

- Jehovah’s Witnesses (NWT) has Jn. 1:1 “Word was a god”.

### **VERY [TRUE] GOD OF VERY [TRUE] GOD**

- The creed counters that Jesus is fully God. See **Col. 1:19, 2:9**.
- “Very” = “true”, and “of” = “from”. Jesus is true God from true God. See also, **1 John 5:20** and **John 17:3**.

### **BEGOTTEN, NOT MADE**

*“MAKING and BEGETTING are two fundamentally different ways to bring something into being.” (Cary, p. 73)*

- “Making” (Greek *techne*, Latin *ars*) includes the idea of skill, craftsmanship or art.
- The Son is not one of the things God *made*, instead His “origination” is by God’s *nature* as the eternally begotten Son.
- The Son is not in the category of creation, he is Creator.

*“Who created God? The answer is that no one creates God. Not even God can create God. However, God can beget God—and he did.” (Cary, p. 75)*

*“[These are] realities beyond our ability to fully understand or articulate. But mysterious does not mean unreasonable or irrational.” (DeYoung, p. 41)*



### **Schedule:**

Chap. 3 – One (Same) Substance	Sep. 28 – Michael
Chap. 4 – For Us and for Our Salvation	Oct. 5 – Karl
Chap. 5 – Who Proceeds from the Father [& Son]	Oct. 12 – Michael
Chap. 6 – One Holy Catholic & Apostolic Church	Oct. 19 – Bob
Chap. 7 – One Baptism for the Remission of Sins	Oct. 26 – Karl

### **Resources for Further Study:**

- **Class Book:** *The Nicene Creed* by Kevin DeYoung [Crossway, 2025]
- **Extra:** *The Nicene Creed: An Introduction* by Phillip Cary [Lexham Press, 2023]
- **Extra:** “Let’s Go Back to ‘Only Begotten’” by Charles Lee Irons, [www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lets-go-back-to-only-begotten/](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lets-go-back-to-only-begotten/)
- **Extra:** *The Trinity: An Introduction* by Scott R. Swain [Crossway, 2020]

## **Chapter 2: Only Begotten**

### **REVIEW**

- We are called to hold to the “pattern of... sound words” and the “traditions... you were taught” and guard the “deposit”.
- The apostle John taught Polycarp who taught Irenaeus (130-222) who spoke of “the rule of faith” by which to judge truth.
- Emphasizing doctrine was unlike pagan religions then, and is downplayed by people today who claim to be “spiritual but not religious” or prefer devotional platitudes to doctrine.
- The creed developed from early Christian baptism questions with the spoken response “I believe”.
- The first truth we believe in is: one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven & earth, of all things visible & invisible.

### **AND IN ONE LORD JESUS CHRIST**

- The creed goes from “one God” to “one Lord”, see 1 Cor. 8:6.
- **God** is used in both sections, both of the Father and the Son.
- **Lord** applies to the Father as well, and is used in the creed of the Spirit, but most naturally is used of Jesus Christ.

*“When Christians say ‘our Lord,’ they mean Jesus... in the New Testament... the words ‘God’ and ‘Father’ go together and the way to say that Jesus is God is to call him ‘Lord,’ applying to him the sacred Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. This is the fundamental way that Scripture testifies to us that Jesus is one and the same God as the Father: he is none other than the LORD.” (Cary, p. 40)*

- The Divine Name in the Old Testament, **YHWH**, is spoken as “Lord” (*adonai*), and was translated into Greek as *kurios* (“Lord”). In English most versions use capital letters: “LORD”.
- This is why early credal statements in the NT say “Jesus is Lord,” 1 Cor. 12:3, Rom. 10:9, Phil. 2:11.

- The name *Jesus* means “Savior” and is the Greek for “Joshua”.
- *Christ* means “anointed one” (like the Hebrew word *Messiah*).

### **THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD**

- “Only-begotten” is a translation of the Greek *monogenes*.

*“It consists of the Greek word for ‘only’ (monos) plus an adjective that could refer broadly to origination (as in genesis and generation), or more specifically to the birth of people and animals. If English had a single word, ‘onlyborn,’ that functioned just like ‘firstborn,’ then that would be about the perfect word to translate monogenes.” (Cary, p. 57)*

- Most modern versions translate the term as “one and only” or “only” in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 Jn. 4:9.
- KJV, NKJV, NASB 1995, and LSB all have “only begotten.”
- The modern consensus in 20<sup>th</sup> Century was that the word meant “unique, one of a kind”.
- Yet the Nicene Creed and theological history takes the word as “only begotten”, and early translation into Latin agrees with that basic meaning.
- In the last few decades, more scholars are re-examining the case and concluding that the word can and (especially in John’s uses) does include the idea of generation.

- Begotten comes from “beget” or “begot” (KJV genealogies).

*“Fathers beget, mothers conceive, and children are born...” (Cary, p. 58)*

- In John, the word is used in close context to teaching about Christians being God’s children. Jesus’ relation to God as Son is of a different nature, he is God’s *onlyborn* Son.

- see also DeYoung, p. 38.

### **BEGOTTEN OF HIS FATHER BEFORE ALL WORLDS (AGES)**

- This begetting is before all time. And as God never changes, he exists eternally as Father and Son. See **Ps. 2:7, Heb. 1:5-6**.
- This is called “**eternal generation**” – “there was never a time when the Father was without a Son” (Cary, p. 62).

*“Eternal generation is hyperphysical (it is outside the physical or material realm), infinite (it does not take place in time), and ineffable (it cannot be fully comprehended). By eternal generation we do not mean that the Father created the Son’s essence, but rather that the Father communicates the essence he shares with the Son.” (DeYoung, p. 40)*

- The Father is “unbegotten, unoriginated, not derived from any source or origin”, while the Son “does have an origin, for he comes *from* the Father” (Cary, p. 59). See also **John 5:26**.
- Theologians call these the “**relations of origin**”, in describing the Trinity. It is these relations that distinguish the three persons of the Trinity, who in all else share the divine simplicity of the one God. See *Swain, Trinity: An Intro.*, p. 61-62.
- Arius argued that Jesus “did not exist prior to his begetting”; thus the creed further clarified its teaching with extra phrases.

### **GOD OF GOD**

- This phrase is in the original creed (325) in Greek, and was added later to the Latin version of the fuller 381 creed.

*“The Son derives his being from the Father, in such a way that he is just as fully God as God the Father is – as a human son is just as fully human as his father is.” (Cary, p. 66) - see also Psalm 45:6-7, Heb. 1:8-9.*

- The Son is the same kind of God; and also not “a part” of God.
- Generation is not multiplication, or division of deities; there is only one God.

### **LIGHT OF LIGHT**

- Heb. 1:3 describes Jesus as the “radiance of the glory of God.”

*“As the sun is never without the light that radiates from it, so God the Father is never without his Son.” (Cary, p. 69)*

- The Son is not a different kind of light, but the same light.
- The analogy has limits as God is not made of material stuff.
- Arians might have agreed the Son was “God of God” but saw him as a lesser sort of God than the Father. See *DeYoung*, p. 39.