

# Christianity Is a Creed to Be Believed

by James Blaine Chapman

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*To be a Christian is to believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, and to accept the other tenets of the Apostles' Creed.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:3, Ephesians 4:14, 2 Timothy 4:3, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 John 4:15

**Topics:** "Christian Creed", "Apostles Doctrine"

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## Description

James Blaine Chapman emphasizes the importance of the Christian creed, stating that all true Christians believe in the creed, which has been preserved and promoted through the centuries by its doctrines. The Apostles' Creed, a brief and sufficient summary of Christian beliefs, has been accepted for sixteen centuries as the challenge for those who claim to be Christians. Chapman highlights that to be a Christian is not only to believe in the creed intellectually but also to encompass other factors that make one altogether a Christian.

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## Transcript

1. Christianity is a creed to be believed, and all true Christians do believe the creed. Every intelligent man has a creed, for a man's creed is what he believes, whether what he believes is written, spoken, or just held in static form in his mind. And down through the centuries Christianity has been preserved and promoted by means of its doctrines more than by all other means. Those who claim to have no creed are but testifying to their own religious indifference. Those who advertise "No creed but Christ" are bidding for spectacular maxims which are in the end misleading. Those very people who advertise no creed but Christ will invariably be found to believe in the Father and the Holy Spirit and in some sort of future judgment and destiny. Christianity is a creed to be believed and Christians all believe the Christian creed.

In the days when Jesus was in the flesh, His apostles went out and preached that He was the Christ. After His resurrection they went out to preach "Jesus and the resurrection." In his first epistle, St. John makes belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God a test for Christians, ruling out the claims of all who do not subscribe to this fundamental tenet. And St. Paul urges upon Timothy the demand that he reject heretics after the first and second admonitions. And so strong was he on doctrine that he assured Timothy that if he would give attention to it he would save both himself and them that heard Him.

When Christianity reached out into the Gentile world it soon came to grips with those who had neither knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures nor appreciation of the Hebrew authoritarian approach to truth. These men acknowledged only the light of nature, and the validity of the process of reason. Christians must

needs face these critics, for their Master had sent them to convert these, as well as the others. So the doctrines of Christianity were forced into philosophical molds and worked out according to logical and systematic demands. Out of the necessities of the case, theology was born, and a summary was made of the essential teachings of the Christian faith.

But it soon became evident that the creed would grow to unwieldy limits if Christian teachers on the long line of offense and defense were left to offer tenets in refutation of all the errors they were compelled to meet. Therefore, at an early date, the Christian creed was set forth in positive, rather than in negative terms, and was reduced to its simplest form and published under the name of "The Apostles' Creed." No one every supposed that the apostles actually wrote this creed in the form in which the fathers published it, but from the beginning it was believed to be a brief and sufficient summary of what one must believe to be a Christian, and to be the substance of what the apostles believed and taught.

The creed appeared first in Latin, and from this has been translated into all the languages used in lands where Christianity has become established. Some of the words in our English translation are used with their obsolete meaning, and we need to be reminded that "hell" means simply "the unseen world," and "catholic" means universal, and is not identical with the Roman Catholic Church. But the Apostles' Creed is a masterpiece for both clarity and sufficiency. It is almost as remarkable for what it does not say as for what it does say, and to this day it represents the minimum of faith upon which one can properly base his claim that he is a Christian.

All Protestants believe that the Bible alone is authority in matters of both faith and practice. But when the essential teaching of the Bible on matters of doctrine are boiled down to their lowest form they come within the compass of the Apostles' Creed, so that nothing of that Creed can be rejected without manifestly violating or ignoring the teachings of the Bible.

For sixteen centuries the Apostles' Creed has been the accepted challenge to those who would call themselves Christians, and there is no sufficient reason for relaxing the challenge today. Men who believe less than this creed requires may have some sort of religion, and they may deserve some sort of a name, but they are not Christians. There are those who take up such items as the virgin birth of Jesus, and ask if one cannot be a Christian and reject this tenet. The answer is that this tenet is so involved in the doctrine of Christ's proper deity that it cannot be rejected and the other retained, and a man cannot be a Christian and not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. John makes that very clear. When one accepts the doctrine of the proper deity of Jesus Christ, the virgin birth, the spotless life, the peerless teaching, the marvelous miracles, the atoning death, the glorious resurrection, and the blessed ascension of Jesus Christ become necessarily involved and accepted. There is no place for compromise with doubt, and this is no time to liberalize the doctrinal challenges of our holy religion.

What is it to be a Christian? Well, to be a Christian in the sense of doctrine is to be able to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, buried; he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen." Do you heartily believe these truths? If you answer, "I believe them with all my heart," then you are a Christian in the sense of creed; you believe what Christians believe; you believe what one must believe to be a Christian.

However, Christianity is something more than a creed to be believed; therefore, one might believe the Christian creed, and yet not be a Christian. Going back to our metaphor, one might have the front wall of a house and yet not have a house. He could not have a house without a front wall, but he might have the front wall and yet not have a house. There is an intellectual factor in Christianity, and creed and doctrine represent that factor. But there are other factors, and these too must be included if one is to be not only almost, but altogether a Christian.

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