

The Creeds of the Faith - Part 1

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- [0 : 00] Are we ready to celebrate the 1700th year of the anniversary of the Nicene Creed?! Do we all have that on our calendars?
- ! Celebration at Roll's house. Alright, well, it's a joy to gather together. It's 9 o'clock. I'm going to jump right in.
- So, in this class, welcome, we are going to dive into our rich heritage by looking at the creeds.
- Christians from the very beginning have been answering the question that Jesus poses to each one of us, who do you say that I am? And creeds come out of that question.
- Creeds come from the Latin term credo, I believe. Or perhaps better translated, I believe and give my heart to. Expressing a profound commitment of the heart.
- [1 : 07] And thought to be the first Christian creed is the simple statement, Jesus is Lord. Coming out of the loyalty oaths where the Roman Emperor would demand that everyone declare that Caesar is Lord.
- Christians would stand firm and confess, no, Jesus is Lord. Probably the first Christian creed. In his introduction to mere Christianity, Lewis provides an analogy which I think will be helpful in our time together.
- He writes, think of creeds as the hall of a large house. Those truths that are central to all true Christians. In the hallway of the house are doors opening to several rooms.
- And these rooms are furnished with fires and chairs and meals. So those rooms represent denominations. So you don't live in the hall. You don't camp out in the hall.
- You have to choose a room. So creeds don't tell us everything that we need to know. But creeds are the central truths that unite all true Christians in all ages.
- [2 : 16] And creeds have been a part of the church since the very beginning, longer than John Newton's Law of Gravity. So Newton's Law is already out of date, I hear, with quantum physics. But these creeds, still withstanding the test of time.
- Providing frameworks for the big C church to help preserve those things that are at the heartbeat of our faith. And so this class, we're going to be exploring these creeds.
- This one in particular, as we begin, is going to be more of a preliminary introduction, a prologue. Where we need to establish some presuppositions before moving into the specific creeds.
- And so one of those preliminary items we need to discuss together is sola scriptura. And for us to have a really good, firm grasp of that doctrine and how creeds relate to the doctrine of the scripture.
- So before we dive in, let me pray. And we'll dive into this together. Father in heaven, Lord, we thank you that you have preserved your church.
- [3 : 28] The gates of hell have not prevailed against it. Lord, we pray that we would stand firm on the truth, on the good deposit that has been passed to us. Lord, we pray that we would guard those truths with our lives, in our hearts, in our church.

Lord, we pray that we would just find valuable the rich work of faithfulness that you have done in your people's midst. Be with us. We covet your spirit, Lord.

Would your spirit be among us. Help us for these truths to seep deep into our hearts. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Okay.

So let me give you a road map. So today we're going to be talking about the doctrine of sola scriptura. And then in these next classes, Tom and John are going to dive into the specific creeds.

So we're going to be talking about the earlier creeds before Nicaea. We'll talk about the Council of Nicaea, the Apostles' Creed, the creeds in Constantinople and Ephesus, the creed at Chalcedon, and then we'll conclude with creeds for today.

[4 : 40] Like, what role do creeds still have in our life as a church together? So as we think about sola scriptura, frankly, many Christians are confused about how this relationship works.

I mean, if we really adhere and find a creed valuable, isn't that compromising to the scripture being our authority? How do those two things work?

And my prayer is that I want us to prize the scripture above all else coming out of this class. But I want you to think of the creed not as a rival, but as a hearing aid.

A hearing aid where we're not bypassing the text, but the creeds help us to hear the text better. So when we look at the creeds, we're putting a hearing aid on and we're listening, and we're actually seeing things in the text.

So let's dive right in. So why should we Christians in the 21st century study ancient texts written more than a millennia ago?

[5 : 51] Let me give you at least three reasons why we're teaching this class now. First... How long is this like a parenting class? Good question. That's going to be next week.

Next week? Yes. Of course. So everyone, there's a parenting class next week starting. But this will be a good foundation for good parenting.

So... Your time will not be wasted. Okay? So, why should we be studying ancient texts in the 21st century?

Let me give you at least three reasons. First, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses. What? Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.

The author of Hebrews says, You and I stand on the shoulder of giants. The author of Hebrews says, look to them. Look at their faith. Look at their perseverance in trials.

