

# The Creeds of the Faith Part 3

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[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome, everyone. We're going to get started. My name is Tom Schmidt. I haven't met you before. I'm one of the elders here at Trinity Baptist Church. Welcome to our Adult Sunday School class. We've been going through a series looking at the various creeds of Christianity. Today we're talking about the Council of Nicaea. I'll give a little bit of background once we begin, but let's open in prayer.

Father, we come before you and we ask that today we would tremble before your word, that we'd be convicted by your truth, by your nature, by how, Lord, you became flesh and dwelt among us and died for our sins and rose again on the third day.

We thank you, Lord Jesus, for all you've done for us. We pray you'd send your spirit into our hearts in this time together, that we would be encouraged, that we would learn from the wisdom of the saints who have gone before us hundreds of years ago.

And we ask this in your name. Amen. Okay, welcome, everyone. So we're in class three right now. The first class we had a couple weeks ago, Tyler talked about what creeds are, how they can help us as Christians, how they're like hearing aids that highlight the salient points, the relevant points of scripture.

And then last week, we talked about early Christian creeds. We looked at, I'll put some names on the board here. We looked at perhaps the first, the first Christian creed we have from a guy named Irenaeus in the year 180 AD.

[ 1 : 33 ] And we looked at that creed, we looked at some other later creeds. These were really good, good creeds. They were very nourishing. I mean, it was wonderful to see that 1,845 years ago, Irenaeus is saying the same things we believe.

Really beautiful, especially because Irenaeus said that it's not just him, that all Christians throughout the whole earth believe this. And he spoke about God being the maker of all things, the son becoming God, and dying for our sins.

He mentions the Holy Spirit. Today, we're going to continue onward and look at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

And I want to give you a little bit of background about this, talk about its importance, talk about who the main folks were, and then we'll get into reading what the Nicene Creed has to say.

Sound good? All right. So, first, I want to read you something. I handed it out. It's just called the confession.

[ 2 : 43 ] I got really excited with the handouts. So, there's a lot. We're only going to go over a very little bit. You can take it home and read it if you want to. But I handed out one called the confession. I just want to read a few lines from this.

All right. Here it goes. We believe in one God, the Father, the ruler of all, and in the Lord Jesus Christ, his only Son, the one who is begotten from him before all ages, God the Word, through whom all things came to be, things in the heavens and things on earth, the one who descended and took flesh and suffered and rose and ascended into the heavens and is coming again to judge the living and the dead, and in the Holy Spirit and in the resurrection of the flesh and in the life of the age to come in the kingdom of the heavens and in the one Catholic Church, Catholic meaning universal church, extending from one end of earth to the other.

If you are listening to that creed and you're thinking, that is a good creed, well, you would be a heretic. Now, I'm actually exaggerating a little bit.

This is the confession of Arius, the great heretic. Yes, it is. So I left his name off. I put it in red in my copy.

Now, I'm actually, I'm being a little unfair here. He wrote this after many years as a way to try and show that he was Orthodox, but he really wasn't because what he meant by some of these terms was not what he meant.

[ 4 : 12 ] They're normally interpreted as being. So, for instance, when he says that Jesus is God the Word, right, he means that in a very different way than what probably you all think that means.

And one of the things we found last week was that with Irenaeus, Irenaeus explicitly says that Jesus is divine.

That's a universal early Christian belief. We find it all over the place. We find it in the New Testament. We find it outside the New Testament. But imagine for a moment that you are in the ancient world where polytheism is rife.

People are believing in multiple gods. So, when someone says that Jesus is divine, Jesus is God in the ancient world, can you imagine ways that they could mean that in a bad way, in a heretical way, in an unorthodox way?

Can you think of, what are some, anyone, any, if you really wanted to twist that, Susan. Yes, you could just mean, yes, Jesus is divine, just like all, there's many multiple gods.

[ 5 : 28 ] Exactly. You could definitely mean that. Yeah, look. He could have been divinized like Heracles. Yes. So, he could be divinized. He could be human who is raised up to the status of the gods.

Exactly. You could mean it that way. Precisely. Yeah. Those are the two big ones. But there are other ones. I mean, if you want to push it, there's several different ways you can try and do it. Here's another one. You can believe that there's this one God who, because he's so far removed from us, has to create a kind of mediator to deal with us, a craftsman.

So, he creates Jesus as this kind of go-between between creation and the divine realm and kind of calls this creature God, but in like a lowercase g sense.

That's another way you could do it. And we'll find out that that's kind of what Arius meant when he was saying Jesus was divine. You guys come in?

