

ANCHORED: The Apostle's Creed | Jesus the Son

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In our series entitled *Anchored*, we're working through The Apostles' Creed. Our goal is to get 'anchored' in the truth of the Word of God.

Throughout Church history, times of peaceful circumstances for the church are the exception, not the rule. The thing that has kept the Church anchored and rooted over the last 2,000 years is truth. The Church knew what they believed and why they believed it.

The culture will tell you that truth is relative—that your truth is your truth, and my truth is my truth. But Christianity says there is a universal, objective truth found in the Person of Jesus Christ, Who said, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).**

Last week we discussed the first article of the Creed and talked about what it means for God to be our Father and for us to become His children. Because of this relationship we know we can come boldly to His throne of grace in every circumstance.

Today, we're digging into second article of the Creed, which covers the conception, birth, life, suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus.

Please note:

1. **In this series, we're not preaching the Apostles' Creed, we are preaching the Bible.** The Apostles' Creed is a *framework* for this series, but Scripture is the *authority*.
2. Whenever the Creed is read aloud in a community, it is simultaneously a rebellion and an allegiance. It is a rebellion against the unbiblical ideologies of our day, and it is a pledge of allegiance to God and His Kingdom. It's a reminder that we are not ambassadors for the kingdoms of men, but for the Kingdom of God.
3. The word *catholic* in *holy catholic church*, doesn't mean Roman Catholic. It means *universal*, and it is a reference to the universal Church, which is composed of every follower of Jesus throughout human history.

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, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;

he descended to hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended to heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Today we will discuss:

The Incarnation of Christ
The Suffering of Christ
The Ascension of Christ

The Incarnation of Christ

The incarnation is the Christian doctrine that God became a human—that He literally put on human flesh. God set aside all of his rights and privileges and came down from heaven to walk among us. It's incredible!

Philippians 2:6–7

. . . who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

- The Creator entrusted Himself to creation.
- The infinite became finite.
- The supernatural became natural.

The doctrine of incarnation says that the *full* divinity of God and the *full* nature of man were combined in Jesus Christ. It's not 50 percent God and 50 percent man. It's 100 percent God and 100 percent man, which is a concept we call *hypostatic union*.

Question—Have you ever considered how offensive the doctrine of incarnation is? How much it is an indictment against the human condition and the world we live in?

“How can you live with the terrifying thought that the hurricane has become human, that the fire has become flesh, that life itself came to life and walked in our midst? Christianity either means that, or it means nothing. It is either the more devastating disclosure of the deepest reality in the world, or it's a sham, a nonsense, a bit of deceitful play-acting.”—N.T. Wright, Bishop in the Church of England and Bible scholar¹

In terms of salvation, other religions share many similarities with each other but stark contrasts with Christianity.

- In Buddhism, Buddha says if you really seek salvation, you can get it through enlightenment.
- In Islam, Muhammad says if you really seek salvation, you can get it through submission and obedience.

¹ Wright, N.T. *For All God's Worth: True Worship and the Calling of the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.

- Buddha and Muhammad don't agree on how to find salvation, but they do agree on this: **that you can find and achieve salvation.**
- That's not at all what Christianity says. Christianity says that the darkness in your heart is so dark you can't do anything about it. The sin in your life is so deep and devastating you can't do anything about it. You'll never be able fix it. You cannot save yourself. You are utterly helpless and hopeless.
 - Christianity says that **the only way to find salvation is for Someone to bring it to you.** For that reason, God in His infinite mercy and compassion broke in, came down, emptied Himself, and set aside all of His rights and privileges **to save you.**

Don't miss this—Jesus didn't come to call all of the moral, obedient people into war against the immoral disobedient ones. He didn't come down saying, "Those of you who are upstanding and righteous, rally around Me, and we'll deal with all those bad, immoral people out there." He says, "Every one of you is so filled to the brim with selfishness and sin that you can't save yourself. *I didn't come to show you how you can get saved. I came to save you.*"

Application—In light of that, we aren't called to wage war against lost, confused, immoral people, because "such were some of you" (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). We are called to pursue them as Jesus pursues them and us and to love them as Jesus loves them and us.

Neither are we called to ignore or exclude them. "So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you'" (**John 20:21**). Jesus gives us the same mission He has: to run toward broken people. We are actively to pursue the lost with the love of Christ and with patience, commitment, and even suffering.

Whenever someone has been called into the Kingdom of God, they have been called in in order to be sent out.

**Jesus says, "You couldn't climb your way up to me,
so I came down to you."
That's the incarnation,
and the calling of every Christian
is an *incarnational calling*.
It's a willingness
to get in the mess with people,
because Jesus descended into our mess with and for us.**

The Suffering of Christ

Philippians 2:8

And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Hebrews 2:9–10

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

- Notice the scripture doesn't say that Jesus was crowned with glory and honor **in spite of** His suffering of death. It says that He was crowned with glory and honor **because** of his suffering of death.

