and on the day of Christ's return the final judgment will be pronounced upon you. You should gird up your loins like a man and prepare to answer the God who created all things. What will you say to him when he condemns you for your sin?

8. I believe in the Holy Ghost,

- The 3rd Person of the Trinity
- The Spirit is called God or equated with God
 - **Acts 5:3-4**
 - **1 Cor 3:16-17**
 - **1 Cor 6:19-20**
 - **Acts 20:28**
- The Spirit has the attributes of God
 - **Gen 1:2** Creation
 - **1 Cor 2:10-11** Omniscience
 - **John 16:13** Omniscience
 - **Rom 15:19** Is the apostle Paul's power to work miracles
 - **John 16:8-11** He convicts of sin
 - **John 3:5-8** He regenerates
 - **Heb 9:14** He's eternal
 - **2 Pet 1:21** Inspires Scripture
- The Spirit is a person, not "God's immaterial part" or a mere extension of his will
 - We will see this best taught by Scripture as we move to our next project, establishing that the three persons are not to be understood as merely "masks" worn by the one God.
 - **1 Peter 1:12** Spirit is "sent"
 - **Acts 13:4** He also "sends"
 - **Luke 2:26** He reveals
 - **Heb 10:15-16** Spirit bears witness (the act of a person) (also Heb 3:7, 9:8, Acts 20:23, 21:11, 28:25)
 - **Eph 4:30** He can be grieved
 - **2 Cor 13:14** His fellowship with us is parallel to God's love and Jesus' grace. In other words, it is not our fellowship with one another that is spoken of here, but our fellowship with the Spirit, a very "person" like idea.
- Though the Creed does not go on to define any other aspect of the Holy Spirit or the work of the Spirit, it is important that we take this opportunity to do so.
 - Key work of the Spirit
 - Spirit regenerates, John 3:5-8
 - Indwells us – to have the Spirit is to have life, Romans 8:9-11
 - Bears witness to us that we are the children of God, Romans 8:16
 - Reveals and illumines our minds – 1 Cor 2:6-16
 - Seals us unto the day of redemption – Eph 1:13-14

9. ...(I believe in) the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,

- ...the holy catholic church...
 - Holy – 1 Peter 2:9 – set apart and devoted to God
 - catholic – simply means “comprehensive” or “universal”
 - With “Roman” in front of it or spelled with a capital C it refers to the Roman Catholic Church in distinction from the Protestant Church or the Orthodox Church.
 - Just as we don’t cede the word “orthodox” to the Eastern Church nor do we do so with the word “catholic” to the Roman Church.
 - Church – ἐκκλησία – the “called out ones”
 - God formed his Church on earth and has set us apart to serve him!
 - Though there is an invisible church (all the elect throughout redemptive history) there is also a visible church (the imperfect manifestation of this elect people on earth at any given moment).
 - The visible church is not despised by God or neglected, but is also formed by God and used by God.
 - A low view of the gathered people of God is the result of ignorance of what God is doing in the world and in history.
 - We are individuals, but we are not just individuals, but given to one another and belonging to a holy nation formed by God.
- ...the communion of saints...
 - “Communion” is the older English word used to translate κοινωνία (koinonia) which is translated “fellowship” in the ESV.
 - Our fellowship with one another in the church militant
 - Our fellowship as the church militant with the church triumphant
 - This fellowship is ours with one another in Christ.
 - 1 John 1:3, 7

10...(I believe in) the forgiveness of sins,

- What is sin?
 - Westminster Shorter Catechism, Q&A 14
 - “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”
 - “want” here means “lack”
 - Notice “conformity unto”
 - Whether it is something commanded or something forbidden...
 - Whether it is the letter of the law or the spirit...
 - Anything we do or fail to do in conformity with the law and therefore with God’s character, is sin.
 - God defines sin, not us.
 - ⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. – 1 John 3:4
 - By referring to the law, John refers to the law given by God.
 - Sin is breaking God’s law.
 - The important distinction between actual sins (actions that are sinful) and original sin (our inherent sin nature – our corruption...)
 - Westminster Confession 6.4-6.5
 - “From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.”
 - “This corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.”
 - So we are tainted with sin not only in our actual sins, but also in our sin nature. And not only that, but in every “motion” of our sin nature, we sin.
 - In other words, the very desire to sin is sin itself.
 - When we are tempted, we sin.
 - How was Christ tempted, then, without sinning?
 - Temptation from without
 - Temptation from within
 - ¹⁴ But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵ Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. – James 1:14-15
 - “Desire” in James is evil desire – that is, the sin nature.
 - Christ does not have a sin nature to which external temptations may appeal.
 - If I sin when tempted, then why not just go the whole way and commit the sin? Or how can I avoid falling into despair because I can’t help being tempted?
 - These are two completely different reactions to the truth of our sinfulness.
 - The first can only honestly be asked by someone who has not yet grasped their identity in Christ.
 - Our sinful desires are sin, and our sinful actions that result from giving into those desires are also sin.
 - There is no biblical logic in being indifferent to adding sin to sin
 - The second response comes from a heart that desires to please the Father.