[ 6 : 33 ] You can come in. Yeah. Yeah. He meant that Jesus really wasn't God, that he was just called that.

However Arius defined it, when you look at his definition, you realize that's not God. So, this confession, while I was a little unfair when I said you would be a heretic, this actually is a great confession.

It's just incomplete. He doesn't define what he means by his terms. In this confession. And that kind of lack of clarity is what created the mess that caused the need for the Council of Nicaea.

So, let's do a little background on the Council here. Christianity begins, you know, the resurrection of Jesus happens, the disciples go out throughout the whole Roman Empire preaching the gospel. And for 300 years, Christianity spreads shockingly. Just remarkably. All over the Roman Empire. There's all sorts of different cultures in the Greco-Roman Empire.

[ 7 : 41 ] There's Greeks. There's Latins. There's folks speaking, you know, Gothic and Coptic and Syriac and all these other dialects. And Christianity spreads.

It also spreads outside the Roman Empire in Persia, Ethiopia, Armenia, Central Asia, all these places. Christians are often persecuted. And by the time 325 rolls around, for the first time, Christians have a Christian emperor.

Constantine, Emperor Constantine comes to power around 311 or so. And he issues an edict allowing freedom of religion.

This is actually not only a massive turn in the history of Christianity, but also in just humanity. I mean, as far as I'm aware, this is the first time a major political figure ordered or made it law that people could believe whatever they wanted to believe.

That you couldn't persecute someone for their religious beliefs. Constantine himself is a Christian. We're going to find out Constantine didn't actually hold to this standard very well.

[ 8 : 52 ] But by the time 325 comes around, Constantine is now sole emperor. When he first became emperor, he was co-emperor. Now he's sole emperor.

And there's a problem in the church, in the Roman church in 325. And that's because there is a guy named Arius, who is a presbyter in the church in Egypt.

And he is teaching things that are upsetting folks. And if we turn to, I have this handout, the Thalia of Arius.

Arius was composing like songs. He was composing little ditties, catchphrases with theological content. And he was saying things like this.

If you go to number one or I right there, he was saying things like this. God was not eternally a father. There was a time when God was all alone and was not yet a father.

[ 9 : 49 ] Only later did he become a father. Yeah, yeah, yes. You should let them know we didn't have enough handout. Oh, okay. Okay, not everybody has everything.

So if you're looking for it, I apologize. We got a lot of folks here today, which is great. Oh, I got an extra one. Is it this one? Yes, it's that one, yeah.

Oh, I got two extra ones. Oh, you're the source of it, Raul. Okay, number two. Arius would say things like this.

The sun did not always exist. Everything created is out of nothing. All existing creatures, all things that are made.

So the word of God himself came into existence out of nothing. There was a time when he did not exist. So notice he uses the term word of God.

[ 10 : 49 ] He calls Jesus the word of God. But then he's very clear. He didn't always exist. He didn't always exist. If we look at his confession, where he says God the word, he calls Jesus God the word.

But now we see that he means that only in the way of defining Jesus as not always existing. Right? Now, I have a question for you. Does that mean he's actually God?

Like, if he didn't exist at some point and then came into existence? Normally, we would say God is eternal. He always existed.

Right? But Arius here is saying, there was a time when the sun did not exist and then came into being.

So, do you see the tension there between calling Jesus divine but then saying that he didn't always exist? Right? And this goes on.

[ 11 : 51 ] Arius goes on for a while. He says, we won't read all of this. If we skip down to number four, he says, there are two wisdoms.

One that is proper to God and exists together with him. And the sun who is brought into being in this wisdom. Only by participating in this wisdom is the sun called wisdom and word.

Hmm. So, scripture says Jesus is the wisdom of God. Right? So, if you believe that Jesus came into existence, then you must mean that God's wisdom came into existence.

Which must mean that God didn't have wisdom at some point. Which seems really weird. Right?

That feels wrong. That feels wrong. So, what Arius tries to do is he says, ah, Jesus is only wisdom in like a very different sense.

He's only wisdom in the sense that he's like somehow expressing God's wisdom. But, and so, so you see the kind of convoluted circles Arius is trying to trace here with these songs.

[ 12 : 55 ] Well, these songs that he was singing and composing got pretty popular, were upsetting some churches. Churches were concerned about this teaching.

And so, they called a council together to try and figure out some kind of solution to this problem. Because you have Arius who's saying, he will say something like this, Jesus is God. He would be willing to say something like that.

But then, what he means by this is different. It's not, it seems like the way he means this means Jesus isn't God.

