

## The Apostles' Creed

As the gospel spread into the Mediterranean world, a variety of distortions of the gospel arose. Early Christians found it necessary to set limits and correct teachings that contradicted the gospel. These limits are called creeds.

All creeds have roots in the New Testament. "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12:3) is the earliest creed. Romans 10:8 and 1 Cor 8:6 are also early creedal fragments.

What's surprising about the Apostles' Creed is that it wasn't written by the Apostles; it's not an early creed; and it was not written or adopted by a council of the church. Rather, it developed gradually over several centuries and was completed after the Nicene Creed (325).

The phrase "descended into hell" / "descended to the dead" in the Apostles' Creed— was added late in the fourth century. The Nicene Creed has no such phrase.

The reason for the difference between the above two phrases is that two very different Greek words are translated "hell." There is *Hades*, the world of the departed, or the dead. And there is *Gehenna*, the place of eternal punishment. The phrase in the Creed properly refers to our Lord's descent into Hades, the world of the departed, not into Gehenna.