

I BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER ALMIGHTY,
MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,
AND IN JESUS CHRIST, HIS ONLY SON OUR
WHO WAS CONCEIVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT,
BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY,
SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE,
WAS CRUCIFIED, HE DIED AND WAS BURIED.

THE APOSTLES CREED



Firm Foundations for your Faith

Peter Hammond

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The Apostles Creed

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 Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, He died and was buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into Heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God,
the Father Almighty;
from there He shall come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit;
Christ's holy universal Church,
the fellowship of Christians,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.

Amen

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*"But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the Truth, to which He called you by our Gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord, Jesus Christ. **Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by Word or our epistle.** Now, may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, Who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work."*
2Thessalonians 2:13-17

God has called us to salvation through sanctification by the Holy Spirit and belief in the truth. We are called to stand fast in this truth, and to hold fast to the apostolic traditions. When we understand the times, and rightly divide the Word of Truth, we will be more effective in God's service. We will be more effective in evangelism and discipleship, when we know **what** we believe and **why** we believe it, and know **how** to defend it in argument.

Always Ready

We are commanded to: *"...always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you..."* 1 Peter 3:15

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If you are asked, can you define the essentials of your Faith? Would you be able to give an answer for the hope that is in you? Do you know **what** you believe? And **why** you believe it? Would you know what to say

As the Lord's Prayer is the prayer of prayers, and The Ten Commandments is the Law of laws, so the Apostles' Creed is the Creed of creeds.

A Creed is a confession, a declaration, and an affirmation. It is a handy statement, a summary of the foundational teachings of Scripture. The Apostles Creed makes an ideal personal statement of our Biblical convictions because it neatly summarises truths that the Bible reveals, and requires, for salvation.

However, many individuals are hostile to the very idea of creeds. I have regularly heard pastors declaring: *"I have no Creed but Christ!"*

Identifying Idolatry

That sounds all very well, but the question arises: Which Christ? All too many people have a very strange distortion of who Jesus is. We had a well-known political priest declare that he could never worship a god that was 'homophobic'. *"If homosexuals don't go to heaven,"* he declared, *"I don't want to go there!"*

Frequently, when engaged in personal evangelism, we hear individuals declare: *"My god could never send*

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anyone to hell!" We need to agree with them. Their god could not, because their god does not exist. He is a figment of their imagination. They have violated the second Commandment by making an idol in the temple of their own minds.

We have had an individual apply for work at our mission and declare that she had had an abortion because she had prayed and asked "*what would Jesus do*" in her situation? She confidently declared that she knew that in her situation Jesus would have also had an abortion!

There are so many un-Biblical, imaginative, idolatrous perceptions of who people think God may be. To some people God is the impersonal figurehead of their religious convictions, something like a constitutional monarch, whom they sing about, but who is not allowed to interfere in their daily life.

Bible Based

Credo's have no power unless they are grounded firmly in Scripture. The Apostles Creed is the most widely used summary for Christianity that the Church has ever composed. It is time tested, Biblically faithful, historically rooted and widely accepted. The Apostles Creed is concise. It is simple and short. Brief and Biblical.

It incorporates Scriptures such as these:

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"...There is one God, the Father, of Whom are all things,...and one Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom are all things, and through Whom we live."

1 Corinthians 8:6

"For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures,... and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures."

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

We can see from these and many other Scriptures that the Apostles Creed is firmly rooted in, and flows out from, the Scriptures.

The Apostles Creed is faithful to what the apostle Paul calls *"the pattern of doctrine"* Romans 6:17 and *"the pattern of sound words"* 2 Timothy 1:13.

Although the Apostles Creed is brief and simple, it is profound and packed full of momentous truths. When Reformer John Calvin set out to explain the heart of the Livingstone Fellowship Protestant Faith in his monumentally important *Institutes of the Christian Religion* he structured it around The Apostles Creed. The Apostles Creed is simple enough for a four year old to memorise, but profound enough to preoccupy some of the greatest Theological minds in history.

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"I Believe"

"I believe..." The first word of The Apostles Creed in Latin is: Credo. This is where we get the word "creed" from.

From its first word The Apostles Creed is personal. A declaration of individual Faith. Although all Christians share foundational truths, the Faith we affirm, in the Apostles Creed, must be our own. I believe. By beginning in this way the Creed emphasises our personal individual responsibility.

As a child of God I have the privilege to say: *"I believe."* We do not stand alone. We are part of a great communion of saints, which is mentioned later in the Creed. However, while we speak in concert with all the Church through all the ages, we are affirming our own personal Faith.

When Jesus asked the blind man whom He had healed: *"Do you believe in the Son of God?"* he answered:

"Lord, I believe!" and he worshiped Him (John 9:35-38).

When we stand on a Sunday morning and raise our voice, along with all the congregation, to recite The Apostles Creed, it can be a very meaningful experience of affirming our Faith, and re-dedicating our life to the Word of God and to the God of the Word.

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Assent

It is important to have our Faith rooted in eternal and unshakable Truth. There are two aspects to Faith: Belief and behaviour. Our belief is rooted in our intellectual assent, knowing, but our trust must result in action. There is a difference between "*I believe that...*" and "*I believe in...*"

Action

There is an aspect of Faith which is intellectual assent, a rational commitment to the truth that we know from the Scriptures, but this must result in action. Confident Faith in action is where we step out in obedience.

