

Why We Don't Have Creeds 6-2-13

This lesson continues a series on being ready to give a “reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). When we look at the various churches in the world around us, we note that almost all of them have a statement of faith that they use to create a unity within their denomination. That statement of faith is typically referred to as a Creed. The word “creed” is from the Latin word *credo*, which means “I believe”. Although it can be used in a secular sense, within matters of faith it is a summary of basic doctrines of faith. There are a number of creeds in the world, but the most prevalent/popular are the Apostle’s Creed (c. 250AD), the Nicene Creed (c.325 AD), the Athanasian Creed (c.500AD), and the more recent Westminster Confession of Faith (1645AD).

Here is an example: 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 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, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What Makes a Creed? Here is one stated conclusion¹: *“Churches in different cities and regions made their own lists, which had many points in common..... The small differences were eventually eliminated as church leaders discussed these things with one another.....Churches throughout the empire agreed on which books should form the New Testament², and they agreed on several basic statements of faith.”*

As you can see, consensus makes creeds. Is consensus an appropriate way to make a spiritual determination? Israel choose to have a king by consensus, and it offended God (1 Samuel 8:7). King Ahab and King Jehoshaphat were misled by the consensus of the prophets speaking falsely (1 Kings 22:3-4). In the New Testament, Gentiles were nearly rejected by the church when the consensus was against them (Acts 11:1-2). The Bible tells us that decisions made by our own wisdom are folly (Proverbs 12:15, 21:2)

Are Creeds Accurate? Consider that in the Athanasian Creed and in earlier forms of the Apostles Creed it states that Jesus “descended to Hell”. However, this is not correct, but a mis-reading of Acts 2:31, which tells us Jesus descended into Hades, not Hell. Hell is the place of eternal torment reserved for the judgment day; Hades is the place of the dead, both righteous and unrighteous.

¹ <http://www.gci.org/history/apostles>

² Note: In fact, the books of the Bible were agreed upon generally far earlier than this author suggests, a factual misstatement that is rooted in the false Catholic doctrine that the Bible was established by the early Catholic councils - BH

In the Apostle's Creed we read about "*the holy catholic Church*". Catholic means "universal", so in some ways this is not an error. However, it leads us to the conclusion that the universal church is in some way manifested in the world now, rather than of a spiritual substance. The Bible speaks of the universal church as being heavenly in manifestation, quite different that the creed suggests (Hebrews 12:22-23).

The Nicene Creed states that Jesus "*shall come againwhose kingdom shall have no end.*". Yet He established His kingdom upon His resurrection, contrary to the suggestion of the creed. As well, His kingdom ends when He returns, so it is inaccurate to suggest it has no end (1 Corinthians 15:24)

Finally, we must ask: are Creeds authorized? Perhaps we ought to ask too if there is a list of Christian "fundamentals" in the Bible comparable to the list given in creeds. In fact, there is such a list in Hebrews 6:1-2 "*Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.*"

The list of Christian "fundamentals"

Repentance

Faith

Baptism

Authority

Resurrection

Judgment

The List of Creed Fundamentals

(not present)

Faith

(not present)

(not present)

Resurrection

Judgment

As you see, half of the fundamental doctrines of Christ are absent from the creeds of men, suggesting they have nothing in common. Simply put, Bible Fundamentals and Creed Fundamentals are not the same!

We must conclude that creeds are quite sinful. They are more divisive from the truth than unifying. They are often false or misleading. Finally, they are not from God but from men. We must conclude that Satan loves creeds, in that they misdirect people from the truth of God.

In Christianity, there can be no creed of consensus. Instead, we must view the Bible as the sole source of faith (Romans 10:17). We are forced to seek the mind of God rather than the error of men.