

## Before Abraham Was ...

*John 8:48-59*

<sup>48</sup> The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?"

<sup>49</sup> Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me.

<sup>50</sup> Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge.

<sup>51</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death."

<sup>52</sup> The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'

<sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?"

<sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'

<sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.

<sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."

<sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

<sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."

<sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. (Joh 8:31-59 ESV)

## Creeds and Christianity

The famous modern Christian saying says, “No creed but Christ.” These four short words reflect a great deal about the state of the church today. The idea seems to be that man-made creeds are evil because, well, they are man-made. Therefore, we shouldn’t be governed by *any* creeds, only by this nebulous thing people like to call “Jesus.” It also seems to suggest that religion is basically on par with these creeds, since it is religion that supposedly made up the creeds in the first place, and all religion must likewise be man-made.

The statement is, of course, absurd. For one thing, *it is itself a creed*. To create a creed that says we shouldn’t have any creeds is self-defeating. How do you talk about Jesus without defining him; and what would defining him be if not a creed? Second, it is every bit as *man-made* as any creed it attempts to attack. You won’t find this statement anywhere in the Bible. Third, it displays to the whole world an *ignorance of Christianity*, a religion which is rooted in theological and

historical facts, facts which can be known and transmitted to others. But the transmission of these facts in any form other than direct quotations instantly becomes a creed, whether it be short or long, and everyone I've ever met attempts to speak about Christianity using their own words. Fourth, it fails to recognize **the creeds within the Bible** itself (**Php 2:6-11; 1 Tim 1:15; 3:16; 2 Tim 2:11-13**) and that the Bible calls us to pass down the traditions (**2 Thess 2:15; Jude 3**)—both religious and theological—that are given to us in the Bible.

Such is the day we live in; and this is probably because we know and care less and less about what the Bible says about God and Jesus Christ. If we cared more, we would love the creeds of the church and pass them onto our children, because, as the **Athanasian Creed** begins, “**Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.**”

What is a creed? “**Creed**” comes from a Latin term *credo*, meaning, “**I believe.**” For instance, when the man in the next

chapter of John says, “**Lord, I believe**” (John 9:38), the Latin Vulgate reads, “Credo Domine.” So a creed is simply a statement of belief or a confession of faith. Some creeds are short while others are long, some are written down, others are spoken at summer camps around a fire-pit; but at the end of the day, they are all still creeds.

Whenever you tell someone what you believe, you are giving them your own **personal creed**. Today, many people’s personal creeds are the private creations of themselves, under no one’s subjection except the person giving it. The **Creeds of the church** on the other hand are corporate, public, created and accepted by the whole church. So the job of a Christian is to believe what the church believes and has always believed, to have your personal creed line up with the Creeds of Christianity. This is what it means to be a Christian.

Of course, I’m not saying that the historic creeds of the church are perfectly infallible. Nor are they all of equal importance. But we do believe for the most part (especially the

ecumenical creeds)<sup>1</sup> they faithfully reflect the teaching of the Scripture, and to that end, this is exactly what Christianity is supposed to be doing, according to the teaching of Scripture itself. We are supposed to be passing down the biblical faith to our children.

For a moment I want to look at one of the lesser known creeds: [The Athanasian Creed](#) (for the text of this creed, see the last page of this sermon). The creed is attributed to [Athanasius](#) (296-373 A.D.), the great African defender of Christ against the Arian heresy. Most scholars believe this creed was penned 100 years after Athanasius, so through it bears his name, he probably didn't write it. The Athanasian Creed is divided into two sections: The first regards the doctrine of the Trinity; the second regards the doctrine of Christ. I want to focus on its doctrine of Christ.

In the creed it mentions as part of the necessary things to believe about Christ—the [incarnation](#), the [two-natures](#) (he is

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<sup>1</sup> An ecumenical creed is one where the whole of Christendom was assembled to arrive at the creed. The Eastern and Western churches all accept the Nicene Creed in this regard and in the West, the Apostle's Creed and the Athanasian Creed are also included among the ecumenical creeds.

both fully God and fully man), his unique status as only begotten, the virgin birth (implicitly), as well as his suffering, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. It says that holding to these things “is necessary to everlasting salvation.” It doesn’t mean it is sufficient to be saved. You can believe the right things and not be saved. But it is necessary, for without belief in the right thing you can’t have faith in it. This is why we place such a heavy emphasis on what you should believe.

