

Apostles' Creed vs. Nicene Creed

Feature	Apostles' Creed	Nicene Creed
Date & Origin	2 nd century (Rome); baptismal confession	325 (Nicaea) / 381 (Constantinople); response to heresies
Purpose	Simple summary of apostolic faith; used for disciple making & baptism	Defends Christ's divinity; define Trinity clearly; used for disciple making & baptism
Length	Short & concise	Longer & theologically precise
Christology	"Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, crucified, died, buried, rose, ascended..."	"God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father..."
Holy Spirit	Brief: "I believe in the Holy Spirit..."	Full: "the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son; <i>filioque</i> in Latin]..."
Church	Mentions "holy catholic Church, communion of saints"	"one holy catholic and apostolic Church," baptism for forgiveness of sins
Use in Worship	Baptisms, catechism, daily prayer (Rosary, Protestant liturgies)	Sunday Catholic Mass, feast days, Orthodox Liturgy, recited in some Protestant services
Church Acceptance	Catholic, Protestant (widely used)	Catholic, Orthodox (without Filioque), Protestant

Quick Takeaway:

- Apostles' Creed = Short, early, Western, not accepted by E. Orthodox, used for baptism & teaching.
- Nicene Creed = Longer, Western and Eastern, universal, cornerstone of orthodox Trinitarian belief.

The Nicene Creed (325 AD-381 AD)

We believe in one God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. And in one lord, Jesus the anointed, the only begotten son of God, begotten of the father before all worlds, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, being of one substance [*homousion*] with the father [against ebionitism and Arianism], by whom all things were made. Who for us humans and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the holy spirit and the virgin Mary [against docetism], and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, and the third day he rose again according to the scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the father. And he shall come again to judge both the living and the dead. Whose kingdom shall have no end. [This first paragraph was agreed upon at the Council of Nicea, 325 AD.]

And in the holy spirit, the lord and giver-of-life, who proceeds from the father, who with the father and the son together is worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets. And in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. [This concluding paragraph is supposed to have been adopted by the Council of Constantinople, 381 AD, although the records of that council are lost. The official recorded ratification of the creed as a whole took place at the Council of Chalcedon, 451 AD.]

The Chalcedonian Definition of the Faith, 451 AD

We, then, following the holy fathers, all with one consent, teach all to confess one and the same son, our lord Jesus the anointed, perfect [*teleion*] in divinity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, of a rational soul [*ek psyche logikes*] [against Apollinarianism] and a body [against docetism], consubstantial (or “coessential”) [*homousion*] with the father according to his divinity [against Arianism], and consubstantial [*homousion*] with us according to his humanity [against monophysitism], in all things like unto us, except for sin [*choris hamartias*]; begotten of the father before the ages [*pro aionon*], according to his divinity [against Arianism], and in these last days, for us and for our salvation, of the virgin Mary, the God-bearer [*theotokos*], according to his humanity [against Nestorianism]; one and the same anointed, son, lord, only-begotten, of two natures [*ek duo phuseon*], without confusion, without change [against monophysitism], without division, without separation [against Nestorianism]; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union [against monophysitism], but rather the proper characteristics of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person [*prosopon*] and one subsistence [*hypostasis*], not parted or divided into two persons [*prosopa*] [against Nestorianism], but one and the same son and only begotten God the word, the lord Jesus the anointed; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] about him and as the lord Jesus the anointed himself has taught us, and the creed [*symbolon*] which was handed down to us from the fathers.