Biblical Faith is not a blind leap into the dark. Biblical Faith is an intelligent step into the light. It is a response to truth. Our Faith is rooted in facts. Our mental assent is the intellectual side of our Faith. This deals with what we believe, the doctrines of our Faith. We are commanded to renew our minds. God invites us to reason together with Him. Believers are not to abandon common sense and knowledge. The Christian Faith is never ignorant nor unreasonable.

The study of God's Word takes discipline and mental application. Those who claim to have Faith but refuse to study the truths of God's Word will be very vulnerable to being led astray. Those ignorant of God's Word will be easy targets for deception and

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manipulation by the unscrupulous. There are many warnings in the Bible against being deceived by false prophets.

Christianity has its foundations rooted in historical reality, truth and reason. Our Faith is supported by the hard, verifiable facts of history. As the apostle Paul declared: *"I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."* 2 Timothy 1:12

Relationship

However, this intellectual aspect is only one part of our Faith. The second element deals with our relationship with God. Faith is not just understanding the truth, it is acting upon those truths. In His earthly ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ was scathing in His denunciations of those hypocrites who claimed to have Faith, but whose lives were without the fruit of Faith.

A Living Faith

The Christian Faith, is not only knowing, it is doing. The apostle James declared: *"Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* James 2:17. We have a living Faith in a living God, and it affects all of life.

Sound reason and commitment to study the truths of God's Word and God's Will constitute the intellectual side of our Faith and serve to protect us from being led astray. However, it is the trust and relationship side of

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Faith that gives it life. Biblical Faith is always a matter of head and heart, belief and behaviour.

We also recognise that Faith is the echo that God's call creates in the hearts of those who believe. Faith, first of all, is a work of God's grace. God is the source of all true Faith. Our Faith comes in response to God's gracious Revelation.

So, what does the Apostles Creed proclaim?

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

Martin Luther declared that The Apostles' Creed is the prayer of beginnings. It is that prayer which reminds us of the essential beliefs that make us Christian. It is the prayer that places us before God before we have asked, or even thanked, Him for anything.

As Francis Schaeffer declared: *"God is there and He is not silent."* God has spoken through the prophets and in and through His Son. Jesus Christ is God's eloquent and gracious Statement to a fallen world. This is why the Scriptures call the Lord Jesus Christ the *Logos*, the Word (John 1:1).

The Fatherhood of God

We believe in God the Creator of Heaven and of earth. He is All-powerful and He is our Father. We have not

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only been created, and redeemed, but adopted into His family as His sons and daughters.

One of the classic testimonies of a Muslim who came to Christ is the book: *"I Dared To Call Him Father."*

The concept of God as our Father is unique to Christianity. Islam does not consider their allah as their father.

"You, O Lord, are our Father; our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your Name." Isaiah 63:16

The Fatherhood of Yahweh is unique to the one true God. Jesus constantly referred to God as Father. At age twelve, He told Mary and Joseph that He had to be about His Father's business (Luke 2:49). When our Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to address God as: *"Our Father..."* (Matthew 6:9).

Jesus taught that to see Him was to see the Father. He and the Father are One. Our Lord Jesus Christ is living proof of the immeasurable love of the heavenly Father.

We are not talking about the abstract, impersonal, first cause, or prime mover, described by philosophers. The Creed is talking about far more than the exalted God of Israel Who thundered from the mountaintop, but Whose face could not be looked upon.

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The apostle Paul explained that Jesus is "*the image of the invisible God*" Colossians 1:15.

When we are born from above and adopted into His family we are secured in a family far more extensive and important than any human family can ever be. We have the privilege to witness some of the wonders of our Creator God, to sing His praises, and we have an eternal Home with our heavenly Father.

It is no wonder that Christianity has produced the greatest art and music in all of history. Christianity is a singing religion. This is something unique amongst all the religions of the world. The depth and variety and magnificence of the music which Christians have produced through the ages to celebrate the beauty of our God and His creation are incomparable.

2. "I believe in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord"

The Apostles Creed is one of the most succinct summaries ever written about the Life and Mission of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ Centred

When we confess our Faith in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, we acknowledge the centre of the Creed and the heart of our knowledge of God.

Belief in "a god" is not unique to Christianity, but believing in God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ is

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unique. It is our relationship to Jesus Christ that gives our Faith its distinctive identity.

The Name, Jesus Christ, is an interesting combination of Hebrew and Greek. *Yeshua* means God is Saviour. The angel commanded Mary and Joseph: "*You shall call His Name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*" Matthew 1:21.

Jesus is also called the Christ. This is a Greek word for the Hebrew title Messiah, meaning Anointed One.

The combination of the Hebrew *Yeshua* and the Greek *Christos* in the Name Jesus Christ demonstrates His universal significance to all nations. He is the only Saviour by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

By acknowledging Jesus as the Christ we recognise that He is the long awaited Messiah promised through many prophets. We recognise the Hebrew roots of Christianity and that He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

In the synagogue of His hometown Jesus Christ declared the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled: "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those*

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who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable Year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-21)

The Apostles Creed echoes the great confession of the apostle Peter to the Lord Jesus: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16-17).

Lord of All

Acknowledging Jesus as our Lord is the very essence of our Christian Faith. This commits us to obeying His commands. On the very first Christmas the angel proclaimed Him *"Lord"* (Luke 2:11).