I want to make a point here, because this may be a debatable part of a Creed. I’m often asked, “What about if someone doesn’t hold to something like the virgin birth? Would this keep them out of heaven?” My answer is that it depends. There is a difference between not holding to a doctrine because you don’t know it or are confused about it vs. not holding to a doctrine because you have understood and rejected it. I believe that there are probably a host of things about God and Christ that someone may not know at the moment of their conversion, and certainly the virgin birth could be among those things. For example, when Peter gives

his first sermon, he does not mention the virgin birth. Yet, people were saved. There are also plenty of doctrines that we are confused about, often for a very long time, and sometimes throughout our whole lives. But it is another thing altogether to hear the doctrine, read about it in the Bible, understand it, and then say, “I don’t believe that.” Or saying it another way, “That is not my creed.” It is difficult to see how such a person as this could believe in the Jesus of Bible.

## Creeds and John 8

At any rate, why would I bring up a creed about Jesus at the beginning of this sermon? Something struck me a few weeks back about John 8, though I’m sure if it was in my mind earlier, I would have seen similar things in other chapters. John 8 is full of statements about Jesus Christ that must be believed. As he told the people on that day, “Unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (John 8:24). Here Jesus says that there is something about him that you must believe if you do not want to die and go to hell. In this



case, you must believe that “I am he” (or as I told you a couple weeks back that “I am”). Other parts of the chapter flesh out what those things are.

What are some of these statements in John 8 that Jesus makes, statements that force a way into our personal creeds if we want to be saved? Let me mention a few, then we shall look at them. “He said to them, ‘You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world’” (John 8:23). “I always do the things that are pleasing to [my Father]” (29). “If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (36). “If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death” (52). “It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God’” (54). Then there is the remark by the Pharisees, “We were not born of sexual immorality” (41). And finally, “Jesus’ last remark, “Before Abraham was, I am” (58). None of these are things for you to do, they are things you must believe. They are creeds.

What I find remarkable about these statements is how closely they parallel the teachings in the Athanasian Creed.



The Creed refers to the [incarnation](#) of Christ. Jesus says “I am from above.” The Creed refers to the [Son](#) of God. Jesus says the Son must set you free. The Creed refers to the [virgin birth](#) (implicitly saying, “of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world”). The Pharisees say, “We are not born of sexual immorality.” The Creed refers [sufferings, resurrection, and ascension](#) of Christ. Jesus refers to being glorified by the Father. The Creed refers to Christ’s being of one essence with the Father. Jesus refers to his pre-existence using the divine name to identify himself as one essence with the Father.

To put this all another way, John 8 can be seen as a kind of [mini systematic theology](#), a treasure trove of teachings from which we get much of our information about Jesus Christ which have been formulated into Creeds. To put it still another way, the Creed is doing nothing more than [expressing the teachings of the Scripture](#), summarizing them for us in a distilled form so that we know what we should and shouldn’t believe about Jesus, in a way that is easy to understand and corrects our errors about him. The other ecumenical creeds are

really doing the same thing. The only people that have problems with this are those who reject Christ as he is found in the Bible before they ever come to the Creeds of the church. Since these things are so very important for our salvation, let us spend some time reflecting on them. We will spend the most time thinking about Jesus' last statement, since it takes up most of our passage today.

## The Attributes of Christ

### *I AM and Christ's Eternal Nature*

Let's look at some of these statements Christ makes about himself, and see if we can get a better understanding of this God we have come to worship today. The one our passage focuses on is also the doctrine that undergirds all the others on his chapter. It is what I would call **Christ's pre-existence**. But more than pre-existence, it is his **eternal nature**. Again, the key verse is **John 8:58**, "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'"

We looked at the “I am” statements (8:12, 24, 28) already made in this chapter a few weeks ago. We saw that Jesus taking upon himself the divine name, the name only given to God in the OT, the one whom we would normally think of as God the Father. Earlier in the Creed we read about the Father, “The Father uncreated [and] ... eternal.” I AM makes up the word we pronounce as Yahweh. It probably means, “The Self-Existent One,” hence, “I AM.” Because Jesus now refers to himself as Yahweh, the Creed rightly says of him that which is also said of the Father, “The Son uncreated [and] ... eternal.” What is true of the Father is true of the Son, though they be distinct persons in one being or essence we call God.

