

Creeds of the Kehillah ~ Part 45

The Nicene Creed ~ Part 31

In our last post, we continued to explore the **Nicene Creed**. In this post, we continue to dig into the third article of faith, keeping with the phrase **and the life of the world to come** in the **Nicene Creed**.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.
With the Father and the Son, He is worshiped and glorified.
He has spoken through the Prophets.
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

AND THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME ~ *Yeshua's Return, the Judgment, and Eternal Life*

Both the second and third articles of the **Nicene Creed** conclude with eschatology. In this second section, commenting on ***the life of the world to come***, we expand on the themes found in the second article in light of the life which is yet to come. The final section of the second article of the **Nicene Creed** includes the themes of **Messianic** eschatology, namely, **Yeshua's** glorious return to earth, the final judgment, and eternal life. Numerous factors influenced the reflection of the Fathers. In fact, the patristic reflection on eschatology takes shape following historical-cultural shifts, which in turn are influenced by the expansion of the **Messianic** movement, so that new times and new situations led **Messianic** thinkers to formulate eschatological beliefs in a renewed way, even though they remained substantially faithful to the biblical spirit. New questions constantly arose concerning the final or last realities, thanks to the meeting of the **Messianic movement** with the Greco-Roman pagan culture, to the influence of **Gnosticism** and the different **Messianic** heretical movements, and the dramatic experience of persecutions.

There are four thematic kernels presented here: the glorious return of **Yeshua**, the final judgment, the intermediate state, and eternal life. The **Parousia**, or **Yeshua's** second coming in glory, is the horizon within which all the final events of history find their position, so that history, according to the teaching of **Sha'ul**, assumes a global meaning that includes the victory of **Yeshua** over sin and death, the **resurrection of the dead** and the **final judgment**.

The theme of the **final judgment** is closely connected to the **Parousia**, which is presented both as a universal and individual event, even though it mostly appears to be universal and final. The judge is **Yeshua**, who will separate the good from the bad, destining the former to life and the latter to eternal damnation.

In the context of the end of the world, the Fathers do not neglect questions concerning the individual's destiny. They face the theme of the so-called intermediate state. The souls of the dead are in a condition of waiting before the **final resurrection** when they will be reunited with their bodies and will fully receive their due reward. In particular, **Augustine** supposes a specific judgment for the individual immediately after death, which involves a particular reward. However, it is not the definitive one, and without precisely describing the location of this reward.

Eternal life with **God** brings an incomparable blessing: communion with **God** amid the communion of the saints with **God** and with all who reflect **God's**, holy love. This community embraces both the living faithful and the faithful departed who now enjoy eternal life with **God**. There is a unique union between the faithful on earth and in heaven, enabled by their mutual communion with the one Head and each other, a communion sustained by prayer, faith, hope, and love. The community or fellowship of the saints is a recurrent theme of

the **Brit Hadashah** that points to communion with **God** and communion with all who share **God's** life. The **Son** prayed to the Father that the whole community of faith *may be one, as we are one*.

The general scriptural term for the final state of the blessed is **eternal life**. This life is transformed into a future life of glory that does not reach full expression until the general resurrection, final judgment, and the final destiny of the faithful. The living **God** permits the new life with **God** to continue without ceasing. **Eternal life** brings to completion the work of grace begun in this life, where one is delivered from sin, its roots, and consequences, fulfilling **God's** purpose in creation, redemption, and consummation. The transformation begun in faithful baptism does not come to nothing but lives on. The spiritual life begun in penitent faith is imparted in spiritual rebirth, grows by sanctifying grace, and lives on by completing grace. The characteristic feature of eternal life is the complete and unending enjoyment of life with **God**.

In **Messianic** teaching, heaven is both a place and a condition of eternal rest and joy in the Lord. It is to *be present with the Lord*. Heaven is where the blessed clearly see **God** and incomparably enjoy the blessings of divine glory. Heaven is represented as a secure lodging of unutterable glory, joy, and peace. Its most prominent features are tranquility, holiness, light, beholding, happiness, and the presence of the Lord. What happens in heaven is complete and endless participation in **God's** goodness and happiness. Those whose *names are written in heaven* have *come to God*. They are *the spirits of righteous men made perfect*. Jesus promised his disciples: **I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.**¹

This post concludes our study of the **Nicene Creed**. I had no idea it would take us through thirty-one posts to examine it. I hope and pray that you have enjoyed learning more about what some of us have recited every Sunday for years.

In my next post, we begin to look at two final **Creeds** of the **Kehillah** that I am not familiar with. We will at least start to unpack the **Symbol of Chalcedon**.

¹ Di Berardino, A., & Oden, T. C. (Eds.). (2010). **We Believe in One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church** (Vol. 5, pp. 214–216).