

Osaka International Church
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Title: The Nicene Creed: Foundational Statement on the Divinity of Christ
and on the Holy Trinity

Key verse: Colossians 1:15-20 – The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (NIV)

Good morning, everyone. It's good to see you all here today. Many of you know me, but some of you may be unfamiliar with me, so let me spend a few minutes to introduce myself. My name is Brad Houdyshel and I'm from the United States. I have been part of the OIC church family for 25 years. For many years, I have been content to minister at OIC quietly behind the scenes, up in the balcony operating the sound system during the service, or sometimes leading a small group Bible study, or being helpful in other ways. But then last year, Pastor Alistair asked me to give the sermon here one Sunday. That was the first time I had been asked to give a sermon here. Before that time, it was hard for me to imagine standing in front of a large group of people to deliver a sermon ... a message from God's Word. That's a heavy responsibility: a message from God's Word for the whole congregation. But I surprised myself by calmly saying yes to the pastor's request. A few years ago, I would not have thought that I could do that, but somehow, last year, I was ready for it. And today, with God's grace, I am presenting a sermon here for the third time.

As many of you know, I love history – ancient history, modern history, Christian history. Right now, I seem to be in the midst of a series of history-related sermons. At certain points in Christian history, there comes a time when the Christian message gets distilled into a concise outline of the essentials of the faith. Last year was the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, so the topic of my sermon last September was the Five Principles of the Protestant Reformation – Scripture alone, Faith alone, Grace alone, and the others. This was a return to the essentials of the Gospel message after the mediaeval emphasis on the performance of various religious works. After delivering that sermon, I began thinking about two ancient creeds that were developed during the early centuries of the Christian era which give us a concise outline of the essential contents of the Christian faith, the essential doctrines that someone professing faith in Jesus Christ should adhere to. These two creeds are known as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. I originally thought that I would try to cover both of them in one sermon in April this year – after all, they are related to each other and they contain some overlapping material. But it was too much to try to cover both creeds in one sermon, so I covered just the Apostles' Creed two months ago and I am here today to cover the Nicene Creed.

In April, I went through every line of the Apostles' Creed to show you where in Scripture each point is taught. But I will *not* take the same approach today. I told you a moment ago that these two creeds have some overlapping material. Today I'll be focusing on those portions of the Nicene Creed that can be regarded as an expansion of what we find in the Apostle's Creed. And I would also like to give you a little history lesson to explain how the Nicene Creed came about in the fourth century. In fact, while I was preparing this sermon, I realized that I have a multi-faceted message for you today: some history, some Bible, some fundamental Christian theology, and some personal testimony. Actually, I'm going to begin with a little personal testimony.

My earliest years were spent attending an excellent Lutheran church. Then in my teenage years, my family attended a very different church which actually turned me off. And, the teenage years are a time of questioning many things, so I questioned if Christianity was really true. Then I went away to college and I attended a really excellent independent evangelical church. I read the Bible through for the first time, I decided Christianity was true, and I accepted Christ as my savior.

And then ... when I was back home during the next summer vacation, a pair of missionaries came knocking on my door. At first, I couldn't understand what the relationship was between the Bible verses they were quoting to me, but when they took out one of their books, I recognized the binding. The book was published by the Watchtower organization. These people were Jehovah's Witnesses. This group rejects the full divinity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity – after all, the word “Trinity” doesn't even appear in the Bible.

Well, at that moment in my life, I was actually very enthused about stripping away any and all church traditions not found in the Bible. I was very into studying just what the Bible itself says. Bible, Bible, Bible. I know that the word “Trinity” doesn't appear there, so I read the Watchtower books with interest. But I also went to the library to find some orthodox, Trinitarian Christian books that would critique the Jehovah's Witness theology. In the end, I rejected the Jehovah's Witness theology.

One of the reasons was this: there are times when the New Testament quotes Old Testament verses about God and applies them to Christ. There are some examples in Hebrews chapter 1. Verses 1 and 2 say, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” (ESV)

Then verse 8a says, “But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever...’...” Whoa. What does that say? *But of the Son, God says, ‘Your throne, O God...’* The New Testament writer quotes Psalm 45:6 and applies it to Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:10 again quotes a psalm about God and applies it to the Son: “And [he also says], ‘You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands’.” (ESV)

Psalm 102:25 says it was the Lord God who created the earth and heavens, and the writer of Hebrews applies this verse to the Son, equating the Son with the creator God.

