

Ancient Faith Part II

The God We Believe In



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.

Not God In General, This God

When we recite, “I believe in God”, we are not saying that we believe that a god exists. We are going far beyond generalities here. We are saying that there is a specific God that we are declaring things about. R.C. Sproul says it this way,

Christian faith does not involve belief in God-in-general. The Christian is not a theist whose hope rests in a “supreme being,” but a Yahwist whose hope rests in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is revealed to us in concrete acts of history. The one who revealed himself to Moses gave “I AM WHO I AM” as a name, not a definition (Exodus 3:14). - R.C. Sproul, *What We Believe*, p. 39, 2015

Who is it that you believe in when you confess the first line of the creed? In other words, when you tell people that you believe in God, who is it that you believe in?

Not “god” Who Exists Only In Your Mind

I was having a discussion with someone about characteristics of God. Her response to me was, “My God is not like that.” This is something that I have heard on a few occasions. And, they are exactly right when they say this. People have a tendency to create a “god” that is like them and believe in him.

The problem is that this “god” that is created in your mind doesn’t really exist anywhere but in your mind.

In the Bible the great divide is between those who believe in the Christian God and those who serve idols—“gods,” that is, whose images, whether metal or mental, do not square with the self-disclosure of the Creator. One wishes that some who recite “I believe in God” in church each Sunday would see that what they actually mean is ‘I do not believe in God—not this God, anyhow!’ – J.I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles’ Creed*, p. 32, 2008

There is not a substantial difference between worshipping a “god” that you have created in your mind and bowing down to a golden calf that you believe is a god.

Read Isaiah 44:6-8

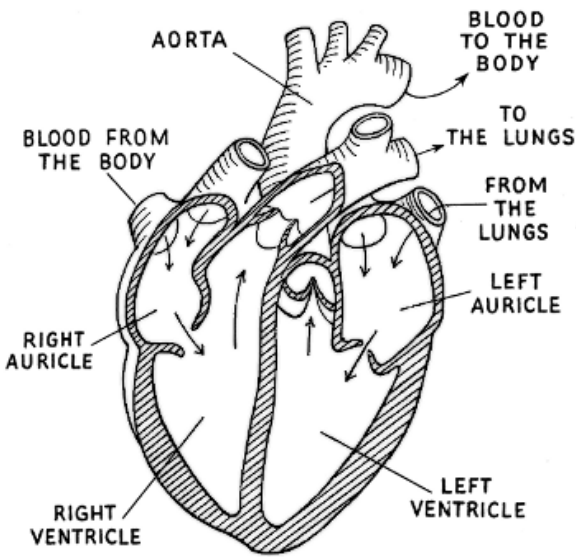
How is the God found in Scripture and confessed in the creed different from the “god” that is created in the mind or with wood or gold?

God As He Is Revealed Himself To Us



God has revealed Himself to us in His creation. Read what David says about this. In Psalm 19:1-6 and list some things that you know about God simply by looking at what He has created in nature.

God has not only revealed Himself to us in the great outdoors but you carry with you an amazing design that speaks of the Creator as well. Are there things that you can know about God when you think about what you consider the way that your body works and its complex design.



God Revealed Himself To Us More Specifically

Though we can know some things about God, we can't know everything that God has revealed about Himself through nature. In fact, we learn more about who God is from His Word.

The most extensive self-disclosure comes from Exodus 34:6-7. What does God tell us about Himself in this passage?

God Reveals Himself Through History

R.C. Sproul wrote that,

...the God of Scriptures is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He is the God who brought Israel out of bondage. He reveals himself through redemptive history. " - R.C. Sproul, *What We Believe*, 2015, p. 39

God made a covenant with Abraham. God extended this same covenant to Abraham's lineage, Isaac and Jacob.. So, God is known as "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Acts 3:13)

And God revealed Himself most fully to us in the coming of His Son (Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:15)

If God reveals Himself to us through Scripture and the revelation of redemptive history and His Son...all of which we find in Scripture...if we want to know more about God as He really is where will we find this information.

The Attributes/Characteristics of God

How would you describe your mother? If you were telling someone else about her what would you say?

Throughout Scripture the attributes of God are discussed in great detail. In fact, there is more about God's characteristics in Scripture than you might've assumed. Here is a list that theologians oftentimes use.

- Asceity/Solitariness—God is independent of all things, He is self-existent, and non-contingent (Gen. 1:1; Job 35:7-8; Acts 17:25)
- Omniscience—God knows everything (everything possible, everything actual, all events, creatures, past and future (Ezek. 11:5; Psalm 44: 21, 139:1-4, 147:4-5; Isaiah 46:9-10; Matt. 10:30; 1 John 3:20)
- Sovereign—God is in control of all things (Isa. 46:10; Psalm 115:3; Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:11)
- Immutability/Unchanging—God never changes (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19)
- Holy—He is completely separate from us in moral purity (1 John 1:5; Hab. 1:13; Prov. 15:26; Psalm 5:5)
- Omnipotence/All-powerful—God is supremely and completely powerful (Matt. 19:26; Gen. 18:4; Jer. 32:27)
- Faithful— (Deut. 7:9; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:19; Psalm 33:4, 86:15; Numb. 23:19)
- Good—God is completely perfect in all His nature, there is nothing lacking or defective in Him (Mark 10:18; Psalm 86:5, 119:68)
- Patient (Numb. 14:18; Ex. 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nahum 1:3)
- Gracious (Psalm 145:9; Eph. 2:8-9)
- Merciful (Psalm 86:5, 59:16, 59:16, 136:1; 1 Kings 3:6)
- Loving (1 John 4:8)
- Righteous, Just—God is morally upright and His judgments are completely morally upright (Psalm 48:10, 97:2, 119:142, 119:137, 145:17; Isaiah 45:21; Jeremiah 12:1)
- The wrath of God—God is completely just and righteous and will punish sin to its fullest extent (Romans 1:18; Psalm 7:11, Rev. 6:16)

