

Session 5 – The Nicene Creed  
Jesus, the only Son of God

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.**

Welcome back to our study of that great historic confession of the Christian faith, the Nicene Creed. I am Jeff Gregory, pastor of Good Shepherd Church, a Baptist Reformed Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, in the United States.

Let's ask God to bless our time together today: "Gracias Father in heaven, holy is your name. You are all-wise and you are sovereign, and in Jesus Christ we see your great love and compassion to a lost race of humanity. We pray that you would bless this study today for your honor and glory, and for our own building up in our holy Faith. Amen."

In the last session we considered the phrase in the beginning of the section of the Creed that focuses the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is important to note that the middle section of the Creed that speaks of Jesus Christ is by far the lengthiest section of the Creed and this is by design. It is the coming of Jesus Christ into the world that is the astounding revelation of the love and purpose of God. He sent his Son to rescue a people from their sin and spiritual darkness out of every tribe, nation, and tongue to be his very own treasured people. This would include you and me, those of us who are believers in Christ!

Most of the historic Creeds of the Christian church were written in a historical context. They were responding to attacks from heretics, or unbelievers, against the Scriptural presentation of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus received the brunt of these attacks because he was the visible One. He could be seen by all men, or at least they could read about him. God laid him out before the world, made him, we could say, an easily visible target. So opportunity was given for certain persons to reject and attack him because they disagreed with how the Bible sets him forth. In essence, these attacks amounted to attempts to strip Jesus of his deity. They sought to rob him of his divinity, in order to make him more palatable to their own thinking.

Some people do not like the Biblical picture of a Savior who is holy and transcendent and exalted above their own ability to fully comprehend. So they emasculate him and they reject the Bible's presentation of him. They want to cut him down to a size that they like, one that fits more easily into their back pocket. They have their own conception of how God should be. They want a "nice God," that they can pat on the head like their household dog or cat.

But the truth is that we do not define God; God defines himself. He explains himself and we must submit to that revelation or else perish in our sins. Are you, O listener today, committed to the Lord Jesus Christ as he is presented in the scriptures, or do you prefer your own imaginary Jesus?

The Lord Jesus will not descend to our conceptions of him. On the contrary, he makes himself known in his full majesty and awesomeness. We must take him as he is. A lesser Jesus does not have the power to bear our sins. He does not have the power to endure God Almighty's burning anger against sin. Only the human-divine Christ of Scripture is strong enough. Only he is capable enough to be the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of his people from every age. So it is with holy reverence that we approach our study of the Lord Jesus Christ today. We are dealing with holy things. Things that came not from the thoughts of man, but are only revealed by God in his Word.

Remember, the Nicene Creed is based on the Scriptures, its authority is the Scriptures, it stands under the Scriptures, and it only seeks to set forth the Scriptural revelation of the person and nature of the Lord Jesus. No man or woman is saved by the Creed or even by the Scriptures, but only by the Lord Jesus Christ. In his person and work He has accomplished what had to be done to save his people from their sins, as they place their faith in him.

Today let's continue to look at what the Creed says about Jesus. He is, as the Creed states, **"...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."**

We need to understand what this phrase, "the only Son of God" means. Actually, the phrase "son of God, or sons of God" can have different meanings in scripture; in a few places it can refer to human beings. For example, we read in Matt. 5:9, "'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called **sons of God.**" But in reference to Jesus Christ the phrase "Son of God" means that he is of the same nature, the same essence, the same being, the same eternity as God himself.

It does not mean, as some religions teach, that God the Father at some point in time procreated and produced a son. This was exactly the teaching that was being circulated by a man named Arius in the early 300's. His teachings precipitated the calling of the Church Council in 325 AD at Nicea in northwestern Turkey by the Roman emperor Constantine. He wanted the Bishops, or leaders in the Church, to respond to these allegations.

