

Ancient Faith Part I

Intro & "I Believe"



Trinity Baptist Students

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The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of Heaven and Earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
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,
He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
And He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church (the word catholic means "universal")
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Intro to the Creed

Here are a few things that we know about the origins of the Apostle's Creed.

- It was used widely in the 4th Century, there were only slight variations in it until the 7th Century.
- By the fourth century it was being used to teach new believers before baptism.
- It is the oldest and simplest of all the Church creeds.
- It is ecumenical. This means that every denomination that is truly Christian holds to this, and arguably some that don't.
- Though not written by the Apostles, it is an excellent summary of what the Apostles taught in the New Testament.
- The Apostles' Creed provides a brief, yet introductory, summary of the Christian faith.
- Reading the Apostles' Creed helps us to see that we belong to a historic stream of belief that has spanned the ages. We do not believe something new and novel, but ancient.

For around 1,700 years Christians have been learning, memorizing, and confessing (declared to believe) the Apostles' Creed.

What is significant about the origins of the Creed? What goes through your head as you consider that it is very likely that the Apostle's Great-Grandchildren and quite possibly their grandchildren recited this creed?

"I Believe"

Our word "believe" has changed meanings throughout the years. Here we have to discuss what we mean when we say "I believe".

Faith, or belief, involves three things.

1. Knowing the facts
2. Assenting to, or believing the facts to be true
3. Trusting the facts

How is this different than believing that Disney world exists? Or believing in magic?

"The word faith, which is English for a Greek noun (pistis) formed the verb in the phrase "believe into" (pisteuo), gets the idea of trustful commitment and reliance better than belief does. Whereas belief suggests bare opinion, faith, whether in a car, a patent medicine, a protégé, a doctor, a marriage partner, or what have you, is a matter of treating the person or thing as trustworthy and committing yourself accordingly. The same is true of faith in God, and in a more far-reaching way."—J.I. Packer, Affirming the Apostles' Creed, p. 26

What is the meaning of faith in Scripture and the Apostles' Creed?

Biblical Examples of Faith

Read Romans 4:13-25

Describe how Abraham's faith looks like the definition of faith that was discussed on the previous page?

Read Hebrews 11

Describe how the faith of God's people throughout this chapter looks like the definition of faith that was discussed on the previous page?

Read Matthew 9:20-22, 27-30

Describe how the faith of these people during the lifetime of Jesus looks like the definition of faith that was discussed on the previous page.

Faith Has An Object

When we say, "I believe", it is not as if our faith is just some thing out there that we summon for salvation. Faith has an object. When I sit down I have faith that the chair will hold me. When we say, "I believe", we are saying that we have faith in someone. Alistair McGrath explains it this way,



"Christians don't just believe—we believe in someone. Faith like an anchor, linking us with the object of faith. Just as an anchor secures a ship to the ocean floor, so our faith links us securely with God. Faith is not just believing that God exists; it is about anchoring ourselves to that God and resting secure in doing so. Whatever storms life may bring, the anchor of faith will hold us firm to God."—Alistair McGrath, I Believe, p. 20

Who is the object of the faith confessed in the Apostles' Creed?

Is the object of our faith reliable? Are you "linked securely with God"?

Faith That Saves Changes Us

Faith, as has been seen throughout this study, is much more than just believing that something exists. There is a real commitment involved in faith. So, it should be no surprise to you that true faith results in a changed life.

Read James 2:14-24

The phrase "can that faith save him" (v. 14) helps us to understand the entire passage. The question posed by James is this, Can faith that does not result in good works save a person?

So, in James 2:24, when James says that people are "Justified by works and not by faith alone", the intention is for us to understand that saving faith is not alone. James isn't contradicting the rest of Scripture. He is correcting people who think that they can have a loveless faith and still be believers.

This discussion matters much to us though. For the questions being discussed get to the heart of what faith is.

Can a person claim to have faith, yet live a life that is in rebellion against God? Why? Or Why Not?

“I Believe”

There is much in these words. In them we declare our trust in God. Our faith is not some vague thing out in space, but is trust in God. God is the object of our faith. And, next week we will look at the object of our faith, who is God.

Faith also changes us. Those who truly believe will be changed. Faith will make a difference in our lives.

Let us, with the countless numbers of people throughout the ages confess “I believe”, professing our faith in God.

R. Dwain Minor

NOTES:

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