Like, it actually seems like what he really means is the opposite of this. But he just, he'll use, he'll use traditional accepted language, but he'll use it in ways that is not how people would normally interpret that.

[ 13 : 57 ] And friends, this is something we have to be very careful with. I think this is both an interpersonal warning and a theological warning. It's theological warning in the sense that you always want to make sure your terms are clear when you're having theological discussions.

Because otherwise, you're just talking past each other. And the same thing interpersonally. So many of our arguments, friends, are just because we're using the same words differently. Or we're using different words to mean the same thing. And we don't understand this about what we are talking about.

And I think Arius, perhaps, is actually, he could be doing this intentionally. I don't think he was doing it intentionally. I think he just had a warped view of what God was.

I mean, I think he just had this warped view. So, because of Arius' rabble-rousing, the Council of Nicaea was called together in 325 AD.

And Tom, I don't know about this for 100% sure, but is it true that the Arian doctrines were sort of gaining in popularity?

[ 15 : 06 ] And that's why it's one thing? Scholars have tried to, have debated this. They've debated, is the Arian doctrine gaining in popularity? I want to, before I answer that question, I want to say one thing.

We're talking about Arius here. However, what Arius believed might be quite different than what, like, an Arian church believed. And so, when he's using terms like Jesus is God, and we're going to, hopefully we'll have time to dig in and see some of this.

That, it's very possible there were people in Arian churches that actually believed pretty orthodox stuff. Because, as you can see, this is getting really technical here. So, you know, if you asked a first century New Testament Christian who just heard the gospel on the streets by Peter the Apostle some of these questions, they, who knows how they would answer some of these questions.

Like, was there a time when the son was not? Did he exist in the mind of God? But not like, it's just, it gets really complicated. So, but in terms of popularity, my understanding is that he was probably gaining a popularity in Egypt for a while.

But then, after his condemnation, there were Arian churches for hundreds of years in Germany. Germany was actually, the Germanic people were mostly Arian for a very long time.

[ 16 : 26 ] But I want to be careful with that because when you say something like, Arians believe Jesus is not divine. That's true, but it's not how they would, I mean, if you went and asked one of the Arians, hey, do you think Jesus is divine?

They'd say, yes. And it's only after like really kind of pushing through some things that you start realizing. So, so those Germanic churches that were Arian, that, that is, I just want us to not, you know, knee-jerk, write them off as, as full-blown, they don't believe in the deity of Jesus.

Because they, some of them might have, but even though their internal theology was a little messed up. So, I think that Arians was growing in popularity. I don't think this was a massive movement, but it was big in Egypt.

I think it was amongst kind of the elite. The Council of Nicaea was also much more than just this. There were other things they had to decide. There were other things they were trying to settle, like the date of Easter and things like this.

325 is also, when Constantine came to power, he was only co-emperor. The other co-emperor was still persecuting Christians. So, when Constantine becomes the only emperor by 325, it's the first time that the Christian church can gather on an empire-wide scale without fear of persecution.

[ 17 : 54 ] So, this is a really big deal. This is the largest church council that's ever met up to this point. And it's, it's effectively an empire-wide council. So, they're talking about lots of stuff, not just the Arian, not just the Arian issue.

Any other questions? I know we're going over a lot. We're moving quickly here. Okay. So, a lot goes on at the council.

We don't have, we don't have, for some later councils, we have like blow-by-blow minutes of the proceedings. We don't have that with the Council of Nicaea.

Instead, we have later reports. We have some eyewitness accounts of people who were there. But, just to show you the difficulty of, or the kind of puzzling nature of Arius's creed, I want you, I want us to read an earlier creed by him.

So, in your packet that has two, two sides, if you go to, towards the back, page 329, the letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia. And this is a letter of Arius where he explains his beliefs.

[ 19 : 24 ] Okay, so I'm going to read just a little bit. So, this is in Arius's own words. Something that is also important is it's, as far as we're able, it's always good to go back to the original source as much as possible.

So, if you want to hear what Arius believes, let's just read what he believes. We have his letter here. He's going to explain it. So, we're going to skip to, at the very, very bottom of 329, in the middle, in the, he talks about how the bishop is driving, driving us out of the city.

Now, we're on top of 330. As godless men, since we do not agree with him, when he says publicly, always father, always son. Father and son together.

The son exists unbegotten with God. The eternal begotten or unbegotten only one. Neither in thought nor by a single instant is God before the son.

Always God, always son. The son is of God himself. These are the, remember how Arius was composing these kind of little songs? This is the, his bishop's reply is these catchphrases, like, Jesus is always the son.

