

# FORERUNNERS OF THE FAITH

## Lesson 7



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# Controversies & Councils

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# Introduction

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# SETTING THE STAGE

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Century</b> Apostolic Era  Pentecost Peter Paul John	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Century</b> 101–200  Apostolic Fathers Justin Martyr Irenaeus	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Century</b> 201–300  Tertullian  Origen	<b>4<sup>th</sup> Century</b> 301–400  Council of Nicaea (325)  Athanasius	<b>5<sup>th</sup> Century</b> 401–500  <b>Chrysostom</b>  <b>Augustine</b>  <b>Fall of Rome</b>
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Ante-Nicene Period  
(1–3 Centuries)

Nicene & Post-Nicene  
Period (4–5 Centuries)

# SEVEN MAJOR COUNCILS

4 <sup>th</sup> Century	5 <sup>th</sup> Century	6 <sup>th</sup> Century	7 <sup>th</sup> Century	8 <sup>th</sup> Century
325 Nicaea	431 Ephesus	553 Constantinople II	680–681 Constantinople III	787 Nicaea II
381 Constantinople	451 Chalcedon			

<sup>N1</sup> Each council primarily focused on the person of Christ.

## Slide 5

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**N1**

Nathan, 1/2/2021

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# Contending for the Truth

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# CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

- In Matthew 7:15, Jesus warned: “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”
- In Acts 20:28–31, the apostle Paul alerted the Ephesian elders to the threat of false teachers: “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”



# CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

- Peter told his readers in 2 Peter 2:1, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you.”
- In 2 John 7, John explained, “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.”

# CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

- Jude also warned about “certain persons [who] have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4).

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# CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

- As false teachers have arisen throughout history, true believers have defended the truth in the face of such attacks.
- Starting with Constantine in the fourth century, Christian leaders in the Roman Empire were able to meet publicly to discuss matters of doctrine.

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# Seven Major Councils

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# SEVEN MAJOR COUNCILS

- The seven most important councils are called the “Seven Ecumenical Councils.”
- They responded to doctrinal controversies that threatened the unity of empire.

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# SEVEN MAJOR COUNCILS

- They were called by emperors, who summoned the bishops from across the Roman Empire to meet together to resolve specific conflicts.
- They involved representatives from both the Eastern and Western halves of Roman Christendom.

# SEVEN MAJOR COUNCILS

- Importantly, for believers today, these historic councils do not establish truth or determine sound doctrine.
- But they give us insight into how Christian leaders in the early church marshalled biblical truth to refute and reject false teaching.

# SEVEN MAJOR COUNCILS

- In this lesson, we will focus on the three most important of these seven councils. These include:
  - The Council of Nicaea (325)
  - The First Council of Constantinople (381)
  - The Council of Chalcedon (451)



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# The Council of Nicaea

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# NICAEA (325)

- A false teacher named Arius taught that the Son of God was a created being.
- Arius denied the eternality of the Lord Jesus, and thereby insisted He was not co-equal to God the Father.



# NICAEA (325)

**Hetero-ousious**

The Son is of a  
**different  
substance**  
than the Father

Arianism  
(initial view)

**Homoi-ousious**

The Son is of a  
**similar  
substance**  
to the Father

Arianism  
(modified view)

**Homo-ousious**

The Son is of the  
**same  
substance**  
as the Father

Trinitarianism

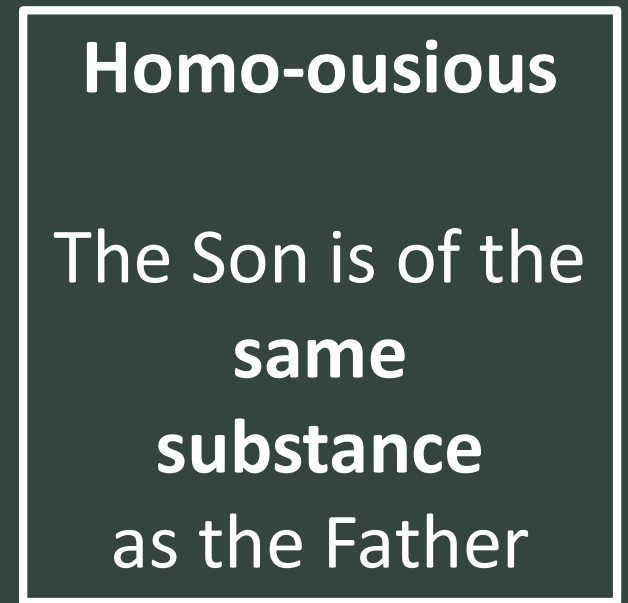
# NICAEA (325)



Arianism  
(initial view)



Arianism  
(modified view)



Trinitarianism





# NICAEA (325)

**The Nicene Creed**: “We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of his Father, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, →



# NICAEA (325)

**Continued:** “By whom all things were made, both which be in heaven and in earth. Who for us men and for our salvation came down [from heaven] and was incarnate and was made man. He suffered and the third day he rose again, and ascended into heaven. And he shall come again to judge both the living and the dead. And we believe in the Holy Spirit.”