[6 : 51] And now follow in their footsteps. So in many ways, this is what this class will be about. Their story is going to be our story. The gospel flame, although it ebbs and flows throughout each generation, ultimately it is unquenchable.

So, creeds are not just old, dry, archaic documents. These are declarations of faith from our spiritual ancestors. And they're not meant to be muttered under your breath, but they're resounding declarations with blasts of trumpets.

And we listen carefully to their voice. We will not only learn from their wisdom, they will exhort you and I to faithfulness, to encourage you to stay the course. Second, to learn the creed is to hear the wisdom of another culture.

The church is not confined to one country or nation or language. To hear from the creeds affirms the global and historical nature of the church. The Christians all over the world adhere to the creeds, not because we find them to be on par with the authority of Scripture, but because they are true.

Didn't Christ promise this global advance of the gospel throughout the world? The gospel go to every tribe, tongue, and nation, and these creeds are a witness to God fulfilling that promise.

[8 : 10] You know, growing up in any culture, it gives you certain accents, different ways of saying words. For example, we here in New Haven correctly say the word car keys.

Correctly. But if you're in Boston, they make the mistake of saying khakis, like these pants. I'm sorry, but that's wrong. That's not how you pronounce car keys.

But here's the thing. No one ever hears their own accents. Am I right? Not until we meet an outsider do we begin to have self-awareness with how we're saying certain things.

And C.S. Lewis made this point in his introduction to Athanasius' work on the Incarnation. He says, to avoid theological errors, you need to read not only outside your culture, but outside your century.

He writes, They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing. And their own errors being now open and palpable will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one.

[9 : 12] Not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction. So if we all listen to the same 21st century voices, we're going to repeat the same 21st century mistakes.

So Christians must learn from prior generations of God's people. And we benefit from their wisdom, their exegetical insights, and their doctrinal clarity. And often this clarity we take for granted.

And that clarity can be lost in a generation. Third, creeds not only summarize Orthodox beliefs, but they are doxological.

In other words, we are praising God with our brothers and sisters in Christ across the world throughout all ages. We join the chorus of faithful believers across time in confessing our faith to the glory of God.

You know, one of the things we'll learn about is that creeds were used before baptism. So I'm going to make up names here. But we join Chloe.

[10 : 17] Chloe was a prostitute in 3rd century Rome, who heard about the Lord Jesus and the Lord saved her as a temple prostitute. We join her in reciting the creed.

Or we join Octavius, a farmer in Corinth in the 3rd century. Octavius had a, his crops failed, and he was facing devastation. But then the Lord saved him, knowing that Christ was a refuge.

We join Octavius in reciting the creed. So this good deposit has been passed down for one generation to the next, and we stand with our brothers and sisters throughout all ages when we recite the creed.

Okay. That's why the creeds, that's why we're teaching this class now. We want you to stand and know that you are part of something much bigger than yourself.

But there's a problem. And the problem is in the last 200 years, I think particularly in American Christianity, a suspicion has grown about the creeds.

[11 : 18] Mostly on two fronts. On the one hand, there's been an emphasis on doctrinal minimalism. You know, where there's a fear that you're going to create disunity if you affirm the truth.

One of the statements that was made was, you know, it's better to believe heresy than to create disunity. So doctrinal minimalism. But on the other hand, there's a fear of doctrinal sectarianism.

Where there's a fear that creeds divide Christians. But of course, Christianity is about truth. If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, Jesus would say.

And if you know the truth, the truth will set you free. I wonder, has anyone ever been in a church, maybe a church you grew up in, where you heard the phrase, we have no creed but the Bible?

Okay, we have one. Okay. Okay, another one. Has anyone ever been in a snake handling service?

[12 : 22] Totally unrelated, but I just wanted to... We have no creed but the Bible. It sounds pretty spiritual. It also kind of sounds like a creed.

But of course, this statement contains a good aspiration. When someone says no creed but the Bible, they're saying the Bible has a unique authority.

And there's a fear that something might replace the authority of the Scripture in that person's life. That's a good aspiration. But of course, that statement never works in real life.

Because what do we do in the church? Right? There's this. There's public teaching. There's a standard of truth that must regulate the public teaching of the church.

