

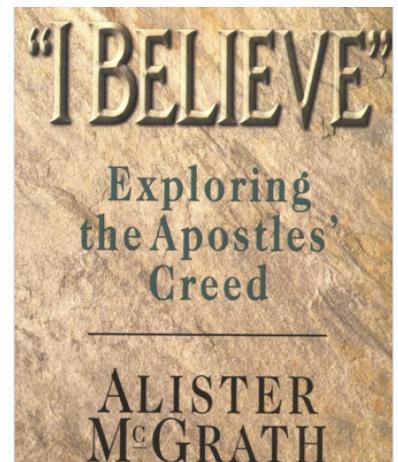


# “I Believe”

From

*I Believe:  
Exploring the Apostles’  
Creed*

© 1991, 1997, Alister  
McGrath



**New Hope Baptist Church  
Romulus, AL**

<b>Session 1: Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Session 2: God the Father Almighty</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Session 3: God the Creator</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Session 4: Jesus, His only Son</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Session 5: Jesus, His only Son, Our Lord</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Session 6: Jesus, Conceived of the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Session 7: Jesus, Suffered under Pontius Pilate</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Session 8: Jesus, Died, Buried, and Risen Again</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Session 9: Jesus, Ascended</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Session 10: Jesus, Returning</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Session 11: The Holy Spirit</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Session 12: The Holy Catholic Church</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Session 13: The Communion of Saints</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Session 14: The Forgiveness of Sins</b>	<b>30</b>

I conducted this study of the Apostles' Creed at New Hope Baptist Church in 2011. Although I know most Baptists automatically recoil at any mention of a "creed," you'll find my reasons for disagreeing as you read this study.

In short, everyone has a creed; everyone believes something. The Apostles' Creed simply gives Christians a framework we can use to explain more fully our beliefs about the God who created us and loves us with an everlasting love. The Creed helps us explain our beliefs about Jesus' redemptive work and the Holy Spirit's participation in our lives today.

As always, with anything you find on my site, this work is not for sale. Also, as always, please contact me if you find doctrinal errors in this document. You may contact me at [johnalex1@mac.com](mailto:johnalex1@mac.com).

One last thing: All errors are mine. All glory belongs to God, my Father; Christ, my Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, my Sustainer.

JA

# 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.

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 resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

## Session 1: Introduction

- Question: Can you describe your faith in 500 words or less?
- The Apostles Creed dates from the earliest days of Christianity, within a half-century of the Revelation of St. John
- In English, 123 words (fits the assignment)
- History:
  - First baptism ceremony
    - “Do you believe in God the Father Almighty?”
    - “Do you believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and His cross?”
    - “Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?”
    - Candidate was baptized after each affirmation (“I believe”)
- Definition of “creed”
  - “a system of Christian or other religious belief; a faith”
  - Origin: Latin “Credo in Deum,” “I believe in God”
  - Earliest Christians stated, “Jesus is Lord” rather than “Caesar is Lord”
  - often chose martyrdom when forced to sacrifice to Caesar, saying “Jesus is Lord”
- Why a Creed?
  - The Creed summarizes our faith
  - doesn’t replace faith, but helps us explain our faith
  - doesn’t provide an exhaustive explanation, either; important to know Scripture
  - helps us prioritize the important points of the faith
  - The Creed helps us recognize false religions
  - Major point: “to believe is to belong”
    - ties us to all Christians who have professed the faith expressed by the Creed, both past and present
    - helps us to recognize fellow believers in Christ

## Session 2: God the Father Almighty

- I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- God the “Father:” refers only to the God who is the Father of Our Lord, Jesus
  - Not a philosophical concept: God “revealed Himself in Scripture and supremely in Jesus Christ”
  - Our God is a living and personal God, not an abstract idea
  - The Lord’s Prayer is addressed to “Our Father”
  - Jesus addressed God as “Father” (Matt. 6:9, John 14:2, John 14:6)
  - St. Paul says believers may address God as “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6)
    - “Abba” does not mean “Daddy”
  - God as Father cares for us
  - God as Father created us
    - Gen 1:26: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”
    - Psalm 139:13: “For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb”
  - God knows our weakness, our fears, and our failures
- God the Almighty
  - Analogy breaks down when we remember God is Almighty
  - God is source of all power and authority
  - Romans 13:8: “there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God”
  - God is able to do all things
  - Gabriel to Mary: “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37)
  - Can God do the impossible, e.g. a 4-sided triangle?
  - “Omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense.” - C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed

- Almighty does not mean “capricious or whimsical”
- God keeps His promises
- God will not break a promise by changing His mind

## Session 3: God the Creator

- “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.”
- Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth”
- Rev. 4:11: “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created”
- God is creative
- God speaks through creation
  - Psalm 19:1: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork”
  - Romans 1:20: “His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made”
- Nature expresses the magnificence of God
  - Complexity: God is infinite in majesty
  - Scope: God is infinite in all things
  - Beauty: God creates beautiful things
- God remains active in creation; “continual care”
- We are created for relationship with God
- We are created to work with God
- We are created for relationship with God
  - Only a relationship with our Creator will fulfill us completely
- Lessons:
  - God created the universe
  - When Hebrews could think of no other reason to praise God, they praised Him for the creation
  - God placed humanity here to tend His creation
  - God speaks to us through creation, but most importantly through His Son and Scripture (Heb. 1:2)

I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed

- God created us for relationship
- We owe everything to God
  - 1 Cor. 6:19-20: “You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.”

## Session 4: Jesus, His only Son

- “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.”
- Jesus, God’s Son
  - Focus of the Creed: “name and relevance of Jesus Christ”
  - Points to the first creed of Christianity: “Jesus is Lord” (Acts 2:36, 16:31; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 8:6, 12:3; Phil. 2:10-11)
  - Core of our faith: Jesus is a person, not a philosophy
  - Unlike “isms,” Jesus lives today
  - No distinction between Jesus’ message and identity
  - Jesus was not an ordinary human being
  - Accepted worship
  - Forgave sins
- The name “Jesus”
  - Jesus’ name: Comes from Hebrew “Yeshua,” “The LORD saves” or “The LORD is his help”
    - “Christ:” Greek “Christos;” Hebrew equivalent of “Messiah,” “Anointed One”
    - More a title than a name
    - Title “Christ” points to Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament
  - “Messiah”
    - “Christ:” Greek “Christos;” Hebrew equivalent of “Messiah,” “Anointed One”
    - Kings were anointed, as were prophets
    - Key passage: Psalm 2
      - Pointed to all Davidic kings as God’s anointed and as His “Son” (2:7)
    - Jesus alone fulfilled all the Messianic passages
- Our beliefs about Jesus

## I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed

- Christians believe:
  - Jesus lived in the first century A.D. in the area of modern day Israel
  - Jesus lived in the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius Caesar (c. 27 B.C. to A.D 37)
  - Jesus was born in the reign of Herod the Great (37 B.C. to 4 B.C.)
  - Jesus was crucified in the time of Pontius Pilate as governor (A.D. 26-36)
- “Son of God”
  - Christians believe in Jesus as the “Son of God”
  - In Old Testament, term referred to:
    - angels (Job 38:7, Psalm 82:6)
    - Messiah (Psalm 2:7)
  - In New Testament, term referred only to Jesus
  - John 5:16-27; 17:1-26
  - Jesus referred to Himself as “Son of God”
  - Resurrection proves Jesus’ identity (Rom. 1:3-4)
    - Christians are referred to as God’s “children,” but Jesus is called His “Son”
- “Savior”
  - Christians believe Jesus brought salvation
    - Jesus saves us from sin (Matt. 1:21)
    - Angels referred to Jesus as “Savior” at His birth (Luke 2:11)
    - Salvation comes only through Jesus (Acts 4:12)
  - Old Testament says salvation comes only in God (Isaiah 45:21-22); Jesus cannot save us unless He is God
- “Lord”
  - Old Testament: God declared worship only of Himself (Exodus 20:3-7)
  - Jesus accepted worship in His life
  - Christians worshiped Jesus from the beginnings of the Church