[ 20 : 33 ] The father is always the father. The son is of God himself. The son is always God. This is because if you think that the son did not exist at some point, then the father wasn't always the father.

He couldn't be father. He hadn't had a son yet. So, uh, what Arius is going to go on is explain what he thinks. So, uh, if we jump down to the middle of 330, uh, he says, but we cannot bear even to listen to such impieties, though the heretics should threaten us with a thousand deaths.

What is it that we say and think and have taught and teach? Here we go. That the son is not unbegotten nor a part of the unbegotten in any way.

The unbegotten, he's referring to God here. Nor formed out of any substratum, but that he was constituted by God's will and counsel before time and before ages, full of grace and truth, divine, unique, unchangeable.

Unchangeable. And before he was begotten or created or ordained or founded, he was not. Meaning he did not exist. Eric.

[ 21 : 54 ] And before he was begotten, okay. For he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say the son has a beginning, but God is without a beginning.

So he goes on. but I want to point something out here that's so tricky that scholars themselves stumble on this. So Arius very clearly here says there was a time when the sun was not.

There was a time when Jesus did not exist in any form or any way whatsoever. But he says he's divine. He says he's divine.

He says he's unchangeable, which is weird. If you come into existence, how can you be unchangeable? But do you notice there's brackets where it says, or parentheses, full of grace and truth.

Do you see that line there? Well, that line is not actually there because what the Greek actually says, and it's in multiple manuscripts, there's no evidence for that phrase of grace and truth.

[ 23 : 01 ] What it actually says is Arius calls Jesus fully divine. That's what it says. He says he's fully divine. So here we have Arius, the great heretic, who says that Jesus, that allegedly says Jesus is not God.

Here saying he's fully God. But then when he explains it, it stopped, it doesn't make sense, right? He came into being. He, there was a time when he didn't exist.

You can see how difficult it would be to have discussions with someone like this, who's constantly moving the chess pieces around in illegal ways. You know, you're like, but you can't, that's not what that word means.

And he just, he just keeps saying it. And it's, it's difficult to negotiate. Yeah. Yes.

Yes. Yes. So, very difficult to talk about this. Some vocabulary here. He always talks about, you know, the unbegotten, this begetting language.

[ 24 : 06 ] We're familiar with this because Jesus in the scriptures is called the only begotten, like the unique, the only son. And God the father is called unbegotten because he wasn't, you know, begotten in a way.

Now, these discussions we're having about, about, you know, the eternity of Jesus and things. Well, Arius would probably say something.

He'd be like, well, how can you be begotten if Jesus is begotten? We all agree. We all agree. So, Arius would probably say something like, how can you, someone be begotten but be eternal at the same time?

How could you do that? How's that possible? For Arius, this is a contradiction. He thinks it's totally contradictory to be begotten but eternal.

He's also squirrely with his language. Another area that he's squirrely with his language is if you, if you see in the handout, where is it? Now I'm losing it.

[ 25 : 10 ] Ah, so right before the, the full of grace and truth where it actually says fully divine, it says that he was begotten before times and before ages. Now, to me, I read that, I say, he's eternal.

Yes. But then he explicitly says, oh, and there was a time he didn't exist. So he's constantly just going back and forth with this squirrely language that feels contradictory.

So this question though, of how can Jesus be eternal but begotten is a question that theologians will need to answer. How is that possible?

What do you guys think? Is it a contradiction? Is it a mystery? Yes. Is it possible that if he was referring to the son in the incarnate form, that says this glorious divine form?

Yeah. Sometimes people do, are referring to it that way. But I think, that's a very good, very good observation. I think theologians still want to use the term only begotten of Jesus before the incarnation as well.

[ 26 : 18 ] Is it referring to divine privilege rather than divine nature? Can you explain a little more? So when Jesus sends to his throne, it says that the father, in Hebrews, he quotes the begottenness language of the Psalms.

It's this idea that Jesus sends, he's begotten first in privilege. He's the woman. Okay. But I mean, that's what you're... Well, so very good observation.

So you can, if you think about in the ancient world, so in the ancient world, you would have an emperor or a king. And very frequently, you know, the throne would be passed down to the firstborn son or something like that.

But didn't always happen. Didn't always have firstborn sons. So it was very common in the ancient world that you would adopt a son. And that person you adopt would become, would have this privilege, this prerogative that they would inherit.

They would kind of inherit your status. And so you could view the begotten language as one like that. It's not talking about any kind of natural begettiness, but more of a status or a positionality that's going on.