Let’s look at the passage to see how Jesus came to make this statement about himself. He has already said several times in the chapter that he is “I am.” Yet, the Pharisees were not catching on. The first verse of our text today has them saying that Jesus must have a demon (John 8:48). They tie this demon-possession to what they think are his true biological origins; they think he is a Samaritan. If Mary is his mother,

then this means they deny that the Heavenly Father or even Joseph is his true father. He is an illegitimate child.

Therefore, when he makes such outrageous claims about not only his parentage (his Father is God), but also about theirs (their father is the devil), then accuse him of being the one who is demon-possessed.

Jesus denies their claims, but his denial is rooted in their own immorality, not in some “just take my word for it, wink wink.” What is their immorality of theirs? He says that He honors his Father, but they dishonor him (**vs. 49**). They dishonor him in **what they accuse him of being** as well as in their **plans to kill him**. Anyone who speaks ill of Jesus Christ is therefore dishonoring God the Father. This is why adherents to Islam and Judaism and cults are in such a precarious position. All say things about Jesus, but they dishonor him in their teachings about him. Those who go a step further to persecute Christians for bearing his name are also in a dangerous place, but it is God’s job to judge them, not ours. Vengeance is Mine, says the LORD.

Jesus goes a step farther. He adds that he does not seek his own glory. This is a statement of his morality. We all know that there is one thing that unites all false Messiahs from **Jim Jones** to **David Koresh** to **Marshall Applewhite** and a thousand others over the centuries. They all seek their own fame and glory. To seek your own glory is to break the First Commandment, where you shall have no other god before the LORD.

In the remarkable relationship that is the Godhead, this holds true even for Jesus. He only seeks the glory of the Father. Yet, it also holds true for the Father. The Father seeks the glory of the Son (**vs. 50, 54**). You see, our Triune God even follows his own commandments. Each Person is utterly selfless, always given to the Others, always seeking their best, and as such, God is always glorified in the purest way by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I'll come back to this at the end of the sermon.

For now, notice that Jesus attaches the Father seeking the glory of the Son to the judgment that he has given to the Son.

Though the Father is the judge (50), he has given judgment over to the Son (8:16). Today, this is good news. Tomorrow, it is bad news. Today, this judgment means that if anyone will keep the word of Christ, thereby believing in him and doing what he says, “he will never see death” (51). Anyone dying knows what good news that would be. Jesus has been given the right to stay the execution of the children of Adam who were sentenced to death long ago. This is the gospel. God has given judgment to the Son, who allows any to live eternally if they keep his word—if they believe in him. The punishment you deserve can be absolved, because of the glory of God, as you will see shortly.

The Pharisees are beside themselves at this point. “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death’ (John 8:52-53). Again, they can only think about the physical. They aren’t thinking about eternal life, but not dying physically. Yet, they realize that Jesus is claiming some kind of power over death itself. Who has such power?

For the Pharisees, it was the **law of God** that had the power over death. God gave the law so that people might live. The OT said this time and again, “**Keep my statues and my rules; if a person does them [keeps the law], he shall live by them**” (**Lev 18:5; Neh 9:29**). Yet, the Apostle understands just how wrong they are. “**The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law**” (**1 Cor 15:56**). Far from making you a better person, the law’s job is to reveal sin, and in sinful creatures, the law actually incites sin to rise up.

Jesus is claiming a much needed power if anyone is to be saved. If the law cannot give life because it was weakened by the flesh, God can give life by sending the Son of God in the flesh to condemn sin in his flesh as a sin offering on our behalf (**Rom 8:3**). So Jesus is given the power over death. Yet, the legalists can’t hear him. They return to Abraham. “**Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?**” (**John 8:53**).

