

SESSION FIVE – THE APOSTLES’ CREED (I)

1. The Creeds are short summaries of Bible teachings.

As we have seen, the Bible contains many books written in various genres over a span of many centuries. It is difficult to grasp the whole meaning of the Bible without a reliable guide or summary. This is where the Creeds come in—as the early Church’s summaries of the Bible’s key teachings. The Episcopal Church accepts the Creeds as reliable and authoritative.

2. The two principal Creeds are the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

The shorter Apostles’ Creed is recited at Baptism. The longer Nicene Creed is recited at the Eucharist.

3. The Apostles’ Creed is a part of traditional Christian *Catechesis*.

Catechesis is teaching given in preparation for Baptism and/or Confirmation. The Apostles’ Creed is the first element or “building block” of Christian catechesis. It answers the basic question, “What do we believe?”

4. Traditional Christian catechesis consists of four parts.

The other three building blocks are the Ten Commandments (how to behave), the Lord’s Prayer (how to pray), and the Seven Sacraments (how we worship). We will examine these in turn as we go through this course.

5. The Apostles Creed is divided into three parts, called “Articles.”

The three Articles thus teach us about the three Persons of the Holy Trinity:

- The first Article describes God the Father.
- The second Article describes God the Son.
- The third Article describes God the Holy Spirit.

In the Rite II (contemporary language) version of the Apostles Creed, each of the three Articles begins with the words “I believe.” In this session, we will be examining the first Article.

BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHRISTIAN TEACHING

WHAT WE BELIEVE THE APOSTLES' CREED	HOW WE BEHAVE / LIVE THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
HOW WE WORSHIP THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS	HOW WE PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE APOSTLES' CREED

RITE II (Contemporary Language)

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

(First Article)

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.

(Second Article)

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.

(Third Article)

FIRST ARTICLE OF THE CREED

WORD-BY-WORD COMMENTARY

I BELIEVE

Belief means not only assent to a proposition, but also trust in someone or something as reliable. For example, if I say, “I believe in you,” I am not only acknowledging that you exist, but also expressing my trust in you as someone I can rely on.

IN GOD

This is a basic affirmation of theism (belief in one God) as opposed to polytheism (belief in multiple gods) or atheism (the belief that no God exists). Theism is also opposed to agnosticism, which holds that even if God exists, we have no way of knowing that he exists.

THE FATHER

Jesus called God his 'Father' and taught us to call God 'Father'. God is not a father in a literal biological sense. Instead, a (good) father's care for his children resembles and teaches us about God's care for us. But all human fatherhood falls short of God's perfect Fatherhood.

ALMIGHTY

God is all-powerful. Christianity understands God to be omnipotent (all-powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (everywhere). The only limit on God's power is that he cannot do anything contrary to his divine nature or anything that is self-contradictory in itself.

CREATOR

Here, the word “creator” is preferable to “maker.” To ‘make’ means to fashion something out of pre-existing materials, such as to make a pot out of clay. However, Christian teaching holds that God created the universe and everything in it “out of nothing” (Latin, *ex nihilo*).

OF HEAVEN

Here, heaven signifies not so much where we go when we die as the entire invisible realm of angels and spirits. This unseen world is as much a part of God's good creation as the visible material world in which we live.

AND EARTH

Here, ‘earth’ signifies not just our planet but the entire physical universe, which God has created. Together, heaven and earth, the spiritual world and the material world, constitute God's good creation.

SESSION FIVE - QUIZ

FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. The Creeds are short _____ of the Bible's teachings.
2. The two principal Creeds are the _____ Creed and the Nicene Creed.
3. The Apostles' Creed is a "building block" of Christian _____ or teaching.
4. The first Article of the Creed describes God the _____.
5. The part of catechesis that teaches how to live is the _____.
6. The part of catechesis that teaches Christian belief is the _____.
7. The third article of the Creed begins, "I believe in the _____".
8. The word "omnipresent" means _____.
9. God created the universe out of _____.
10. "Belief" means not only assent to a proposition but also _____ in someone.

TRUE OR FALSE

- | | | |
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| 1. We don't need any guidance to understand the Bible. | T | F |
| 2. The Apostles' Creed is traditionally recited at the Eucharist. | T | F |
| 3. The Apostles' Creed summarizes the Bible's key teachings. | T | F |
| 4. Christian Catechesis consists of four "building blocks." | T | F |
| 5. Agnosticism holds that God does not exist. | T | F |
| 6. The first Article of the Creed teaches about God the Father. | T | F |
| 7. "Earth" in the Apostles' Creed signifies just our planet. | T | F |
| 8. "Heaven" in the Apostles' Creed signifies the spiritual realm. | T | F |
| 9. Polytheism means belief in one God. | T | F |
| 10. Christianity holds that God created the universe out of nothing. | T | F |