Well, I could go on with more examples, but I will stop with these. During that period in my life when I was examining the pro and con arguments regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, I had a very anti-traditional and anti-denominational attitude. I was open to the argument that the notion of a Trinity could be a relic of a time when the church was becoming corrupted at the beginning of the Middle Ages. However, my studies in the Scriptures convinced me that the Biblical evidence points toward a God who manifests Himself in three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This has been the majority opinion of the Christian community through the ages, and I learned to value the conclusions of our church fathers in the early centuries of the Christian era.

Well, it is time to move to the main theme of today's message: looking at two foundational creeds of the ancient church.

The Apostles' Creed arose organically from the ancient churches as a baptismal creed that new Christians were expected to recite at their baptism. New converts were instructed in the points of the creed to make sure that they understood and embraced the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, and then they were baptized.

The origin of the Nicene Creed was different. It was formulated at the Council of Nicaea, a council of bishops that gathered in response to a theological challenge that rocked the church in the fourth century. They took a baptismal creed from one of the eastern churches and they enhanced it with additional statements to clarify their theological viewpoint on the person of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. At the conclusion of the Council, nearly every bishop present signed the creed to acknowledge their adherence to the doctrines stated in it. As you see these two creeds side by side, you might notice that one is expressed with the singular pronoun "I," while the other is using the plural pronoun "We." The Apostles' Creed was recited by individual Christians at their baptism. The Nicene Creed is the collective declaration of the corporate faith of the whole church, as stated by its leaders, the bishops. So, the plural pronoun is used. (Well, that is how the Nicene Creed was originally composed, though today you will sometimes see it printed with the singular pronoun.)

In a moment, I'm going to tell you the story of the Council of Nicaea. But before I get into the historical background, I would first like to take a look at the opening lines of both creeds to introduce for you what I mean by the Nicene Creed having more expansive language. The Apostles' Creed opens with this: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord..." The Nicene Creed says this: "We believe in **one** God, the Father, the Almighty..."

"**One**" has been added. **One** God. This is to emphasize monotheism in the midst of a polytheistic society. Let's take a look at one of the most famous verses in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 6:4 – "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one" (ESV). This declaration is called the *Shema Yisrael*, from the Hebrew word for "hear" (*shema*). Israel's God, Yahweh, is one. Yahweh is to be Israel's one and only God. And our Christian creed affirms that *we* believe in this one God.

"We believe in **one** God, the Father, the Almighty ... maker of heaven and earth, **of all that is, seen and unseen.**" Some English versions say, "*of all things visible and invisible.*" God created not only the things that we can see – the earth, the trees, the clouds, the stars – but also the things we cannot see – spirits, for example. God Himself is not a created being, and neither is His Son. In fact, God created the world working with His Son:

John 1:1-3 says this about Jesus, who is called "the Word (the *Logos*)": "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." (ESV)

So, Jesus was there in the beginning with God, and He participated in the creation. Everything was made through God the Son.

Colossians 1:15-16a says about Jesus: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible..." (ESV)

And the next section of the creed begins, "We believe in **one Lord**, Jesus Christ..."

1st Corinthians 8:6 says, "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and

for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (ESV). And Ephesians 4, verses five and six – “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all...” (Eph 4:5-6a, ESV). “We believe in **one Lord**, Jesus Christ...”

The title of my message today is “The Nicene Creed: Foundational Statement on the Divinity of Christ and on the Holy Trinity.” My focus today will be the creed’s statements on Jesus Christ as fully divine, fully God. I will also speak a bit on the Holy Spirit and how He is also *a person*, a fully equal member of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To do that, I would like to start by describing the situation in the early fourth century. I’m going to give you a little history lesson – this will take about five minutes.

As most of you are aware of, in the earliest centuries, the church suffered several periods of persecution from the Roman authorities. This ended when the Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian. In the year AD 313, he issued what has been called the Edict of Milan, officially ending persecution of the Christian minority. Constantine’s action has sometimes been characterized as making Christianity the official religion of the empire, but actually that didn’t happen until about sixty years later, under a different emperor. What the Edict of Milan did was to grant freedom to the Christians to practice their religion and it ordered the restoration of property that had been taken away from the Christians.

