

# ***The Apostles' Creed***



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- *Intro to the Creed Itself*
- *God the Father*
- *God the Son*
  - *Christ's Birth*
  - *Christ's Crucifixion and Death*
  - *Christ's Death and Resurrection*
  - *Christ in Heaven (part 2)*



# Christ in Heaven

- “We believe in... Jesus Christ... Who ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty...”
  - Okay, we need to take this in chunks...
    - Last time, we talked a bit about “Heaven” and what that word means in the Bible
    - So *this* time, what does it mean that Jesus sits at God the Father’s “right hand”...?



# Christ in Heaven



Funky little teaching moment...

- Okay, please don't think me snarky if I say that this *can't* mean that Jesus is literally, physically sitting at the right hand of the Father
  - Remember that they aren't *separate guys*—the Son is part of the Trinity with the Father and the Spirit
    - I mean, it's not like my words physically sit on the right hand of my lips—they're more *interconnected*
    - And besides, I'm not sure that the Father aspect of the Trinity *has* physical hands, per se

(NOTE: When the Bible speaks about God's hands in Isaiah 64:8, Ecclesiastes 9:1, Psalm 19:1, etc., it's using the term poetically or thematically, not physiologically)

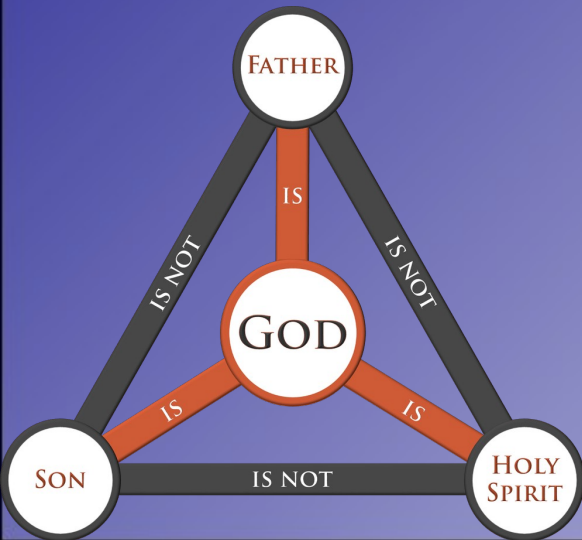


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        - Read John 4:24
          - And then, what does Jesus say in Luke 24:39 (using the same word as in John 4:24)?  
“God is *πνεῦμα*, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)  
“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a *πνεῦμα* does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” (Luke 24:39)
- How do *you* put those verses together?



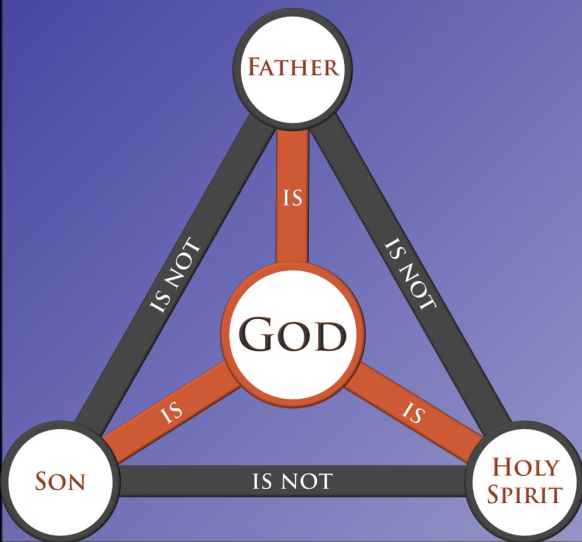
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    - And besides, I'm not sure that the Father aspect of the Trinity *has* physical hands, per se
      - Read John 4:24
      - Read Matthew 6:6, 1 John 4:12, John 1:18, and 1 Timothy 6:16
      - What consistent picture are Jesus, John, and Paul painting of God in these verses?
        - Why is that?

