

“Foundations of Faith”
King of Kings Lutheran Church
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
The God Who Is

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- God the Father
- God the Son
- God the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Trinity
- Heaven & hell

GOD THE FATHER

We confess in “The Apostles' Creed”

(The Apostles' Creed was not written by the Apostles of Jesus. It is an ancient Creed of the Church which reflects accurately what the Apostles and the Bible teach. It is used around the world by Christians even today.)

“I believe in God the Father almighty maker of Heaven and earth.”

Who is God the Father?

1) God the Father _____ the universe.

Genesis 1:1, *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

a) God created the universe in six 24 hour days.

Genesis 1:31, *“And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day.”*

Exodus 20:11, *“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them...”*

- Even secular Hebrew scholars state that the natural meaning of the word for *day* in Genesis 1 is a 24-hour day. It is only when one decides, apart from the text itself, that this somehow cannot be possible that he tries to read into the text some other meaning other than what is obvious.
- The text goes out of its way to emphasize and repeat the six 24-hour day pattern of God.
- Intellectual integrity is helpful in addressing this issue. Why do we question the meaning of the word *day* only in Genesis 1? No one suggests that Moses stayed up on Mt. Sinai 40 billion years! No one suggests that Joshua really marched around Jericho for seven billion years! Finally, did God rest a billion years after He created the universe? A day means a day.

b) It is by _____ that we believe the universe was created by God. However, it is also by faith that evolution believes the universe has evolved.

Hebrews 11:3, *“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.”*

- Whether one trusts the biblical testimony of creation or the theory of evolution none of us were there to see it happen. So either way it is a matter of faith. Evolution must hypothesize about the universe’s beginnings because they cannot prove how the universe began. Likewise, people who believe the world was created do so as a matter of faith because we were not there either. However, we believe the One who was!
- Which faith system has better evidence to support it? During the last few decades dramatic advances in physics, astronomy, and biochemistry have so undermined evolutionary theory that many scientists have abandoned it as a viable explanation for how things came to be. Perhaps surprisingly, these same advances have provided substantial evidence that the universe is carefully designed by a highly intelligent Designer.
- For more information check out books investigating the Intelligent Design Theory.

c) The universe was created _____.

Genesis 2:1, *“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.”*

“If you cannot understand how God could create the world in six days, then at least grant the Holy Spirit the honor of being more learned in this matter than you.”

-- Martin Luther

- The universe is not further evolving, ever improving and becoming more complex, as evolutionary thought would require. It has been falling apart ever since sin entered the world through Adam and Eve’s rebellion.
- Because the universe was created complete, things that perhaps would have ordinarily taken millions of years to form or happen were in fact brand new. For instance, how old did Adam look when he was created? 25? He may have seemed to be 25 by every scientific measurement, but in fact he was just seconds old. How old did a mighty oak tree look when it was created? 150 years? It may have seemed to be 150 by every scientific measurement, but in fact it was just seconds old. How old did a rock look? 2 billion years old? It may have seemed to be 2 billion years old by every scientific measurement, but in fact it was just seconds old.
- It must be noted that our presumptions about how long certain processes take are just that, presumptions. Empirical science observes and measures. However, many aspects

of the universe we cannot observe happening, so we are left to speculate about how things happen, and how long they really take. Often after further discovery these presumptions are shown to be very wrong. For instance the formation of rock. What we assumed took eons to form we have found can take just weeks (e.g., Mt. St. Helen).

d) The _____ of each living creature, even each living cell, speaks against evolution and for a Creator.

Psalms 139:14, *"I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well."*

Romans 1:20, *"Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."*

- Examples: the eye needs every part fully formed in order to see. The brain has more than 200 chemicals which all need to be fully and precisely balanced in order to think. Any living creature needs a fully developed reproduction system in order to reproduce, etc. Evolution cannot account for these fully formed and complex systems.

For more information see www.answersingenesis.org.

2) The universe God created. You He (for the sake of His Son) _____.

