



THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
The third day he rose 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.

I 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. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

"From thence He shall come to judge
the living and the dead."



Apostles' Creed

The Church always believes as she prays. From the time of the apostles until the current age, the way the Church prays effects what she believes. Her prayer is most completely revealed within the liturgical life – the celebration of the Sacraments and other ritualistic actions. In the second century, the Church of Rome was using a baptismal formula, which had the catechumens (those to be baptized) declare their belief in the Triune God as well as the Church and the resurrection of the body via a series of questions. These questions, which find similarity to the baptismal rites of today, developed into the Apostles' Creed by the end of the seventh century.

Commentary is by Saint Thomas Aquinas. By universal consent, Thomas Aquinas is the preeminent spokesman of the Catholic tradition of reason and of divine revelation. He is one of the great teachers of the medieval Catholic Church, honored with the titles Doctor of the Church and Angelic Doctor.

"From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

It is of the office of the King and Lord to pronounce judgment: "The king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with His look" [Prov 20:8]. Since Christ, therefore, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God as Lord of all, it is clear that His is the office of Judge. For this reason we say in the rule of Catholic faith that "**He shall come to judge the living and the dead.**" Indeed the Angels have said that: "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven shall come again as you have seen Him going into heaven" [Acts 1:11].

We shall consider three facts about the judgment: **(1)** the form of the judgment; **(2)** the fear of the judgment; **(3)** our preparation for the judgment.

The form of the judgment

Now, concerning the form of the judgment there is a threefold question. **Who is the judge, who are to be judged, and upon what will they be judged?** Christ is the Judge: "It is He who is appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead" [Acts 10:42]. We may here interpret "the dead" to mean sinners and "the living" to mean the just; or "the living" to refer to those who at that time were living and "the dead" to mean those who had died. Christ of a certain is Judge, not only in that He is God, but also in that He is man. The **first reason** for this is because it is necessary that they who are to be judged may see the Judge. But the Godhead is so wholly delightful that no one could behold it without great enjoyment; and hence the damned are not permitted to see the Judge, nor in consequence to enjoy anything. Christ, therefore, of necessity will appear in the form of man so that He may be seen by all: "And He has given Him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man" [Jn 5:27]. Again Christ deserved this office as Man, for as Man He was unjustly judged, and therefore

God constitutes Him Judge of the entire world: "Your cause has been judged as that of the wicked. Cause and judgment You shall recover" [Job 36:17]. And, **lastly**, if God alone should judge men, they, being terrified, would despair; but this despair disappears from men if they are to be judged by a Man: "And then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud" [Lk 11:27].

All are to be judged—those who are, who were, and who will be: "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil" [2 Cor 5:10]. There are, says St. Gregory, four different classes of people to be judged. **The chief difference is between the good and the wicked.**

Of the wicked, some will be condemned but not judged. They are the infidels whose works are not to be discussed because, as St. John says: "He who does not believe is already judged" [Jn 3:18]. Others will be both condemned and judged. They are those possessing the faith who departed this life in mortal sin: "For the wages of sin is death" [Rm 6:23]. They shall not be excluded from the judgment because of the faith which they possessed.

Of the good also, some will be saved and shall not be judged. They are the poor in spirit for God's sake who rather shall judge others: "Amen, I say to you that you, who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the seat of His majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel" [Mt 19:28]. Now, this is not to be understood only of the disciples, but of all those who are poor in spirit; for otherwise Paul, who labored more than others, would not be among this number. These words, therefore, must refer also to all the followers of the apostles and to all apostolic men: "Know you not that we shall judge Angels? [1 Cor 6:3]. "The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of His people and its princes" [Is 3:14].

Others shall both be saved and judged, that is, they who die in a state of righteousness. For although they departed this life in justice, nevertheless they fell somewhat amiss in the business of temporal matters, and hence shall be judged but saved. The judgment will be upon all their deeds good and bad: "Walk in the ways of your heart,... and know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" [Eccles 11:9]. "And all things that are done, God will bring into judgment for every error, whether it be good or evil" [Eccles 12:14]. Even idle words shall be judged: "But I say to you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" [Mt 12:36]. And thoughts also: "For inquisition shall be made into the thought of the ungodly" [Wis 1:9]. Thus, the form of the judgment is clear.

The fear of the judgment

The judgment ought indeed to be feared. **(a) Because of the wisdom of the Judge.** God knows all things, our thoughts, words and deeds, and “all things are naked and open to his eyes.” [Heb 4:13]. “All the ways of men are open to His eyes” [Prov 16:2]. He knows our words: “The ear of jealousy hears all things” [Wis 1:10]. Also our thoughts: “The heart is perverse above all things and unsearchable. Who can know it? I am the Lord, who search the heart and prove the reins; who give to every one according to his way and according to the fruit of his devices” [Jer 17:9-10]. There will be infallible witnesses— **men’s own consciences:** “Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness to them; and their thoughts between themselves accusing or also defending one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men” [Rm 2:15-16].

(b) Because of the power of the Judge, who is almighty in Himself: “Behold, the Lord God will come with strength” [Is 40:10]. And also almighty in others: “The whole world shall fight with Him against the unwise” [Wis 5:21]. Hence, Job says: “Whereas there is no man that can deliver out of your hand” [Job 10:7]. “If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I descend into the underworld, You art present,” says the Psalmist. [Ps 138:8].

(c) Because of the inflexible justice of the Judge. The **present is the time for mercy;** but **the future is the time solely for justice;** and so **the present is our time, but the future is God’s time:** “When I shall take a time, I shall judge justices” [Ps 74:3 Vulgate]. “The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge. Nor will he yield to any man’s prayers; nor will he accept for satisfaction ever so many gifts” [Prov 6:34-35].

(d) Because of the anger of the Judge. He shall appear in different ways to the just and to the wicked. **To the just, He will be pleasant and gracious:** “They will behold the King of beauty” [Is 33:17]. **To the wicked He will be angry and pitiless,** so that they may say to the mountains: “Fall upon us and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb” [Rev 6:16]. But this anger of God does not bespeak in Him any perturbation of soul, but rather the effect of His anger which is the eternal punishment inflicted upon sinners.

Our preparation for the judgment

Now, against this fear of the judgment we ought to have four remedies. The **first is good works:** “Will you then not be afraid of the power? Do what is good, and you shall have praise from the same” [Rm 13:3]. The **second is confession and repentance for sins committed;** and this ought to include sorrow in thinking of them, feeling of shame in confessing them, and all severity in making satisfaction for them. And these will take away the eternal punishment. The **third is giving of alms,** which makes all things clean: “Make friends of the mammon of iniquity; that when you fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings” [Lk 16:9]. **The fourth is charity,** viz., the love of God and our neighbor, for “charity covers a multitude of sins” [1 Pt 4:8].

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