In 2 Timothy 1, verse 13, Paul would tell Timothy, follow the pattern of the sound words that you heard from me in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. He doesn't say, hey, memorize my letters or memorize the Scripture.

[13 : 24] We ought to do that. But he's saying, Timothy, follow the pattern. Follow the norm. Follow the model. Follow the rule that I have given you.

Make sure you are teaching by the standard I set. You know, that's why we have a statement of faith here at Trinity. You know, imagine if I get up and start teaching and preaching that, you know what we really need to do?

Is to trust Elvis Presley and trust the works that he did. And we all need to move to Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee. You should say, you should say, Tyler, that does not follow the standard of teaching in this church.

The standard of truth. And then you should fire me as an elder. So that's what you ought to do. So very early on, we see the importance that teaching had in the early church.

And so creedal statements begin to function as that standard. Philip Schaaf wrote this in his classic work. Faith, like all strong conviction, has a desire to utter itself before others.

[14 : 30] And that conviction led to creeds. But there's another problem. And there's a bigger problem. And I think there's a misunderstanding that if the scripture is supreme, does not that exclude human traditions?

I mean, we don't want the creeds of human tradition to rival the scriptures. Right? And so in this class today, I want to define sola scriptura.

And we're going to walk through this in three steps. The first step is going to be this. The Bible is the only infallible rule. And so when I say rule, what I mean is a standard that governs faith and practice.

So the Bible is unique. Second, there are no other infallible rules. And third, there are other legitimate rules, derived rules, but ultimately a subordinate to the scripture.

So these are the three steps we're going to walk through. So the first step, the Bible is the only infallible rule. This is the first step in sola scriptura. Scripture, bless you, is the perfect standard of truth.

[15 : 40] Scripture has an unparalleled authority, period. No rivals. Jesus illustrates this conviction. Jesus asserted against Satan in the wilderness, Man shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.

Every single word is a rule for our lives. Jesus had an unshakable confidence in God's words. He loved it.

He knew it. He quoted it. The scripture cannot be broken. He would say, God's words are unbreakable. No promise, no warning, no word will be falsified.

Down to the last stroke. For truly I tell you, Jesus would say, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

You see, he held scripture in the highest possible esteem. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God will stand forever. And Jesus treated every single stroke as important.

[16 : 53] Jesus was comfortable. I think John mentioned this in his former foundation class a few years ago. Eight classes on the doctrine of scripture. So if you want more on this, go listen to that class.

Jesus was comfortable having his argument hint on a single word, even a single tense of a word. You remember in response to the Sadducees, Jesus hints his arguments on the tense of a word.

Matthew 22, verse 32. He says, God did not say I was the God of Abraham. He says, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Present tense. So he is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive because of the verb tense. There is more to it, but you notice his argument hinges on a single tense of a single word.

Jesus debated the Pharisees about marriage and divorce. Jesus responds with, have you not read? In his mind, that's settled the debate. Have you not read?

[17 : 58] Elsewhere, he says, you err because you do not know the scriptures. Of course, we can use other examples. Paul tells the Galatians that not only the apostolic teaching, but even angelic teaching must be tested by the scriptures.

Even if we are an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Paul would say whatever is said needs to be brought before the bar of scripture, and it must align.

The Barans are commended for their noble spirit and diligently verifying Paul and Silas' teaching to see if it aligns with the scripture. Go on. Warning the church of false teaching.

The apostle John writes, Do not believe everyone, but test the spirits. Test what we're saying to you to see if it aligns with the scripture. So that's the heart cry of Sola Scriptura, which says that scripture sits above and judges all human traditions.

This is the court of the highest jurisdiction. It is the final court of appeals. And the reformers stood on this principle in the Reformation. And so they had a freedom to take a critical stance toward popes who granted indulgences to fund the basilica.

[19 : 14] Salvation at discount prices. They were critical toward councils in any human tradition that failed to measure up to the standard of the word of God. But it's not just the function, but the scriptures very nature and character is different.

Scripture itself claims to be infallible. God's word is God breathed, Paul writes. He makes up a word, theopneustos. All scripture is theopneustos, breathed out by God.

It's expired like God breathes out the scripture. And it's profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. And the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

So God's speech is ontologically unique. Now you see this conviction of the authoritative nature in the earliest disciples.