[ 27 : 38 ] That's one possibility. So that Jesus always had the position of being the firstborn in the sense of title, in the sense of rank, in the sense of, of how a emperor might designate, might have someone who's their firstborn son, who's not actually naturally their son, but just, that's one possibility.

But I don't think that's enough because then you could argue, oh, then Jesus actually isn't nature by nature divine. He was just adopted. He was just selected.

So, I think the solution to this conundrum is that we have to stop thinking of God purely in physical terms because physically, from mammalian biology, human biology, you can't have a child that exists from the very moment their parent existed.

you just can't, you can't do that, right? But, that's not, God is not biology, right? He's beyond biology. And, you can have examples of, for instance, if you have a tree, for instance, and you have a huge limb of the tree, but the tree's eternal, right?

But the tree sprouted the limb. But if the tree's eternal, then, the limb is eternal. Even though, does that make sense? So, you have something that is kind of sprouted from, but in an eternal way.

[ 29 : 08 ] That's how theologians will often explain this idea of begottenness. But you see, Arius is fixated on these kinds of issues here and is trying to find solutions, but his solutions just create many more problems.

It means Jesus didn't always exist. It means God didn't have wisdom or he has to redefine wisdom. It means that the father wasn't always the father. It means, of course, the big one, God didn't actually become human.

He didn't actually die for our sins. God sent someone else to do it. That's what Arius' theology implies. Matt? Did you read something that indicated that Arius called his bishop or whatever a heretic?

Yes, he does think of him as heretic. So, Arius is saying, hey, people who believe differently than me are really in a bad spiritual state and vice versa. Correct.

Were there people at the time who kind of took the attitude Paul does somewhere saying, you know, this is the way it is, but if you disagree with me, you know, God will make that clear to you sometime.

[ 30 : 18 ] That's a great question. Kind of a secondary issue. Were there people who said, hey, you know, this is not the biggest deal. We can disagree. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Or was it just boom?

You do get people who say things like that. One thing to keep in mind is that the peacemaking attitude of, well, you know, we'll just agree to disagree.

Remember that Arius is like composing songs designed to stir people up. And so he's in a very different position than some peasant in the countryside who is just saying, you know, this is beyond me.

Like, you're talking about all this stuff I don't understand, unbegotten, begotten. Just, I just, I'm going to worship Jesus. He's my savior and that's it. That's a very different thing than what Arius is doing here.

And I think in our Christian life we need to be very aware of those two distinctions. That we should not, I mean, already we can see, like, we're really getting into the weeds here with terminology.

[ 31 : 23 ] It's going to get worse, by the way. We're going to have more, more of these technical terms coming up. But that's very different than the humble peasant who's just a farmer doing his, doing his thing.

That's why I mentioned that about the Aryan church amongst the Germans. I mean, there would have been tens of thousands of these peasants. You know, the gospel rolls into town, they show up at the only church they can even get to and technically it's part of this Aryan church but for all we know they just, they believe, they didn't understand any of this or it wasn't even talked about and it was just, you know.

Are there any Aryans today that you can, usually people will say Jehovah's Witnesses are Aryans but the thing with Jehovah's Witnesses there's two distinctions I want to make.

one is that they do tend to have, I don't want to be needlessly pejorative but like, kind of like cult-like behavior it's very difficult to leave and to inquire and have, and do research and ask questions it's very difficult to do that but secondly, they wouldn't agree with Aryan, they wouldn't call Jesus fully divine.

they wouldn't say that. They, so they're more extreme than Aryan seems to have been. My understanding is I'm not, I'm not an expert on Jehovah's Witnesses.

[ 32 : 48 ] Okay, so, we read a little bit of Aryan's confession. So now, what I want to do is look at what the Council of Nicaea has to say.

So, that same packet that had Aryan's confession, I put it in the wrong order. I should have put Aryan's first but at the beginning we have here the letter of Eusebius of Caesarea describing the Council of Nicaea and then on page 336 we have the text where, where Eusebius starts describing the Council.

So, this is awesome. Eusebius of Caesarea is literally, I'm not exaggerating, the father of history. This guy created the historical method.

So much of what we know about ancient history is because of him. So, having him, he attended the Council of Nicaea, he wrote a letter immediately afterwards that he sent back to his church describing the Council of Nicaea and that letter is preserved in multiple manuscript traditions.

So, we've got really good manuscript tradition of it. So, this is like A plus stuff here in terms of historical veracity. What we're going to find though is that the Council of Nicaea is a little more complicated than you might have, than you might have imagined.

[ 34 : 07 ] So, in his introductory paragraph he just says, hey, I wanted to send you this letter because rumors often spread and I just want to let you know what happened and then if we go to the next page, so we're on 337 now, what Eusebius says, he says this.

