

The Apostles' Creed, week 1

As we begin a short series on the Apostles' Creed, two very similar versions are given on a second page for your use.

The Old Roman Creed dating back to about 340 A.D. was the baptismal creed of the early church at Rome. It was based on the teaching of the Apostles and took its name from that teaching, and not from the fact that it was written by the 12 Apostles at Jerusalem. Comparing this early creed (see p.2) with the modern forms we can see that the basics have been handed down to us virtually unaltered.

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

This statement not only affirms our belief in God, it also gives us a definition of that God in whom we believe!

He is God the Father:- The writers of the Epistles (e.g. Romans 1, verse 7: 2 John, verse 3), with exception of James, all refer to "God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". Note that the greeting in 1 Peter includes a Trinitarian formula. Verse 2:- *"chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with His blood."*

He is not only the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He is also OUR Father! At the resurrection appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene Jesus said *"go to my brethren and say to them 'I am ascending to my Father and YOUR Father, to my God and your God.'"*

He is Almighty :- In the Old Testament there are two words which are usually translated as "Almighty". The first which refers to God's authority over "all the host of heaven" is "*Sabaoth*". Those of us familiar with the 1662 Holy Communion Service will recognise it. - *"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts . . ."*

The second word is used exclusively as a divine name:- El-Shadday. This is the name by which God revealed Himself to Abraham (Genesis 17, verse 1). This name gives general expression to the omnipotence of God – all-powerful in mercy and in judgement; e.g. in Isaiah 13, verse 6.

In the New Testament the Greek equivalent is used in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 18; and many times in the Book of Revelation – e.g. 1, verse 8; 4, verse 8; etc.

He is the Creator:- The opening words of the Bible are a statement of belief. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1, verse 1). This is repeated in Genesis 2, verse 4, and that chapter goes on to describe how God created man and woman, giving them the task of caring for the world He had made. That *"God Most High"* was recognised as *"Creator"* (the word can also mean "Possessor") comes in Genesis 14, verses 18 – 24, where it is used by Melchizedek *"priest of God Most High"* and Abram. Many of the Psalms glorify the Lord God as Creator:- notably Psalms 8; 19; 89, verses 11 – 13 etc.

Next week we move on the belief in Our Lord Jesus Christ and it is worth recognising that He too had a role in creation : see John 1, verses 1 – 3 and Colossians 1, verses 15 – 20.

For use in prayer or as a devotional:- Read Psalm 139 verses 1 – 18.

Verses 13 -15 God the Father as our Creator (as an aside; What could this be saying in regard to abortion?)

Verses 7 – 12 God the Father as our Guardian.

Verses 1 – 6 God the Father as our Sustainer.

*He only is the maker
Of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
The winds and waves obey him,
By him the birds are fed;
Much more to us, his children,
He gives our daily bread.*

Matthias Claudius 1782 (translated from the German in 1861)

The Apostles' Creed (Book of Common Prayer 1662)

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, 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 sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholick Church; The Communion of Saints; The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed (Common Worship)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Compare with this ancient Creed from about 340 A.D.

The Old Roman Creed

I believe in God the Father Almighty;
And in Christ Jesus His only Son, our Lord,
Who was born from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,
Who was crucified under Pontius Pilate and was buried,
And the third day rose again from the dead,
Who ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of the Father,
Whence he will come to judge the living and the dead;
And in the Holy Spirit,
The holy Church,
The remission of sins,
The resurrection of the flesh,
The life everlasting.