When we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord we recognise our duty to worship, honour, serve and obey Him. We willingly submit our time, talents and treasures to extend His Kingdom. We rearrange our lives and priorities around His Will. His Great Commission is our supreme ambition.

The early Christians were confronted with a life and death decision: Choose *Kyrios Christos* (Christ is Lord) or *Kyrios Kaisar* (Caesar is Lord). Christians were not persecuted for worshipping Christ. They were persecuted for refusing to worship Caesar.

One of the earliest confessions of the early Church is: Jesus is Lord. In the battle between God and the state, the Scriptures declare Christ: *"King of kings and Lord of lords"* (1 Timothy 6:15).

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"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the Name which is above every name, that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11

As the Son of God, Jesus Christ is the perfect expression of God, and the perfect example for us to follow.

In Jesus Christ, God has left His footprints in human history.

3. "...Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary..."

To any parents the birth of a Baby is a miracle and cause for much celebration. It is most appropriate that the birth of one particular baby has been celebrated more than any other. For over 2,000 years, people have celebrated the birth of Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary. He is Immanuel (God with us). In every way the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ was extraordinary. God came to earth and was born the greatest of kings in the humblest of circumstances.

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman..." Galatians 4:4

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The birth of Jesus Christ is central to all of history - every calendar has to acknowledge that Christ is the central figure of all of history. All of our dates centre around when He was born. That is why all of history is divided into BC (Before Christ) and AD (*Anno Domini* - the year of our Lord).

The angel appeared to Mary and declared: *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* Luke 1:35

Fully God and Fully Man

The same Holy Spirit Who was active in the Creation of the world is now active in the Salvation of God's chosen in the world. As the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2) bringing life to the world, so the Holy Spirit enabled this humble and pious young virgin to become the mother of the Son of God. *"My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour"* declared Mary (Luke 1:47).

In the Incarnation we have God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, fully God and fully man.

Our Lord endured life in a fallen world and overcame temptation, giving us an example to live by. By the grace of God His awesome and terrifying holiness was

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clothed in human flesh, making Him approachable. When we acknowledge Jesus Christ conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, we recognise the dual nature of Christ's earthly life. His Divine conception and His human birth.

4. *"...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, He died and was buried. He descended into hell."*

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught: *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*

John 15:13

The Greatest Sacrifice

In the eternal sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ we discover a greater love than even the greatest people can show, because in Jesus' case He gave His life for His enemies. *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."* Luke 23:34

"But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:8

The suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross reveals the ugly consequences of sin and the incredible love of God for sinners. In those few words *"suffered under Pontius Pilate"* is summed up His betrayal, capture and illegal arrest, the beatings and mockings He endured, being stripped, flogged, spat upon, falsely

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accused and unjustly condemned, crowned with cruel thorns, abandoned and denied by His closest friends.

The suffering of the Messiah was prophesied from the very beginning in Genesis 3:15. In Isaiah 53 the prophet foretold of the suffering Saviour, wounded for our transgressions, beaten for our iniquities, by Whose stripes we are healed, led like a lamb to the slaughter.

An Historic Faith

By naming Pontius Pilate, who was the Roman procurator of Judea (26-36 AD) the Creed identifies both the time and the place of Christ's sacrifice. This is yet another indication how deeply the Christian Faith is imbedded in human history.

Although it was the Jewish religious leaders who conspired and agitated for Christ's death, they were under Roman domination at that time, and were prevented from handing down a death sentence. The high priest had to bring the prisoner before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate, to engineer the verdict he wanted.

Yet Pilate found no fault in Christ and declared His innocence to the crowds (John 18:38). However, to Pilate's eternal disgrace, he did not release the Man Whom he three times declared innocent. Compromising and crumbling under pressure, succumbing to the clamour of the crowd, Pontius Pilate issued the order for

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the Lord Jesus to be scourged and crucified (John 19:1, 16).

He Suffered For Our Sins

As the film *The Passion of the Christ* so graphically depicts, crucifixion was a distinctly cruel form of Roman torture. But even more awful than the pain, that must have racked His body, was the suffering in our Lord's soul. He cried out: "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" Matthew 27:46. The Jewish high priest had actually already offered an answer to that question. He declared that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, so that the people would not perish (John 18:14).

The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Christ died for us. He was executed. He drew His last breath in agony and gave up His Spirit with a loud cry. We have known that there are consequences for sin. The price for sin is death. The death of Jesus also demonstrates the cost of forgiveness.

However, we need to remember our Lord Jesus was not merely an innocent victim of human injustice. As He declared, no man took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own free will (John 10:18). He had wrestled in the garden, praying that this bitter cup be taken away from Him. But amongst much anguish of heart He chose to suffer and die for our salvation. Those

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cruel bystanders who taunted Jesus to call down the angels could not have realised that He could have done just that. However, while He could have called on legions of angels to deliver Him and destroy His earthly enemies, Christ died for our sins. His death was a Ransom paid for us on our behalf (1 Timothy 2:6). ***"...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..."*** 2 Corinthians 5:19. ***"He came to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found."***

After the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin, the human race was hopelessly separated from God. But Jesus came to make Atonement for our sins, to redeem us as a substitutionary Sacrifice. He took our place. The innocent suffered on behalf of the guilty.

Jesus endured death. He conquered death. He transformed death. He made death a doorway to life! Mercy is now possible and grace is freely offered because Christ has paid the price for sin.

