

EPSOM Module 5: Early Church History

Week Two: The Nicene Creed & Council

The Nicene Creed (AD 325, expanded 381) was written to establish a unified and biblical

understanding of God—especially the nature of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. Doctrine simply means:

what the entirety of Scripture teaches about a subject. Error occurs when doctrine is built on partial truth instead of the full counsel of God.

Why the Nicene Creed Was Necessary

The early church faced division through false teaching—especially Arianism, which claimed Jesus was created and not fully God. This caused widespread conflict across churches and regions. Emperor

Constantine called the Council of Nicaea to restore unity, but he did not create doctrine. The bishops

debated Scripture and defended apostolic truth.

What the Council Affirmed

• Jesus is eternal • Jesus is fully God • Jesus is of the same essence as the Father (homoousios)

Teaching Line: Constantine called the council—but the Church defended what Scripture had already declared.

Defending the Deity of Christ

The creed declares Jesus as “True God from true God” and “begotten, not made.” Homoousios

(homoousios) means “of the same substance.” This was written to directly oppose Arianism. Scriptural

foundation: • John 1:1 — The Word was God • Colossians 2:9 — Fullness of Deity • Hebrews 1:3 —

Exact representation Jesus is not like God—He is God.

Why This Matters for Salvation

If Jesus is not fully God: • His sacrifice is not infinite • Salvation is not secure Only God can save.

The Trinity

The creed affirms: • The Father is God • The Son is God • The Holy Spirit is God Three persons, one essence.

The Gospel in the Creed

The Nicene Creed summarizes the Gospel: 1. Incarnation 2. Crucifixion 3. Resurrection 4. Ascension 5.

Second Coming 6. Final Judgment

The Filioque Controversy

“Filioque” means “and the Son.” Original: The Spirit proceeds from the Father Western Church added:

“and the Son” Why it matters: • Protects the divinity of Christ (West) • Preserves the Father as source (East) This disagreement contributed to the Great Schism (1054).

Church Unity & Division

The creed declares “one holy catholic and apostolic Church.” Originally, the Church was unified.

Division came later through history, not Scripture. Teaching Line: There was one Church with two expressions—until division turned distinction into separation.

Modern Relevance

Arianism still exists today in new forms: • “Jesus was just a teacher” • “Jesus is not fully God” Arianism didn’t disappear—it rebranded.

The Cost of Truth

The early church contended for truth under pressure, division, and persecution. This creed is not just theology—it is a stand for truth. Teaching Line: Truth is worth contending for, even when it costs you