Even after the apostolic era. If you read Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, a disciple of the apostle John. A generation removed from the apostles. He wrote to the church of Rome, Look, I do not give you orders like Peter and Paul.

[20 : 23] They were apostles. He's clearly distinguishing his authority to the apostolic authority. When Athanasius is arguing against the Arian heresy in the fourth century, he appeals to what?

He's appealing to the scripture. Right? Now you can imagine, what if someone had said to Athanasius, You know, Athanasius, who are you? People have disagreed about whether Jesus is really God for at least 300 years.

Who do you think you are citing the scriptures? When most of the world disagrees with you at this point. So stop fighting the battle. Let's stop creating disunity in the body. Whether Jesus is Lord or not, we should stop dividing over this doctrine.

Well, thank God Athanasius didn't buy that. He stood firm on the scriptures. So what matters most, step number one, is what the scriptures say.

That's the posture of sola scriptura. The scripture is the highest authority. Let me just stop here. Any questions before we go to step two?

[21 : 25] Okay. Tom? Just a clarification. So sola scriptura, in other words, there is a popular, I think what you're saying is a popular conception of sola scriptura means, we only have the scriptures and nothing else.

But you're saying, no, no, it's the only infallible guide. There's lots of other rules and guides that have some authority, but they're just subordinated to that. So we do have all sorts of other methods or practices or whatever, but the scriptures are the beginning and end of that.

That's where it starts. Yes, yes. You're anticipating my point number three, but that's exactly what you said. It's exactly, I couldn't have said it better myself. Yes.

Thank you, Tom. I appreciate that. Richard. So I noticed that in your definition you stopped short of saying rule of faith. You stopped with rule.

Is that significant? Whatever scripture it speaks on, it's a rule. I didn't mean to say that scripture has a jurisdiction that I'm imposing upon it.

[22 : 37] I'm not sure if that's what you mean, but I think the scripture is an infallible rule for matters of faith, but practice as well. As Paul said in 2 Timothy, equipped for every good work.

So that scripture is equipping us for every good work. So that's point number one is an infallible rule, but there's a second point.

Does the church possess other rules, other sources of revelation, other authorities, maybe like the apostles of Nicene Creed, that are infallible? And the answer is no.

There is no other infallible rule. And we should never give human teaching the kind of authority, or we should never venerate human teaching that belongs to God's word alone.

Jesus, remember, dealt with this with the Pharisees. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for not following their fastidious traditions. Not only the hand washing, but remember Corbin, where you give money to a fund so I don't have enough money to honor my father and mother any longer.

[23 : 47] And Jesus rightly rebuked them. He said, he quoted Isaiah, Here's the important part.

The doctrines, the commandments of men. Paul instructs the church in 1 Corinthians 4, You may learn from us the meaning of the saying, You may not go beyond what is written.

So there's a dark side of tradition too. We might call this traditionalism. Rather than saying scripture alone has the final word, human traditions are now adding to it.

Of course, how we view the creeds is how we're going to differ from, say, Roman Catholicism or East Orthodox. Roman Catholicism would say, you know, church tradition is another source of infallible revelation.

For example, the claim of papal infallibility, which says, if the Pope speaks ex cathedra from the chair in matters of faith and practice, the Pope claims to be infallible.

[25 : 01] The tradition is now on the same level as scripture. You must accept that as final and binding. Of course, we do this too. We sit ex cathedra and begin to make up our own rules and our personal convictions, and we begin to enforce those on others and bind their consciences.

We make our own rules about schooling and music and which candidates to vote for. Of course, there's matters of wisdom in this, but the scripture gives no clear command.

And it gives us freedom of conscience on these matters. So, the human tradition and scripture are not on the same level.

But I want you to notice that it wasn't that the Pharisees or the church didn't have real authority. Real authority to teach, to apply the law, and to make judgments.

In Matthew 23, Jesus said the teachers of the law and the Pharisees sat on the seat of Moses. And so, you must be careful to do everything they tell you. That's what Jesus said.

[26 : 09] The Pharisees held real authority, and you should listen to them. So, how does that work? I mean, Jesus clearly saying, don't listen to their doctrines, the commandments of men, right?