- Before the question of "how" the universe came to be, there is the question of "why?" God wanted a love relationship with you.

Ephesians 1:4, *"For the Father chose us...before the creation of the world..."*

Ps 100:3, *"Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His."*

3) The Father is both _____ and _____, thus the cross.

Psalms 101:1, *"I will sing of your love and justice."*

GOD THE SON

We confess in "The Apostles' Creed"

"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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead."

Who is God the Son?

- 1) God the Son is _____ God, co-equal with the Father. He is not God, Jr.
John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
- 2) God the Son was born as a _____ who was named Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah/Christ. (*Messiah is from the Hebrew, Christ is from the Greek, both mean "anointed one".*)
John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."

So, is Jesus God or Human?

- 1) He is _____!
 - Jesus is fully God and fully human
- 2) How do we confess that?
 - Jesus is one _____, but with two _____
 - Jesus is "True God and True Man"
Colossians 2:9, *"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form..."*
- 3) Why did Jesus have to be true God?
 - He couldn't _____ being God!
Mark 1:11, *"You are My Son..."*
 - So He could be born _____, without sin.
Luke 1:35, *"So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."*
- 4) Why did Jesus have to be true Man?
 - God could not pay the price for mankind's sin. Only a human could, because it was a human who had broken God's law and earned the sentence of death.

Hebrews 2:17, *"For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might... make atonement for the sins of the people."*
Hebrews 2:11, 14-15, *"Both the One who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers... Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil."*

5) Was Jesus a sinner, like the rest of us humans?

- No, but Jesus _____ our temptations

Hebrews 4:15, *“For we do not have [a Savior] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet was without sin.”*

Hebrews 2:18, *“Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”*

Who was Jesus the person?

1. He had no supernatural glow about Him.

2. He probably had little in common with what most stained glass windows depict Him to be.

- He was a carpenter.
- He had such charisma that people stayed at one point for three days, without food, just to hear Him speak.
- He was passionate, feeling great joy, compassion, anger, and grief.
- Little children loved to jump into His lap.
- People *liked* being with Him.

3. He had great patience with broken people and little patience with proud people.

4. He loved the Father, but angrily exposed hypocritical, self-serving religion.

5. He saw great power in love, but great danger in power.

6. The broken, the outcast, the sinners and the sick crowded around just to be near Him. The religious establishment plotted His murder.

7. Angels and the Father Himself announced Jesus to be the Son of God, yet He ate and drank like other men, had to obey His mamma, got tired and slept, felt frustration and uncertainty, and even enjoyed a good party!

8. His heart's desire and life's mission was to find and retrieve the lost, and yet Jesus never once forces, manipulates, twists arms, or flatters. Rather, He invited, loved, stated truth, stated consequences of a choice, gave His life on the cross, but left the choice to people.

9. What about miracles?

- Jesus knew that excitement over a trick usually did not lead to life-changing faith. He turned down requests to simply dazzle the crowds or impress people. Most often, His miracles were done as an expression of His compassion or to affirm the faith that people placed in Him.

- However, it is important to note that many, many more sick people did *not* receive a miracle from Jesus than did. Why is that? For that matter, *today* why does Jesus not answer every request for a miracle? It is because miracles are simply *glimpses* of what the world is *suppose* to be like, of what the restored creation *will* be like, of what the Kingdom of God will be when it finally arrives *in full power*. Miracles are not suppose to be attempts to turn this world into Heaven but to give us a glimpse of what it will be like when Heaven finally comes.
- Ultimately, the most important miracle Jesus ever preformed was the cross and resurrection. (**Matthew 12:39-40**)

Why is the cross the heart of Jesus' work on earth?

The Answer: At the cross, Jesus offered Himself in our place so that we could be reconciled to the Father and live.

1 Timothy 1:15, *"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners..."*

1) At the cross, our _____ was exchanged for Jesus' righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21, *"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."*

2) At the cross, Jesus took the _____ for our sin.