- But if I am sinning simply by desiring something sinful, how can I ever please him! I don't want to desire it, but I do!
 - First, making war against our sinful desires pleases the Father, even when we stumble in that warfare.
 - Second, none of our efforts or actions could ever please the Father in themselves, but are pleasing to him in Christ.
 - “Notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in Him; not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreprouable in God's sight; but that He, looking upon them in His Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.” – WCF 16.6
- How does God forgive?
 - Both just and the justifier
 - “²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” – Romans 3:26
 - Doctrine of the atonement (different views which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but differing in emphasis and utilizing all of the biblical metaphors)
 - Moral Influence
 - Christ set a good example by his teaching and death and thus transformed the world for good.
 - Ransom Theory
 - Adam and Eve sold us into slavery – they incurred a debt – and Jesus' death bought us back.
 - Some hold that the debt was paid to Satan and some that it was paid to the Father.
 - Christus Victor Theory
 - Christ defeated sin, death, and the devil, and thus set us free.
 - By the way, this is the view Lewis is using in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.
 - Satisfaction Theory
 - Christ died to satisfy the justice of God
 - Governmental Theory
 - Christ suffers a punishment for sin to show what sin deserves and also to satisfy God's wrath, but it is not Christ being punished in our place.
 - Penal Substitution
 - Christ suffered the penalty declared against us and did so in our place.
- Theological liberalism's rejection of the biblical concept of sin
 - They reject our inherent sinfulness as an unjust concept.
 - They reject any conception of God as wrathful.
 - They speak of our sin not as though we are perpetrators but as though we are victims.
 - Sin is not a willful act of rebellion, but a sickness we unfortunatly suffer
 - Therapeutic Models of Sin and Forgiveness

11....(I believe in) the resurrection of the body,

- We affirm a historical event still future in which every person who has ever lived will be bodily raised from the dead, those who belong to Christ being raised in glorified bodies to eternal life and those who died apart from Christ being raised with bodies of death.
- General Resurrection
 - Daniel 12:2
 - John 5:28-29
 - Acts 24:15
- Physical Resurrection
 - Some have argued that the resurrection is spiritual and not physical
 - Romans 8:11 “...give life to your mortal bodies...”
 - Something that is mortal is subject to death.
 - The Greek is literally “will make alive also your bodies-subject-to-death”
 - The word translated “mortal” in the ESV is part of the Greek word group for “death” – θνητός – thnetos, from thanatos
 - That is, the body which the Spirit in us will make alive is the body which was formerly subject-able to death.
 - This can be understood as none other than the physical body.
 - 1 Cor 6:14
 - Paul argues against joining your body to a prostitute, because your body – not just your spirit – belongs to God.
 - It is inescapable that Paul refers to the physical body in this passage.
 - In the middle of his argument he reminds the Corinthians that God will raise them up just as he raised up Jesus Christ.
 - It is clear from the context that what will be raised up is our physical bodies.
- Christian Anthropology: Body and Soul
 - We are a “complex dichotomy” of material and immaterial parts or aspects – body and soul
 - “Complex” points to the fact that we cannot describe where one ends and the other begins.
 - We believe that both are necessary parts of the human person.
 - The creation account
 - Death is the unnatural separation of these two aspects of the human person.
 - Resurrection is the reunification of these two aspects.
 - One reason we believe that the human person is made up of two parts is that Scripture only describes two locations for the human person in death – the body goes into the ground and the spirit, or soul, awaits judgment either with Christ or in darkness.
 - WCF 32
- The Centrality of the Resurrection in Christian Theology
 - 1 Cor 15 (especially 12-19)

12....and (I believe in) the life everlasting.

- Who is it for?
 - It is an expression reserved for the elect.
 - Daniel 12:2
 - Acts 13:48
 - The eternal state of the reprobate is not described as life, but as shame, contempt, judgment, wrath, torment, and death.
- What is everlasting life/eternal life?
 - Life forever without possibility of end.
 - John 4:7-15 (especially 10, 14)
 - Not only the presence of life vs death, but a perfect quality of life.
 - Life as fellowship between the Triune God and his people
 - Gen 1-3
 - I will be their God... (Ezekiel 37:27)
 - Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)
 - Tabernacled (John 1:14)
 - Revelation 21:3-4
 - Notice not only the description of life in the kingdom, but the correlation of that life with the presence of God.