But then he says, no, but you actually have to listen to them. How do these two things work? I think we need to distinguish the kinds of authority Jesus is giving the Pharisees.

What Jesus is referring to in that case is what we call ministerial authority. It's an authority to apply the word. One analogy you can think about this is the Constitution.

Right? We have, theoretically, we have courts that settle disputes, and the courts don't make up the Constitution. They are applying it, theoretically.

So, are their courts infallible? Of course not. No, they're not. Or think about baseball. You have umpires. They call balls and strikes. Does an umpire have authority?

[27 : 10] Yes, they do. Is the umpire infallible? Of course not. Of course not. Ministerial authority is real authority, but it is not an infallible one.

Think about a congregational meeting. Okay? We are going to collectively discern Pamela's candidacy. And we are going to make decisions together about matters of faith and practice.

Now, are our decisions infallible as a congregation together? No. They're not. Right? Our decisions are useful only to the extent they reproduce and apply faithfully the teaching of Scripture itself.

And so, I want you to think about that. It's the same with creeds. We shouldn't follow the creeds just because they're a tradition. They were written a long time ago. Right? Where Catholics would say, we follow the Nicene Creed because it was said at the Council of Nicaea, so therefore it's binding.

I think the position that we ought to take is, we follow the Nicene Creed because it aligns with the Scripture. And that's very important. Every tradition must be grounded in God's Word.

[28 : 25] And Scripture is the highest court of authority. Okay. But now there's a big problem with what I've just described to you. And one of the common objections that comes out of this framework of sola scriptura is, say, for Mormon Catholics.

They say, look, without the authoritative interpretation of Rome, aren't we just all left with our own personal readings of Scripture? So the argument goes, you might talk a big game about the Bible being your ultimate authority, but actually the final authority rests with you, doesn't it?

And your individual interpretation of Scripture. The creeds don't really have a real authority because you can simply disagree with them on your private interpretation.

And what you get is a free-for-all. And this flaw exists in many so-called churches. Benny Hinn, prosperity preacher and false teacher, says, Trinity?

There's nine of them. The very next words is you can't argue with the Word, can you? It's right. It's all in the Word right there. It's like in the Book of Judges. Each person defines Christianity as it seems right in his or her eyes.

[29 : 43] The Scriptures are twisted because we go to the corner with our Bible and we come up with a novel interpretation that no one's ever heard of before.

So this is where we need the final three-legged stool of Sola Scriptura. And this final point is often neglected and I think it would be helpful for us to consider it together.

The first step is there's an infallible rule for the church. The second is there are no other infallible rules. But lastly, there are other authorities within the church.

But these authorities are derived and based on the Scripture. So the term that's sometimes used is the Norma Normans.

I'll put that on here. The Norma Normans. And that's the Scripture. Any Latin teachers here want to say what that means?

[30 : 50] The ruling rule. Yes. The terming determinant. The rule that rules. The ruling rule. The determining determinant.

That's the Scripture. Okay. And then we have underneath the Norma Normata. Sorry, you can't really see that because...

It's invisible. The Norma Normata. It's even harder to read. I did that intentionally. The Norma Normata.

Any... Do you want to take... The rule rule. The rule rule. Yes. A rule that is ruled. Right. So that's typically how this works.

The Scripture is the Norma Normans. And the creeds are the Norma Norma Normata. Okay. Okay.

[31 : 50] So often the... Solo Scripture is often misrepresented that the Bible is the only authority in the church. That's not so. It is not solo Scripture which says it's Scripture alone and me alone in a corner somewhere.

No. Creeds are an authority in the church. Why? Why can... How can we say that? Because we recognize that the Holy Spirit has been worked in the church for the last 2,000 years.

So it's not a zero-sum game. Right? The creeds do not have an independent authority. They are subordinate to the Scriptures. Charles Spurgeon once said, I find it odd that those who think so highly of what the Holy Spirit teaches them think so little of what the Holy Spirit teaches others also.

That's... Yeah. It's almost the 21st century.

But the Scripture... We don't just approach Scripture in a vacuum. Right? The Scripture must be interpreted in community. And this community includes the communion of saints in all ages.

[33 : 02] So creeds then will act as a communal balance that acts as a check against our potentially mistaken interpretation.