Isaiah 53:5, *"...the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him."*

3) At the cross, Jesus took our death and _____ into Himself.

Matthew 27:46, *"Jesus cried out, 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?'"*

1 John 3:8, *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*

4) Many are troubled by the bloody torture and death Jesus endured. We can't understand why it had to be so horrible. However, this is for one reason: we have not fully understood the depth of our own sin and darkness, nor what it would take to get us back.

Isaiah 53:5, *"But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed."*

Why was His physical resurrection from the dead all-important? (see 1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

1) His resurrection is how we know His sacrifice for our sin was not only offered to but _____ by the Father.

1 Corinthians 15:17, *"And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."*

2) The resurrection is, finally, what _____ Jesus is who He says He is.

3) His resurrection is how we know we human beings have eternal _____.

John 14:19, *“Because I live, you will live also.”*

1Corinthians 15:54, *“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

“Jesus would rather go to hell for you than to Heaven without you.” --Max Lucado

4) Jesus’ resurrection from the dead was not only spiritual but _____.

John 20:27, *“Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

5) His resurrection is how we know Jesus is really in _____.

Revelation 1:18, *“I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

Jesus Ascended to the Father & Is Returning

John 14:2-3, *“In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.”*

Matthew 24:42 & 44, *“Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.”*

- When you love someone who has gone away, you are always ready for them to finally come home. That is how we live “being ready” for Jesus’ return day after day.

“There are two ways to look at human history, I have concluded. One way is to focus on the wars and violence, the squalor, the pain and tragedy and death. From such a point of view, Easter seems a fairy-tale exception, a stunning contradiction in the name of God. There is another way to look at the world. If I take Easter as the starting point, the one incontrovertible fact about how God treats those whom He loves, then human history becomes the contradiction and Easter a preview of ultimate reality. Hope then flows like lava beneath the crust of daily life.

This, perhaps, describes the change in the disciples’ perspective as they sat in locked rooms discussing the incomprehensible events of Easter Sunday. In one sense nothing had changed: Rome still occupied Palestine, religious authorities still had a bounty on their heads, death and evil still reigned outside. Gradually, however, the shock of recognition gave way to a long slow undertow of joy. If God could do that... --Philip Yancey

What will the Last Day be Like?

1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, *“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from Heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.”*

Matthew 25:31-32, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

- People who know and love Jesus do not fear this day, but *anticipate* it. Only those apart from Jesus need fear this day.

Who do *you* say that I am?

Ultimately, the most important question any of us can answer about Jesus is this: “Who do you say that I am?”

It is popular to deny that Jesus was the Son of God but to hold Him up as a wise, revolutionary spiritual guru. They would say that Jesus never called Himself the Son of God, that His disciples said it of Him later, and then invented stories in which they have Jesus claiming such divinity. However such a view is hopelessly naïve.

Why did Jesus get nailed to a cross? It wasn’t because Jesus taught people to love one another. The ruling authorities didn’t crucify Mr. Rogers. They crucified Jesus because He claimed to be God and it infuriated them. Therefore, there are only three answers we can give with intellectual integrity to the question of Jesus’ identity:

- 1) Jesus is a _____.
 - In other words, He wasn’t who He said He was and knew it.
 - However, does the evidence of His life indicate that He was a liar?
 - And what liar when faced with slow, tortuous death maintains the lie? He drops the pretense and seeks to be spared... which is all Jesus would have had to do before Pilate. However, Jesus willingly goes to the cross *because* He is who He says He is.

2) Jesus is a _____.

- In other words, He wasn't who He said He was but didn't know it.
- However, does the evidence of His life indicate that He was a lunatic?
- He demonstrates composure under the most intense emotional conditions.

3) Jesus is the _____.

- In other words, He is who He said He is.
- It is crazy or a lie for me to say that I am George Washington. It is neither crazy nor a lie for George Washington to say that.
- Again, is there evidence from His life to indicate that He is God in the flesh?
- There were the miracles.