Let's look at some scripture references to gain an understanding of the use of this term "Son of God" in reference to Jesus Christ. One of the most well-known declarations of the identify of Jesus Christ is found in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 16 and verse 16. Here Jesus has been asking his disciples who did people say he was. Finally Peter, the leader of the disciples, exclaimed:

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus recognized that Peter did not come up with this revelation on his own, but the Father in heaven had revealed it to Peter. What Peter is saying is that he recognized

that Jesus was the promised Messiah. He recognized that he was the anointed one of God, the deliverer of God's people. He realized that he is the Son of the living God.

In John's Gospel, chapter 5, we read that Jesus healed a man who had been a paralytic for 38 years. Let's take up at verse 15:

15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."

18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. John 5:15-18

Jesus knew what he was talking about when he called God his own Father. He knew that he had this special, unique relationship with the Father that no mere mortal could have. These Jewish people did not understand that; they didn't want to understand it.

In another place Jesus told his disciples, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He also said, 30 I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

This equality of the Son with the Father is a fundamental revelation of the Scriptures. It would also include equality with the Holy Spirit. The equality of these three "persons," as we call them, in their divinity, their eternal power and their glory, is fundamental to the Biblical revelation of the nature and being of God. The Bible clearly states that there is only one God, yet it also clearly states that each of the three persons within God are all equally divine. Each one is just as much God as the other two, and yet we do not have three Gods, but one God. This is what we call the doctrine of the Trinity. It is not easy to grasp, to understand. But then God is a being of a much higher order than we humans.

There is within the Triune God, a certain special relationship between the three persons. The Father, for example, has always been the Father, and the Son has always been the Son. There never was a time when the Son did not exist alongside the Father.

Look, for example, at John 1:1-3:

"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. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."

The "Word" here is a reference to Jesus himself, who was the living Word of God. He spoke the words of truth regarding the invisible God to the people. This Word, Jesus, was "in the beginning," that is, at the beginning of the universe he was already there. He existed before the world began. And this verse goes on to say that "the Word was with God." The original literal Greek language that the New Testament was written in says

he was “face to face with God.” So there was this relationship of equality. They were on an equal plane. The Father was not above the Son, looking down on him in an inferior position, but they were “face to face,” the “Word was with God.”

And in order to remove all doubt, the text says in the third phrase in verse one of John 1:1 that “the Word was God.” Can it be any clearer than that? The Word, Jesus Christ, was God himself. He existed as a person face to face with the person of God the Father, and he was also at the same time God himself, as the creed says, “very God of very God.” This is the mystery, but the mystery that has been revealed, that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is of the same nature, the same essence, the same being as God the Father. The Creed says that he is “of one Being with the Father.” We don’t have two Gods here, but two persons within God.

This is the consistent teaching in the New Testament. Another important text is Philippians 2:6-7 which says of Jesus that...

“...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...”

Notice it says that “he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped” – the plain statement here is that he was equal with God but was willing for a time to veil his deity under his humanity, to hide it, so to speak, in order to take upon himself our full human nature and live among us. He never lost his equality with God. There again, these kind of statements are why the Creed says that Jesus was “God from God...true God from true God.” The Creed wants to remove all doubt as to the absolute divinity of Jesus Christ. He is God who came from God. One English translation of the Creed states it like this: “He is very God of very God.” You just can’t be any more God than that. Jesus is not 99.9% God, but 100% God.

Now let’s look at the two phrases in this section of the Creed where it says, first of all, that Jesus was “eternally begotten of the Father” and he was “begotten, not made, of one being with the Father.”

We find these expressions in the Creed because this term is found in the New Testament as in two verses in John chapter 1. In verse 14 we read in the NKJV:

14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And in verse 18 also in the NKJV we read,

18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him*.

The term here “only begotten” must be understood in the context of the entire revelation in the New Testament of the person and work of the Son of God. On a purely human

level, the term “begotten” can be used to describe the procreation of a child by its father and mother.

But here in John 1, verse 14 and 18, the term is not just “begotten,” but “the only begotten Son.” In other words, he is the only one of a kind. He is unique in his relationship to the Father. There is no other like him. In fact, most of the more modern translations in English express this unique relationship like this in verse 14, for example, of the *English Standard Version*:

<sup>4</sup>“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Or we read in the *Christian Standard Bible*:

<sup>14</sup>The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We observed his glory, the glory as the one and only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

So the term “begotten in the older version of the English Bible is now often translated as “the only Son from the Father” or “the one and only Son from the Father.”

