

SESSION SIX THE APOSTLES' CREED (II)

We have seen that the Apostles' Creed is divided into three "Articles," corresponding to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Last week, we looked at the First Article of the Creed. It expresses beliefs shared by most other monotheistic religions, such as Judaism and Islam—e.g., that God is the almighty creator of heaven and earth.

This session looks at the Second Article of the Creed, which describes the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. This Article introduces specifically Christian beliefs. Christian faith rests on the Gospel of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. (*Gospel* means "Good News.")

The Second Article of the Creed reads as follows:

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit,
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Christian teaching gives two basic titles to Jesus Christ: Savior and Lord.

A **Savior** is someone who saves us. From what do we need to be saved? From sin and death. Sin is our disobedience to God's will for our lives. The Bible tells the story of humanity's growing alienation from God and from one another. The Christian faith holds that Jesus reconciles us to God and to one another by his life, death, and resurrection. Different theologians have proposed various theories on how this works. But the "how" is not as important as the "what." The Church proclaims that by dying on the cross and rising from the dead, Jesus has obtained the forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life.

A **Lord** is someone to whom we give complete loyalty and obedience. To call Jesus "Lord" is to affirm that he is God. It is also to accept him as "the Lord of my life," the one whom I choose to follow, serve, and obey. Being a Christian involves not only believing certain things *about* Jesus, but also *knowing* and *following* him as the living Lord.

COMMENTARY

Second Article of the Creed

1. Jesus Christ

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

This tells us, first, that Jesus is the “Christ,” which means *Messiah* or Anointed One. Second, he is the only Son of God the Father. Third, he is our Lord.

2. Incarnation

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary.

This means that God the Son took flesh and became incarnate as a human being, Jesus. (The word *Incarnation* means “taking flesh.”) He was conceived in his mother’s womb miraculously, not by the usual process of human procreation. He had no biological father. His mother Mary remained a virgin.

3. Atonement

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.*

In Christian belief, Christ’s death by crucifixion is the sacrifice that pays the price of human sin. (The word *Atonement* means an offering or reparation that repairs a broken relationship.) Christ’s sacrifice obtains God’s forgiveness and the possibility of reconciliation between God and human beings. While Jesus’ body was in the tomb, his spirit descended to the place of departed spirits, offering this reconciliation to all those who had previously lived and died.

4. Resurrection

*On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

Because Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, death could not hold him. On the morning of the first Easter Sunday he rose bodily from the dead to a new and glorious existence. He began appearing to his disciples. Then, after forty days, he returned to his Father in heaven. To sit at a king’s right hand is to occupy the position of highest honor. This means that Jesus is not dead but alive, always available to us when we pray to him.

5. Return

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

In way that we cannot predict or understand in advance, Jesus will return as our Judge on the Last Day, the end of the world as we know it. This is also called “the Second Coming.”

BIBLE LOOKUP EXERCISE

Write the letter of the New Testament passage listed in the second half of the page next to the phrase of the Apostles' Creed which best corresponds to it.

1. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. _____
2. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit _____
3. And born of the Virgin Mary. _____
4. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, _____
5. was crucified, died, and was buried. _____
6. He descended to the dead. _____
7. On the third day he rose again. _____
8. He ascended into heaven, _____
9. And is seated at the right hand of the Father. _____
10. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. _____

BIBLE REFERENCES

- a. 1 Peter 3:18-20
- b. Hebrews 8:1
- c. Luke 2:1-7
- d. Mark 15:16-47
- e. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- f. Acts 1:6-9
- g. Matthew 1:18-21
- h. John 1:49
- i. Mark 15:1-15
- j. Matthew 28:1-9

QUIZ – SESSION SIX

TRUE / FALSE

1. The Creed's First Article expresses beliefs that monotheistic religions share. T F
2. The Second Article of the Creed is about God the Father. T F
3. Two key titles of Jesus Christ are "Savior" and "Lord." T F
4. As our Savior, Jesus saves us from sin and death. T F
5. To call Jesus "Lord" means nothing more than to acknowledge that he is God. T F
6. Sin is disobedience to God's will for our lives. T F
7. Being a Christian means only believing certain things about Jesus. T F
8. Incarnation is a type of flower. T F
9. Atonement is an offering that repairs a broken relationship. T F
10. Jesus rose from the dead the day after he was crucified. T F

MULTIPLE CHOICE (Circle the letter of the best answer)

1. In Christian belief, Jesus' death is the sacrifice that pays the price of:
 - a. Eggs
 - b. Credit card debts
 - c. Human sin
2. The title "Christ" means:
 - a. Messiah
 - b. Anointed One
 - c. Both of the above
3. On Easter Sunday, Jesus rose bodily from his:
 - a. Bed
 - b. Recliner
 - c. Tomb
4. Forty days after his Resurrection, Jesus returned to:
 - a. Bethlehem
 - b. Heaven
 - c. Galilee