

The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is both the best known and the least known of all postbiblical creeds. Its doctrine is apostolic, as it proclaims the high points of New Testament teaching. Elements of the Apostles' Creed are found in summaries of the faith by early Christian writers, with some lines matching word for word. Christians employ this creed in worship more than any other creed. Nonetheless, its origins are shrouded in mystery. We do not know who wrote this first-person statement of faith, even if we are sure that it was not written by any of the apostles themselves.

In this summary of the faith we find a basic call to believe in a God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the three headings organizing the creed. Here we confess a God who is both Father and Creator; a Savior who is God's Son and Mary's son; and a redeeming work that begins with humiliation and ends with exaltation. Here too we see a compressed account of the Holy Spirit's work in gathering the church—bringing Christians into communion with God and each other.

Perhaps the most useful feature of the creed is its balanced picture of Christ. This creed reminds us that the Lord who came first to rescue us will come a second time to judge us. This is what the church confesses in the Apostles' Creed: that we are saved by Jesus, from Jesus. It is on this basis alone that believers are now forgiven, will one day be raised, and will forever live with Christ.

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord;
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;
the holy catholic^[1] church;
the communion of saints;
the forgiveness of sins;
the resurrection of the body;
and the life everlasting. Amen.

1. "Catholic" means universal; that is, there is one church across all times, places, and peoples. ↩