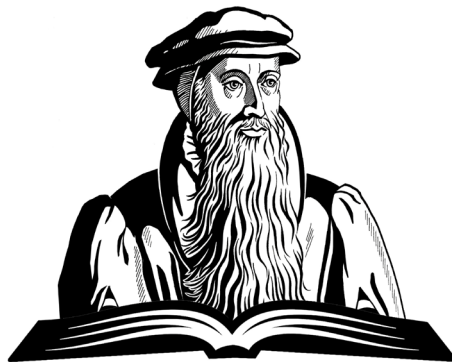

**VIDEO LECTURE MODULE:
THE APOSTLES' CREED**

LECTURE 3

**ARTICLE 2: THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,
GOD'S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Module

THE APOSTLES' CREED

13 LECTURES

Lecturer Presenter: Rev. Cornelis Harinck

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THE APOSTLES' CREED

Rev. Cornelis Harinck

Transcript—Lecture 3

Article 2: The Lord Jesus Christ, God's Only Begotten Son

Beloved listener, the second article of the Apostles' Creed speaks about Jesus Christ. We read in this Article, "and in Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, our Lord." With these words the Christian confesses not only that Jesus is the Son of God, but also that Jesus is his Lord.

In Matthew 22, it is spoken of a group of Pharisees that approached Jesus with a question, saying, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" They wanted to know which of the Ten Commandments was most important. Since the Pharisees and scribes were preoccupied with such questions, they confronted Jesus and demanded that he would designate one of the Ten Commandments as being most important. Jesus's response to their question was: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"—Matthew 22, verses 37 to 40). What an extraordinary answer! It expresses great wisdom and exceptional knowledge of Scripture. Jesus did not say, the first commandment or the tenth commandment is the most important commandment. He pointed at the very heart of the law, namely, love to God and the neighbor. Love is the fulfillment of the law. They could have known this, for Moses had already taught that the law mandates love to God, saying, "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might"—Deuteronomy 6, verse 5. After that, Jesus countered them by asking the Pharisees also a question. He asked them, "What think ye of Christ? whose son is he?"—they replied—"The Son of David" (Matthew 22:42). The answer to this question was well known. Every Jew knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Jesus then confronted them with a dilemma, saying, "How then does David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?" These words are found in Psalm 110. There David speaks of the Messiah, both as his son and as his Lord. In light of David's reference to the Messiah, Jesus then asked the Pharisees, "If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:43–45). They did not know how to answer this question. We also cannot comprehend how the Messiah can simultaneously be the son of David, and David's God and Lord. There is only one satisfactory answer: the Messiah is both. He is a descendant of David, as to his human nature, and he is the Son of God, as to his divine nature. Jesus is God and man.

Attacked by heresies who denied that Jesus was the eternal Son of the eternal God, the early church confessed about Jesus, in the Nicene Creed, in the year 325 AD: "The only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds. God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." Jesus is truly God and truly man. Jesus, in his human nature, is flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary. As is true for all men, he was born of a woman and grew up from childhood to adulthood. Jesus experienced hunger and thirst, sorrow and joy, fatigue and pain, temptation, suffering, and death. Jesus was truly man. The Bible tells us that he became like unto us in all things, "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren"—Hebrews 2, verse 17. There was but one thing in which he differed from us—he knew no sin. Hebrews 4, verse 15 says he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Jesus could challenge his enemies by saying, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46) How delighted they would have been if they

could have charged him with being a thief, fornicator, or liar. However, they could not accuse him of one single sin.

Jesus is an historical person, a man of flesh and blood. Regarding this historical Jesus, a man of flesh and blood, who lived during the first year of our calendar, the early Christian church confesses in the Apostles' Creed that he is, "God's only begotten Son." The child Jesus, who grew up in Nazareth, the man Jesus, who preached the Gospel of the kingdom of God; who went about doing good, healed the sick, raised up the dead, died on the cross of Calvary, is the Son of God. He is God and man united in one person—Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). Why does the Christian believe this? We believe this, not because we can comprehend it, but rather, because the Bible teaches it.

