

“Jerusalem Meets Rome and Finds Babylon: A Study in Church Purity”

Fall 2022-Spring 2023

March 22, 2023

The Council of Nicaea 325 AD

I. The Council of Nicaea 325 AD

A. Who Called for the Council and who Attended

1. Emperor Constantine I (Caesar Flavius)

- a. Became the sole emperor in 324 AD
- b. Though not a Christian at the time, (don't know if he ever was) allowed Christians to practice their faith without being oppressed.
 - i. The Edict of Milan 313 AD
 - ii. Put Christianity in a favored status causing many who were not believers to claim Christianity as their own.
 - To escape persecution
 - To find favor with the emperor
- c. Hoped that Christianity could be used to unite his subjects.
- d. He was an unbaptized **catechumen**
 - i. a person who receives instruction in the Christian religion in order to be baptized.
 - ii. In the NT, the apostles instructed converts after baptism (Acts 2:41–42), and Christian instruction was evidently given to all converts (Luke 1:4, Acts 18:25, Galatians 6:6).
 - iii. As the number of Gentiles in the Church increased, instruction became more definite. In the 4th century, with the rise of heresy, detailed doctrinal teaching was given.
 - iv. By this time the postponement of baptism had become general (Constantine was not baptized until he was at the point of death),
 - v. a large proportion of Christians belonged to the catechumenate. most being merely “adherents” of the church, while others were under definite instruction for baptism.
 - vi. As infant baptism became general, the catechumenate decreased.
- e. Called for the Council to unify the Christians for his ultimate goal. Spoke of the need for unity saying that “division was worse than war.”
- f. Entered dressed like an emperor w/o his Customary soldiers as bodyguards.
- g. the involvement of Constantine in the Council of Nicaea indicated the solidarity between Church and State, and the patronage of ecclesiastical matters by secular rulers, a pattern which was to last for centuries to come.

2. About 318 Bishops and innumerable elders and deacons

B. What issues were they to address?

1. Defining the Nature of God b/c of Arianism

- a. Condemned and exiled Arius with reluctance (50% of “Christians” believed his heresy)

- b. Included the non-scriptural word *homoousios* (of one substance) into the creed.
 - i. A key term of Christology formulated at the first ecumenical council, held at Nicaea in 325,
 - ii. Affirmed that God the Son and God the Father are of the same substance. Also dealt with the Holy Spirit as being a co-equal and co-eternal member of the triune Godhead.
 - iii. Arianism taught that Christ was more than human but not fully divine, he was a created being.
 - iv. The New Testament teaches that
 - Jesus the Messiah should be worshiped, which is to say He is co-equal with God. The New Testament forbids the worship of angels ([Col 2:18](#); [Rev 22:8, 9](#)) but commands worship of Jesus.
 - The apostle Paul tells us that “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” ([Col 2:9](#); [1:19](#)). Paul declares Jesus as Lord and the One to whom a person must pray for salvation ([Ro 10:9-13](#); cf. [Joel 2:32](#)). “Jesus is God over all” ([Ro 9:5](#)) and our God and Savior ([Tit 2:13](#)). Faith in Jesus’ deity is basic to Paul’s theology.
 - John’s Gospel declares Jesus to be the divine, eternal Logos, the agent of creation and source of life and light ([Jo 1:1-5,9](#)); "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" ([Jo 14:6](#)); our advocate with the Father ([1 Jo 2:1-2](#)); the Sovereign ([Rev 1:5](#)); and the Son of God from the beginning to the end ([Rev 22:13](#)).
 - The author of Hebrews reveals the deity of Jesus through His perfection as the most high priest ([Heb 1](#); [Heb 7:1-3](#)). The divine-human Savior is the Christian’s object of faith, hope, and love.
 - The Council of Nicea did not invent the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Rather, the Council of Nicea affirmed the apostles’ teaching of who Christ is - the one true God and the Second Person of the Trinity, with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

2. Tried to establish the Date of Easter – failed.

3. Proper method of consecrating bishops

4. Condemned the practice of clerics lending money with interest.

5. Refused allowing Bishops, priests, and deacons from moving one church to another.

6. Set up Alexandria and Jerusalem as primary churches in their respective areas

7. Tried to make a rule enforcing celibacy of the clergy - failed.

C. Issues Commonly believed to have been addressed.

1. The choosing of some books to be in the Bible

2. The exclusion of dropping of other books from being part of the Bible

D. The Nicæan Creed

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, **begotten** from the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven; he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate; he suffered and was buried. The third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead. His kingdom will never end.
And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life.
He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
He spoke through the prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We affirm one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look forward to the resurrection of the dead, and to life in the world to come. Amen.