A key to whether we can trust this evidence as reliable is that His miracles are actually confirmed by His enemies! Throughout Jesus' ministry His enemies never deny that He does miracles. They see His power in action, acknowledge His power, and resent it (**John 10:32-33**, *"I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone Me?" "We are not stoning You for any of these, but for blasphemy, because You, a mere man, claim to be God."*). However, they never deny the miracles.

- There were the prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.
Jesus fulfills all the prophecies of the Old Testament, all of which were written at least hundreds of years before. Just lucky? The probability of someone fulfilling even eight of these prophecies (*there are at least 60 major ones*) is 1 in 10 to the 17th power (*10 with 17 zeros*).
- There is the resurrection.

There were many who were eyewitnesses to Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead. They said they saw Him alive and spent time with Him. But even if one disbelieves their witness, one cannot disbelieve the transforming power seeing the resurrected Jesus had on these once frightened, hiding followers. Having seen Him alive in the flesh, they became convicted, bold proclaimers of Who they had seen, even unto their own deaths.

- If Jesus is who He says He is, this has profound implications. It means everything – all history, all lives, all things – really do revolve around Him and are subject to Him.

So, who do you say that He is?

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We confess in "The Apostles' Creed"

"I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen."

Who is God the Holy Spirit?

- 1) The Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son. He is no lesser God.
Matthew 28:19, "...baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."
- 2) The Holy Spirit _____ us to faith in Jesus.
1 Corinthians 12:3, "No one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit."
Acts 16:14, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."
- 3) The Holy Spirit enables us to _____ the blessings of salvation and a personal relationship with God.
1 Corinthians 2:9-10, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."
- 4) The Holy Spirit enables us to _____ spiritual things.
1 Corinthians 2:12, "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us."
- 5) So, one of the most important prayers we can pray is,
"_____."
Luke 11:13, "If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

The Two Works of the Spirit in Us

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, there are two kinds of work He does in us. There is the work of justification and the work of sanctification.

- 1) The work of justification is the work of saving us. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to take away our sin and restore us to life with the Father. We are declared to be children of God again. The Holy Spirit is the One who brings us back to spiritual _____. (*Rebirth, born again, re-created*)
John 3:6, "The Spirit gives birth to the spirit."

2) The work of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit to _____ us more and more into the likeness of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 3:18, *“And we...are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”*

Day by day the Holy Spirit seeks to transform us from who we are to who we have been declared to be: children of God.

Your Choice (AS A BAPTIZED, BELIEVING CHRISTIAN)

In the Bible we see people choosing one of two courses with the Holy Spirit.

- They ignore, resist and grieve the Holy Spirit.
- Or they invite, receive and release the Holy Spirit.

Acts 7:51, *“You always resist the Holy Spirit!”*

Ephesians 4:30, *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...”*

1 Thessalonians 5:19, *“Do not quench the Spirit’s fire...”*

Luke 11:13, *“If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*

John 20:22, *“Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit flowing like water or moving like the wind. Do we resist the flow or invite it? The invitation of Jesus is to let the Spirit flow. Renounce resisting. Give the Holy Spirit greater and greater access to your life and surrender more and more of your life to Him so that your transformation is deep.

This is the key to abundant life! Too many Christians are satisfied with the deposit of His Spirit when God wants to give them abundance in His Spirit.

2 Corinthians 1:22-23, *“God anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come.”*

John 10:10, *“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

The Fruit & Gifts of the Spirit

1) When the Holy Spirit is in us, what comes out of us? _____

Galatians 5:23, *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”*

2) The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual _____ to use to benefit others in Jesus' name.

1 Corinthians 12:7,11, *"Now to each one the manifestations of the Spirit is given for the common good... All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines."*

Note on Spiritual Gifts. The word for "gifts" on the Greek is the same as grace. God gives facets of His grace as He pleases.