- The word “captain” in Hebrews 2:10 is the Greek word *archegos*, which means founder, author, originator, hero, champion, or captain. All of those definitions are found in this one word.
- Here’s what this means: A hero or a champion is someone who engages in combat as a substitute. Consider Israel facing the Philistines and Goliath. Who’s the *archegos*, or champion? David. David steps in to defeat Goliath and save Israel from further humiliation and defeat. ***In this way, David is a picture of Jesus, not a picture of us. David is a picture of the One Who brings salvation—Jesus Christ.***
- When you’re in a battle or running for your life or on the verge of death, the solution is not to channel your inner David and rise up to meet the challenge. The solution is to surrender to our *archegos*—Jesus Christ—the champion Who sees us, steps in for us, defends us, and stands between the enemy and us. Jesus destroyed death by dying for all of us. He has dealt the final blow to death itself through His own suffering and death.

**When we set our eyes on the risen Christ,
we’re no longer afraid.
Because our Captain has already walked
through the valley in the shadow of death.
He has been through every darkness and
experienced every suffering and sorrow.
There’s nothing we can’t face with him.**

But the story doesn’t end there:

Jesus didn’t just die. He defeated death!

He wasn’t just buried. He rose to life again!

He defeated sorrow and suffering! He conquered the grave!

The resurrection of Jesus is the linchpin of the Christian faith. If Easter didn’t happen, Christmas doesn’t matter. If the resurrection didn’t happen, then the incarnation failed, and our faith is in vain.

But if it all ends at the resurrection, we’re saved, but we still have a problem.

The Ascension of Christ

Many modern evangelicals tend to overlook the ascension of Christ, but the Apostles’ Creed doesn’t.

He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

John 20: 11–17

But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’”

- Directly after the resurrection, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, and there is this fascinating dialogue between them. Mary is standing at the tomb grieving because her Rabbi was crucified, and His body was missing from the tomb.
- All of a sudden Jesus appears to her, and she runs to Him and is clinging to Him. You would think Jesus would console her, but instead he tells her not to cling to Him, for He is yet to ascend to the Father. Why is this His response?

Application—Because the ascension of Jesus has huge implications for every single one of us:

1. Without the ascension, we have salvation but no power.

John 16:7

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.

- If Jesus doesn't ascend to the Father, we don't receive the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We would have a calling but no power, a mission but no means.

2. The ascension means Christ's presence is eternally accessible.

- Jesus is no longer limited to a specific time and place in human history. He is accessible to anyone and everyone who places their life in His hands.
- When Jesus told Mary to let Him go because He hadn't yet ascended to the Father, He was essentially saying, "You don't understand, Mary. You're afraid to let go of Me, because you think you'll lose Me. But when I ascend to my Father, you'll never be able to lose Me again. When I ascend, the Holy Spirit will descend, and I'll be with you always. Anywhere you go, I'll be with you. The darkest valley, the highest mountain, I'll be with you."

**The ascension means
that Christ is accessible
to people of every tribe,
every nation, and every tongue,
in every time and every place,
from the moment of His ascension to right now.**

3. The ascension of Jesus means that every knee will bow.

- Throughout Jesus's earthly ministry, He says over and over again that the Kingdom is near, the Kingdom is at hand. If there is a Kingdom, then that means there is a King.
- When Jesus ascended, He ascended to the right hand of the Father, which means He ascended to His throne. In other words, **the ascension is a coronation ceremony!** Jesus is taking His rightful place as the King of kings over every kingdom, over heaven and earth, with all authority, dominion, power, glory, and honor!

Philippians 2:9–11

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.

- At the First Coming, Jesus came as a suffering servant.
- At the Second Coming, He's coming as a conquering King. When He does, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Conclusion

What now?

The first and most important question to ask is, “Have you surrendered your life to the One who surrendered His life for you?”

- If you’ve never given your life to the King, or if you’ve wandered from Him, today He is inviting you in, to find forgiveness for your past, power for your present, and hope for your future. ***Come to Him today.***

For those who have trusted in Christ, the question to ask is, “What are you doing with it?”

- If you have settled for a country-club Christianity, today God is asking you to step out in faith, to share what you’ve been given, and to run toward the broken people and to bring them to the King.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does it matter that we know Truth as embodied in Jesus Christ?
2. What is the essential Christian truth of salvation? How does this stand apart from every other religion and ideology? How does it uniquely offer hope to a dark and suffering world?
3. Discuss how David is a picture of Jesus as *archegos* and not of us. Does this challenge any preconceived notions? What are the dramatic implications for how we are to live our lives when we understand this concept?
4. Why does the ascension matter? Why do you think it is so often downplayed in comparison to the crucifixion and resurrection?
5. Discuss the three implications of the ascension for you personally and for the world at large.
6. In what ways is God calling you to live on mission for Him and His Kingdom?

NOTES