He was buried. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus went to Pontius Pilate to plead for permission to take the Body of the Lord and give Him a decent burial. After the humiliation and horror of the crucifixion these prominent followers of the Lord Jesus gave honour to the Body of the Lord. Joseph offered his own tomb. Nicodemus applied a hundred pounds of fragrant spices.

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The Body was anointed and bound with linen, placed in the tomb and the rock was rolled into place.

Our Lord Jesus Christ died and was buried. He descended into hell. He Who became sin for us endured the punishment for sin.

Shortly after my conversion to Christ, as a new believer, in 1977, I wrote this poem:

He became like us - that we might become like Him.

He was rejected - that we might be accepted.

He was condemned - that we might be forgiven.

He was punished - that we might be pardoned.

He suffered - that we might be strengthened.

He was whipped - that we might be healed.

He was hated - that we might be loved.

He was crucified - that we might be justified.

He was tortured - that we might be comforted.

He died - that we might live.

He went to hell - that we might go to Heaven.

He endured what we deserve - that we might enjoy what only He deserves.

The Reality of Hell

Hell is a real place. Most of what we know about hell comes from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Our Lord preached on hell even more than He did on Heaven. The Lord described hell as "*outer darkness*"

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Matthew 8:12; and *"where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched"* Mark 9:44.

Jesus taught: *"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those who practise lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth"* Matthew 13:40-42.

In Matthew 25:41 the Lord Jesus taught that on the Day of Judgment, He, as the Son of Man: *"will also say to those on the left hand, depart from Me you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels... "*

Jesus warned: ***"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."***

Matthew 10:28

In Luke 16:19-31 the Lord Jesus related the story of a rich man and Lazarus. This is plainly not a parable, as it specifically names names: Lazarus and Abraham. The Lord presents it as an historical event. In this teaching, the Lord makes it clear that hell is an actual place of eternal torment.

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The rich man who died and was buried lifted up his eyes in hell, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus with him. He cries to father Abraham to send Lazarus with some water to cool his tongue, "*for I am tormented in this flame*". Abraham responds: "*Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.*"

The rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers "*lest they also come to this place of torment*". Abraham responded that they have the Scriptures. The rich man pleads that if someone rose from the dead that they would repent. Abraham declared: "*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.*" Luke 16:31

In this passage of Scripture the Lord Jesus pulls back the curtain to give us a glimpse of what lies beyond the grave. "*As it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the Judgment.*" Hebrews 9:27

The man whom the Lord Jesus referred to was fully conscious, both of his own physical torments, and the implications for his five brothers. He recognises Lazarus, and knows who Abraham is. He remembers his brothers. He knows that they have not repented. He longs for a drop of water to cool his tongue. He hears

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the voice of Abraham answering his request from Heaven. He remembers that he never helped that poor man Lazarus at his gate.

The Lord taught: ***"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth - those who have done good, to the Resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the Resurrection of condemnation."***

John 5:28-29

5. "The third day He rose again from the dead..."

This is Christianity in a nutshell - Christ has died. Christ is Risen.

Until this point, the Creed has followed Jesus' descent, beginning in Heaven. From that exalted place, He came down to earth, to be born in humble surroundings, and was put to death as a common criminal, plummeting into the depths of hell itself. Yet, in these two words - "He rose" - everything changes. Atonement. Redemption. Forgiveness. Adoption. Eternal life is guaranteed to those who trust and follow Him. This is the Good News. Overwhelmed by the evidence the disciples were transformed and were galvanized into action to take the Gospel throughout the world.

By stating that Jesus rose on the third day, the Creed fixes the Resurrection for us in time. This was an

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historic event. Not some mysterious, mystical, ethereal concept. The Resurrection was a well-attested to event. There is the absence of the body, the empty tomb, and the testimony of many eyewitnesses.

Eyewitnesses

On at least twelve separate occasions Jesus Christ was seen after rising from the dead. Mary Magdalene, the other woman, the apostle Peter, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, ten of the disciples, all eleven disciples eight days later, seven disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, to five hundred at one time, to James, to all the eleven apostles and others at the Ascension, Paul and John - all saw the Lord bodily raised from the dead.

The Transformation of the Disciples

Not only do we have the testimony of eyewitnesses, but the dramatic transformation of the disciples. The Resurrection of Christ from the dead transformed the disciples' grief to joy, their cowardice to boldness, their skepticism to Faith and their doubt to determination! It turned Saul, the persecutor of the Church, to Paul the apostle of the Church.

It also transformed society and history. It changed the Jewish Sabbath into the Christian Lord's Day. The Resurrection transformed a Jewish remnant into the worldwide Christian Church. The very existence of Sunday as the Christian Lord's Day is a testimony to the

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Resurrection of Christ from the dead. The existence of the largest religious movement in the history of the world, over 2 billion people worldwide, is another powerful indication of the truth of the Resurrection.

We serve a risen Saviour! Death is defeated. **Christ is risen** - victorious over death, hell, satan and the grave. Jesus Christ is the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in Christ, though he may die, yet shall he live (John 11:25).

Because of Christ's death on the Cross, we can rejoice that our sins are paid for - we are forgiven, justified by Faith.

Because of Christ's **Resurrection** from the dead we can rejoice in the prospect of eternal life.