(Okay, I know that Jacob says that he saw God's face in Genesis 32:30, but what he “wrestled with” was actually a physical manifestation of God at Peniel—like the “Angel of the LORD” that Moses and others saw—which is not the same thing)

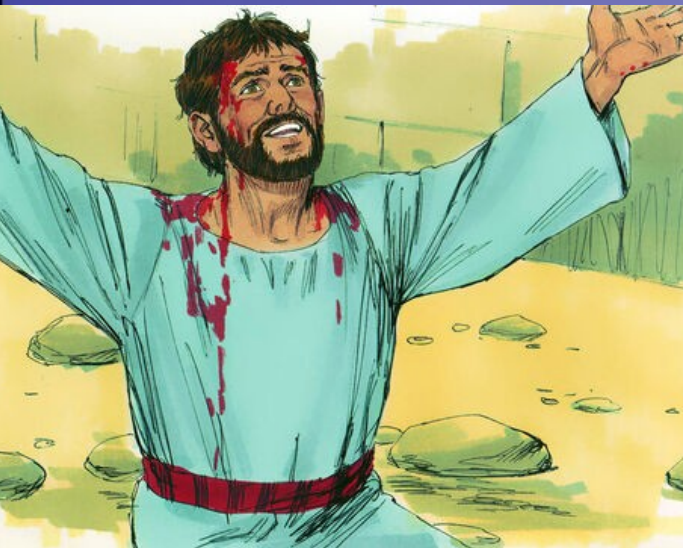


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      - Read John 4:24
      - Read Matthew 6:6, 1 John 4:12, John 1:18, and 1 Timothy 6:16
      - Read 1 Timothy 1:17, Romans 1:20, and Colossians 1:15
      - What consistent picture is being painted of God in these verses?
        - So what are people like Paul or John or Stephen “seeing” when they see a vision of God in Heaven?



# Christ in Heaven



Crazy deep dive into what God looks like...

A good Mormon would ask, “Then how are we created in God's image, if He isn't flesh and blood like we are?”

- First off, those sorts of ideas are clearly in danger of anthropomorphically putting the cart before the horse
  - We know what we “look” like, so we just assume that God is essentially an “awesome” version of us, instead of us being essentially flawed echoes of Him
  - But the words translated as “image” don't necessarily mean the same thing as, say, “perfect 1-to-1 copy”
    - And remember this from our “Body Parts” class?
      - Just because this is an *image* of a pipe—that it *represents* a pipe—that doesn't mean that it truly, fully embodies all of the qualities of a pipe (or that it doesn't *add* any crucially *different* qualities)



*This is not a pipe*



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      - The Hebrew words most often used for “image” would be “פֶּסֶל” (“*pesel*”) (meaning “a physically carved representation”) (like all of those “graven images” that we're not supposed to be making of any physical thing under heaven or in the heavens)



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(meaning “a shade”)

(like the “phantoms” in Psalm 39:6 or the “fantasies” left over after you awake from dreams in Psalm 73:19-20)

(but it's not just “ghosts”—think of “*tselem*” as being like a “visual echo” of something that doesn't have a physical form)