He's going to articulate the creed of his church. So, he re-articulates the creed that his church used to say and then he's going to compare this with the Nicene Creed.

So, this is a creed his church used to say, as I received my tradition from the bishops before me both in my first instruction when I was baptized. So, interestingly, he was taught this creed at baptism and as I learned from the divine scriptures, the creed is also derived from the scriptures and as I believe and taught in the office of presbyter and episcopate.

That means bishop. So, still believing, I present to you my creed which is this. Here it goes. So, this creed is probably from the year 300 or so when Eusebius was baptized.

We believe in one God, Father Almighty, the maker of all things visible and invisible and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the word of God, God of God, light of light, life of life, unique son or only begotten son, first born of all creation, begotten of the Father before all ages through whom also all things came to be, who for salvation was incarnate and dwelt among men and suffered and rose on the third day and ascended to the Father and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead.

[ 35 : 39 ] We also believe in one Holy Spirit, believing that each of these is and exists, the Father truly is Father, the Son truly is Son, the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit.

As also our Lord said, when sending forth his disciples for the preaching, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, of which I firmly assert that that is what I hold and so I am convinced.

He quotes that passage because Jesus accords one name to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He doesn't say, go forth and make disciples, baptizing them in the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

It's one name. And notice he says, Jesus is the Word of God. He's God of God. He's begotten of the Father before all ages. But as we've read though, Arius might be willing to say all that because he defines before all ages differently than I would define before all ages.

And he also defines God differently. And the one thing he probably wouldn't agree with is where Eusebius says, the Father is truly Father, the Son truly Son, meaning the Father probably is always the Father.

[ 36 : 54 ] Anyway, that's Eusebius' Creed. He goes on to say that he offered this Creed as a model for the Nicene Creed. When they were at the council, he said, hey, let's use this Creed for our conciliar Creed.

Let's do it. And if you know the Nicene Creed, you see that this actually looks very similar to it. It's very, very similar. And there was some back and forth and they decided to make one or two significant changes to the Creed.

And they made these changes to try and make sure, to try and eliminate Arius' word twisting. So he goes on. Let's, we're down at the bottom of 337, the final paragraph, when I had presented this statement of faith there at the council, there was no room for opposition.

Indeed, our most pious emperor himself, that's Constantine, testified that its contents were very sound. He further confessed that he himself was so convinced and urged all to agree to it and to subscribe and assent to this very teaching with the addition of one word, consubstantial.

Okay, we got another vocabulary word here. Now, I'm emphasizing this because as you get into Trinitarian theology, this word comes up all the time. Consubstantial, which in Greek is homoousios, which means of the same substance, of the same substance, different from homoousios, which means of similar substance.

[ 38 : 42 ] So, this means the same, whoops, the same substance or essence or nature.

and I want to ask you, pretend you've never heard, if you've looked at Trinitarian theology, you might have heard of this word before, consubstantial, right?

Pretend like you've never heard it before. Okay, if I said, oh, this is consubstantial, X is consubstantial with Y, what would you think I meant by that?

Or, if instead of using the actual word, if I kind of made the phrase, this is of the same substance, what would that mean? Made from the same stuff.

Okay, oh, made from the same stuff. I like, I like that. Because, let's, let's take that definition, it's a very, it's a very good first reaction, and apply that to Jesus.

[ 39 : 43 ] Are we saying Jesus is made from the same stuff as the Father? Do you see the difficulty there? Because, so, so, and that's very, very good because people, some people, as we keep reading in the letter, interpreted it in that kind of way.

Although, for them, it was more a physical thing. So, instead of Jesus being created, it was like acting like Jesus was a physical substance, as if the divine nature is similar to some kind of physical element that you can cut up and derive things from, which, divinity is not like that.

God isn't existing in our plane of reality. He's not, you know, the element 145 where you can do stuff with it. And so, people were very concerned that this idea communicated the idea that God was somehow physical or corporeal, which, if you're in a polytheistic environment where people are bowing down to physical idols, is a big no-no.

That's a big no-no. You do not want the Christian God to be thought of as analogous to an idol that someone would set up in their house and they could cut a piece off and give it to someone else. They don't want that. And Eusebius himself is very concerned about this term. He goes on to say at the bottom of 337 that the emperor said the sun is not to be called consubstantial according to what happens to bodies.

[ 41 : 25 ] So, Constantine is saying, I don't mean this in a physical way. I don't mean this. I know you might think of it in a physical way. I'm not thinking of it in a physical way. Top of 338. Nor is he constituted by a division or by some kind of cutting up of the father nor can the immaterial and intellectual and bodiless nature undergo what happens to bodies but these things must be

conceived of in divine and in ineffable terms meaning beyond our speech.

