

## New City Catechism

Question 31: What do we believe by true faith?

Answer:

*We believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

Jude 1:3

This one is, admittedly, tough. But remember our question last week: “What is faith in Jesus Christ?” and our answer: “Receiving and resting on him alone for salvation *as he is offered to us in the gospel.*”

The Apostle’s Creed is nothing more than a summary of Jesus as he is offered to us in the gospel. It has been memorized by Christians of all denominations for nearly 2,000 years as such a summary. It is certainly worth remembering for us.

I strongly encourage you to watch the video for Q31 from the New City Catechism app or website. Then spend the bulk of your time this week working on memorizing the Apostles Creed a line at a time, reviewing it nightly and at any given opportunity. Bribes are encouraged!

Most of the Creed requires little explanation. There are two expressions, however, on which you *may* want to do a little explaining: 1) “He descended into hell” and 2) “the holy catholic church.” On these two points I offer the following:

1) Many Christians have wondered where the expression “He descended into hell” finds any basis in Scripture. The evidence is

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1) Many Christians have wondered where the expression “He descended into hell” finds any basis in Scripture. The evidence is

indeed slim and for this reason many have not considered this statement to be part of essential apostolic faith. The text that is often given as biblical support for this statement is 1 Peter 3:18-20 though the meaning of this text has been frequently debated with no conclusive resolution. Other texts that some see as allusions to Jesus' descent into hell include: Job 38:17; Psalm 68:18-22; Matthew 12:38-41; Acts 2:22-32; Romans 10:7; Ephesians 4:7-10; and 1 Peter 4:6, though others see little basis in these texts.

For further study, let me commend to you the following articles online:

<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/what-does-apostles-creed-mean-when-it-says-jesus-d/>  
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/asktheexpert/nov15.html>

2) There is far less controversy over the statement “the holy catholic church” when properly understood. The word “catholic” simply means “worldwide” or “universal.” In this sense to believe in “the holy catholic church” simply means that that believers are included in a church that encompasses Christ’s followers from all over the world, across the ages. Thus, it is not a statement that necessarily affirms we align ourselves with the *Roman* Catholic Church. Christians were confessing this Creed long before the church at Rome rose in power and influence among the churches of ancient Christianity.

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Commentary, Video, and Prayer, as you see fit.

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