

I Believe in God, the Son

DAVE BAST

A lot of people believe in God, the majority of the world's population, in fact; and of course, so do Christians; but as Christians, we believe in a God who is unique—a God who is one, and yet, also three—the Holy Trinity. So, in the Apostles' Creed, immediately after declaring that we believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth; we go on to proclaim: And in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. This is our confession of faith. We believe in God, we believe also in Jesus; but what is it we believe about Jesus? We will explore that today on *Groundwork*. Stay tuned.

SCOTT HOEZEE

From Words of Hope and ReFrame Media, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Scott Hoezee.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast; so, Scott, we are continuing now, moving into a new section of the Apostles' Creed. We have done several programs already on God, the Father; and let me just read, as we move on, what we say we believe about Jesus. So, the Apostles' Creed says: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From there, he will come to judge the living and the dead.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, that is the second section. We noted in the first program that the Apostles' Creed is indeed Trinitarian in nature. It is divided up into a Father section, a Son section, a Spirit section; and you just read the Son section—the longest section of the Creed; and most of that section focuses on the saving work of Jesus. For this program, we are just going to sort of take that first line: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; and there is actually a lot in there, as we are going to see, as we start to take this apart, kind of one word at a time, almost.

DAVE BAST

We start with Jesus...the name Jesus...*I?sous* in Greek, which is just transliterated into Jesus, but its Hebrew equivalent in the Old Testament is a rather significant name, pregnant with meaning, really. It is *Yeshua* or Joshua, and it really means *savior*.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Saving is right in his very name. That is what Jesus means, that he is the one who will be our savior. He brought the Gospel in his very person, which is good news to people who were living in a world which is mostly full of bad news many days.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; you know, the fact that Jesus' very name proclaims him to be the Savior suggests that we all need saving...saving from something; and again, now immediately we are introduced to controversy, because a lot of people would say: Huh, saving? From what? I am not addicted to drugs; I am not in prison; I'm not a

criminal; what is this salvation thing? In fact, it is one of the things that is sometimes ridiculed about the Christian faith. Jesus saves...Green Stamps or something; or you think of a sign outside a rescue mission: Jesus saves...well, maybe for those people, yes; but why should I need salvation?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And yet, most people at some point in their lives get to a point where they realize that maybe there is something wrong with this world and with themselves that they cannot fix by themselves; and we are really seeing that, Dave, with the opioid crisis. In recent years in the United States, life expectancy has gone down because there are so many suicides happening and so many deaths from drug overdose. It is startling; in the most developed nation in the world with the best healthcare system, our life expectancy is going down because despair is rampant. I think some people do realize: You know, I think I need help that I cannot get from my own; or even people who enter AA—Alcoholics Anonymous—I need a higher power to lift me out of my alcoholism.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and you know, this is how Jesus himself defined his mission: I came to seek and to save the lost. He said in that same memorable passage: Those who are healthy don't need a doctor; it is people who are sick, and that is who needs a savior, and that I what I came to do. I didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for many. So, there it is right there from Jesus' own lips.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so that is Jesus. I believe in Jesus...and then: I believe in Jesus *Christ* the Apostles' Creed says. So, what about that second word: *Christ*? Well, it is actually not a name. I mean, sometimes people treat *Christ* like it is his last name; like I am Scott *Hoezee*; he is Jesus *Christ*. No; Christ is a title; and of course, as I think many people might remember, it means *anointed one*. In Hebrew it is *Mashiach*, from which we get Messiah. So, we think of Handel's *Messiah*. The Messiah is the anointed one—the one who is set aside by God for a special purpose. It began with the kings. David was anointed, and all the kings in the Davidic line in Israel's history were anointed. They were all mini messiahs, if you will...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But they all anticipated *the* Messiah—the Christ; and when he came, eventually even the disciples started to recognize that.

DAVE BAST

Well, there is a famous scene in Matthew Chapter 16, where Jesus has taken his disciples actually right out of Israel. They have gone up north to a place called Caesarea Philippi, which was kind of in the foothills of the mountains of Lebanon, and it was a gentile area, an area with a lot of pagan shrines; and you get the feeling that Jesus kind of wanted to go on this getaway so that he could have the disciples just to himself...not pestered by the crowds for once...so that he could say something important to them; and so,

¹³He began by asking them, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" (In other words, what are people saying about me?)

