



Defending Your Faith

Expository Apologetics

“Always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.”

PROVIDENCE REFORMED

BAPTIST CHURCH



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- For the course of this study, we will be referencing “Expository Apologetics: Answering Objections with the Power of the Word” by Voddie Baucham.
- Chapter 5: Learning Apologetics through Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- We have been looking at both a broad view of apologetics and a narrower view in this study.
- The Broad View says that apologetics “is vindication of the Christian world view against all others.” (pg. 85)
- The Narrow View of apologetics is knowing “what we believe and why we believe it and being able to communicate that to others in an effective, winsome manner.” (pg. 85)
- Remember, we do not have to give an account for things we do NOT believe. We are responsible for giving a reason for the hope that is in *us*, not others.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- We also are not responsible for knowing things that God has not revealed! He has not told us everything.
- Our hope must be centered in what we do know and what has been revealed – the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Paul wrote to Timothy, “Hold to the standard of sound words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 1:13).
- The gospel has not changed and neither have objections to it. People still ask the same questions today that were asked of Jesus and the Apostles. That means that to be effective we simply need to be familiar with a few key concepts and texts of Scripture.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- “When most Christians think apologetics training, they think philosophy, logic, and debate. However, the key tools for training the expository apologist are creeds, confessions, and catechisms.” (pg. 87).
- Creeds: The Earliest Apologetics – Our ancient creeds and confessions of faith serve the purpose of being statements of belief written by early believers in response to heretics, false teachers, and error. They help summarize the gospel in a way that is easy to remember.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- Three Creeds that are basic and helpful are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed.
- The Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

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 [Hades]. 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.

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.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Apostles' Creed is a summary of the gospel we preach!
- 1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.
- The Creed is historic, written around 300 years after the time of Christ. It is easy to memorize and many churches quote it in their liturgy, and it is widely and easily available for people to find and read.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Nicene Creed (AD 325, revised 381) was written to address the heresy of Arianism, which teaches that Jesus is not divine, but a created being. The Jehovah's Witnesses are a modern cult that holds to this heresy.

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father. Through him all things were made.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human. He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified. He spoke through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.



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- This creed addresses OLD heresies that are still being propagated today. “There is nothing new under the sun,” Solomon said (Eccl. 1:9).
- These are also basic truths that must be taught and understood by believers if we are to grow in grace and understanding. These things are the “milk” of the Word that prepare us to move on the “meat.”



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Athanasian Creed was written in response to the heresy of Sabellianism, or modalism, a serious misunderstanding of the nature of God as it denies the doctrine of the Trinity.
- Athanasius was an early church father from Alexandria, Egypt, known as “The Black Dwarf” by his enemies, mocking his short stature and dark skin. He was a deacon under Bishop Alexander, who led the Council of Nicea and succeeded him in 328 AD and served 45 years.
- Exiled 5 times by 4 Roman Emperors.
- Refused to reinstate Arius (Bishop from Libya) who taught that Jesus was a created being and not eternal.
- Taught and defended the truth that God is One Essence, three Persons.
- Defended Trinitarian theology against Arianism, including the idea that the Holy Spirit was not eternal, but created out of nothing by the Father and Son.
- Created a list of 27 books he believed should be included in the New Testament.
- His writings on the life of Antony, one of the first monks, influenced Augustine in his conversion.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Athanasian Creed:

Whoever desires to be saved should above all hold to the catholic faith. Anyone who does not keep it whole and unbroken will doubtless perish eternally. Now this is the catholic faith:

That we worship one God in trinity and the trinity in unity, neither blending their persons nor dividing their essence. For the person of the Father is a distinct person, the person of the Son is another, and that of the Holy Spirit still another. But the divinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is one, their glory equal, their majesty coeternal.

What quality the Father has, the Son has, and the Holy Spirit has. The Father is uncreated, the Son is uncreated, the Holy Spirit is uncreated.

The Father is immeasurable, the Son is immeasurable, the Holy Spirit is immeasurable.

