

Lesson No. 43

The Orthodox Creed (I)

References:

Notes For Servants:

- 1.
- 2.

Objectives:

General:

Specific:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Instructions:

1. Church occasion
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Bible Verse:

Lesson:

The Orthodox Creed (I)

Historical:

1) The first part of the creed was written in the year 325 by the council of Nicea which was attended by 318 bishops from all over the world. This first part ends just before "Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit...". Pope Alexandros represented the Coptic Church and brought with him his deacon Athanasius. The council was held because of the Heresy of Anus who said that Christ is not the eternal Son of God but He is merely a created being similar, in a way, to any other person. Alexandros tried his best to sway Anus from this wrong opinion but he rejected all advice.

2) Emperor Constantine attended the first meeting of the council of Nicea in which Athanasius

was the hero, defending the Divinity of Christ in front of Anus and succeeded in getting the Council to decide on ex-communicating Anus.

3) The second part of the creed (from Truly we believe in the Holy Spirit up to the end) was written in the year 381 by the council held in Constantinople. This council was held because of the heresy of Macedonius who denied the Divinity of the Holy Spirit.

We Believe in one God:

The statement "Truly we believe in one God" contains two facts: (A) the existence of God, (B) the Oneness of God.

A) The Existence of God:

The order in the world and the laws of nature is a clear proof of the existence of God. The general public usually say that "no one saw God but people knew Him by their minds" and that is true. This means that no one has the ability to see God as He is, but one can judge using his mind that God exists and that He created the world in such an order from nothing. The Lord said to Moses "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). St. Paul also said "Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honour and everlasting power. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:16).

Truly we cannot see God now while we have these five senses in our nature: vision, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. But we will be able to see Him when we leave the limitation and thickness of our bodies, when we depart from this world to the next. As long as we are still in the limitation of this body we cannot see God. We cannot even see far away things or hear far away and weak sounds. We cannot see the air, but we believe that air exists when it moves. Therefore, if you want to see God here in this world look at His creation and the mysterious order of nature and its laws, because all these things prove the existence of God.

Man with his senses alone cannot see or know God. But God in His love purifies our senses to accept the declaration of knowing God as a divine gift. However, this knowledge is only in part and becomes complete in the eternal life when we meet God face to face.

B) The Oneness of God:

Our church has a firm belief in the oneness of God. This means that God is One and that there is no other God. Unlike the pagans who believe in many gods, our church and our religion is a monotheistic one.

In the Old Testament:

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, there is no God besides Me" (Isaiah 45:5).

"Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Savior, there is none besides Me" (Isaiah 45:21).

In the New Testament:

Our Lord Jesus said "No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17)

"There is no other God but One" (1 Corinthians 8:4).

The Unity and Oneness of the Holy Trinity:

God is One in essence. He wanted to explain to us His essence and in order to do so He taught us about His Trinity or the Three persons. Jesus said to His disciples "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

When our Lord Jesus was baptized, the Three Persons of the Trinity (the One God) were manifested: the Father speaking, and the Son in the water and the Holy Spirit descending like a dove. St. John said, "For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1 John 5:7).

Therefore, we believe in Three Persons and in the One Essence of God and not in Three essences. When we cross ourselves we say "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, One God Amen". So, we do not say in the names ... and we end it with "One God". The Three persons are equal and of the same essence. The Father is not begotten and is not fourthly proceeding from another person, the Son is begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit fourthly proceeds from the Father. Through this classification we can distinguish between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

The Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all Things, Visible and Invisible:

He created everything:

Visible: everything we see: sky, world, plants, people, etc.

Invisible: the angels and the spirits which have no bodies but they may appear to some people in some circumstances.

The angels are spirits created by God to glorify Him, to protect the world and to protect the people. The guardian angel is an angel sent from God to a person to protect him and guide him to do good. Review Matt. 6:26-30 and Matt. 10:29-31. "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet **your heavenly Father feeds them**" (Matthew 6:26).

What Do We Learn From This Lesson?

The creed is what the Christians believe in according to the apostolic teaching. Remember what St. Paul said "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:" (Hebrews 11:1)

We Believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Begotten Son of God; Begotten of the Father Before all Ages:

The Second Person (of the Holy Trinity) the Lord Jesus Christ, is One Lord, the Word of God, the Incarnated God, God Who took flesh and became man, the Person of the Holy Trinity Who manifested God the Father to man, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him" (John 1:18)

He is called the Son of God because His divinity is in essence the same as that of the Father (example a human being gets a son or daughter as a human being). Jesus is the only Begotten Son of God because there is no other person who is also begotten.

For this reason, our Lord Jesus said to Philip "He who has seen Me has seen the Father ... believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John 14:9-11). Jesus also said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30).

Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God because there is no other similar relationship between a father and his son. The Son-Father relationship in the Holy Trinity is not similar to the son-father relationship in the world of man. The son-father relationship in the world of man is by flesh and the father is before his son in time. Isaac, for example, is the son of Abraham who existed

before Isaac. The Son in the Holy Trinity is eternal with the Father and there has been no moment in which the Father and the Son have not been together.

Therefore, Jesus Christ the Son, existed before the incarnation, before creation and before all ages.

Light out of Light, True God out of True God:

Truly, He is light out of light. The Son-Father relationship in the Holy Trinity is not son-father relationship from the flesh's or time's point of view. It is a spiritual Son-Father relationship as the birth of light from light. The Divinity of the Son is the same as the Divinity of the Father. The Son is a true God as the Father is a true God. The Father and the Son are One God.

Remember that we are made sons of God only by adoption and not by the natural Father-Son relationship which existed between God the Father and God the Son before all ages.

Begotten not Made:

The Son was incarnate at a certain time. He was born in a way above our comprehension and understanding because it has no similarity in the world of creatures. St. Paul said, "great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of the Virgin Mary.

Of one Essence with the Father; by Whom all Things were Made:

Our Lord Jesus said: "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). In this way, our Lord Jesus is declaring that He and the Father are one essence, one Divinity. There is no more than one essence which is the essence of God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit together. By whom all things were made means that the Son is God the creator. This is the same attribute that is for God the Father because we say "The Father creator of the visible and the invisible in heaven and on earth". About the Son being a creator, St. John said "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4). Also St. Paul said, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds"; (Hebrews 1:1-2). Christ our Lord is the Word of God. Everything that was created was created by the Word of God. We read in the first Chapter of the Book of Genesis: "Then God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light .." (Gen.1:3). Therefore, the Word of God is the Creator; and that is why we say in the Creed, "We believe in One Lord Jesus Christ ... by Whom all things were made ...".

Conclusion:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.