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# The Council of Constantinople

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# CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

- Even though it was denounced at the Council of Nicaea, Arianism continued to be a popular view in the Roman Empire.
- Arianism not only rejected the deity of the Son of God, but also denied the deity of the Holy Spirit.

# CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

- Another errant viewpoint was introduced by Apollinarus of Laodicea. He denied the full humanity of Jesus Christ.
- Faithful Christian leaders found themselves defending both the true deity and the true humanity of the Lord Jesus.

# CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

## **Arianism**

Denied the  
full deity  
of both  
the Lord Jesus  
and  
the Holy Spirit.

## **Apollinarianism**

Denied the  
full (or true)  
humanity of  
the Lord Jesus

## **Trinitarianism**

Affirmed the  
deity of both the  
Son and Spirit.  
Affirmed the full  
humanity of  
the Lord Jesus

# CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

## Arianism



## Apollinarianism



## Trinitarianism

Affirmed the  
deity of both the  
Son and Spirit.  
Affirmed the full  
humanity of  
the Lord Jesus

# CONSTANTINOPLE (381)

## Expansion to the Nicene Creed:

“We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father [and the Son]; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.”

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# The Council of Chalcedon

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# CHALCEDON (451)

- The Council of Constantinople had affirmed the full deity and full humanity of Christ.
- He is truly God, being co-eternal, co-equal, and co-essential with the Father.
- In His incarnation, He became truly man, without ceasing to be truly God in any respect.

# CHALCEDON (451)

- But how do these two natures (Jesus' deity and humanity) relate to one another?
- One view (called Nestorianism) put a wall of division between these two natures, teaching that they were like water and oil.



# CHALCEDON (451)

- An alternate view, called Eutychianism, argued the two natures combined in Christ's incarnation, to create a hybrid of the two.
- The result was like water mixed with wine, such that it was neither pure water nor undiluted wine. It was a different substance altogether.

# CHALCEDON (451)

- Nestorianism separated the natures to the point that it created two persons in Christ (one divine and one human).
- Eutychianism, by contrast, emphasized the singular person of Christ to the point that it denied His two distinct natures.





The controversy  
resulted in a  
council in 451.

# CHALCEDON (451)

## Nestorianism

Two natures  
(divine and  
human)

Two Persons

## Eutychianism

One nature  
(hybrid  
mixture)

One Person

## Chalcedon



# CHALCEDON (451)

## Nestorianism

Two natures  
(divine and  
human)

~~Two Persons~~

## Eutychianism

One nature  
(hybrid  
mixture)

One Person

## Chalcedon

# CHALCEDON (451)

## Nestorianism

Two natures  
(divine and  
human)

~~Two Persons~~

## Eutychianism

~~One nature  
(hybrid  
mixture)~~

One Person

## Chalcedon

# CHALCEDON (451)

## Nestorianism

Two natures  
(divine and  
human)

~~Two Persons~~

## Eutychianism

~~One nature~~  
~~(hybrid~~  
~~mixture)~~

One Person

## Chalcedon

One Person  
Two Natures

Hypostatic  
Union

# CHALCEDON (451)

**Chalcedonian Creed:** “We confess that one and the same Christ, Lord, and only-begotten Son, is to be acknowledged in two natures without confusion, change, division, or separation. The distinction between natures was never abolished by their union, but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person and one hypostasis (or substance).”



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# The Other Four Councils

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# THE OTHER FOUR COUNCILS

- Ephesus (431)
- Constantinople II (553)
- Constantinople III (680-81)
- Nicaea II (787)

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# Evaluating Councils & Controversies

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# EVALUATING COUNCILS

- Protestant groups have held varied opinions about which councils to accept.
- The seventh council, with its approval of the veneration of icons, is particularly troubling for evangelicals, who rightly view such practices as competing with the purity of worship that God requires.

# EVALUATING COUNCILS

- In learning about church councils and historic creeds, it is important to remember a simple principle: **God's Word is our authority over church history and church tradition.**
- That means that the decision of a church council is only valid insofar as it accords with what the Word of God teaches.

# EVALUATING COUNCILS

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# EVALUATING COUNCILS

- Like the noble Bereans (Acts 17:11), believers ought to go to the Scriptures to confirm the teachings and traditions of men.
- Paul told the Thessalonians to “examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:21–22).

# EVALUATING COUNCILS

- We should be grateful for historic councils that affirm clear biblical truths, like the deity of Christ.
- But we should also remember that the authority for what we believe is not found in the councils of church history, but in the truth of God's Word.



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