So we learn and rely on others. And we learn from those who have gone before us, who have wrestled with the Scripture. Okay? We do not interpret a part...

We do not interpret Scripture apart from creeds, the confessions, or the history and traditions of the church. And we put the burden of proof on those who would seek to overturn the consensus of the church.

Right? To do otherwise, think about it, is interpretive chaos. If we go to the Bible and just think, look, I am not influenced by my own culture.

I am going to go to the Bible with a blank slate. And we have the posture, I have nothing to learn from Augustine or Athanasius or Aquinas and so many others.

[34 : 06] It is to ignore that the Holy Spirit has been at work in the church for 2,000 years. And we miss so much when we just take a me and my Bible approach. Not because these men or women are right in everything, they are not infallible.

But we apprentice ourselves to a more mature believer. So here is a secret. When competent pastors are preparing a sermon, typically they do not just stare at a page for eight hours at a time and hope for the Spirit's illumination.

What they do, and this might be a surprise, they pull commentaries. Maybe a systematic theology off the shelves. Maybe someone they respect and trust has written about the text.

They talk to others about what they are seeing in the text. And they use that as aids in their study of the Scripture. Right?

All while in prayer. So the pastor is using church tradition as they look at a text. But he is using it responsibly. That is what we ought to be doing.

[35 : 11] We interpret it together as a community. You know, there were reformers who wrote most about Sola Scriptura. Had a high honor for the creeds.

We were reading this the other day in our church history group. And the first line in the Augsburg Confession, one of the first documents that really articulated the faith of the reformers.

The first line, they wrote this, Our churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the unity of the divine essence and concerning the three persons is true and to be believed without any doubting.

So the reformers taught that the Council of Nicaea was a norma normata in their churches.

So when we look at the norma normatas in this class, take for example the definition of Chalcedon. We're going to see that church fathers were appealing to Scripture, but what was important is how do we use language that faithfully reproduces what's in the Scripture?

[36 : 33] There was all these questions in the air about the nature of Christ's humanity and divinity. And if you really look at the definition of Chalcedon, it's really just breaking down what the author of Hebrews says.

So maybe a helpful exercise, if you want to do this, is look at Chalcedon and open up the book of Hebrews. And just start marking off where the author of Hebrews says that Christ is divine and his humanity.

And then look and cross-reference the definition of Chalcedon and see how those two things overlap. Really, that Council is just taking what we see in the text and they're analyzing it, they're explaining it, they're giving you conceptual frameworks of what's right there in front of your eyes in the Scriptures.

Again, it's a hearing aid to help us hear the text better. Another analogy might be when you're in grammar school and you're learning to break down a sentence.

Right? You have the subject, you have the object, the direct object, the indirect object. Right? When you're breaking down a sentence, you're not adding anything to the sentence. You're just putting categories to help you conceptually understand what is being said in the sentence.

[37 : 52] And that's what the creeds are doing for us. They're giving us categories to help us analyze the text of Scripture. It's a norma normata.

Let me pause there. Any questions? Any thoughts, comments, clarifications? It seems like I was reading in the late that a lot of these creeds were born out of conflict in the 2nd and 3rd century when Christ and the Spirit and all these doctrines were hashed out.

The creeds aren't born, they're not intellectualistic. They're not born in a scholarly study. Like, let me write a creed. It's always because there's somebody from within or from without threatening the true teaching of Scripture.

That oftentimes the creeds are giving clarity to something, again, that we take for granted. That's so true. I mean, the word Trinity is church tradition. Like, the word Trinity is not found in the Bible.

But we understand that's faithfully reproducing what's in the text. Or the term Great Commission. That term is not found in the Scripture, but it's referring to Matthew 28 and the church's commission as we go forward to make disciples.

[39 : 19] Yeah, so these traditions are born out of believers wanting to state clearly what their beliefs are.

That Jesus is Lord. It's that important. That's... Yeah, I... Anything else? Any other questions, comments?

Well, you know, I think one of the... One of the episodes in history that really drove home the importance of this for me was when I was reading the debates between Athanasius, his camp, and the Arians in their camp.

So, Arianism. Arius was a tall, handsome, wealthy, winsome poet, songwriter.