By the way, at this period of time, the city of Milan (in northern Italy) had been the capital of the western half of the Roman empire for many years. Emperor Constantine unified the empire after a period of civil wars, and about ten years later he moved the capital from Milan to a city in Greece, on the Bosphorus Strait, called Byzantium. He changed the name of the city to Constantinople: the city of Constantine. Today, that city is called Istanbul. (By the way, historians often refer to the eastern Roman empire of the following centuries as the “Byzantine Empire,” taken from the original name of this city, Byzantium). Well, it was in a city south of Constantinople, the city of Nicaea, where the Emperor Constantine called an ecumenical council of bishops to discuss various matters that were causing division in the church. This is known as the Council of Nicaea, and it met in the year AD 325.

There were a variety of issues that were causing some controversy in the church during this time. Emperor Constantine wanted peace in his realm, including peace in the church, so he called this council of bishops so that they could discuss these issues and come to a resolution on them. Invitations were sent out to all of the Christian bishops in the Roman empire. Somewhere around 300 bishops were able to come. Estimates differ as to how many bishops actually attended the council, but the most commonly used number is 320 bishops. Every region of the Roman empire had at least one delegate in attendance, even from Britain. It seems that there were two or three bishops from outside the empire as well – one from Persia and one from Georgia.

The most pressing controversy that the Council of Nicaea had to deal with was one involving a priest named Arius. Arius was from North Africa, and he was ordained a priest in Egypt and he worked in the city of Alexandria, one of the most important cities in the Christian world at that time. Arius believed that the Son of God was not eternal but had a beginning. Arius believed that the existence of the Son had a starting point. The most famous of his statements was this one: “There was a time when the Son was not.” There was a time when the Son of God did not exist. Arius taught that the Son was *a created being*, distinct from the Father and subordinate to the Father. To Arius, God the Father alone was supreme over everything. To support his claims, he quoted some verses from Scripture, such as Colossians 1:15 (Christ is “the firstborn of all creation”) and John 14:28 (“The Father is greater than I”). In his view, the Son is God’s first

created being, and after that, the Son created everything else. This teaching did not originate with Arius, but he was the most vocal and influential advocate of it, and so we call this theological position “Arianism.” By the way, there are better ways to view Colossians 1:15 and John 14:28, and I will discuss those verses again later.

Beyond the issue of whether the Son of God had a beginning point, there was also this theological question: how are we to describe the very essence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (His being, His substance)? Does He have the very same essence/substance as the Father? Or maybe a similar but not identical substance? Or a different substance altogether? During the early fourth century, each of these ideas was circulating in the church. Different verses in the New Testament seemed to go in one direction and other verses in another direction. But actually, *we have to take the whole body of Scripture* on this matter, examining *all of the verses* that pertain to this question and find the best way to describe the divine character of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That was the task of the Council of Nicaea.

When the Council of Nicaea was convened, bishops from all over the empire were invited. Each bishop was allowed to bring five people with him to assist him: two priests and three deacons. From the city of Alexandria came Bishop Alexander, the patriarch of the Christian community there. One of the deacons who accompanied him was a bright young man named Athanasius. You should remember this name: Athanasius. At the Council of Nicaea, it was Athanasius who gave the strongest argument in favor of the divinity of Christ, fully equal to the Father, co-eternal with the Father, and being of the same substance as the Father. Bishop Alexander and Deacon Athanasius taught that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Logos, was “eternally begotten” by the Father. *The Father was always a Father, therefore there must have always been a Son.* Let me say that again. *The Father was always a Father, therefore there must have always been a Son.* They are co-eternal. And they are of the same substance – in theological terms, we say that they are consubstantial.

John 10:30 – “I and the Father are one.” (ESV)

John 1:1-2 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. (ESV)

Verse 14 – The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (NIV)

What shall we say about John 14:28, where Jesus says “The Father is greater than I”? This means that the Father is *greater in authority* than the Son, after all, He is a Father. But it does not mean that the Son is inferior in His divine essence.

Let’s return to the Nicene Creed and see how the bishops assembled in Nicaea formulated their statement on the divinity of Jesus Christ. First, look at what the Apostles’ Creed says: “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...” Now, look at the Nicene Creed – before the statement on Jesus being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, several important phrases have been added:

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made...”

John 3:16 – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (NASB)

Only. Begotten. Son.