Because of Christ's **Ascension** we know that He has all authority and that His Great Commission will be accomplished on earth.

Because of the coming of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost** we do not need to trust in our own abilities, but in His power alone. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord..."* Zechariah 4:6

Jesus was seen in all kinds of places and situations after the Resurrection. He met His disciples while they were together. He met some of them on their own. He came to them during the day and during the night. He came to

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them while they were fishing, while they were walking, and while they were eating. From downtown Jerusalem to the Galilean countryside, He was met by both men and women. People spoke with Him, touched Him, ate with Him, drank with Him, and saw the scars in His hands and side. He was undoubtedly alive.

6. "He ascended into Heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty."

After reminding us of how the greatest of kings was born in the humblest of circumstances and how He suffered a shameful criminal's death, even tasting the torments of hell, the Apostles Creed takes a most triumphant turn. When all seemed lost, the disciples were stunned by Christ's victory over death and the grave and Christ's triumphant Ascension to the right hand of His Father in Heaven. Christ has conquered! He has overcome sin, death, hell and the grave. He has ascended to His Father and has opened the way for believers into the very courts of Heaven.

The Ascension

Up to this point the Creed has been dealing with what Christ has undergone in the past, but now the Creed is dealing with what Christ is doing in the present. Right now, our Lord is enthroned in Heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. He is Sovereign, All-knowing, Everywhere Present and All-powerful. Having

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accomplished His Mission of Redemption, He is now involved in Intercession, pleading with the Father on our behalf (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Christ is Lord of all. He has all power. He is seated in the place of greatest honour and authority. He has ascended to His rightful place, with all glory, honour and dominion at His feet. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Ascension Day deals with authority. Christ *"has gone into Heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels, authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."* 1 Peter 3:22. ***"...All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..."***

Matthew 28:18-20

The Ascension proclaims the Lordship of Christ in all areas of life. Jesus has all authority. Jesus is Lord over the world of business, sports, entertainment, and government. Jesus Christ is Lord over the schools, the shops, the cinemas, the factories, the hospitals, the law courts and Parliament. There is no area of life that is outside of His authority. Every doctor, teacher, policeman, businessman, Parliamentarian, factory worker, mother, father, magistrate and Supreme Court judge will have to individually stand before Almighty

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God on the Day of Judgment and give an account of his life. *"When You ascended on high, You led captives in Your train..."* Psalm 68:18

The Ascension celebrates the vindication and victory of Christ. *"The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" Psalm 110:1*

The Ascension proclaims the ultimate victory of Christ. Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Those who refuse to bow to Christ as Saviour and Lord today, in the day of grace, when forgiveness is freely available, will one day be forced to bow to Christ as the eternal Judge when they will be condemned to Hell forever. *"...He will crush kings on the Day of His wrath. He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the w/whole earth."*

Psalm 110:5-6

The Ascension is a great comfort to believers who suffer persecution. *"Therefore, since we have a great High Priest Who has gone through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the Faith we profess."* Hebrews 4:14

We have an Advocate in Heaven. He hears our prayers. He ever lives to make intercession for us. He will come again. He will crush all His enemies. Therefore, we should not fear governments, popes or councils. We

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must not bow before idols, nor should we compromise the essential principles of our Faith.

The Ascension is a wonderful reminder and assurance to us that ***"...the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."***
Habakkuk 2:14

The Ascension proclaims Christ's glorious triumph and His future return and Day of Judgment. Therefore, we as Christians should return to observing Ascension Day as a holy day to our Faith. If something is important then we need to work it into our calendars.

Although He has entered into the very Throne room of Heaven, Christ still remains very involved in our lives. He has gone ahead to prepare a place for us. The King of Creation, the Conqueror of death, the Saviour of the world is our heavenly Advocate. He is pleading our case before the Father. *"If anybody sins, we have One Who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ the Righteous One."* 1 John 2:1.

7. "From there He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

Up until now the Creed has dealt with what Christ has done and what He is now doing on our behalf. Now the Creed turns to the future. This world has not seen the last of Jesus Christ. He shall return to Judge the living and the dead. History is His story. The ultimate victory

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of the Kingdom of God is inevitable. ***"At the time of those kings the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."***

Daniel 2:44

"The Lord will be awesome to them, for He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; people shall worship Him, each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations." Zephaniah 2:11

Christ Will Judge the Living and the Dead

"His eyes were like a flame of fire and on His head were many crowns...He was clothed with a robe dipped in Blood and His Name is called the Word of God...and the armies of Heaven... followed Him... now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God...King of kings and Lord of lords."

Revelation 19:12-16

8. *"I believe in the Holy Spirit."*

The Apostles' Creed confirms the existence of the Trinity. Christians believe in the Trinity because there is only one God: ***"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God the Lord is one!"*** Deuteronomy 6:4

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"Before Me there was no god formed, neither shall there be after Me." Isaiah 43:10

The Trinity

Because the Bible clearly teaches that the Father is God, that the Son is God and that the Holy Spirit is God, Christians are compelled to accept that God is eternally existent in three Persons.

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

1 John 5:20

The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is God. *"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?...You have not lied to men but to God.'" Acts 5:3-4*

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" 2 Corinthians 3:17

There are more than 60 passages in the Bible which mention the three Persons of the Trinity together: *"When He had been baptised, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the Heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him And*

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suddenly a voice came from Heaven saying "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

Matthew 3:16-17

"For there are three Who bear witness in Heaven; the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and these three are One." 1 John 5:7

"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, Who is above all and through all, and in you all."