All you could want in a pastor, right? Except he denied that Jesus was Lord. There was that part, too. And so, and Arians gained political power.

[40 : 27] So, after the rise of... And the rise of Constantine. And the Arians were persecuting those who confessed that Jesus was Lord.

Athanasius was exiled six times, or maybe more than that, for confessing that Jesus was Lord. And he was called by his enemies the Black Dwarf. And one of the... one of the... my heroes in church history.

But when they came together, both sides confessed to believing the Bible. And Orthodox believers would cite a Bible verse to prove that Jesus was Lord.

But to their surprise, they were met with perfect agreement on the other side. So the other... the other... the Arians, they denied Jesus was Lord, but they could safely accept the phrases that were being used.

Because they used it as an open canister where they can just fill in their own meanings. Sort of like a post-modern evasion of language. All right? So the... Athanasius in his camp would say, Christ is the Son of God.

[41 : 36] A term to convey the Son's divinity and his special relationship with the Father. He has all the divine prerogatives. The Arians would say, okay, but like all sons, he must have had a beginning.

And Richard Hansen explained the process like this at the Council of Nicaea. Theologians of the Christian Church were slowly driven to a realization that the deepest questions which faced Christianity cannot be answered in purely biblical language.

It may be surprising. Why? Because the questions are about the meaning of the biblical language itself. Right? So... The Arians wanted to take the high ground and say, no creed but the Bible.

Let's just stick with biblical language. A thing where Athanasius in his camp wanted to say, no, but we need to clarify what's in the language itself.

Right? We need to clarify that Jesus was Lord. And so they came up with a non-biblical term which we'll talk about which said that Jesus was of the same substance as the Father.

[42 : 47] and that was enough to divide the two camps you can't either agree with that or you don't agree with that is he similar or is he of the same substance as the father and eternity is a difference in those two terms so that's why we need the norma normata again because we're trying to clarify what's in the scripture itself Richard you have a point you want to make yes so the principle that the bible interprets itself fails at this point I don't think so but go ahead say what say more well the language of the bible is insufficient to for understanding the bible oh I see what you're saying so there's so there there's we have to distinguish the doctrinal clarity if we never have the norma normata you can go to the scriptures and find that Jesus is Lord the things that are most important to salvation are clear they're understandable and that is we don't need the norma normata to have a correct understanding of scripture but again it's a hearing aid to help us hear what's already in the text sometimes it amplifies certain truths that are in the scripture so I don't I won't say it's insufficient but it is a tool just like church tradition is a tool to help us interpret the scripture we're relying upon our certain truths that are in the scripture.

So I wouldn't say it's insufficient, but it is a tool, just like church tradition is a tool to help us interpret the scripture. We're relying upon those who have the Holy Spirit before us to give us insight and clarity.

But I think if I give the Bible to a farmer who's never heard of the Council of Nicaea, and I just said, you know, read the Gospel of John. And I think that person would say, you know, Jesus claims to be God himself.

The Word was with God. The Word was God. But again, there are certain doctrinal clarity that's helpful for us as a church when there's controversy about some of the meanings of this language.

I don't know if that answers your question, but maybe not. Can I follow it up? Yeah, go ahead. So the initial creed, Jesus is Lord, right? Yeah. So the two terms in that simple sentence, Jesus and Lord, are found many, many times in the scriptures.

[45 : 20] Yes. Surely then we can use, a careful study of the scriptures will result in informing those two terms properly and biblically.

Yeah. If others, Christian or not, inform those terms otherwise, they are being unfaithful to the scripture. We need, in this case, we need nothing beyond the scripture to come to the right conclusion.

I understand your point. Yes. So the, yes, Jesus is Lord. The scriptures are sufficient. Remember, Paul says, for every good work. So we don't, the scriptures are, are there and the nature and character of the scriptures allows us so that we can approach them and, and glean the things that are the most obvious, which are the things that are pertaining to salvation.

Jesus is Lord. They're, that's certainly there. I think one of the, and we'll talk about this next class, is the creeds were an authority before the canonization of the scripture.

So before we had the, the biblical canon, there were certain rules of faith that the early church would use that were, that were centered around the gospel. And those, those things were passed down as traditions in the early church apostolic era.

