

Zion Lutheran Church, 15 S 4th St., Harrisburg, PA 17101

Tuesday Bible Study: February 1-22, 2022 - INTRODUCTION

Historic Creeds of the Church: Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian

Opening Prayer: ... You drew us unto You, some through pious parents, others through faithful teachers. When we forsook You, You drew us to You again. You did not desert us and sweep us, like many others into eternity when we were unprepared to meet You; no, You extended the day of grace for us. You sought us as a shepherd seeks his lost lamb, not abandoning the search until You had found us and restored us to faith in Your Son. Amen.

(C. F.W. Walther, 1811-1887) From: The Lord Will Answer: A Daily Prayer Catechism (Drawn from Holy Scripture, the Church Fathers, and Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation); Concordia Publishing House.

FROM: Rose Book of Bible Charts: Volume 3; Rose Publishing, 2014.

Where did the creeds come from?

As the gospel spread in the first centuries after Jesus' death and resurrection, people wondered about the beliefs of this new religion. Like today, believers needed quick accessible answers to questions. Early Christians formulated simple creeds that expressed essential Christian beliefs. **These creeds served at least three purposes:**

- 1. Explanations of the faith.**
- 2. Training of believers.**
- 3. Identification and correction of false teachings.**

Today, the creeds still give us identity as Christians. They tell us the following and much more:

What does it mean to be a Christian?

Why is it important to believe in the Trinity?

Why is it important that Jesus is fully God and fully human?

What unites us as believers?

The Apostle Paul emphasizes, "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:2). When we recite the creeds, we agree with them; and this agreement joins us in one Lord-the God of the Bible, revealed to humanity as one God in three persons-and one faith; the confession of our common belief. The creeds identify us as the church, the called-out people of God.

Creeds in the Bible

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (Shema)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

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.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

FROM: "The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church," Theological Consultation between Representatives of the U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the Bishops Commission for Ecumenical Affairs held July 6-7, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Function of the Creeds: Creeds and confessions have a threefold significance in the Lutheran church:

Doxology: In keeping with the biblical understanding of confession, affirmation of the Nicene Creed is first of all a liturgical act. In its confession of Jesus as Lord and Son of God the church praises God for the deliverance accomplished in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Self-identification: The ecclesiastical and theological disputes of the sixteenth century saw labels distributed generously. In this atmosphere the Lutheran church seeks to identify herself as a church participating in the catholic tradition of the west, as standing in continuity with the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.

Interpretation of the Gospel: Inasmuch as the Scriptures present formidable problems of interpretation, and can be misunderstood even by men of good will, the confession serves as a guide to the understanding of Scripture by affirming what is sound in the teaching of a given period and rejecting what is skewed. The church of our time thus receives the help of the church of earlier days to aid her to find her way to a true understanding of the Scriptures.

Resources – may be referenced throughout the study

Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord; Concordia Publishing House.

Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present, edited by John H. Leith, Third Edition; John Knox Press, 1982.

Journey into Belief: Finding God Through the Creed by Steve McCoy-Thompson; Liguori Publications, 2004.

Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978 by Lutheran Church in America, The American Lutheran Church.

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation; Concordia Publishing House.

Rose Book of Bible Charts: Volume 3; Rose Publishing, 2014.

Sola Publishing <https://www.solapublishing.com/>

The Athanasian Creed (Anglican Foundations) by Martin Davie; Latimer Trust, 2019.

The Lord Will Answer: A Daily Prayer Catechism (Drawn from Holy Scripture, the Church Fathers, and Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation); Concordia Publishing House.

The Lutheran Study Bible; Concordia Publishing House.

The Need for Creeds Today: Confessional Faith in a Faithless Age by J.V. Fesko, Ba

"The Status of the Nicene Creed as Dogma of the Church," Theological Consultation between Representatives of the U.S.A. National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation and the Bishops Commission for Ecumenical Affairs held July 6-7, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland.

The New Handbook of the Christian Year: Based on the Revised Common Lectionary; Abingdon Press, 1992.