Ephesians 4:4-6

"But when the kindness and the love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour." Titus 3:4-6

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13:14

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit was sent from God the Father by our Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:26) to: convict the world of sin (John 16:8); regenerate God's chosen people into

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new life (John 3:8); reassure us of our salvation (Romans 8:16); teach us the truth (John 14:26 and 16:13); lead us (Romans 8:14); fill us with power from on high (Luke 24:49); direct our prayer life (Ephesians 6:18); and produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit gives gifts to each part of the body (1 Corinthians 12:11); to empower us to worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); to empower us for Evangelism (Acts 1:8); to call and direct us into ministries (Acts 13:2); and to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:14).

The Belgic Confession (1561) declares: *"We believe and confess also that the Holy Spirit from eternity proceedeth from the Father and Son and therefore is neither made, created, nor begotten, but only proceedeth from both; who in order is the third Person of the Holy Trinity; of one and the same essence, majesty and glory with the Father and the Son; and therefore is the true and eternal God as the Holy Scriptures teach us."*

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) declares: *"In the unity of the Godhead there be three Persons of one substance, power and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten from the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son."*

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"...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ he is not His." Romans 8:9

We are commanded to: be **filled with the Spirit** (Ephesians 5:18); to **be led by the Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:14); to **walk in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:25); and to **pray in the Spirit** (Jude 20; Romans 8:26).

The Word of God warns us: **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 4:30); **do not quench the Holy Spirit** (1 Thessalonians 5:19); **do not resist the Holy Spirit** (Acts 7:51) and **do not lie to the Holy Spirit** (Acts 5:3).

The Bible identifies the Holy Spirit as: the Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2); the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26); the Spirit of Faith (2 Corinthians 4:13); the Spirit of Power, Love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7); the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation (Ephesians 1:17) and the Spirit of Holiness (1 Corinthians 6:19).

"The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Might, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord." Isaiah 11:2

The Holy Spirit is as beautiful and gentle as a dove, as revealing and warm as light, as awesome and overpowering as a storm, as energising and stirring as the wind, as intense and consuming as a fire.

The Lord Jesus proclaimed that: *"If anyone thirst\, let him come to Me and drink... He who believes in Me*

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out of his heart will flow rivers of living water! But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, Whom those believing in Him would receive." John 7:37-39

9. "Christ's holy universal Church..."

Jesus Christ declared that He would build His Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). Our Lord carefully selected and trained twelve Apostles. He gave them a Mission and a Message. He taught them to observe two ordinances, baptism as a rite of entrance into membership of His Church, and the Lord's Supper as a remembrance of His death, until He comes. He gave rules for discipline and the authority to enforce them. He promised His followers the guiding of the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth and to produce the New Testament for the edification and instruction of His people. He bought the Church with His own Blood. He intercedes for the Church. He sustains the Church. He will return to gather His Church to Himself. The Lord promised us that the gates of hell will not be able to prevail against the advances of His Church.

For All Nations

The Church of Jesus Christ is truly universal. It consists of all believers of all times and in all places. The Church is universal in respect of time, place, doctrine and mission. It has a universal character and is meant for all nations and all times.

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The visible churches contain both believers and unbelievers. The invisible Church is made up of only true believers, those who are regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit. God's chosen people, the elect are redeemed by the Blood of Christ. Church congregations and assemblies are places where believers gather to worship together, to be discipled and to enjoy fellowship with one another.

The Church is holy in the sense that it is set apart for God's service. The term holy does not suggest that we are pure and faultless, but rather that we are called to consecration and dedication to the Lord's work.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) declares: *"The Catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be, gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the Law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints; in this life, to*

The Apostles Creed

the end of the world, and doth, by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto... And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure accordingly to the doctrine of the Gospel taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. The purest churches under Heaven are subject to both mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to His will. There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ... "

10. "The fellowship of Christians..."

The fellowship of the faithful is so durable that it cannot be severed by time, distance or death. The Christian is not an isolated individual, he is not designed to stand alone. The true believer is united forever with Christ and all other Christians to become one of God's people, chosen by God to serve Him, to know Him and to enjoy Him forever. The communion of the saints is a wide community, stretching into both the past and the future. We have fellow believers who lived before us and those who are yet to come. There is a church militant on earth and a Church triumphant in Heaven. They are all part of our great family of the Faith, both our spiritual ancestry and our posterity.

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For All Times

This phrase, 'the fellowship of Christians', in the Creed, reminds us of those brave believers who gave their lives for Christ and His Gospel. It reminds us of the highest deeds, the worthiest of actions, the most profound sufferings and the grandest sacrifices of all those who came before us. We are indebted to those who paid the supreme sacrifice for the Kingdom of God. We are part of something so much bigger than ourselves. We are not alone. We are part of God's great family, His sons and daughters, His servants and soldiers, we are part of a fellowship of Christians, militant and triumphant.

11. "The forgiveness of sins..."