So, the emperor is saying, look, we don't mean this in a physical way. We mean it in that they're sharing the same nature and the nature happens to be divine. If we used this term with like a rock so, this granite rock is consubstantial with this granite rock because I cut it off and that's one thing but we're talking about divine things here.

So, then, they drew up the Nicene Creed on 338 Corbin. Emperor is now in church office. It's a great question.

How much authority did Constantine have over the church Yes. So, it makes me uncomfortable to think of Constantine here kind of like saying, you know, hey, what about this?

The authority he had, he tried to have, it's hard to answer. There's many examples of him saying, you guys need to do this and then I'm just not doing it and then he, he can't really do anything about it.

[ 42 : 56 ] This happened with the Donatist schism. He told the Donatists, don't leave the church, don't leave the church, don't leave the church. They left the church and eventually he's like, okay, I can't do anything about it. So, you know, remember, this is the first time they have a Christian emperor.

I mean, they have gone, this church has gone from being horrifically persecuted just, I mean, if you're in the east, just a couple years previously for centuries to then they're in front of the emperor who's telling, I mean, so there certainly was a lot of pressure.

On the other hand, like the creed that Eusebius presented was the church's creed in his church, which as we saw with Irenaeus, totally agree with Irenaeus. I mean, so the emperor is not, you know, it's really squishy.

It's hard to, it's hard to suss out exactly. But he was not in charge. He could certainly affect pressure. And as time went on, the emperor got more and more power over this, but it took, it took a while.

But yeah, he's monkeying about with stuff he probably shouldn't be, you know, monkeying about. Yeah, quick related question for that. How, how well read, how well studied was Constantine?

[ 44 : 11 ] Eusebius says that he was like highly educated, he was fluent in Latin and Greek. he could talk about all these things. My reading is he probably was a remarkably gifted leader.

He was very brave. He did make some massive, horrible mistakes. He actually had his own son executed and then realized the charges against his son were false after the fact.

Really bad stuff. but my sense is that he actually more just wanted the Christians to agree on something. Right, like, because I'm trying to derive his motives here.

I think he came in, read the room, and saw that 97% of everybody there was against Arius and was like, okay, that's good. Let's get this settled. We want this. That's probably... My sense is he's a pretty smart cookie, but not necessarily like a specialized...

Yeah, he's a politician. But, yeah, he's like saying I know enough to say you guys should figure this out so we can all get back to like being an empire. Yes, I think so.

[ 45 : 18 ] Okay. So, that's my read. He may have come, remember, he reigned for quite some time, so, you know, he may have shifted, you know, as time went on, he became more familiar with some of the theological things.

Okay, so here's the creed. This is 338. We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father uniquely, that is, of the substance, that's a new one, of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father, another new one, through whom all things were made, both things in heaven and those in earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, became man, he suffered and rose on the third day, ascended into heaven and is coming to judge the living and the dead and in the Holy Spirit.

But those who say there was once when he was not and before he was begotten he was not and he came into being out of things that are not or alleged that the Son of God is of a different subsistence or essence or that he's created or alterable or changeable, the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.

They cast those people out. So, Eusebius, so they added two words. They added consubstantial and then they also added the word substance which is just usia and if we keep reading, Eusebius is actually concerned about these two phrases.

He actually is writing this letter to his church because he knows he's going to get some blowback when he gets home because he says when they formulated this statement I did not let it pass without examination as to what sense they meant when they said of the substance of the Father and consubstantial with the Father.

[ 47 : 09 ] So, questions were raised and answered and the meaning of the phrases was tested by reason. Thus, it was declared that they used the phrase of the substance to indicate his being of the Father but not as if he were a part of the Father.

So, like a physical part of the Father like physicality. He's really worried about this physicality stuff. It's very clear that in his church these words have physical connotations and he's trying to say that's not what we mean.