The Creed is careful to communicate its use of the term “begotten” by, first of all, placing the word “eternal” in front of it in the first expression: “Jesus is eternally begotten...” This means that in all eternity the Son was begotten of the Father. In other words, he was in relationship to the Father as a Son, as a Son of equal power and glory and divinity. This is known in Christian theology as “the eternal generation of the Son.”

There is something similar, but not the same in human relationships. My father, while he was still alive, was always my father, my dad. And always I was his son, his eldest son. Nothing can ever change that. The difference between this type of human relationship and that of God and his Son is that both the Father and the Son have always existed together in all eternity, neither one preceded the other. However, I had a beginning 23 years after my father had a beginning. We both had a beginning, but at different times. Yet with the Father in heaven and the Son in heaven, neither one had a beginning, they were always both in existence.

And to make this even clearer, a little further the Creed says that Jesus is “begotten, not made.” In other words, the Father did not create or make Jesus at a point in time. The

word “begotten” is meant to describe the unique relationship of the Father and the Son. It is not used to indicate that the Father existed before the Son and then begat or created him at a later point in time. It is a description of the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son.

Jesus was always the Son before he came to the earth. We read in 1 John 4:9: <sup>9</sup>“God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his one and only Son into the world so that we might live through him.” The Son was always with the Father until the Father sent him to earth to accomplish the mission of redemption for God’s people.

And we something of the eternal relationship that the Father and the Son had before he came to the earth in his prayer the night before his crucifixion in John 17:5. He prayed:

<sup>5</sup>“Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.”

What is Jesus saying here? he is saying that before he was sent to the earth he shared the same glory that the Father had, and that he is returning to that glory.

Who can claim to be worthy of the same glory that God the Father has had from all eternity? A mere human had better not even dare to do this! But Jesus declares that he shares the same glory that belongs to the Father.

So not only the glory of the Father and Son are the same glory, but as the Creed says, the Son is “Light from Light” and “true God from True God.”

In order to cap off this whole declaration, and to confirm again the eternal deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is one more short sentence which says, “Through him all things were made.”

All things were made through Christ. If he made all things, then he could not have been made by God the Father as Arius and others claim. He himself was Creator, as Colossians 1:16 states:

<sup>6</sup>“For (by Him [that is, Jesus] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.”

The true doctrine of Jesus Christ as revealed in the scriptures will always be attacked by unbelievers who refuse to accept the revelation of the Scriptures. The true identity of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, must always be treasured and declared by the Christian Church.

Once again, hear the section of the Nicene Creed that we have been studying together today:

**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.**

If you haven't already done so, won't you take your place in the history of the Christian church and join true believers from every century and every people in bowing your knees before Jesus Christ and confess him as your own Lord and Savior? Therein is found true joy and eternal life. Amen.

*I invite you to join me in prayer:*

Holy Father, what you reveal in your Word regarding yourself and your Son the Lord Jesus Christ is so wonderful that we can scarcely take it in. Give us increased understanding and deeper commitment. Enable us to know you more intimately in the enlightenment of our minds and in the depths of our being. Reveal your Son to us, and through us, and may his name be glorified in all the earth. Amen.

Thank you for joining us today and hope you will join us again for our next study. This channel is a ministry of Good Shepherd Church, a Baptist Reformed Fellowship that meets in east Dallas. Our website is [www.gscddallas.org](http://www.gscddallas.org).

For any questions or comments feel free to call me at 214-730-0114. Please leave a voice message and I will get back to you.

Hear now the benediction of the Lord:

The Lord bless you and keep you;

<sup>25</sup> The Lord make His face shine upon you,

And be gracious to you;

<sup>26</sup> The Lord turn his face toward you,

And give you peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” (Num. 6:24-26)

Copyright 2020 by Jeff Gregory  
Good Shepherd Community Church  
Dallas, Texas