## Session 5: Jesus, His only Son, Our Lord

- “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.”
- “Jesus is Lord”
- Old Testament names for God:
  - “Elohim”: translated “God”
  - common name for God
  - “YHWH” (“Yahweh”): translated “LORD”
    - “God spoke to Moses and said to him, ‘I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them’” (Exodus 6:2-3)
- YHWH: the Tetragrammaton (sacred 4 letters)
  - Not used by Jews; heard only in the priestly blessing
    - “The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24-26)
- Old Testament: God declared worship only of Himself (Exodus 20:3-7)
- When scholars translated Hebrew to Greek, they used the term “Kurios” (“Lord”) to translate YHWH
  - Word “Kurios” came to refer to God Himself
- Jesus accepted worship in His life
  - Wise Men worshiped Him in His infancy
  - Other examples:
    - Disciples (Matt. 14:33)
    - Blind man Jesus healed (John 9:38)
    - Disciples worshiped Jesus after His resurrection (Matt. 28:9; John 20:28)
- Disciples realized the Resurrection proclaimed Jesus as LORD
  - Acts 2:36: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified”

- Apostles used Old Testament passages referring to the LORD to refer to Jesus
  - Joel 2:32: “everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved”
  - Acts 2:21: “it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”
- Christians worshiped Jesus from the beginnings of the Church
  - Confessing Jesus as Lord became the hallmark of professing Christians
    - Romans 10:9: “if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”
- God has exalted Jesus as Lord of all: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11)
- Word once used to refer only to the Father now used to refer to Jesus as well
- McGrath: “To believe that Jesus is Lord, therefore, involves more than believing He has authority over us...; it makes a direct and powerful claim to the divinity of Jesus Christ. To confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is to proclaim His equality with God. It makes a statement about Jesus’ relation to God.... It affirms that He is, or should be, the Lord of our lives” (p. 44)

## Session 6: Jesus, Conceived of the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary

- “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.”
- “Conceived of the Holy Spirit”
  - Matt. 1:18: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit”
  - Gabriel’s words: ““The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:35)
- The Virgin Birth
  - Luke 1:34: “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”
  - Major witness of the Church to the Virgin Birth: St. Luke, a physician
  - Jesus was born of a human mother (Gal. 4:4)
  - Jesus is:
    - “a human being, like us”
    - “the ‘Son of God’ in every sense of the term”
  - Jesus did not “become” the Son of God
    - God did not “adopt” a man as His Son
    - Jesus was not “a divine being who masqueraded as a human being”
  - The importance of the virgin birth
    - Ties to prophecy (Isaiah 7:14)
    - Stresses Jesus’ divine nature
    - Rebuts the accusation that Jesus was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier
      - Mark 6:3: “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon?”

- Jesus' True Nature

- If Jesus were an ordinary human being, then He could not save us from sin (He would require redemption, too)
- If Jesus were only God, "He has no point of contact with us"
- Heb. 4:15: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin"
- 1 Tim. 2:5: "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"
- 1 John 2:1: "But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"

## Session 7: Jesus, Suffered under Pontius Pilate

- “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.”
- Why does the Creed mention Pontius Pilate?
  - Answer: historical accuracy
  - Helps us date the Resurrection
  - Pontius Pilate: Governor of Judea, A.D. 26-36
    - Dedicatory stone with Pilate’s inscription found at Caesarea Maritime
  - Pilate was appointed by emperor Tiberius, A.D. 26
  - Josephus: Pilate built an aqueduct to Jerusalem but also upset the Jews
  - Apparently slaughtered Galilean Jews at one point (Luke 13:1); led to trouble with Rome
- Pilate ties us to history
  - God acts in history; the Son of God lived, ministered, and died in a historical context
- Jesus was condemned by the religious leadership of His people; also condemned by Pilate, the Roman political leader
- Jesus’ suffering in prophecy: Isaiah 53
  - “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (53:4-5)
- Jesus’ suffering in the Garden: Luke 22
  - “And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:41-44)