John 1:2 – He was in the beginning with God. (NASB)

John 1:3 – All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. (NASB)

“All things” came into being through God the Son. He is not one of the “things” that came into being at the beginning. He was already there, and it was through Him that “all things came into being.”

Hebrews 1:1-3a – Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ^{3a} He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power... (ESV)

Again: ^{3a} He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...

The Creed says He is “...of one Being with the Father...” Other English translations of the creed use another word: He is “...of one Substance with the Father...” Thus we say that the Son is *consubstantial* with the Father.

Look at this crucial passage, Colossians 1:15-19 – The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things [*“He is before all things” – meaning He is co-eternal with the Father*], and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him... (NIV)

The Son is *co-eternal* with the Father. They are *consubstantial*. Verse 19: “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in [the Son].” Verse 15: “The Son is the image of the invisible God...” They are of the same substance.

But what about this other phrase, “firstborn over all creation”? Arius used it to justify his belief that the Son was the first created being of the Father. But is that what this phrase means? No – we say that Arius is mistaken on this point. Look at verse 18, we see the phrase “firstborn from among the dead”. Was Jesus the first person to come back from the dead? No, He wasn’t. Does the term “firstborn” *have to* indicate a chronological sequence? *Apparently not*. He was not the first person chronologically to come back from the dead. And we should not look at verse 15 (“firstborn over all creation”) as a chronological statement that the Son was the first created thing.

The term “firstborn” is a term of *position*, used for the *one who has the rights and privileges* of the heir to a monarch’s throne. Let’s take a look at Psalm 89:27 – here, God is speaking about King David: “And I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth” (NIV). David was not the firstborn son, but God puts him in the position of the firstborn, the heir, the one with the right to rule as king. God the Son was in His sonship position from the very beginning, not created, but in relationship with the Father. Verse 16 – in the Son “all things were created.” Verse 17 – the Son is “before all things and in him all things hold together.” This is what it means to be “the firstborn over all creation.”

Well, let us continue with the Nicene Creed. We have so far read only half of what it says about Christ. The Creed continues:

“For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again **in accordance with the Scriptures;** he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again **in glory** to judge the living and the dead, **and his kingdom will have no end.**”

For those of you who heard my message in April, you see some familiar phrases here. But there are also some new phrases. On the PowerPoint screen, these new phrases are in bold font and underlined. That phrase “In accordance with the Scriptures” echoes the Apostle Paul’s own simple creed in 1st Corinthians 15 (verses 3 and 4), where he twice says that what Christ did was “in accordance with the Scriptures.”

For the past ten minutes, I have been commenting on the creed’s statement on the fundamental nature of God the Son, His full divinity. Now, we enter a section on *His purpose* in coming to earth. His purpose: **“For us ... and for our salvation ... he came down from heaven.”**

John 3:16a – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...

The creed continues ... “He became incarnate from the Virgin Mary...” He took on human flesh ... through a human birth. It was miraculous, but it came through an actual woman.

“For our sake he was crucified...” – this happened in space and time, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea.

Why did God have to take on human flesh to save us? Wasn’t there any other way to save us? A few minutes ago, I asked you to remember one of the most important people at the Council of Nicaea, Saint Athanasius. He had many things to say. About six or seven years *before* the council, he wrote a book called “On the Incarnation of the Word of God” – it is one of the classics of ancient Christian literature. Why did God have to take on human flesh? Saint Athanasius had this to say:

“Whatever is not assumed, is not redeemed.” Whatever is not acquired, is not redeemed.

God the Son had to take on human flesh in order to redeem human flesh. In the beginning, God created man to have fellowship with Him. But this fellowship with God was broken when Adam and Eve sinned. With the fall of man came death and corruption.

The creed says: “For us and for our salvation, [God] came down from heaven.” He was incarnated with a human body. He took on human flesh. Athanasius said it had to be this way: in order to redeem our human bodies, God had to take on human flesh.

And then: He died for us.

And then He was resurrected: to accomplish *the defeat of death* and the eventual *complete redemption* of our bodies.

Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned...

Verse 17 – For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of

righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

1st Corinthians 15:20-21 – But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man.