Jesus answers them in **vs. 56**. “**Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.**”



Still not understanding, they said, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” (57). Jesus answered, “Before Abraham was, I am” (58). John 8:56 is one of my favorite verses in the Gospel of John. When did Abraham see Christ’s day? What is Christ’s day?

Since he is “I AM,” the Day almost certainly refers to “The Day of the LORD” found throughout the OT. Normally, we associate the Day with the Return of Christ in the Second Coming. It has apocalyptic overtones, and the figures present are often gruesome and horrific. It is a Day of Judgment. Yet, it says Abraham “rejoiced.” And it puts it in the past tense rather than the future. So what might Jesus be talking about?

The most common answer since the early days of the church has been to see the Day foreshadowed in the near sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Chrysostom writes, “By this day perhaps He means the day of the cross, which Abraham prefigured by the offering up of Isaac and the ram: intimating hereby that HE did not come to His passion unwillingly”

(*Homily 54. 2*).<sup>2</sup> This idea is reinforced when we consider that Isaac is a type of Christ and at his birth, it is recorded that Abraham fell on his face and laughed/rejoiced (**Gen 17:17 Onkelos Targum**). I agree that both the birth and near sacrifice of Isaac are prefigurements of Christ and as such it could be said that Abraham saw Christ's day.

Yet, this does not seem to me to do enough justice to the pre-existence of Christ which is in focus here. I believe we would all do well to really take the time and consider that Jesus is in fact pre-existent and there with Abraham, even in the prefigurements of his incarnation later on. Indeed, one of the great missing ingredients of modern Christianity is a robust theology of proof that Jesus existed in the OT, that he was **actually there**, not in the flesh as a man, but as the Angel of the LORD.

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<sup>2</sup> This may go back all the way to the Testament of Levi 8:6 (which may or may not be of Christian origin), "The heavens will be opened, and from the temple of glory sanctification will come upon him, with a fatherly voice, as from Abraham to Isaac." See F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Pickering and Inglis, 1983), 207.

Notice that Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac because God spoke to him. But it was no disembodied voice heard by a man that belongs in a mental institution. Rather, it was, a person present with Him. The old Targum says, “the Memra” was there, and this Aramaic “Memra” becomes John’s *Logos*. “The Word (Memra) of the Lord at once tried Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ and he said, ‘Behold me’” (**Gen 22:1 Pseudo-Jonathan**).

The Memra was a person, nor a mere sound of vibrations vibrating in Abraham’s ears. And this person came to Abraham time and time again. As **Gregory** said of this verse, “Abraham saw the day of the Lord even then, when he entertained the three Angels, a figure of the Trinity” (*Hom. xv. in Evang.*). I don’t think this was the Trinity, but I do know that one of the Angels was Yahweh, for later, when he is arguing with this angel over the fate of Sodom, the text calls him Yahweh (**Gen 18:22, 26, 33**). So **Tertullian** said, “[Jesus] certainly proves [here] that it was not the Father that appeared to Abraham but the Son” (*Against Praxeas 22*). And **Irenaeus**

says, “Christ himself ... together with the Father is the God of the living who spoke to Moses and who was also manifested to the patriarchs. In teaching this very thing he said to the Jews, “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day ... Righteously, therefore, having left his earthly family, he followed the Word of God walking as a pilgrim with the Word so that he might [afterwards] make his home with the Word” (*AGAINST HERESIES* 4.5.2–3).

Do you see how remarkable this is? To learn that such teaching has always been the teaching of the church is as exciting as anything I’ve ever come across. For whatever reason, while we pay lip-service to Christ’s pre-existence today, it rarely makes much of a difference to us. In fact, talking like this can get you drawn and quartered in some Christian circles, because for whatever reasons, we have become complacent and intolerant of actually thinking that Jesus is there in the OT. That might just undermine our view of that nasty old mean God in the OT, and we wouldn’t want to ruin our idol of Jesus that we have created for ourselves in “no creed but Christ.”

Tell me then, does it **thrill you or chill you** to learn that Abraham actually saw Jesus? If Jesus is the light, perhaps he is the very Day Abraham saw. What ought it do to your faith in him to know that he came before Abraham, that he created Abraham?