- Jesus' suffering under the Jews
  - "When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand" (John 18:22)
  - "Then they spit in His face and struck Him. And some slapped Him" (Matt. 26:67)
- Jesus' suffering under the Romans
  - "Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and struck him with their hands" (John 19:1-3)
    - Scourging: so brutal Roman law prohibited its use on Roman citizens
    - Crucifixion: also prohibited for Roman citizens
- Importance of Jesus' suffering
  - Jesus' suffering in life
  - "We cannot believe in a God who stays safely in his heaven while all this suffering goes on. We cannot take that sort of God seriously. If he doesn't know what it is like to suffer, he cannot know anything about us" (McGrath, p. 58)
  - Jesus knows suffering:
    - betrayal by friends
    - betrayal by friends in the Garden
    - betrayal by Jewish leadership:
      - court held at night to prevent Jesus' supporters from knowing of His trial
      - relied on false witnesses
    - betrayal by political leadership (Pilate)
    - physical suffering of a scourging and crucifixion

## Session 8: Jesus, Died, Buried, and Risen Again

- “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. On the third day he rose again.”
- Jesus’ death points us to Calvary (Golgotha)
- All 4 Gospel accounts verify secular accounts of a crucifixion
- Crucifixion left no room for “swooning”
  - “But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water” (John 19:34)
    - Medical diagnosis: Jesus’ blood separated into clot and serum; occurs at death
- “Crucifixion was a punishment reserved for the lowest criminals; thus Jesus’ death by crucifixion implies that He was one of their number” (p. 60)
- Jesus did not die for His sins, but for ours
  - “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3)
  - “God suffered in Christ, taking upon Himself the suffering and pain of the world He created” (p. 58)
  - “Christianity is not just about the historical fact that Jesus was crucified; it is about the astonishing and thrilling truth that He died in order that we might be forgiven” (p. 60)
- “He descended to the dead”
  - This means that Jesus really died
  - Old version in English: “He descended into hell” (from the Latin “inferno”)
  - “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” (1 Peter 3:18)
- “Jesus shared the fate of all those who have died” (p. 62)
- “Jesus’ divinity did not compromise His humanity” (p. 62)
- On Good Friday, God “seemed absent, only to be shown to have been working in a hidden and mysterious way to transform it in a totally unexpected manner” (p. 69)
- “On the third day He rose again”

- "...that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. 15:4-6)
- Jesus' resurrection didn't occur in a closet!
  - "For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner" (Acts 26:26) "King:" Herod Agrippa II, great-grandson of Herod the Great
- Why is the Resurrection so important?
  - "It tells us about God:" He is the One who raised Jesus from the dead (p. 64)
  - "It tells us about Jesus:" it demonstrates His vital unity with God Himself (p. 64)
  - Jesus is "the Son of God, suffering pain and rejection for us" (p. 65)
  - "It tells us about ourselves as believers:" Faith binds us to Jesus Christ , so we share in His adoption (p. 65)
  - "Those who, through faith, are united to Jesus Christ will one day share in His resurrection" (p. 65)
  - "What our Lord is, we shall be as well" (p. 65)
  - "There is no resurrection without suffering and the cross" (p. 66)
  - "Where there is no cross, there is also no resurrection" (p. 66)
- Jesus destroyed the power of death in His resurrection

### **Holy Sonnet X: "Death, Be not Proud"**

**John Donne (1572-1631)**

**Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou thinkst thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be  
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow  
And soonest our best men with thee do go  
Rest of their bones and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppies or charms can make us sleep as well  
And better than thy stroke. Why swellst thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die!**

## Session 9: Jesus, Ascended

- “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. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”
- Jesus rose again on Easter
  - Seen by over 500 people, including all the Apostles
  - Remained on earth for 40 days
  - Question: Where did He go?
- “And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9)
  - The Creed: “He ascended into heaven”
- Sixth Thursday after Easter: Ascension Day
- Jesus came to earth to redeem humanity; He ascended to heaven to intercede for us
  - “He came down to earth from heaven in great humility; He returns to heaven in triumph and glory, having accomplished all that was necessary for our salvation” (p. 74)
- “God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name” (Phil. 2:9)
- Jesus ascended, but He left a mission for the Apostles
  - “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20)
- Jesus did not leave us:
  - “In no way does the ascension of Christ mean that Christ is now absent from His world” (p. 74)
  - The book of Acts demonstrates Jesus’ presence in the world
  - “Through the resurrection Christ broke down the barriers of time and space, allowing Himself to be available to all” (p. 74)