We mean this in purely like essence or nature or something like that. So, he goes on. You can read the rest of the letter yourself. But as you read you start realizing so Eusebius agrees he agrees with the creed he signs off on it but he knows it's going to be controversial at home so he writes this letter to try and explain it but then as he is explaining what he believes it's it becomes unclear like sometimes Eusebius is called a semi-Aryan because he seems to believe that Jesus always existed but maybe maybe only like in the mind of God kind of it's weird it's unclear exactly what he means by this so I'll say the fallout of the council and then we can open it up to questions so this creed is issued almost all the bishops agree there's only a couple that don't Arius is exiled Arius lives for another 10-15 years that's at some point when he issued his confession that I read where he clearly tried to tone down the explicit stuff but he doesn't want to subscribe to the Nicene Creed because he doesn't like these words here and he eventually dies Arianism does not die it continues in Germany especially but other places there were later emperors that were Arian so after Constantine died there were other emperors that came along that were pro Arian and we had this back and forth Athanasius was exiled you know bunches of times and Athanasius was kind of the theologian that drove the death now in Arianism because he was able to show things like if Jesus is not actually God then God did not become human how can humans be reconciled to God by someone else God has to do it we're made in God's image we have

I mean he he go again and again and again for decades is saying this and eventually you know that wins the day I have to say when the opening line of the gospel of John says in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God that feels pretty clear to me that Jesus is divine and eternal how you want to use the technical language like John doesn't use the word consubstantial he doesn't use the word hypostasis which we'll come across but it scripture declares that Jesus is divine and to then try and take that word divine to make it not really divine seems to go against the scriptures and and it also seems to go against not just the implications but just the plain reading of the scriptures and this is in the Old Testament it's not a new thing Isaiah says you know to us a son is given and he will be called mighty

[ 50 : 47 ] God Isaiah says that Zechariah says in speaking through as Yahweh's words that they will look on me the one whom they pierced and they will mourn for him like one mourns for an only son which seems to be his prophecy of God coming down and being crucified and then he goes on to say and a fountain of forgiveness will be opened up in Jerusalem so it's very clear in scripture we're going to find though that this creed which is probably the most universally ascribed to creed on earth is this creed it was a roman creed it was later accepted by the churches in Ethiopia and Persia Armenia Georgia all these other churches accepted this creed even the novationists whom we mentioned last time the novationists were like the splinter group a splinter church they accepted the creed but didn't want to sign it because they didn't want to be part of a church where the emperor was in charge of things and stuff like that so and other big or schismatic groups like the Donatists they would have agreed with this I mean so everyone seems to agree with this it's very broadly very universal Protestants many Protestant churches actually formally agree with this and those that don't think it's good they're like oh yeah it's a good one we just you know those are churches that don't come from traditions where they want to impart extra authority to the creed beyond just someone's regular confession of faith we're about done here but any final questions before Luke so from what I understand another important part of the creed is that in the original creed it says God of God and in the Nicene Creed it says true God of true God I think it's attempting to take away that squishiness!

Very good very good so what Arius had been saying was he would say when you pin him down oh Jesus is God he's just not true God he would say that which to me makes no sense at all but he

would say that part of it has to do with true true true true has a narrower sense than in Greek where it can refer to something more like actual or it still doesn't make sense even in Greek but it just it's a little less jarring in Greek so yes they add that word true because they really mean it like he really is it took 50 years to verify the Nicene Creed because of those words because of true true substance yes yes substance consubstantial yes yes there's going to be another term hypostasis that's going to come up that's going to be introduced next class John Hinkson is going to be talking about the Apostles Creed then after that we'll be talking about the Creed of Constantinople and things like hypostasis and consubstantial one thing when you're speaking of divine things by definition our words are going to fail us when we're talking about

God because God is not exactly analogous to anything we can imagine perfectly analogous to so what that means is that if we want to talk about God one thing theologians do is they make up words because if you're using all the other words they're always going to have some kind of connotation you don't want so if you make up a word you can encapsulate better what you're referring to and that's why scholars will use the word consubstantial or hypostasis and they'll define it sometimes in ways that the ancients we're going to find out that sometimes these words had different meanings to different people which we've seen here but we're going to see it big time with hypostasis is there another hint yes the words Nicene Creed make it into our Christmas hymns that we sing true God from light from lights so Nicene Creed it's like when you're on your deathbed you're saying it is well it has comforted so many Christians even to this day when we're singing Christmas hymns you'll notice

Nicene Creed appears in there so we're still using it as a church even though we don't realize yeah amen yes absolutely we are we are very widespread let me close in prayer if you want to stick around and talk for a few minutes I'd be happy to but church is starting in a few minutes Father in heaven we thank you for this opportunity to dwell on these matters Lord we know that your nature is beyond finding out but we know you've revealed yourself Father we know that you sent your son to die for our sins on the cross we know that we confess together that Jesus the same Lord true true God of true God light of light Lord we pray that we would claim to this truth that God himself came down to walk and suffer for us and to rise again that we might also rise to we thank you for this we pray this in the name of Jesus amen let me let me turn my finger off but yeah keep going anything like peace or friends would be safe