

# The Apostles' Creed

Lesson 3

Jesus Christ

Lesson Guide



thirdmill

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Our goal is to offer free Christian education to hundreds of thousands of pastors and Christian leaders around the world who lack sufficient training for ministry. We are meeting this goal by producing and globally distributing an unparalleled multimedia seminary curriculum in English, Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish. Our curriculum is also being translated into more than a dozen other languages through our partner ministries. The curriculum consists of graphic-driven videos, printed instruction, and internet resources. It is designed to be used by schools, groups, and individuals, both online and in learning communities.

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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or manuscript versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Notes

### I. Introduction (1:01)

No other figure in history has been as widely admired or had as much impact on society as Jesus of Nazareth.

### II. Divinity (2:55)

Christians have always intended words like Christ, Son of God, and Lord to indicate Jesus' divinity.

#### A. Son of God (4:35)

“Son of God” is often used for beings that are not divine:

- Angels (Job 1:6; 2:1)
- The nation of Israel (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1)
- Kings of Israel (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7)
- Adam (Luke 3:38)
- Believers (Matthew 5:9, 45; Luke 20:36; Romans 8:14, 19; Galatians 3:26)

Jesus is God's son in a unique way.

Jesus as the divine and eternal Son of God is reflected in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Ontological perspective:

- Equal in power and glory to the Father and Holy Spirit
- Infinite, eternal, unchangeable
- Same divine attributes
  - Wisdom
  - Power
  - Holiness
  - Justice
  - Goodness
  - Truth



Implications for the Christian life:

- acknowledge and worship Jesus as God
- pray to him just as we do to the Father and Spirit
- know that God himself has redeemed us from sin

### **III. Humanity (18:12)**

In the early church, it was common for people to question the humanity of Jesus.

#### **A. Experiences (19:27)**

Several of Jesus' experiences prove that he was truly human.

##### **1. Generation (20:24)**

Conception and Birth:

- unusual details
  - Conceived by the Holy Spirit
  - Mother was a virgin



- essential human experiences
  - Began as a tiny baby in his mother's womb
  
  - Formed the same as God molds every human baby
  
  - Did not appear magically or descend from heaven

## **2. Body (24:49)**

The Creed attributes experiences to Jesus that would only have been possible if he was truly a physical human being.

Jesus was a real man with a physical human body.

A genuine human being had to suffer physical divine judgment to atone for the sins of humanity.

**3. Soul (27:02)**

Human beings consist of a mortal body that houses an immortal soul.

The words “soul” and “spirit” refer to all the inner, non-physical aspects of our being as a whole.

While Jesus’ body would be placed in the grave, his spirit or soul would be in the hands of God the Father. (Luke 23:46)

**4. Resurrection (29:17)**

The resurrection proves that Jesus was a real human being because it included the reunion of his real human body with his real human soul.

**B. Office (32:03)**

The word Christ is actually the title of Jesus' office, similar to words like "king" or "judge."

**1. Old Testament Background (32:43)**

Christ:

- *christos* (Greek)
- *mashiach* or messiah (Hebrew)
- anointed one
  - anyone God appointed to serve him specially
  
  - sons of David
  
  - great king descended from David

**2. Fulfillment in Jesus (38:28)**

Jesus is the great messiah that the Old Testament anticipated.

The Messiah had to be human:

- Son of David
- atoning sacrifice
- second Adam

**C. Nature (44:22)**

Jesus possesses all the attributes and traits that are essential to being human.

Jesus differs from other human beings in some important ways:

- perfect human being
- two natures

Hypostatic union: Jesus is one person with two distinct natures (a divine nature and a human nature) with each nature retaining its own attributes.

- Philippians 2:5-7
  
- Chalcedonian Creed
  - One person
  
  - Two natures

Implications for the way we live:

- We have an effective human mediator between us and God.
  
- Jesus has constituted a new human race.
  
- We can approach the throne of grace with confidence.

#### **IV. Work (57:29)**

##### **A. Humiliation (58:26)**

The Son of God caused his glory to be veiled and hidden from sight, and subjected himself to suffering and indignity.

**1. Incarnation (59:37)**

Incarnation refers to Jesus permanently taking on a human nature.

The work of incarnation accomplished three things:

**a. Davidic King**

Jesus could only claim David's throne if he had a human father who descended from David.

**b. High Priest**

The incarnation gave him the mercy and sympathy he needed to be an effective high priest.

**c. Atoning Sacrifice**

Jesus had to be human in order to die in place of his people.

## 2. **Passion (1:07:47)**

The term passion refers to Jesus' suffering and death.

Jesus' suffering was necessary to teach him obedience, and to commend him to God the Father.

It was Jesus' death that atoned for our sin and accomplished our salvation.

Jesus underwent the normal human experience of death. The Apostle's Creed says, "He descended into hell."

Interpretation:

- Jesus was buried (unlikely)
- hell: underworld that contains the souls of the dead
- Jesus soul descended into the underworld between his death and resurrection.