- Christ lives within us: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20)
- Jesus: Now with God
  - “Seated at the right hand of the Father”
  - Favor and status: “Jesus’ being allocated this place of honor confirms His unique status” (p. 75)
  - St. Stephen: “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56)
  - “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12)
  - “Jesus has the Father’s ear” (p. 75)
    - “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Rom. 8:34)
    - “Christians pray in the name of Jesus Christ, acknowledging that the effectiveness of their prayers rests on what Jesus Christ has achieved in the past and will achieve in the future” (p. 75)

## Session 10: Jesus, Returning

- “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. 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.”
- Christians have always taught that Jesus will return because He said He would
- Jesus will not only return; He will judge all people and nations
  - “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations” (Matt. 25:31-32)
- Other religions also believe in a last judgment
  - Judaism
  - Islam
  - Zoroastrianism
- Belief in the Last Judgment goes back to Daniel
  - “many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2)
- New Testament consistently teaches Jesus will return to judge the “living and the dead” (1 Pet. 4:5)
  - “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done” (Rev. 20:11-12)
- Those who believe in Jesus should not fear the judgment
  - “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1)
  - “Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us” (Rom. 8:34)
  - “We are being judged by someone who knows us totally” (p. 76)

I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed

- God will judge us in complete knowledge (Psalm 139:1-4)
- Jesus knew about those He met (John 1:47-50, 4:18)
- “We are being judged by someone who is passionately committed to us” (p. 77)
  - “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16)
  - McGrath, pp. 77-78: East Anglian shepherds
  - “When a shepherd died, he would be buried in a coffin packed full of wool”
  - Motive: Jesus would recognize the person as a shepherd
  - Jesus, the “good shepherd,” would have mercy on the shepherd
  - “We are not dealing with a distant God who knows nothing of what being human means” (p. 78)
- “We are judged by someone whom we know and trust” (p. 78)
  - “Our response to the tender image of Christ dying on the cross determines our attitude toward God and the results this brings in its wake” (p. 78)
  - “Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me” (John 12:44)
- “Faith is the basis of divine judgment” (p. 79)
  - “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1)

## Session 11: The Holy Spirit

- “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. 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 Trinity includes God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit
  - 1 God in 3 Persons, not 3 separate Gods
- The Holy Spirit is not an emotion
- The Holy Spirit is God Himself
- In both Hebrew and Greek, word for “spirit” also translates as “breath” or “wind”
- The Holy Spirit brings life
  - God breathed life into Adam (Gen. 2:7)
  - God brings life to empty shells
  - Valley of Dry Bones: “Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live” (Ezek. 37:9)
  - The Holy Spirit brings new life to God’s creation
- The Holy Spirit brings power
  - The Spirit acts as an “unseen force” in God’s people (p. 80)
  - The Holy Spirit entered the Church on Pentecost Day, A.D. 33
  - The Holy Spirit indwells all believers
    - The Spirit represents “God in action”
- The Holy Spirit convicts us
  - We cannot convince people they are sinners
  - “And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11)
- The Holy Spirit, our Pledge
  - The Holy Spirit acts as a “pledge” of our salvation (Eph. 1:14)

I Believe: Exploring the Apostles' Creed

- Greek word for “pledge” means “guarantee” or “down payment”
- “God places His Spirit in our hearts as a down payment” (p. 81)
- The Holy Spirit, our Comforter
  - Jesus promised He would send a “Comforter”
    - “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him” (John 14:16-17)
  - Greek word for “comfort” also means to strengthen, to urge on
- The Spirit’s Gifts
  - St. Paul: The Holy Spirit gives gifts for the Church (1 Cor 12)
    - “All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (v. 11)
  - “Remember that gifts are gifts, not rewards” (p. 87)
  - McGrath’s points:
    - “Our talents are gifts from God”
    - “God’s gifts are given in order to be used”
      - Spiritual gifts are not “some kind of ornament, there just to decorate you and make you a more interesting person”
    - “God’s gifts increase when they are used”
      - Matt. 25:14-30: Parable of the Talents