The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, the Holy Spirit is eternal.

And yet there are not three eternal beings; there is but one eternal being. So too there are not three uncreated or immeasurable beings; there is but one uncreated and immeasurable being.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Athanasian Creed:

Similarly, the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. Yet there are not three almighty beings; there is but one almighty being.

Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Yet there are not three gods; there is but one God.

Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, the Holy Spirit is Lord. Yet there are not three lords; there is but one Lord.

Just as Christian truth compels us to confess each person individually as both God and Lord, so catholic religion forbids us to say that there are three gods or lords.

The Father was neither made nor created nor begotten from anyone. The Son was neither made nor created; he was begotten from the Father alone. The Holy Spirit was neither made nor created nor begotten; he proceeds from the Father and the Son.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Athanasian Creed:

Accordingly, there is one Father, not three fathers; there is one Son, not three sons; there is one Holy Spirit, not three holy spirits.

Nothing in this trinity is before or after, nothing is greater or smaller; in their entirety the three persons are coeternal and coequal with each other.

So in everything, as was said earlier, we must worship their trinity in their unity and their unity in their trinity.

Anyone then who desires to be saved should think thus about the trinity. But it is necessary for eternal salvation that one also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ faithfully.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- The Athanasian Creed:

Now this is the true faith:

That we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, is both God and human, equally.

He is God from the essence of the Father, begotten before time; and he is human from the essence of his mother, born in time; completely God, completely human, with a rational soul and human flesh; equal to the Father as regards divinity, less than the Father as regards humanity.

Although he is God and human, yet Christ is not two, but one. He is one, however, not by his divinity being turned into flesh, but by God's taking humanity to himself. He is one, certainly not by the blending of his essence, but by the unity of his person. For just as one human is both rational soul and flesh, so too the one Christ is both God and human.

He suffered for our salvation; he descended to hell; he arose from the dead; he ascended to heaven; he is seated at the Father's right hand; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. At his coming all people will arise bodily and give an accounting of their own deeds. Those who have done good will enter eternal life, and those who have done evil will enter eternal fire.

This is the catholic faith: one cannot be saved without believing it firmly and faithfully.



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- “Here we have a clear, creedal history demonstrating the commitment of Christians throughout the ages who believed that the Trinity not only could be defined and explained, but that it must be! This is the God in whom we believe.” (pg. 95).
- Confessions of Faith, in addition to Creeds, flowed out of the Protestant Reformation to demonstrate the differences between the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Churches.
- The Augsburg Confession in 1530 contains 28 articles of faith and was the work primarily of Luther’s disciple, Philip Melancthon. It is the confession of the Lutheran Church.



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- The Three “Reformed” Confessions include the Belgic Confession of Faith (1561), the Thirty-Nine Articles (1563), the Canons of Dort (1619), the First London Baptist Confession (1644/1646), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), and the Second London Baptist Confession (1677/1689).
- While many in Reformed circles today stress the differences between our churches, the overwhelming level of agreement within these confessions is a testament to the history and legacy we share in our understanding of the gospel and the Scriptures.



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- These creeds and confessions serve 3 purposes:
- 1. Confessions of Faith serve to unite believers with their historical roots. 2 Timothy 1:13-14; 2:2; 3:14.
- 2. Confessions serve to clarify the distinct beliefs of various groups of Christians.
- 3. Confessions serve as a standard and starting point for disciple making.
- Spurgeon wrote of the 1689 Baptist Confession, “This ancient document is the most excellent epitome of the things most surely believed among us. It is not issued as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby you may be fettered, but as a means of edification in righteousness. It is an excellent, though not inspired, expression of the teaching of those Holy Scriptures by which all confessions are to be measured. We hold to the humbling truths of God’s sovereign grace in the salvation of lost sinners. Salvation is through Christ alone and by faith alone.”



Lesson 5 – Creeds, Confessions, and Catechisms

- Our Confessions answer the question, “What do you mean when you say you believe the Bible?”
- Next week, Part 2 – Catechisms.