Considering God How He Is

We should be struck with awe and wonder as we consider the characteristics of God. There is nothing more glorious to consider.

Charles Spurgeon once said,

"The proper study of the Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can engage the attention of a child of God is the name, the nature, the person, the doings, and the existence of the great God which he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can comprehend and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-contentment, and we go on our way with the thought, "Behold I am wise." But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought, "I am but of yesterday and know nothing."-Charles Haddon Spurgeon, from "Sermon on Malachi 3:6

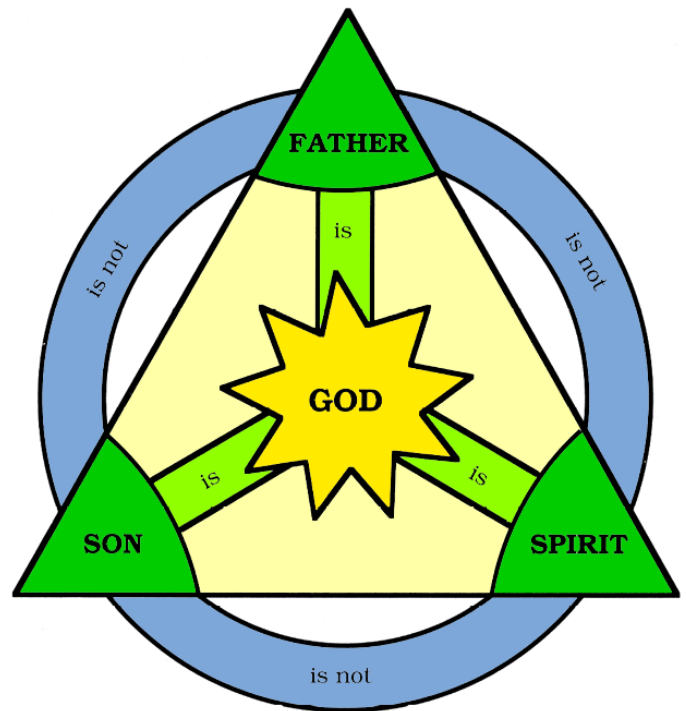
Consider the characteristics/attributes of God for a moment.

Write down a personal prayer of praise and wonder as you consider the attributes of God.

God Reveals Himself To Be Triune

There are things about God that are beyond explaining. This makes sense because if I could explain God completely then He wouldn't be very immense. Simply put, His existence is beyond our understanding.

In Scripture, God reveals Himself to be one God who exists in three persons. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are three separate persons who are one being. They are all co-equal and co-eternal. This means that Father, Son, and Spirit are all equal. One is not greater than the other. This also means that the three persons of God have always existed. We see this in Matt. 28:19, John 1:1, 5:18, 8:58, 10:33, 19:7, 12:41+Isa 6, Rom 14:11, 2 Cor13:14, Phil 2:1-2, 9-11, Rev. 22:3, Gen. 1:26 and other places.



I know that this is difficult to understand. We exist in a way that is much different. For us, only one person can exist in our one being, but it is not so with God. We simply struggle to understand how one God can exist in three persons. J.I. Packer, one of the world's leading and most intelligent theologians for over 50 years said it this way,

How the one eternal God is eternally both singular and plural, how Father, Son, and Spirit are personally distinct yet essentially one (so that tritheism, belief in three gods who are one, and Unitarianism, belief in one God who is not three, are both wrong), is more than we can know, and any attempt to "explain" it—to dispel the mystery by reasoning, as distinct from confessing it from Scripture—is bound to falsify it. Here, as elsewhere, our God is too big for his creature's little minds. - J.I. Packer, *Affirming the Apostles' Creed*, p. 34, 2008

For him to say this should let you know that you are not alone in your struggle to understand.

Explain as best you can, the doctrine of the Trinity.

God, He is God, other gods are not

When we confess "I believe in God", we don't confess that we believe in a "god" of our own imagination. We are not confessing that we believe in a "god" in general.

We are also saying that people who confess that God is not Triune, do not confess the one true God. Islam does not believe that God exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, therefore they do not believe in God. Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that God exists as Trinity. Mormons, fall into the other side of this. They believe that there are an infinite number of gods.

When we confess "I believe in God" we are confessing that there is one true God. He is the God who has been revealed in Scripture to us as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that was revealed to us most fully through His Son coming to Earth.

Do you believe in the God of the Bible, the one confessed in the Creed?