### *Incarnation*

If all you had was this theology about pre-existence, you may not know what to do. But in John 8, this is not all we have. Christ's pre-existence actually **paves the way** for the rest of the theology about him that we glean from these words of John. The first of these has to be Christ's **incarnation**. We do believe there is something fundamentally different about Christ today than back in Abraham's day. That difference is spelled out in **John 1:14**, "**The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.**" The idea is that the Word has always existed, as the personal expression of God's activity throughout all eternity. The Word appeared to Abraham in physical form, yet he did not take on human nature in those appearances.

But here is where one of those [biblical creeds](#), a creed which almost certainly predates Paul, but which he uses in his letter to the Philippians because it is the orthodox faith that they were taught becomes informative. “[Though he was in the form of God, \[he\] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself ...](#)” ([Php 2:6-8](#)). Christ, the very form of God became the very form of man, adding a new human nature to his divine nature.

So the Athanasian Creed says, “[Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood by God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person.](#)” So to make that clear, God is one nature/essence/being with three persons. But Jesus is one person with two natures or essences. He added a human

nature to his divine nature, but they are not mixed or combined or diluted into one another. Jesus gets that is in John 8 when he teaches that he is from above and that he came down to earth. From the first words of this Gospel, this is one of the main points John is trying to establish, so that you might know who Jesus is, so that you will not confuse him with prophets or other world religious leaders, as if they are all just good guys come to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony.

### *Virgin Birth*

Closely tied to the incarnation is Christ's [virgin birth](#). To incarnate, he had to come to earth in the womb of a woman; he had to become a man. Luke teaches us that the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and brought Jesus to her womb apart from any relations with a man. Jesus had no biological father and this makes him unlike any other beings that have lived on earth.<sup>3</sup> The virgin birth is important, first, because it is

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<sup>3</sup> This includes even clones of sheep, who while not having a direct biological father, were nevertheless clones of beings that did. Without those pre-existing biological entities with biological fathers, cloning would not be possible. Jesus is not like this.



prophesied in Isaiah. Second, if there was no virgin birth, then Jesus' father would not be God in the unique sense he has in mind, and therefore Jesus would not be his only begotten Son.<sup>4</sup>

### *Son of God*

Though the language “**only begotten**” does not occur here, it has occurred several times in John's Gospel. Now Jesus simply says that the Son must set you free. It is because he is God's **Son** and not Joseph's son that he has such power and authority. The prince alone has the right to become the king. And the Prince of Peace has become the King of kings because of his being glorified by the Father.

### *Glory of God*

And now I return to the **glory of God**. Because he is pre-existent, Jesus could incarnate as the Son of God born of a virgin. But this **incarnation had a purpose**. The purpose was

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<sup>4</sup> The idea that Jesus would not be sinless were it not for the virgin birth is true, but probably not because sin is passed down through male sperm. Rather, Jesus' sinlessness has to do with the fact that he is fully divine. I am of the opinion that no created being, not even unfallen angels, are perfectly holy (Job 4:18; 15:15). This is why there are “elect angels” (1 Tim 5:21). Only a fully divine being (i.e. God) can be perfectly sinless for reasons that are beyond the scope of this footnote. Even in heaven, our sinlessness will be due in no small part because we are in mystical union with Christ, not blended into God, but remaining separate from him, yet in such union with him that (through the analogy of marriage) we become one flesh with him. Of course, all temptation to sin will also be removed.

not to glorify himself, but to glorify the Father and to be glorified by the Father. As we have seen, this is a central point of our passage today. But how did Jesus glorify the Father and what does it mean that he was glorified by the Father?

The Creed refers to the **sufferings, resurrection, and ascension** of Christ. This is the glory he is talking about. It is curious that **Philippians 2:8** continues by saying about the incarnation, “... and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” To humble yourself is to not seek your own glory, but that of another. It was the humility of Christ that allowed him to glorify the Father in doing what the Father sent him to do for us! To die in our place. In this regard, there is a certain Medieval Church Father named **Alcuin** (d. 804 AD) who comments on this section of the Father glorifying the Son says, “**The Father glorified the Son, at His baptism, on the mount, at the time of His passion, when a voice came to Him, in the midst of the crowd, when He raised**

Him up again after his passion, and place Him at the right hand of His Majesty.”