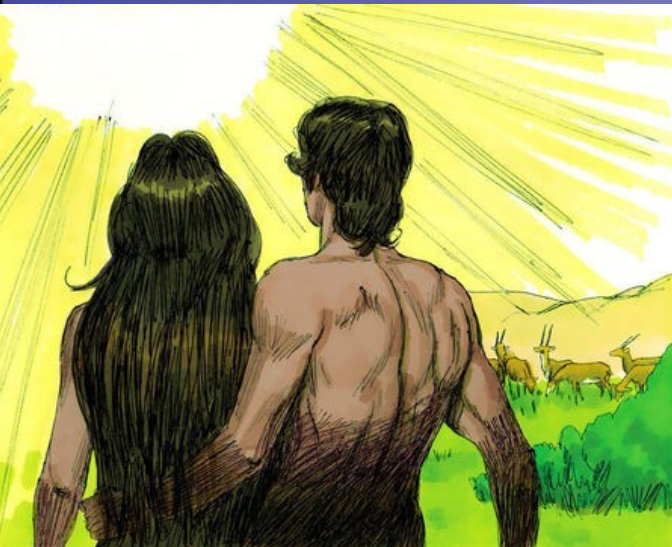


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        - Read Genesis 1:26-27  
“Let us make man in our [*tselem*—as a shade or an echo], in our [*dēmût*—a sketch or a simplified visual representation]...” So God created man in his own [*tselem*], in the [*tselem*] of God he created him; male and female he created them.”
  - Tellingly, a key word *not* used here is “*pesel*,” referring to a carved or sculpted visual representation of a physical thing



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      - The Greek words most often used for “image” would be ὁμοίωμα (“*homoióma*”) (meaning “looking like”)

(like when the locusts of Revelation 9:7 had a “look” that was “like” men's faces—making ὁμοίωμα something of a cognate for דְמוּת... and was in fact used that way by the Jews in the Septuagint—their Greek translation—of Ezekiel 1)



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      - The Greek words most often used for “image” would be ὁμοίωμα (“*homoióma*”) and εἰκών (“*eikōn*”)  
(meaning “a representative depiction”)  
(like the depiction of Caesar on the Roman coins Jesus sees in Luke 20:24 or like the metaphors used by James about being “like” a wave of the sea or “like” a person looking in a mirror)

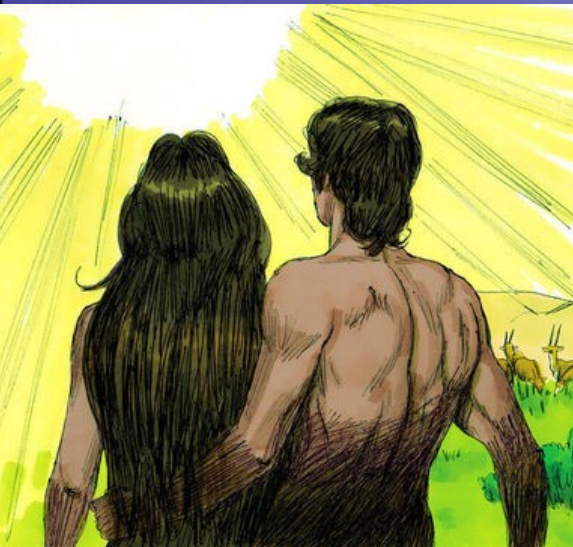


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      - Let's look at a flow, starting with Genesis 1:26-27
        - In the “Septuagint” translation of these verses, humans were made in God's εἰκών, in God's ὁμοίωμα  
(i.e.; not to “look like” God's *body*, but rather to *reflect* who God is)



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      - Let's look at a flow, starting with Genesis 1:26-27
      - Read Colossians 1:15
        - Jesus *is* the visible εἰκών of the *invisible* God (see also 2 Corinthians 4:4)





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      - Let's look at a flow, starting with Genesis 1:26-27
      - Read Colossians 1:15
      - Read Philippians 2:5-8
        - Christ had *existed* in the form of *God*, but *took on human* form to be made in our *ὁμοίωμα* (see also Romans 8:3)

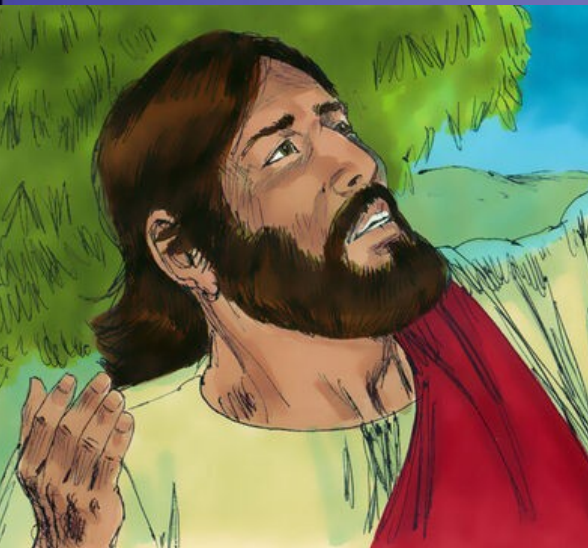


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    - Read Colossians 1:15
    - Read Philippians 2:5-8
    - Read Romans 8:29
      - Humans should conform to *His εἰκών* (see also Romans 6:5—that we should be united in the ὁμοίωμα of His death)