Sin is an ugly fact of life. It is one of the chief and most enduring characteristics of earthly existence. Almost every history book and news report bears testimony of human depravity. Sin in the Scriptures is described as: missing the mark, trespassing, stumbling, falling, breaking the Law, disobeying God's commands, failing to obey God's commands, moral debt, failing to be what we ought to be. We are a fallen people. Sin is the condition of every human soul. **All** have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Full Salvation

We have two major problems, sins and sin. Sin is a condition of spiritual death. Sins are wicked actions or conduct. I need forgiveness for my actions (sins). I need

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to be saved from the guilt of my sins - for what I have **done**. I also need deliverance from my nature (sin). I need to be saved from the power of sin - from what I **am**. **Forgiven for what I have done and delivered from what I am.**

The Gospel message declares unto us a salvation that is past tense, present tense and future tense. If we are Christians then we *have been saved* - from the **penalty** of our sins (our actions). We are fully forgiven. We *are* also *being saved* - from our sin (our nature). We are daily freed from the **power** of sin. And we *shall be saved* from the **presence** of sin (in heaven). We will be eternally delivered.

The Son of God died instead of me for my forgiveness. This deals with my guilt. The legal word *justification* deals with the **past tense** aspect of our sin. Justification - just as if I had never sinned.

Jesus Christ lives instead of me for my deliverance. The **present continuous** aspect of our salvation can be called *sanctification*. This deals with the power of sin.

One day Jesus Christ will return to this world in glory. He will raise the living and the dead. In our new Resurrected bodies we will be freed from the very presence of sin - in heaven. The **future tense** of our salvation can be called *glorification*.

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The Blood of Christ dealt with what we have **done** - it cleanses us from our sins. The Cross of Christ deals with what we **are** - it strikes at our capacity for sin. The return of Christ will deal with our very inclinations and temptations for sin.

So in a real sense Christians can speak of salvation being past tense, present tense and future tense. We have been saved from the penalty of sin. We are being saved from the power of sin. We shall be saved from the presence of sin. If we have a proper understanding of the problem of sin, then we will not be satisfied with anything less than **full Salvation**. Not only forgiven from the penalty of sin, but victory over the power of sin.

Dealing with Sin

God does not excuse sin, and He does not condone it. He judges it. He eradicates sin - at a high cost to Himself. The sentence He passes on sin is a sentence that He has taken upon Himself. God does not compromise. To forgive sin is not to ignore it, or downplay it. It is to take upon oneself the full penalty, which is much the same way a creditor must pay for every outstanding debt owed him, but which he chooses to cancel. The cost of a bad loan is borne not by the bad debtor, but by the creditor.

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God is completely holy, so He must deal with sin. From the Creed we learn that God the Father Almighty, the Creator of Heaven and earth, forgives. The Creator and Eternal Judge is also the Redeemer.

The Bible teaches us that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). God's Word also teaches us that the forgiven must **be forgiving**. As recipients of God's mercy, God requires us to have mercy. He demands it. Anyone who refuses to forgive his brother from his heart cannot expect to receive forgiveness from God (Matthew 5:7; 6:14-15). If you repent of your sins, confess your sins, and forgive those who sin against you, God promises to forgive you.

12. "The Resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen."

The last words of the Creed contain two affirmations. We are given words of unparalleled hope and confidence. This is the second time that the Resurrection is mentioned. The first one was the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The second Resurrection will be ours. He is the first fruit of those who rise from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:23). The Spirit Who raised Him, will raise us (Romans 8:11).

We will follow where Christ has led. Though He was dead, yet He lives. So shall we.

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Everlasting Life in Resurrected Bodies

Much as seed is planted in the ground and by its decay gives rise to plants, fruits or mighty oak trees, the physical body that we lay into the grave decays and gives rise to a spiritual body. We will leave death and weakness behind and receive Resurrection bodies. Paul teaches that what is sown is perishable, but what is raised will be *imperishable*. What is sown in dishonour, will be raised *in glory*. What is sown in weakness, will be raised *in power*. What is sown a physical body, will be raised *a spiritual body* (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). Christ's victory over death teaches us that our own earthly life is a prelude to eternal life. This life is not all there is. The grave is not actually an end, but a beginning, a doorway to eternity. The life to come will be the death of death.

The Scriptures teach us that everlasting life will include: the presence of God, Divine comfort, the tree of life, communion with God, coming into possessions of the treasures we have sent on to Heaven while on earth, opportunities to please God, gain, being with Christ which is far better, protection, safety from the second death, authority over the nations, the waters of life, worship, glory and the Morning Star. Christ will confess our name before the Father and His holy angels, and in Heaven we will enjoy reunion with loved ones who have gone ahead.

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"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." Revelation 21:4

The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) teaches: *"The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption, but their souls, that neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest of Heavens, where they behold the face of God, in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. And the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness, reserved for the Judgment of the Great Day."*

The Westminster Larger Catechism teaches: *"The righteous shall be delivered from death itself on the last Day, and even in death are delivered from the sting and curse of it; so that although they die it is of God's love to free them perfectly from sin and misery, and to make them capable of further communion with Christ in glory, which they then enter upon...at the last Day there shall be a general Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, when they that are then found alive shall in a moment be changed, and the same bodies of the dead which were laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls together, shall be raised up by the*

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power of Christ. The bodies of the just by the Spirit of Christ, and by the virtue of His Resurrection as their Head, shall be raised by power, spiritual, incorruptible, and made like to His glorious Body; and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonour by Him as an offended Judge."

Eternal life means knowing and abiding in God (1 John 5:20); and participating in God's own Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). The Resurrection of the body will just be the beginning of life everlasting. The Apostles Creed ends where the life to come is just beginning.

