

A Year of Living Tradition

A Bible Study for New Hope Lutheran Church, Comfrey

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Week 1 / Session 1
WE CREED: God The Father

INTRODUCTION TO THE CREED (*copied from the Lexham Bible Dictionary*)

Nicene Creed – A creed that was the result of the Council of Nicaea in ad 325. While early forms of the Apostles’ Creed may have predated it, this was the first creed to be officially recognized by an ecumenical council. It was later revised at the Council of Constantinople in 381, and this revised version is sometimes referred to as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, but more commonly is simply called the Nicene Creed.

The Creed of 325

The Arian controversy of the fourth century centered on the relationship between the Son and the Father, and the Nicene Creed was drawn up to clarify the Church’s opinion on the matter. Against the Arian teaching that the Son of God was a subordinate being to God the Father, the creed includes the Greek word *homoousios* (“of one substance with”) to describe the relationship.

The text of the original Nicene Creed is as follows. Square brackets indicate portions that were later removed or rewritten by the Council of Constantinople:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth];

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;
He suffered, and the third day He rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

[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.]

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed

The Council of Constantinople in 381 made several changes to the Nicene Creed of 325, and this longer version is often simply called the Nicene Creed. At this point, all present were in agreement. But in later centuries, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed became the subject of controversy between Eastern and Western churches when the Western church adopted the addition “and the son” (Latin *filioque*) to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed’s phrase “who proceeds from the Father,” referring to the Holy Spirit. This remains a divisive issue between East and Western churches to the present day. The text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is as follows. Italics indicate additions made to the creed of 325, and the Western addition of “and the son” is in brackets.

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of *heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.*

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the *only-begotten* Son of God, begotten of the Father *before all worlds*, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made;

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down *from heaven*, and was incarnate *by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary*, and was made man; he was *crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried*, and the third day he rose again, *according to the Scriptures*, and ascended into heaven, *and sits on the right hand of the Father*; from thence he shall come *again, with glory*, to judge the quick and the dead; *whose kingdom shall have no end.*

And in the Holy Ghost, *the Lord and Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

The opening affirmation of the Nicene Creed states: *“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things seen and unseen.”*

Just within this one, opening statement, there is so much we can unpack. The very first words we recite are simply this: “I believe in One God.” As Christians, we profess there is *only* one God, not many gods as other faiths maintain. We don’t have to travel far in the Bible before we see the earliest declarations about this.

- Deuteronomy 6:4
- Isaiah 44:6–8

Why do you think God needed to remind the Jewish people of his nature, when he said *“I am the first, and I am the last; besides me, there is no god.”*? How might we need that kind of reminder today, too?



Then we hear this packed statement, that this God who is one, He *is* our Father, and He is *the* Almighty (one). The Prophet Isaiah wrote this: *“For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us...”* (Isaiah 63:16, ESV).

Question: When you think of the word, “Father,” – what comes to your mind? Who and what is a father (figure) to you? And... looking at Isaiah’s declaration, what can we say about the character of God, when our earthly father’s fall short? What’s this mean to you?

Take some time to write down your thoughts.

When God declared (*see Genesis 17:1, Exodus 6: 3, Psalm 91:1-2, Revelation 4:1-11*) He is Almighty, He's telling us that He is ALL-MIGHTY, all powerful, omnipotent, and omniscient.

Let's look at another passage that paints a picture of God's almighty nature – Revelation 4:1-11. What words and phrases are you seeing (that describe God's nature)?



Then we come to the last statement about God's nature, that this God who is one, who's our ultimate father figure, and is more powerful than anything we can imagine, that he formed the heavens and the earth, *all* that is visible and invisible.

Genesis 1:1 says this: "*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*"

Every time I stand beneath the starry skies, and I gaze upward into the infinite heavens, I awe at God's creation. While starrng enclosing into the vast cosmos, I often feel so insignificant, so minute, yet also, so unique and special that I am part of God's created order – that he though enough of me and you to make us too. Consider also these passages.

- Amos 5:8
- Psalm 139: 13-18

As we wrap up this opening belief statement of the Nicene Creed that is just... packed, we hear and speak this last phrase that can seem like a bit of an enigma. The Church Fathers declared that God is the maker of all that is visible and invisible (or seen and unseen).

It's easy to comprehend things that are visible, but invisible—hmm. That can be a mind-thumper: **Question:** What do you think they alluding to? *Let's discuss; here's some passages to spur on the discussion:*

- Amos 4:13
- Colossians 1:15–20
- Ephesians 1:3–10



FOR HOME

To spur your mind on a bit more, between today and next week, consider a few more things that are unseen, but now affirmed – things such as the laws of physic (i.e. gravity); sound (waves); the fullness of the color spectrum; dark matter; and atomic & sub-atomic particles.

Why do you think God would've created these invisible things, that, as humans, most people subscribe as former and current mysteries of creation.