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

DAVE BAST

¹⁴And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." ¹⁵He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" ¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, (there is that title...you are the Messiah) the Son of the living God."

SCOTT HOEZEE

Exactly; you are the one we were waiting for. Now, the time will come when Jesus gets crucified and arrested that the disciples sort of think: Whoop, I guess we made a little mistake. The Messiah wasn't supposed to get killed. Of course, he was, and Jesus tried to teach them that all along. In fact, right after this passage, Jesus will say: You are right, Peter, I am the Christ, and so I am going to have to suffer and die; and Peter says: Whoa...

DAVE BAST

Whoa, wait a minute; no!

SCOTT HOEZEE

You just said you were the Christ...that cannot happen...get behind me, Satan. So, they are going to have to learn what being the Christ...what being the Messiah...is really all about, but they will...of course, they will learn that; but that is who it is, that Jesus is the Messiah...he is the Christ; and that is what that second title is: Jesus Christ, that Jesus, as Frederick Dale Bruner says: He is the answer...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He is the one that we have been waiting for.

DAVE BAST

The one they have been looking for, and he says that in a memorable way when John the Baptist even begins to have doubts: Are you the one? Are you really the Messiah? And Jesus says: Just go tell John what is happening, you know, the blind are seeing, the lame are walking, and sins are being forgiven. So, yes; Jesus was *the* Anointed One, and all those others that you mentioned, Scott, the kings and the prophets and the priests, they were symbols of his coming, but he is anointed, not with oil, but with the Spirit being poured out on him at his baptism, and God saying: You are my Son; with you I am well pleased; and he is the one who came to show us God—to bring us back to God—to heal the breach. So, that is Jesus Christ, but he is also God's only Son. Peter says that: You are the Son of God; but what does that actually mean? We will explore that next.

Segment 2

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and this program, which is really the fourth in a long, 12-part series on the Apostles' Creed; but the first program in the second part of the Creed, which begins with: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, which looks at the person and the work of Jesus.

So, Dave, we just looked at what Jesus means...it means savior. We looked at what Christ means...it is his title...it means the anointed one—the chosen one; but now, that next line: His only Son...and we want to dig into that.

DAVE BAST

Right; and to do that, let's go to a familiar passage of scripture. We have used it already in this series. It is kind of the classical place to think about Jesus' divinity...his divine sonship; and it is the beginning of the Gospel of John. So, we read this: ^{1:1}In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ¹⁴The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, (there it is) full of grace and truth.

SCOTT HOEZEE

¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Or, as Dale Bruner likes to paraphrase that: Nobody has ever seen the Father, but Jesus came and he explained God to us.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I like that line; so, what does it mean to say he is his only Son? Well, you know, sometimes, Dave, somebody might say to you: I am an only child. Or a parent might say: We only have the one child...our only son. That is not quite what it means with God. It is not as though God could have had more kids, but he just had his only child. *Only*, in that sense, doesn't mean the possibility of more siblings. It is a very unique term... *begotten* is a term that actually used to be in some older versions of the Creed: His only *begotten* son. It really wasn't in the original of the Creed, so they took it out in newer translations; but, to be begotten does not mean you were born; it doesn't mean there was a time, if you will, before and after that there was no son, and then he was born. That was a very early heresy in the Church, by the way. A man named Arius said: Well, you know, the Father was first, and then he kind of birthed a son eventually...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, the son began at some point. No, only *begotten* Son means somehow there was never a time when there wasn't a Father and a Son...and a Spirit, while we are at it...they were always, eternally, together.