## Session 12: The Holy Catholic Church

- “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. 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 Church
  - In Scripture, Greek word “ekklesia” is translated as “church:” means “assembly”
    - Literal meaning: “those called out”
  - “Ekklesia” refers to a group of people, not a building
  - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9)
- The “Four Marks” of a true Church:
  1. The Church is one
  2. The Church is holy
  3. The Church is catholic
  4. The Church is apostolic
- The Church is one
  - The Church is based on the foundation of Jesus Christ
  - “And he is the head of the body, the church” (Col. 1:18)
  - In spite of the apparent disunity of the Church, we remain part of one Church as long as we remain united to Christ
  - “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call — one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6)
  - We must seek and maintain the unity of the Church
  - Jesus prayed for our unity: ““I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21)

- The Church is Holy
  - Word “saint” comes from Greek word for “holy” (“hagios”)
  - “Holy:” Consecrated to God
  - Problem: We often don’t see the “saints” as holy
  - “When he goes inside, he sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him one shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands... When he gets to his pew and looks round him he sees just that selection of his neighbors whom he has hitherto avoided” (C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*)
- The Church is Catholic
  - The word “catholic” does not mean “Roman Catholic”
  - Term means “universal”
  - McGrath: “In saying that the Church is catholic, we are affirming that its message is valid and relevant to every age and every situation” (p. 93)
  - “Catholic” is an affirmation of the universal validity and relevance of the gospel” (p. 93)
- The Church is Apostolic
  - The Church “continues steadfastly in the faith and teaching of the first Apostles and gladly accepts the Great Commission entrusted to them” (p. 93)
  - We have inherited and proclaim “the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)
- The 4 Marks “point to a worldwide body of believers whose sole foundation is Jesus Christ, who have been entrusted with the Apostles’ faith and responsibilities to proclaim the gospel throughout history, knowing that it is of continued vital relevance to the human race” (p. 93)

## Session 13: The Communion of Saints

- “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. 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 Church
  - In Scripture, Greek word “ekklesia” is translated as “church:” means “assembly”
    - Literal meaning: “those called out”
  - “Ekklesia” refers to a group of people, not a building
  - “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9)
- In New Testament, “church” never refers to a building; it refers to a group of believers
- “The church is not a static building but a dynamic pilgrim people who are constantly moving on in faith and obedience” (p. 94)
- “Communion:” old English word for “fellowship”
  - The Church exists “to support its members”
- Greek word for “fellowship” (“koinonia”) implies “sharing”
  - We share sorrows and trials, joys and celebrations
  - The strong have a responsibility to care for the weak in the Church and society
  - The rich has a responsibility to care for the poor as well
    - Scriptural imperative, in both both Testaments
- “Saint:” literally, “holy one”
  - Groucho Marx: “I wouldn’t want to join a club that would have me as a member”
- Our holiness comes from our calling as believers, not from our works
  - “We have been called by a holy God and have responded to Him” (p. 95)
- A saint is “someone who is consecrated to God” (p. 96)
- “Consecration:” “being set apart”

- We are “set apart to remind people of Jesus Christ” (p. 97)
- “We do not suddenly become holy and righteous; indeed, sin remains a major threat to our Christian lives” (p. 97)
- “Communion of saints” does not imply a “holy club;” “It means that we believe in a holy God who has called us as individuals into a community, within which his work of renewal and regeneration can take place” (p. 96)
- “God calls us while we are sinners into a community within which His work of healing can begin” (p. 96)
- St. Augustine: “the church is rather like a hospital. It is full of sick people who are desperately hoping to get cured” (p. 96)
- “The Church is a fellowship of forgiven sinners who confidently hope, by God’s grace, to become a fellowship of saints” (p. 96)
- We have been “set apart from the world” (p. 97)
- Still, we are also a “fellowship of forgiven sinners who are in the process of becoming holy” (p. 97)
- “We are righteous on account of God’s having clothed us with His righteousness” (p. 97)
- “Although we remain sinners externally, we thus live in hope, knowing that God is at work within us, renewing and rebuilding us from within” (p. 97)
- The Communion of Saints includes all believers from all ages, both those alive and those who now live in heaven (Heb. 12:1)

