

“We Believe” - The Nicene Creed, the Church, and you

All-Ages Sunday School Winter/Spring 2021

Grace Presbyterian Church (PCA) Sierra Vista, AZ

“¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.” — Romans 8:18-25

Review:

The Nicene Creed is a confession of what ‘we’ believe as Christians. Since its completion in 381 AD, it has been continually used by Christ’s Church in worship.

As we have seen throughout this study, it is a worthy and robust confession of the basic, essential beliefs of orthodoxy. We have traced its trinitarian structure, seeing that great mystery of our faith as the organizing theme of the Creed; we have seen Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.

Today, we conclude looking at the person and work of the Holy Spirit. This is the ultimate thing the Creed says He does.

“... and we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”
Physical resurrection and the everlasting final state are the closing note of both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds. Tying these two truths together is the ministry of the Holy Spirit giving us hope.

Future hope, and therefore present comfort, should be the lesson we draw from confessing these truths. Consider the Heidelberg Catechism on these two statements:

Q57. How does “the resurrection of the body” comfort you?

A. Not only will my soul be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head,¹ but also my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul, and made like Christ’s glorious body.²

Q58. How does the article concerning “life everlasting” comfort you?

A. Even as I already now experience in my heart the beginning of eternal joy,³ so after this life I will have perfect blessedness such as no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has ever imagined: a blessedness in which to praise God eternally.⁴

¹Luke 23:34; Phil. 1:23-23. ²1 Cor. 15:20, 42-46, 54; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2. ³Rom. 14:17. ⁴John 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:9

The Physical Resurrection

The hope of Christianity is not the vague hope of becoming an angel, or a harp-playing spirit floating on a cloud. The certain anticipation of Christianity is that just as Christ rose from the grave on the third day, so too will we one day rise bodily from the grave to be with him (1 Cor. 15, 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11). Souls will be reunited with bodies. The dead will be raised.

Romans 8:11: *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”*

Paul even names the indwelling Spirit by His activity raising Christ from the grave. As we have already seen, He is Lord and Giver of Life. He is giving life, and He will give life everlasting in New Creation Bodies.

Additionally, He enables us to look for this moment with hope. He gives us a healthy anticipation of Christ surely doing all that He has promised (Rev. 22:20-21). Jesus is not only faithful to our souls; He is faithful to our bodies too. The Holy Spirit comforts us with this.

The Life to Come

The dead are not raised to continue on in a world exactly like this one is now. Instead, the dead are raised for two purposes: 1) the greater condemnation of the reprobate in the ‘lake of fire’ (Rev. 20) and 2) the consummate blessing of the redeemed in the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev. 21). Isaiah’s prophecy ended on this same note (Is. 66:22-24).

The Holy Spirit is at work preparing us for the final state of the redeemed, a work that will be perfected on that Day. The “life of the world to come” will be Creation as it should have been. God is moving history to the point He always put forth as a promise: life abundant (John 10:10, Gen. 2:16-17).

The goodness and joy we now experience in Christ, by the Spirit, is only a glimpse of what is to come in fullness and perfection in the life everlasting.

See also: Westminster Shorter Catechism Q36-38

Amen!

We close our prayers saying “Amen” because “Amen” means “yes,” or “so be it.” Amen here could express a desire for these hoped for things to come true, and to come soon (Rev. 22:20-21).

But “Amen” means even more. It is a Hebrew word brought straight into Greek, and now straight into English. Originally, in Hebrew, it had a sense of not just agreement but also truthfulness. When Jesus says “Truly, Truly...” in John’s Gospel, He’s literally saying “Amen, Amen ...” In this sense, Amen may be here to affirm that all we have confessed is God’s truth, Amen!.