

Who is Jesus?

This week we focus on what the Creed says about Jesus. Your small group this session may look a little different than the ones in the past. There is more teaching and less interaction. Feel free to stop the recording at any time to unpack the significance of what you are learning.

The Heart of the Creed

The focus of the creed, and indeed the entire Christian faith, is upon the person and work of Jesus. At the core of the Christian faith is a *person*.

Who is Jesus?

Before exploring how the Apostles' Creed answers this question, it's prudent to say that the Jesus we confess was indeed a Jewish man who walked the earth some two thousand years ago in 1st century Palestine.

The Creed describes Jesus as: "the Christ," "God's Son," and "Lord." Unpacking these titles help us understand precisely who Jesus was.

Jesus: the Christ

Jesus is first described in the Creed as "Christ." When the New Testament authors refer to Jesus as "the Christ" they are in fact referring to Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah. When we speak of Jesus Christ, we speak of Jesus, the Messiah.

The Messiah was "God's anointed one," the one who would defeat God's enemies and establish his everlasting Kingdom once again on earth. As such, the Messiah was viewed as the "divinely appointed King of Israel."

When we put this all together we see Jesus as:

God's Chosen One...who has come as King... to rescue and deliver God's people...by defeating God's enemies...and establishing his forever Kingdom – A world order where things are the way they are meant to be.

Jesus: God's Son

The Creed also refers to Jesus as God's Son. This title in the Old Testament referred to a person bearing a special relationship or task from God. In particular we see this term used in relation to Israel's kings, those charged with establishing God's kingdom way of life on earth.

When we come to the New Testament, "Son of God" is used exclusively in reference to Jesus. The term highlights the unique nature of the Son-Father relationship between Jesus and God. And this special relationship between God the Father and God the Son was one in which the Son was equated with the Father. In other words to say that Jesus is the Son of God is to say that Jesus is God.

John 5:18 tells us the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus because he calling God his Father, thus making himself equal to God.

Sometime around the 1st and 2nd century a particular symbol came to represent followers of Jesus. It was the sign of the fish. The fish or ΙΧΘΥΣ (ichthus) in Greek was an acrostic for Jesus:

I = Iēsous (Ἰησοῦς) = Jesus;
X = Christos (Χριστός) = Christ
Θ = Θεοῦ (Θεοῦ) = “of God”
Υ = υἱός (μιος) = Son
Σ = σωτήρ (Σωτήρ) = Savior

ΙΧΘΥΣ (ichthus), or the fish, became a symbol of who Jesus was: the Messiah, God’s Son, Savior.

This symbol helps us understand what it means to be called God’s Son. God’s Son is closely related to the idea of Savior. He is God’s own saving presence. In the Old Testament it is made clear that God alone is the one who saves. He is the redeemer. Jesus takes up this role as His very presence in human form.

Jesus: our Lord

The Creed then confesses Jesus as our Lord.

In our English translation of the Old Testament we come across the word LORD all the time. It is the name given to God. In the Hebrew it is written with four letters, YHWH.

Genesis 12:1 – “The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you.”

When the Old Testament was translated into Greek, some two to three hundred years before Jesus, the Greek word *kyrios*—“the Lord”—was used to translate this Hebrew word, YHWH.

Long before Jesus the word “Lord” came to refer to God himself.

When the New Testament refers to Jesus as Lord it is a claim to Jesus’ deity. The word that was once used to refer to God has now come to refer to Jesus himself.