Nature of hell:

- Sheol (Hebrew—Old Testament)
  
- Hades (Greek—New Testament)

The most likely meaning is that Jesus' human soul descended to the place of the departed spirits.

Jesus' passion shows us what it means to be truly human in a fallen world.

**B. Exaltation (1:17:36)**

Christ's exaltation was more than an unveiling of his veiled glory.



**1. Resurrection (1:19:05)**

Christ's resurrection was just as important to our salvation as his death.

We were raised in new life through his resurrection.

**2. Ascension (1:23:12)**

Jesus was taken bodily into heaven.

Jesus ascended to:

- prepare places for believers in heaven (John 14:2-3)
- send the Holy Spirit to empower the church (John 16:7)
- complete the work of atonement that he began on the cross (Hebrews 8-9)
- intercede for us (Hebrews 7:24-25)

**3. Enthronement (1:26:06)**

Jesus is our great human king with a throne in heaven that sits to the right of the Father's great throne.

Jesus is also spoken of as a priest who intercedes for his people.

**4. Judgment (1:28:45)**

Jesus will render royal judgment against those who have violated his laws and not respected his kingship and kingdom.

Good news: Those who are united to Christ by faith will receive an eternal blessing and inheritance.

Bad news: Those who are not found in Christ will bear the full brunt of God's wrath.

**V. Conclusion (1:31:40)**



3. In what ways do Jesus' experiences prove that he was truly human?

4. What does the Old Testament title "Christ" mean? How does Jesus fulfill this office?

5. How does the fulfillment of the office of Christ point to his humanity?

6. Discuss Jesus' human nature and its relationship to his divine nature.

7. Why was the incarnation necessary? What did Jesus accomplish by it?

8. Why did Jesus subject himself to arrest, suffering, and crucifixion?

9. Explain the phrase in the Apostles' Creed "he descended into hell."

10. Discuss the four parts of the exaltation of Jesus.

## Application Questions

1. How can Jesus' divinity give us greater trust in him?
2. How does Jesus' humanity allow him to identify with us?
3. How should a proper understanding of the Trinity, together with Christ's divinity and humanity, influence the way we pray?
4. How does the divinity of Christ help us understand God's love for us?
5. What does Jesus' possession of a real, physical body suggest about the way we ought to treat our own bodies?
6. In what way can Jesus' role as our mediator give us confidence before God without fear? In what ways is it proper for a Christian to fear God?
7. How can the humiliation that Christ endured for us encourage us as we endure trials and struggles in this life?
8. How is our new life in Christ generated by his resurrection from the dead?
9. Why is the church better off with the presence of the Holy Spirit than with the physical presence of Jesus?
10. How can the Creed comfort us as we look forward to the final judgment?
11. What is the most significant thing you learned in this lesson?



## Glossary

**Chalcedon** – City in Asia Minor where a church council was held in A.D. 451 to defend traditional Christian doctrines and deny heresies

**Chalcedonian Creed** – Creed written in A.D. 451 by a church council in the city of Chalcedon that affirmed, among other things, that Jesus is "truly God and truly man"; also called the *Chalcedonian Symbol*, and the *Definition of Chalcedon*

**christos** – Greek word (transliteration) for Christ; used in the Septuagint to translate "*mashiach*" or "messiah," meaning "anointed one"

**Hades** – Greek term (transliteration) used in the New Testament, usually meaning the abode of wicked souls, but sometimes referring to the place of both the righteous and the wicked

**hypostasis** – Greek term meaning "underlying substance or nature"; used in the early centuries after Christ to express the doctrine that the divine nature and the human nature of Christ are united in one "person"

**hypostatic union** – Phrase used to express the doctrine that the divine and human natures of Christ are united in one person

**Ignatius** – (ca. A.D. 50 - 108) Church father and third Bishop of Antioch who wrote a series of letters to early Christians addressing a number of important theological topics

**incarnation** – Term that refers to Jesus' permanent assumption of a human nature

**kurios** – Greek word (transliteration) meaning "lord," "ruler," "master" or "sir"; a name for God in the New Testament

**mashiach/meshiach** – Hebrew word (transliteration) for "messiah"; anointed one

**passion** – From the Greek word "*pascho*" (transliteration) meaning "to suffer"; refers to Jesus' suffering and death, beginning the night of his arrest

**Septuagint** – Greek translation of the Old Testament

**session** – Theological term used to refer to Jesus' ongoing rule and ministry of intercession while seated at the right hand of God the Father

**Sheol** – Hebrew term (transliteration) used in the Old Testament to refer to the place of departed spirits, both the righteous and the wicked

**soul** – The immortal, immaterial part of a human being; all the inner, non-physical aspects of our being

**Tertullian** – (ca. A.D. 155 - 230) Early Christian writer and church father from Carthage who wrote *Against Marcion* and popularized the Latin terminology used to discuss the Trinity

**Trinity** – Theological term used to express the fact that God is one essence in three persons