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    - Let's look at a flow, starting with Genesis 1:26-27
    - Read Colossians 1:15
    - Read Philippians 2:5-8
    - Read Romans 8:29
    - So we were designed to reflect *God's* essence, which Christ did *perfectly*—and then He came mirroring our *own* likeness, so that we could better reflect *Him* in order to reflect *God* again



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  - Or read verses like Hebrews 1:3

“The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”

(The “ἀπαύγασμα” (“*apaugasma*”) or “rays of light radiating out” from God's shininess)



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(The “*χαρακτήρ*” (“*charaktēr*”) or “precise, exact carved likeness”)

(so *both* of these words are pointing to Jesus being the physicality of God)



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(His “*ὑπόστασις*” (“*hypostasis*”) or “essence, substance, core nature”)

(which is why Christian orthodoxy speaks of Christ's “*hypostatic union*”—that His human and His divine core natures were perfectly unified as one individual, undivided personhood)



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  - So this is all speaking about Jesus perfectly reflecting God's *essence*—reflecting the entirety of God's core *character*, not God's *physicality*



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- So this is all speaking about Jesus perfectly reflecting God's *essence*—reflecting the entirety of God's core *character*, not God's *physicality*
- Meaning that *this* is talking about something *other* than just a physical placement
  - Though it *is* helpful to remember that in most cultures, *no one* is allowed to sit in the king's presence—often not even the queen
    - And when she does, it's always to his *left*, not to his *right* (though a *queen mother* could sometimes be seated at his right—see 1 Kings 2:19)





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  - So this is all speaking about Jesus perfectly reflecting God's *essence*—reflecting the entirety of God's core *character*, not God's *physicality*
  - Meaning that *this* is talking about something *other* than just a physical placement
  - The idea is that “the right hand of the king” is an expression of something crucial *thematically*, not just *physically*  
(i.e.; it's about power and authority—that *no one* in the kingdom has more power than the king's right hand does)



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  - Or read verses like Hebrews 1:3
  - Think about 1 Peter 3:21-22
    - “Jesus Christ... has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”
    - The “right hand” is emblematic of effective power and genuine authority  
(NOTE: Even the non-Christian world always depicted Zeus as carrying his thunderbolts in his right hand, etc.)



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      - Paul uses the image in Ephesians 1:20-22
        - “[God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet”



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    - The “right hand” is emblematic of effective power and genuine authority
      - Paul uses the image in Ephesians 1:20-22
      - In Acts 2:34-35, Peter cites Psalm 110:1 as referring to God speaking to Jesus and Christ's conquering power
        - “The Lord said to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”
        - (Note that Jesus had made the same connection in Matthew 22:41-45)



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    - The “right hand” is emblematic of effective power and genuine authority”
      - Paul uses the image in Ephesians 1:20-22
      - In Acts 2:34-35, Peter cites Psalm 110:1
      - Hebrews 10:12-14 ties that all together
        - “When this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”
        - Once and for all, effective power



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  - In Acts 2:34-35, Peter cites Psalm 110:1
  - Hebrews 10:12-14 ties that all together
  - So how does that nuance your reading of verses such as Isaiah 41:9-10?

“I have chosen you and have not rejected you. So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

- Once and for all, effective power



# Christ in Heaven

- “We believe in... Jesus Christ... Who ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of God the Father Almighty...”
  - So how would you suggest that we apply and live out this **T**ruth in our own lives today?