DAVE BAST

Right; in fact, another creed, the Nicene Creed, which is even more ancient than the Apostles' Creed, says he was begotten not created; and the truth of Christian faith is that Jesus is eternally begotten from the Father. He is always proceeding from the Father, as the Spirit is proceeding from the Son and the Father. It is just...I kind of try to picture it as almost an atom, you know, or what you see the model of an atom with electrons kind of flowing around it. There is this bond of love whereby the Son comes from the Father and the Spirit comes from both, and they are all kind of joined together as one God. That may not be helpful to you, and we don't really fully understand it; but the point of calling Jesus God's *only* Son is to say that he is uniquely God's Son in a way that we are not. We are children of God; yes, that is true, because God is our creator. Everyone is a child of God in that sense; and Christians, we would say, are even more doubly God's children because we have been adopted, as the New Testament teaches, that the Spirit teaches us to call God Abba—Father; but Jesus is uniquely God's Son in a way that we are not.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we should just name what probably a lot of our listeners are thinking to themselves right this very moment, listening to this program: Wow! This is complicated. Eternally begotten...eternally proceeding...I cannot quite visualize that...I am a temporal being...I am stuck in time. Yes, it is a mystery, and it is okay that we really cannot come up with a perfect image or we cannot really grasp it. It is a mystery, but mysteries are a good thing; but the point is, is that there never was a time when there wasn't a Father and a Son, and calling them Father and Son...again, that doesn't imply hierarchy, right? There are no inferior and superior persons within God, they are all co-equal. It is a relationship word for us and for our salvation, this is how God operates. The Father sends the Son and the Son sends the Spirit, and the Spirit connects us back to the Son, who connects us back to the Father. It is like this wonderful, virtuous circle. The Father sends the Son, the Son sends the Spirit; the Spirit connects us to Jesus, who brings us to the Father; and it goes on and on...

DAVE BAST

Yes, right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

In wonderful, wonderful ways. In fact, in the West we often picture the Trinity as a triangle. In the East, they picture the Trinity as a circle; and you say what is three about a circle? Well, it is because they have something they call *perichoresis*, from which we get the word choreography. It is like a divine dance where the three persons in God are constantly chasing each other around in a wonderful circle of ongoing love; and we get...as you said, by adoption we get caught up in that wonderful, virtuous circle now ourselves.

DAVE BAST

Yes; maybe just to bring it back into the scripture of John 1; notice what John says there. He says three things, basically, about the Word, who is synonymous with the Son, who is Jesus. He says, first of all, the Word has always existed. He is eternal: In the beginning was the Word, and that is a conscious echo of Genesis 1: In the beginning, God... He says that the Word is distinct from God. He is another person: For the Word was *with* God; but he also says the Word was identical to God: The Word *was* God. So, that is what we are all trying to unpack just this truth of scripture.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And we should note that some of us have encountered Jehovah's Witnesses, who sometimes will try to use John 1 to make their own point. They slip an A...an indefinite article...they say that John wrote that he was A God. That is not what John 1 says. It says the Word *was* God—identical to God. So, the Son is not inferior; he is not a creature; as we just said, he is not an angel; he is co-equal with God, and that is what it means that he is God's only Son; and as the Son was sent here by the Father, as we said earlier, Dave, when you read John 1, in Dale Bruner's again paraphrase: Jesus came here to explain God to us. He was the human face of God for the first time in history. If you have seen me, Jesus said to Phillip in the upper room at the end of John, you have seen the Father; which is a remarkable thing to say.

DAVE BAST

Right; because John says here, again at the outset: ¹⁴The Word became flesh; and that is just a blockbuster statement. What he is affirming here is that this divine Son, who has been God from all eternity actually became a human being. Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. The theologian J. I. Packer once said: You get two mysteries for the price of one here; namely the plurality of God—that there is more than one person in God—and the divine and human nature of Jesus—that there is more than one nature in the person of Jesus. So, I mean, it is mindboggling, but it is astonishing, too, to know that if we want to know what God is like, all we have to do is look at Jesus. If you want to know what God is in himself...no one has ever seen God, John says...but God, the only Son, he has made him known.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is a difficult teaching. An early Church theologian, St. Bernard of Clairveaux, once said: It is rashness to search too far into this truth; it is piety to believe it; it is eternal life to know it.

DAVE BAST

Amen, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, it is a difficult teaching, but it is eternal life; but there is one other thing in that opening line in this section of the Apostles' Creed: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, *our Lord*...what does Lord mean? We will take that up next.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and we are wrapping up this program on that first line of the second part of the Apostles' Creed: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son...we have looked at all that now...our Lord. So, Dave, what is Lord?

