

Praise God for the creeds!

Who would have thought that a course about the creeds <yawn!> could be so transformational! God is using it (and other influences, of course) to change my whole view of God, of life, and probably of myself eventually – but then we’ve only had four sessions so far – two more to go.

(I don’t want to rush you, Alex, but when is this course going to be available as a book, so that more people can have their faith deepened and renewed?!)

The course, thus far, has been almost exactly parallel to my own journey. It all started when I discovered something about the nature of God: [as I’ve said, ad nauseam] the fundamental nature of God is relationship. The fact that God is three persons in one being is totally and utterly fundamental to our faith. And we can enter into that love. Amazing!

He is by nature, in and of himself, **love**. And that only works if not only *God the Father* but also *God the Son* and *God the Holy Spirit* is, are, always have been, always will be, by nature God. Full stop.

Then **out of** that love, because God **is** love, he did something, he chose to do something; he didn’t have to but he did – he created! And that which he chose to create – the glorious universe, including us – he created in order that we could share in that love.

But as we know, love is not love without choice, and so it all went horribly pear-shaped because we chose well, you know all that stuff! So what’s the solution?

And this has been the second major stage in my journey. The **how** of salvation (but see below).

My unhappiness with the way that the solution has always been presented (well, since the days of Calvin?) is that it is seen as a mechanism, a transaction. I’m not saying that penal substitution is wrong, per se, but that it too easily turns the gospel into: God is angry with you, but he won’t be angry if you accept Jesus as your personal saviour.

In sum, the gospel has become all about **us** – worse still, it’s all about **me**! It’s about whether I will accept Jesus and therefore go to heaven, or reject him and go to hell.

So as an antedote, here are my notes from Alex’s session on the ‘Jesus became incarnate’ bit of the course on the creeds [bits in sq. brackets are my later additions!]:

- It's only **because** Jesus is God that he can be our saviour.
- The important question is not “What is salvation?” but “Who is our saviour?”
- The trajectory of Jesus in the creeds is [*please add arrowheads to those lines so they go down and then up again*]:

Down for heaven	\	/	ascended into heaven
became human	\	/	rose from death
	\	/	to death (cf. Phil 2.)

- Jesus shared **all** we are ... so we can share in his glory! [in all his glory?]
- Why did Jesus become human? [the creeds only say] “For us and for our salvation”
- The person and work of Jesus are **inseparable**.
- Salvation is the exchange – his life for ours
- Jesus became all **we** are and returned it to the Father [so that we can become all **He** is?]
- **Salvation IS the person of Jesus**

What I said early was wrong: what really, really matters is not the **HOW** of salvation; it's the **WHO** of salvation.

So my efforts at sharing the gospel will henceforth focus on relationships as the link-point with not-yet-believers, then the narrative of Jesus' birth, death, (claimed) resurrection and ascension as the continuation, and when they show signs of positive interest, I'll suggest they bypass me and talk directly to God.

If you're interested, I'll let you know how that works out in practice.

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