THE HOLY TRINITY

The mystery of God's nature is a deep one. No human ever fully understands it. Yet the Bible does teach us enough to know that God is three distinct persons while being only one God. It is something like the three strands of a rope. The persons of the Trinity are distinct and yet come together to form a whole.

One God:

Deuteronomy 6:4, *"Hear, O Israel: the Lord your God, the LORD is one."*

Three Persons:

Matthew 28:19, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

- 1) The Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Three persons, one God.
- 2) Each has His own work, but each participates in the work of the other.
(See **John 14:16-20** for an example)
- 3) The Father: we were created to be in relationship with Him, lost it because of sin, and now need to be reconciled to Him.
- 4) Jesus came to reconcile us to the Father through His death and resurrection and to help us know the Father.
- 5) The Holy Spirit comes to bring us to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation, to help us know Him, and to become like Him.
- 6) Summary: The Father sent the Son to reconcile us back to Himself so that the Spirit could be poured out into us again. In the same way, the Spirit brings us to Jesus and Jesus brings us to the Father.

- 7) The amazing-grace bottom-line: we are invited back into the community of the Trinity!
John 14:20, *“On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you.”*

What the Trinity Wants for You

- That we would be right with, know and love the Father.
- That we would trust and follow the Son.
- That we would let the Holy Spirit flow into our lives and live abundantly in Him!

HEAVEN & HELL

Heaven is being in the full presence of God unencumbered by the weakening, blinding, self-centered force of sin. Heaven is the place where human beings get to live with God and each other forever. Hell is being fully *removed* from the presence of God, completely given over to the consequences of sin. Hell is the place human beings live *without* God forever.

1) Why is Heaven so great and hell so horrible?

- It all revolves around being with or apart from God.
- God is life and love. Being with Him means experiencing these things. Apart from God we have nothing but death, hatred, anxiousness, envy, sorrow, darkness, brokenness, and rejection.

2) Why would God send people to hell?

- It is not that God *sends* people to hell. God desires all to be saved; but for those who reject His love and offer of forgiveness through Jesus, there is only one alternative. Eternal life will either be with God or without God. Those who desire to be with God will receive it in full measure, and those who desire to be without God will also receive it, again in full measure. The choice is made in this life. The consequences are lived in eternal life.

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

1) Will it be boring? Floating on clouds and playing harps sounds cool for a while, but for all eternity?

2) Heaven is the new world where we will live with God and each other forever.

Revelation 21:1, *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...”*

3) Heaven is a real place that the Bible calls *paradise*.

- Heaven is finally getting us back to the place where we were always meant to be!
- Paradise literally means *garden*.

Genesis 2:15, *"The Lord God put him in the Garden of Eden..."*

Luke 23:43, *"Today you will be with Me in paradise."*

4) When a person dies, he goes directly to Heaven or hell.

- No ghosts, no channeling, no reincarnation, no conversations from beyond.
- Remember, demons seek to deceive and lead away from God and life.

Hebrews 9:27, *"Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment."*

Philippians 1:23, *"I desire to depart and be with Christ..."*

Luke 23:43, *"Today you will be with Me in paradise."*

5) Heaven is where everything is made whole and right again.

Revelation 21:5, *"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'"*

a) Emotionally and physically.

Revelation 21:4, *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away."*

b) Relationally.

- We will know each other and enjoy each other! (**Matthew 22:32**)

c) In regards to justice and pain.

2 Corinthians 4:17, *"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all."*

6) In Heaven everyone will delight with who they have been created to be (*physically, intellectually, talent-wise, etc.*) and will delight in who God has made others to be.

- We will finally fully be ourselves!
1 Corinthians 12:4, *"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit."*
- Heaven is perfect. However, perfect means "just right, just the way God intended."
- God delights in diversity and creativity and you!

The Apostles' Creed *(one of three ecumenical creeds)*

**I 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 sits at the right hand of God
the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge
the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

FOR FURTHER GROWING

Obtain a copy of "Luther's Small Catechism" available through King of Kings Lutheran Church.