DAVE BAST

Yes, well, that is maybe where it all comes down to for us personally. It is one thing to say, yes, we believe this theology about the Trinity...and that is a wonderful truth; and it is beyond our full comprehension, but we can kind of get at it, or somewhat grasp it, and see how important it is, because that means that Jesus is God and Jesus is human and he is the Savior and he is the Anointed One; but, where it all comes down in our lives is when we are led by the Spirit...and the Apostle Paul says it is only by the Spirit that you can truly make this confession: Jesus is Lord.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you know, Dave, we said in our first program when we were looking at the nature of creeds in general, and the history of creeds, that the line: Jesus is Lord, in a way counts as the earliest creed of the early Church. They had no written documents. They didn't have the Bible written out. They had no pamphlets, nothing to look up. Jesus is Lord was the earliest creed. It was the summary; and Paul even says nobody can say that unless the Spirit of God lives in them...nobody can say that or believe that...but what we also forget is that in the Roman Empire, in that First Century...and here is what we forget today...this has lost its punch...but to say Jesus is Lord was considered treason, because only the Caesar was lord. It was on every single coin. Caesar was *deus et dominus* in Latin: God and Lord...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And so, interestingly...I think we have noted this before; you know, Paul wrote the entire letter to the Romans without ever once mentioning Caesar. Here these people were living in the shadow of Caesar, in Rome. Paul never mentions Caesar, but every chance he gets, he says: Jesus is Lord, which was a slap in the Caesar's face; but that is how powerful a claim this is, but we forget that today.

DAVE BAST

Yes; we often do. In fact, the title Caesar in Latin was *imperator*, which meant originally *commander*. He is the one who commands; and of course, the apostles and every Christian since then have said: No, that is Jesus. He is the one who commands; and he really commands my life. So, to say that Jesus is Lord is to say quite a bit more than that Jesus is my personal savior. Okay, that can be a wonderful truth, but it can also be a little bit of a cop out by forgetting that Jesus is the one whom we now obey. He is the one who has the right to command our lives, and command every part of our lives, not just...I think of something I read once online that Tom Wright, the great scholar, N. T. Wright, said: The confession, Jesus is Lord, was never a religious claim. It is a political claim, and it is a claim over every other part of life.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And basically, as I used to say to my catechism class, or when people were making profession of faith in my church when I was a pastor...I would say, you know, Jesus...you are claiming Jesus as your Lord now. That means he is your boss. Think of him as a manager or a director or a CEO. Use whatever image you want from sort of the modern world, but he is in charge now. He calls the shots. If you are going to go into his kingdom, he is the one who is in charge of how you make decisions, how you spend money, how you raise

children, and relate to friends and your spouse, and so forth and so on. There is...right, it is sort of Abraham Kuyper...Kuyperian Reformed theology. There is not a single square inch of the creation of which Jesus cannot say: Mine. Right? That is mine. So, when we serve Jesus as Lord, that means our lives are his.

DAVE BAST

Yes; so, we cannot say Jesus is Lord, and then waffle by saying things like, well, my country right or wrong. I love my country, and I am a patriot. Well, that comes under the Lordship of Christ, too. We cannot worship things or we cannot live for our family only, if Jesus is Lord; because all those lesser allegiances must serve under his Lordship; but it is also a universal claim, Scott; and I think that is something that we tend to underplay today. We are not just saying Jesus is *my* Lord or our Lord or the Lord of the Christians and other people can have other lords if that suits them, because “Jesus is Lord”, according to the New Testament, is this cosmic...sort of...he is Lord over everyone and everything. As you just said, there is not a square inch.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Jesus cannot be Lord kinda...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Or he cannot be Lord, well, just over there, but not over here. It cannot work that way; and right, these days that is a rather divisive claim, that is not considered politically correct or, you know, being tolerant and pluralistic. Of course, if Jesus is our Lord, that means we should act like Jesus, which means we don't use this claim as a club...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

With which to bludgeon other people or beat up on people. Jesus wouldn't want us to represent him that way. We still represent him kind and gentle and meek and mild as Jesus himself was; but, we have to say here is the truth, and it comes out...in Philippians Chapter 2, as Paul wrote, talking about the trajectory of Jesus after he died and rose again:

⁹Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; ¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So, there is that sort of absolute cosmic claim, because of what he did...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

As our savior, as we said; as the Anointed One; as God's only Son, who came to represent the Father to us. Because of all that he did in his death and resurrection, he is in charge. He is the Lord of Lords. The King of Kings.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and if he is not *the* Lord, he cannot really be *our* Lord or my Lord either, because it is an all-or-nothing sort of thing; and the great promise of that scripture, Scott, that you just read...that wonderful passage from Philippians...is that someday every creature in heaven and on earth, and even under the earth, if there are any such, will recognize that Jesus is, in fact, Lord, to the glory of the Father. Thanks be to God.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Scott Hoezee and Dave Bast. Join us again next time. We will continue our study of the Apostles' Creed by exploring the scriptures that inform our beliefs about Jesus' life, ministry, and death.

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