One modern-day teacher said this: “Sometimes we as conservative, as evangelical Christians, so emphasize the deity of Christ that we forget that it’s really his humanity that saves us. Because Jesus became a true human being, he could suffer and die for us, for our sins. So, Jesus’ humanity is essential to our salvation.” (Dr. Mark Strauss)

And in the end time, Jesus will return: “...**in glory** to judge the living and the dead, **and his kingdom will have no end.**”

This is the gospel message. God created everything. God the Son, who is equal in divinity, took on human flesh in order to redeem our human flesh and save us. And those who have received Him – Romans 5:17 above – will have eternal life. “**And his kingdom will have no end.**”

In the year AD 325, the bishops who were assembled at Nicaea agreed on this description of Jesus Christ and His work. It was not an easy conclusion – there was much debate, as there always has been when you have a group of serious-minded people, some of whom will have different perspectives on things (we see that in the Book of Acts, when Paul had to contend with some people in the Christian community who were too legalistic in their mindset). Actually, there were several people at Nicaea who were sympathetic towards Arius and tried to defend him. But after some of his writings were read out in the assembly, the bishops could see how problematic they were.

In the end, *the consensus of the bishops who gathered there was that if we take the whole of the testimony of Scripture, then it is in line with the view of the full divinity of Christ.* The Nicene Creed was drawn up, and out of the 320 bishops present, 318 signed it. Two bishops from North Africa, which is where Arius came from, refused to sign the creed. But nearly every bishop at the council signed it.

The creed drawn up in AD 325 ended with one sentence on the Holy Spirit, and then a paragraph containing a condemnation of Arian teaching.

“And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.”
Period.

I will not read out the condemnation, but you can see it on the screen.

[*Unspoken in the sermon, but appearing on the PowerPoint screen: “But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.”*]

This sounds harsh to us. But if you read the book of Galatians, you will see that Paul likewise condemns false teachers. [*Unspoken in the sermon: Galatians 1:9 – “As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed” (ESV).*]

Well, the story of the Nicene Creed does not end there. Fifty-five years later, in the year AD 380, Emperor Theodosius made a proclamation. He declared that the religion of the bishop of Rome and the bishop of Alexandria shall be the official religion of the Roman Empire. This is when Christianity became the state religion of the empire. And the bishops of Rome and

Alexandria were followers of the Nicene viewpoint of the full divinity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

In the following year, AD 381, Emperor Theodosius called another ecumenical council of bishops. This is known as the Council of Constantinople, because it met in the capital city. There were many issues to discuss about the church. One of the issues was how to view the Holy Spirit. The Nicene Creed was expanded to include statements on the Holy Spirit and these assert that He is as much a person as the Father and the Son are. This last section reads:

“We believe in the Holy Spirit, **the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father . With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic **and apostolic** Church. We acknowledge **one baptism for the forgiveness of sins**. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

“With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified.” The Holy Spirit is equally worthy of our worship, He is as deserving of glory as the Father and the Son are. He is equally a person. Nicene Christianity asserts that we have one God in three persons – commonly called the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father.” Some of you may notice that I seem to have left out a phrase. Most of us know the creed as saying that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father *and the Son.*” Well, as originally composed, the creed only says “proceeds from the Father.” The phrase about the Son was added by a local council in Spain in the 6th century and became popular in the Western church.

Let’s look at some verses. In John 14:16, Jesus says, “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever.” (NIV)

Verse 26 – “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (NIV)

In Acts 1:8, just before the Ascension, Jesus tells His disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (NIV)

The creed ends with a statement that the Church is catholic (worldwide) and apostolic (founded upon the teaching of the apostles).

Then: “We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.” That’s the heart of the gospel message for mankind. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached his great sermon, and in response to a question about what we should do, he said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

And the creed ends with a statement that we look forward to our resurrection and eternal life in the world to come.

I really wish I could say more on this section, but I have run out of time. I must close here.

For today’s message, I chose Colossians 1:15-20 as the key Scriptural reference. I have read most of these verses already, but I would like to just point out the first phrase of verse 18: “And

he [Christ] is the head of the body, the church...” This reminds me of my favorite hymn, so I have asked the worship team to lead us in this song a few minutes from now.

The Church's one Foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord;
 she is His new creation, by water and the Word;
 from heaven He came and sought her to be His holy bride;
 with His own blood He bought her, and for her life He died.

<u>The Apostles' Creed</u>	<u>The Nicene Creed (or Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed)</u>
<p>I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Book of Common Prayer, 1979</p>	<p>We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.</p> <p>We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.</p> <p>We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.</p> <p>Book of Common Prayer, 1979</p>