The Nicene Creed: Introduction and History

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I. Introduction: The Nicene Creed was produced by the Council of Nicaea _____ years ago.

A. What was the council of Nicaea?

i. It was the first _____ (universal) council.

ii. It met from May to August in AD 325, in Nicaea (modern Turkey).

B. Who took part in the council?

i. It was called by emperor _____, but his involvement is debated.

ii. The main leaders of the council were actually bishops—possibly _____ of them.

iii. The moderator was probably Hosius of Cordova, a bishop & adviser to Constantine

iv. But there were also Elders, deacons, and others—possibly _____ people total!

C. What did the council of Nicaea do?

i. It didn't decide biblical canon or change the day of worship from Sat to Sun.

ii. The main question it addressed was whether and in what way is Christ _____?

iii. It also addressed minor controversies and ruled on _____ ordinary church matters.

D. Why does the council of Nicaea matter to us today?

i. It laid the foundation for the _____ we still use today.

ii. And it corrected any heresy that goes beyond the bounds of the biblical guardrails.

II. The controversy leading up to the council.

A. In the early church, theology was fairly _____.

i. Sometimes this meant simply different emphases, without substantial difference.

ii. Other times, though, regional schools of theology did have substantial differences.

B. Two examples are Antioch (in modern Turkey) and Alexandria (in modern Egypt).

i. Antioch emphasized the _____ meaning of Scripture (e.g., Chrysostom).

ii. Alexandria emphasized the _____ meaning of Scripture (e.g., Origen).

C. But this different emphasis on Bible interpretation had implications on Christology.

i. The Antiochenes were more concerned with Christ's _____.

ii. While the Alexandrians were more concerned with Christ's _____.

iii. Some in both schools took these emphases too far, and fell into heresy.

iv. Many in Alexandria followed Origen: the Son is _____ to the Father.

D. These differences led to the Arian controversy—named after Arius, an elder in Alexandria.

i. He said that Son was not only subordinate to Father, but even _____ by him.

ii. Christianity puts Christ on the _____ side of the Creator-creature distinction.

iii. But Arius was challenging that, by putting Christ on the _____ side.

iv. The Arians even wrote a jingle that said, "There was once when the Son was not."

E. And Arius's teaching spread fast and far—why did it spread so much?

i. Partly because theologians like _____ paved the way for Arius.

ii. But the main reason was that the opposing sides didn't understand each other.

F. Arius was condemned and resisted just as quickly as his teaching spread.

i. _____ of Alexandria called a regional council that excommunicated Arius.

ii. Then Hosius of Cordova was sent to Alexandria to try to settle the dispute.

iii. When that didn't work, Hosius urged Constantine to call a universal council.

iv. Before the Council of Nicaea, Hosius met with another regional council in _____

III. The council and its work.

A. So, when the council of Nicaea actually met, a lot of discussion had already occurred.

i. Eusebius of Nicomedia seems to have supported Arius and presented a creed.

ii. But the council quickly rejected the Arian creed and condemned Arianism.

iii. Eusebius of _____ presented another creed, which was amended.

iv. Hosius, Alexander, and Athanasius insisted on the term "homoousios."

B. But the Nicene Creed isn't the same as Eusebius's, closer to a creed from Jerusalem.

i. The Nicene Creed became the standard of orthodoxy, and condemned Arianism.

ii. Nicaea gave us a common language so we can speak about Christ's two natures.