

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 11

The Apostles' Creed ~ Part 10

This post will begin our closer look at the third article of faith contained in the **Apostles' Creed** to learn more about what we affirm that we believe.

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.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The story of the **Bible** begins with the **Ruach** brooding over the abyss, ready to bring forth creation out of nothing (Gen 1:2). And at the turning point of the ages, we find the **Ruach** brooding over the womb of a virgin (Luke 1:35). The **Ruach** rests on **Miryam's** body in order to bring forth the new **Adam**, the beginning of a new creation.

The language of the creed reminds us that the work of this creative **Ruach** is not yet finished. The same **Ruach** is now brooding over the whole human race, bringing forth a new human community in the image of **Yeshua**.

One of the great themes of the **Bible** is the unity of the human family. In the garden of **Eden**, **God** makes a man and a woman, a miniature society imprinted with **God's** own image. And the **Bible** ends with depictions of a future city where people from every tribe and tongue will live together in a perfect harmony of praise (Rev 7:9).

In Genesis, the fall brings about a tragic disorder in human relationships. There is a curse now at the heart of the relation between man and woman, as well as between parents and children. The relation between humans and the rest of creation is likewise blighted (Gen 3:14–19). **God's** creation is divided. Each human being is a fragment torn loose from the whole.

This grim assessment of human error culminates in the story of **Bavel** [Babel ~ Confusion] (Gen 11:1–9). Here, human beings have begun to use their collective life to mock **God**. And so, **God** divides their language, making it impossible for them to work together. They can no longer share a common world or articulate a common good. They cannot form a coherent society. Each group is a mere splinter of humanity, all scattered across the cursed earth, exiled and alone.

But with the coming of **Yeshua**, the story of **Bavel** is reversed. When the **Ruach** descends on the frightened company of **Yeshua's** followers, they all begin to speak in different languages. The multicultural crowd outside is astonished to find that each one's language is being spoken by a band of **Galileans**. They ask, ***how is this possible? Aren't all these people who are speaking from the Galil?*** (Acts 2:7).

The **Shavuot** (Pentecost) story shows the undoing of the fall through the creation of the **Messianic** community. There is now a new society in which all the old divisions are torn down. That is what happens when the **Ruach** is present. The **Ruach** fulfills the **Creator's** original plan by bringing forth a universal community whose boundaries extend to the whole world. The **Ruach** broods over the chaos of human nature, lovingly piecing the fragments back together so that together we form an image of the Creator.

Sha'ul notes that the presence of the **Ruach** is marked by heightened individuality as well as a deeper communal belonging. The **Ruach** fuses unity and diversity by bringing *many gifts* together in *one body* (1 Cor 12:12–31). We become more truly ourselves as the **Ruach** broods over us and as our lives are knit together with other lives and stories.

In this way the **Ruach** broods over each of **Yeshua's** followers, renewing the human race one life at a time and drawing all into a common family. There is nothing more personal, and more universal, than the **Ruach HaKodesh**.

The Holy Catholic Church

At baptism, each **Believer** proclaims that the **Kehillah** is “catholic.” The word simply means universal. It means that there is only one **Kehillah** because there is only one Lord. Though there have been many **Messianic** communities spread out across different times, places, and cultures, they are all mysteriously united in one **Ruach**. Each local gathering of **Believers** is a full expression of that mysterious catholicity.

The **Kehillah** is catholic because it is a microcosm of a universal human society. In the waters of baptism, all the old social divisions are made irrelevant. The **Kehillah** includes every kind of person: rich and poor, male and female, Jew and gentile, slave and free (Gal 3:26–28). Whatever defined a person before is relativized by the new defining mark of membership in the company of **Yeshua's** followers. There is no social barrier that could exclude a person from inclusion in this body. The boundaries of the **Kehillah** are as wide as the human race.

Further, the **Kehillah** is catholic because it preaches a catholic message. The **Gospel** is not addressed to one particular social class or ethnic group. It is addressed to every imaginable human being. There is nobody in the world for whom the message of **Yeshua** could be irrelevant. One of the most unusual aspects of the **Messianic** faith is its translatability. The other great monotheistic traditions, Judaism, and Islam place a high value on preserving the divine message in its original language, whether Hebrew or Arabic. But right from the start, the **Messianic** movement was marked by translation. **Yeshua** himself spoke Aramaic, but the four **Gospels** all translated His teaching into vernacular Greek so that the message would be available to as many readers as possible. Within a remarkably short time the **Messianic** movement had taken root in many different cultures, each one reading and proclaiming the **Gospel** message in its own tongue. The message of **Yeshua** is a catholic message.

The message of the **Gospel** is also “catholic” in the way it responds to the human plight. The deepest human needs are addressed in the **Gospel**. The message of **Yeshua** does not just speak to a special part of life - the moral or spiritual part, for example. It speaks to the whole person, body, and soul, individual and social. It is a catholic message because it embraces the whole person in a word of grace and truth. The **Gospel** is as broad and deep as human life itself. It is a catholic word because it speaks to the whole human condition.

But there is an even more radical dimension of **Messianic** catholicity. The greatest barrier that divides human beings from one another is not culture or language or class. The greatest barrier is death. It splits the human family into the two classes of the living and the dead. All other social divisions are petty compared to this great division. All human beings are powerless before this fundamental boundary. But in the resurrection **Yeshua** has stepped across the barrier and restored communion between the living and the dead. He has formed one family that stretches out not only across space but also across time. The body of **Yeshua** is the most inclusive community imaginable because it includes not only those who are now living but also all **Believers** who have ever lived.¹

In my next post, we continue to unpack the third article of our faith in the **Ruach HaKodesh** (Holy Spirit) in the **Apostle's Creed**.

¹ The Apostles' Creed: A Guide to the Ancient Catechism.