[46 : 42] But those rules of faith were never meant to be an independent authority. They were always subserving to the scriptures. So, I mean, the first Corinthians literally says, obey tradition.

But those traditions were, are now for us in the canon. The apostolic deposit is now written down in the canon. So, yeah.

Yeah, I mean, I guess what I would think is to say that I think there's two different things going on here, right? Because if you say, scripture interprets scripture, I think the principle there is that if there's a question about an ambiguous nature of the text, we look to see if there's other parts of scripture that are more clear about what the text is talking about.

Yeah. And then I think the other element is that if we do like a systematic theology, right, where we take a certain term or a certain concept and look at the entire scripture or what it says about that, that is a good way of getting a hold of the idea.

However, even then, to what I think Tyler is pointing out, is that the words that we use in scripture are underdetermined.

[47 : 53] underdetermined, meaning like no word that we find in scripture, almost no word that we find in scripture has a single univocal meaning, right?

And the same thing with our language. Like, almost every word we use could be used in multiple different ways. And so, oftentimes, sometimes it's not 100% clear when he says this, because, you know, the word Lord is used, is applied to secular rulers in the Bible as well, right?

or kings and stuff like that. And so, I think someone who is motivated to, for instance, deny the divinity of Jesus can find reasons to weasel, using the words, to weasel out of the, I think, what we're pointing out is the obvious conclusion.

Like, if you did a systematic theology of Jesus and Lord and looked at it, you'd be like, yeah, he's claiming to be God, he is God, right? He has authority. But if you are motivated to find a way to deny that, you could weasel with the words to make them sound like you're saying something else.

Like what I think you're saying, sometimes we have to use very specific, distinct, almost scientific language that has one meaning that we can say, okay, we're investing this word with this one meaning, now we're using it to describe what we see in scripture, now we can have a discussion where there's absolute clarity based on this word.

[49 : 25] Right. It's smuggling non-biblical meanings into a word, into a phrase. That was the issue at the Council of Nicaea. Tom?

Just to add to that, I think also that the preach, it's not that the scriptures are insufficient and the scriptures don't interpret each other because they do. They are sufficient. It's that there are, you know, like, scripture doesn't have the word monotheism, but we use that term to just characterize what the scriptures are saying.

And so the creeds, like the Nicene Creed could have just done a big list of Bible verses, you know, describing, but then, but that's not the point of the creed. The point of the creed is to just quickly summarize what the scriptures are saying and sometimes you need to coin some words, like, I am monotheistic.

That's just a summary of what Christians should be. Same as the word trinity, same as the word homo lusios. And that the Arians, the Arians tried to do this in reverse by putting phrases together that were misleading about what the scriptures were saying and the Nicene Creed was a response to that.

And actually, here's the response that the Arians couldn't, they couldn't agree with them. It was an easy way to differentiate between two different understandings of scripture, one of which is scriptural, the other says it is, but it really isn't.

[50 : 49] That's helpful, yeah. And so, both sides claim to believe the Bible, but when we start talking about the meaning of the language itself, we need to start using other words that clarify, but I would still maintain that the scripture is sufficient, so, for all things necessary for salvation.

So, again, we're trying to interpret the scripture in light to the fact that there have been saints who have gone before us and we stand on the shoulders of giants who have fought this battle and we can learn from them.

You can imagine someone who says, I'm just going to go in the corner in the Bible with myself and I'm going to read Romans and I'm going to see what it really means. What it really means. I'm not prejudiced like with all those other people throughout church history.

That's a foolish thing to do. We need to recognize that we learn from other people. We rely upon other people. Any final... That's why it says in the Bible it talks about pastors and teachers.

Teachers. Yeah. We need faithful teachers, but we don't put teachers up here. Again, the scripture is the highest jurisdiction.

[52 : 10] So this is sort of a... As we dive into the specifics, I want us to keep this framework in mind. Because to elevate the norma normata to this level, I think dishonors those who actually were appealing to the scriptures in their defense of the truth they were seeking to guard the church with.

So let me pray and then we'll go downstairs. Our Father in heaven, we thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your ways, for men and women who have gone before us, who have been examples to us of faithfulness.

Will we walk in their footsteps, Lord, as they have walked with you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.