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"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9



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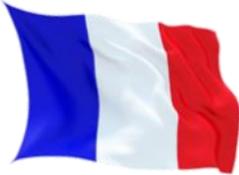
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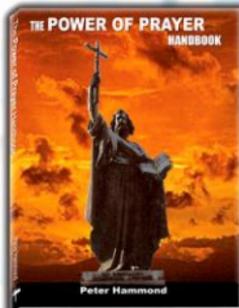
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"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2: 4-5



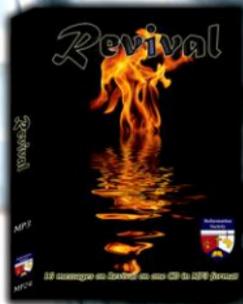
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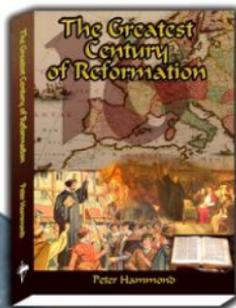
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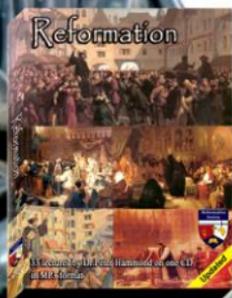
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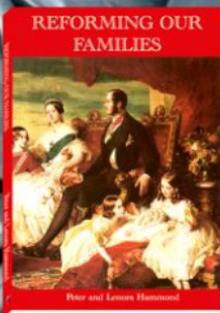
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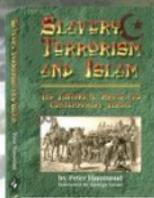
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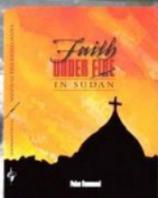


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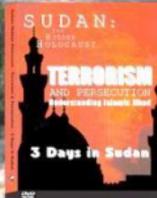
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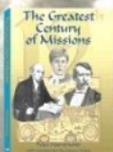


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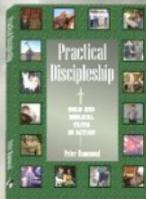
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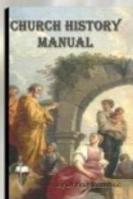
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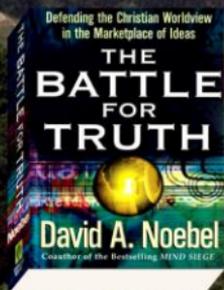
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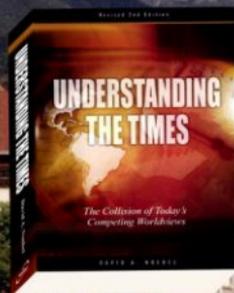
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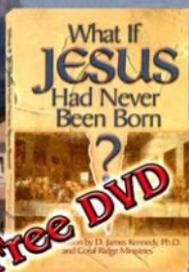
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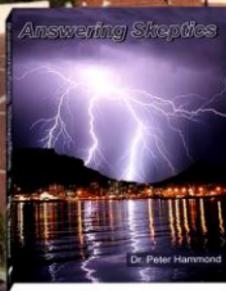
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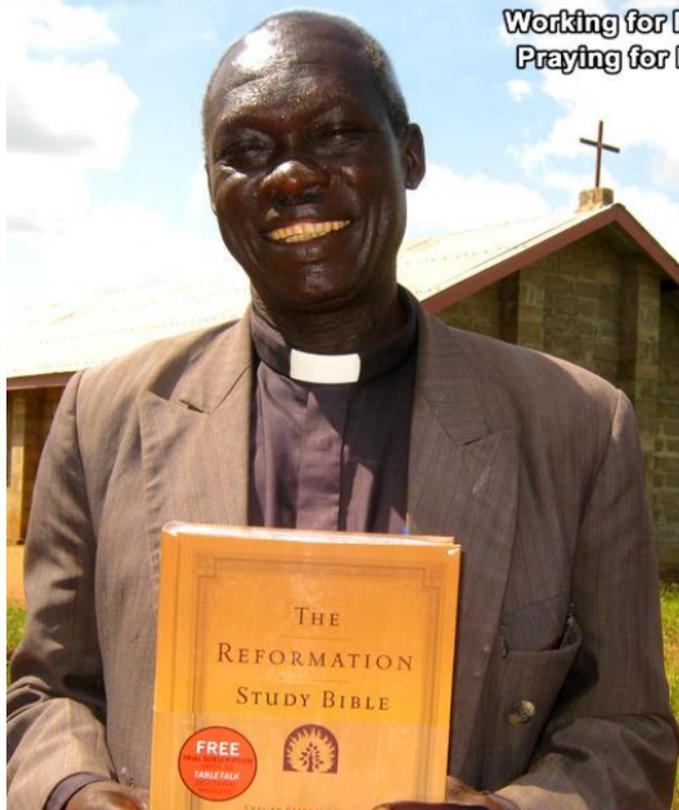
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“... always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.”

1 Peter 3:15

If you are asked, can you define the essentials of your faith? Can you give an answer for the hope that is in you? Do you know what you believe? And why you believe it? Would you know what to say?

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions that you were taught, whether by Word or our epistle.” 2 Thessalonians 2:15



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