## Session 14: The Forgiveness of Sins

- “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. 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....”
- “Forgiveness of sins:” the part of the Creed that addresses what Jesus did for humanity for our salvation
- The Creed merely states that we believe in the forgiveness of sins; doesn’t try to elaborate on how Jesus accomplished our salvation
- Four concepts to explain the death and resurrection of Jesus:
  1. Forgiveness of sins
  2. Reconciliation
  3. Salvation
  4. Redemption
- Forgiveness: “Most powerful and familiar concept used to explain the significance of Christ’s death and resurrection for believers”
- Forgiveness interpreted in 2 ways: “legally and personally”
  - Legally: “remission of a debt”
    - Jesus paid our debt; He “wiped out our guilt by His death on the cross” (p. 99)
  - Personally: sin separates us from God; Jesus’ death and resurrection help restore the relationship
- “The barrier between human beings and God has been broken down by the death of Jesus Christ” (p. 100)
- Reconciliation
  - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to



Watanabe, “The Prodigal Son Returns”

himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17-19)

- Greatest example of reconciliation in Scripture: Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15)
  - God accepts every prodigal who comes home!
- Salvation
  - Greek word: "soteria:" used 46 times in the New Testament
  - "Expresses the idea of deliverance, preservation or rescue from a dangerous situation" (p. 101)
  - Jesus' death and resurrection "is understood to deliver us from the fear of death and the power of sin" (p. 101)
  - Salvation: we are restored to spiritual wholeness and health
- Redemption
  - To redeem: "to buy it back"
  - St. Paul used the term as a picture of "redemption of slaves"; "a slave could redeem himself by buying his freedom
  - "Christ's death and resurrection set us free from our bondage to sin and death" (p. 102)
  - "We have been freed from bondage to sin at the cost of the death of Jesus Christ" (p. 102)

## • **Session 15: The Resurrection and Life Everlasting**

- “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. 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 resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.”
- The Resurrection of the Body
  - “The Creed ends on a positive note, with a clear statement of the Christian hope” (p. 102)
  - “All believers will share in His glorious resurrection” (p. 102)
  - “Christians will be where Jesus now is” (p. 102)
  - “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (John 14:1-3)
  - Connection between the resurrection of Jesus and future resurrection: Our adoption
    - The difference between “sons of God” (believers) and the Son of God (Jesus Christ)
    - Through faith, we receive the same status as Jesus, even though we do not have the divine nature of Jesus
    - “Adopted children have the same inheritance rights as a natural son” (p. 103)
    - “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom. 8:16-17)
- “Life Everlasting:” The expression in the Creed that speaks of “eternal life”
  - “Having affirmed that we will one day share Christ’s resurrection, the Creed now hints at what form our existence will take” (p. 104)
  - Two Greek words for life:
    - “Bios:” biological existence (p. 104)
    - “Zoe:” life in all its fullness (p. 104)
  - “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10)

- “Life” in this verse comes from Greek word “zoe”
- “Eternal life means that our relationship with God is not destroyed or thwarted by death, but is continued and deepened by it” (p. 104)
- Eternal life begins in this life, not at death
- Jesus’ words at Lazarus’ death: “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26)
- “To come to faith in Jesus Christ is to begin a new relationship with God that is not abolished by death but is actually deepened — death sweeps away the remaining obstacles to our experiencing the presence of God” (p. 105)
- “Eternal life is inaugurated, but not fulfilled, in our present life as believers” (p. 105)
- “To enter fully into eternal life... is to extend and deepen our experience of the presence and love of God” (p. 105)
- “Amen!”
  - “The Creed is as much a prayer as a statement of faith” (p. 105)
  - “To say ‘Amen!’ to the Creed is to pray that the power and presence of God might touch our lives, deepen our love for Him and enhance our understanding of His gospel” (p. 105)
  - “The Creed will have done its job, and done it well, if it propels us out into God’s world, determined to serve Him with the same faithfulness and dedication as those who first used this Creed all those centuries ago” (p. 105)
  - “We have not been dealing with ideas but with the living God” (p. 111)