To be this sacrifice, it was first necessary that Christ should obey the entire law. Since he was a man, he was born under the same law of God that men are. To earn the right to be our satisfaction and our sacrifice, Christ had to be spotless, perfect. So he says in [John 8:29](#), “I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” By Jesus’ own admission, he never sinned, but always did everything the Father told him to do. He always obeyed the law.

This obedience took the Savior to the ultimate end, [death on a cross](#) as a sacrifice to God. He offered himself up as a sacrifice as our high priest. And so he was both priest and lamb. In doing this, he offered his body to the Father as punishment so that in God’s justice it might be accepted as a sacrifice for those sinners who trust in it to save them.

For his obedience in all things, the [Father glorified the Son by raising him from the dead](#). Now Jesus is no longer dead, as all the world’s religious leaders are. He is alive. He

has been given a glorified body that shall never taste death again. Because he is alive, he now holds the keys to life and death in his hands. And he may grant life to any that come to him, any that the Father chooses to give him. This was the glory of the Father to the Son and Abraham saw this ahead of time as he stood there ready to sacrifice his only begotten son Isaac, but Jesus spared Isaac's life, knowing that the only true sacrifice that would ever satisfy God was his own, when he would come to earth 2,000 years later in the womb of Mary.

The final glory of the Son is to give [glory to the Holy Spirit](#). When the Father literally glorified Jesus by bringing him to heaven, the Son sent the Spirit in his place to carry out the will of the Father on earth, bringing many sons to glory, by teaching them about these many truths of Christ, convincing them of their truth, and bringing them to life by his breath. The Holy Spirit is in our midst today.

When the Pharisees had heard all of these things, [“they picked up stones to throw at him.”](#) They believed he was the ultimate blasphemer and he had to pay. But they did not have

the power of death over Jesus. “Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple” (John 8:59). Only months later would he return to be crucified by them, at his own self-sacrifice. Theirs is one response to the Lord Jesus. What is yours?

Will you deny him or confess him today? Will you accept his teaching of himself as you have heard it from John 8? Will you believe what the creeds have faithfully recounted to you in a systematic form that you can understand? Will you stand with the rest of his church in the midst of the assembly and sing praises to his name for nothing less than who he is? This is why you have assembled. This is why you have come. There is no higher calling than to praise such a God as this, to give up your own glory and give all glory to Him who has made provision for you to have eternal life.

### **Athanasian Creed**

Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled; without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship **one God in Trinity**, and **Trinity in Unity**; Neither confounding the **Persons**; nor dividing the **Essence**. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the

Father is; such is the Son; and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreated; the Son **uncreated**; and the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father unlimited; the Son **unlimited**; and the Holy Ghost unlimited. The Father eternal; the Son **eternal**; and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three eternals; but one eternal. As also there are not three uncreated; nor three infinities, but one uncreated; and one infinite. So likewise the Father is Almighty; the Son **Almighty**; and the Holy Ghost Almighty. And yet they are not three Almighty; but one Almighty. So the Father is God; the Son is **God**; and the Holy Ghost is God. And yet they are not three Gods; but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord; the Son **Lord**; and the Holy Ghost Lord. And yet not three Lords; but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity; to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; So are we forbidden by the catholic religion; to say, There are three Gods, or three Lords. The Father is made of none; neither created, nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone; not made, nor created; but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten; but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is before, or after another; none is greater, or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal, and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid; the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is to be worshipped. He therefore that will be saved, let him thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the **Incarnation** of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is **God and Man**; God, of the Essence of the Father; **begotten** before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood by God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ; Who **suffered** for our salvation; **descended** into hell; **rose again** the third day from the dead. He **ascended** into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the God the Father Almighty, from whence he will come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies; And shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting; and they that have done evil, into everlasting fire. This is the catholic faith; which except a man believe truly and firmly, he cannot be saved.