The Old Testament contains prophecies regarding the divinity of the Messiah. In Micah's well-known prophecy, the Messiah is referred to as the person whose being is from eternity, "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). The prophecy of Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as the One whose name is, "Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"—Isaiah 9, verse 6. These names are all applicable only to God.

The New Testament yields abundant proof of Jesus' divinity. God the Father spoke from heaven after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). The Apostle John testifies of Jesus, saying, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Paul declares Jesus, "to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead;" that is, Jesus Christ our Lord—Romans 1, verse 4. Jesus himself frequently testified publicly that he was the Son of God. When he stood before the Sanhedrin, the high priest put Jesus under oath and said to him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God." And what was Jesus' answer? He replied, "You have said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall you see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." When the high priest heard this answer, he rent his high-priestly garment in utter dismay, and said, "He has spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses?"—Matthew 26, verses 63 to 65. He clearly understood that Jesus claimed to be the blessed Son of man, the Messiah, and the eternal Son of God, of whom Daniel had spoken, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven"—Daniel 7, verse 13. After Jesus had spoken these words, he was condemned to death by the Sanhedrin, because he affirmed himself to be the Son of God.

Finally, the many miracles and works he performed testify of Jesus' divinity. He did works that only God can perform. Upon having calmed the wind and the sea by his omnipotent words, the disciples said in amazement, "What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"—Mark 4, verse 41. They were deeply convinced of Jesus' divinity, and therefore confessed, "We believe and are sure that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God"—John 6, verse 69.

The apostles had in their ministry many struggles, doubts and fears. They often had to say with Paul, "Without were fightings, within were fears"—2 Corinthians 7, verse 5. But they never doubted that Jesus was divine. They knew him to be the Son of God.

Jesus is very God and very man. The early church articulated this by saying, "Vere Deo, vere homo." The Bible repeatedly refers to Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. God's love for a lost world was made manifest in the giving of his only begotten Son, to be the Redeemer and Savior of the lost. In John 3, verse 16, we hear Jesus saying to Nicodemus, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Therefore the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son.

Jesus is called the only begotten Son of God, albeit that believers are also said to be the children—the sons and daughters of God. There is nevertheless a profound difference between the sonship of Jesus and that of believers. Believers, for Christ's sake, have become the sons of God by way of adoption. However, Jesus is the natural Son of God. He is of the same essence as God, being the only begotten Son of God. In this sense, God has only one Son. Jesus is therefore always referred to as the only begotten Son of God.

Thus, Jesus is the unique Son of God and has a unique relationship with God the Father. To the Jews, he declared, "The Father and I are one"—John 10, verse 30, thereby declaring himself to be

equal with the Father. Jesus spoke of God as his Father, in a very unique sense. He called him his “abba,” the name whereby little children, in the Aramaic language, did call their father. We can say that Jesus called God his own daddy. The Pharisees, scribes, and elders of Israel understood very well what Jesus was thereby saying. We read in John 5, verse 18, “Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his own Father, making himself equal with God.” Jesus would refer to God as his own Father, that is, as his personal and natural Father.

The Bible uses the word “begotten.” As the Son, Jesus is begotten of God, he is not the created Son of God, but the generated Son of God, never having been created, but eternally begotten of the Father. These are important expressions and qualifications. The heavens and the earth, men and angels, animals and plants, and all things visible and invisible have been created by God. The Son, however, has neither been created nor made. Thus, was it never so that the eternal Son of God was not with the Father, and thus that the Son did not yet exist. One could easily be inclined to think so. The Scriptures, however, speak of the Son being begotten of the Father, in the present tense, and thus in connection with God’s everlasting existence. The Father is eternally engaged in generating or begetting his Son, without there being a beginning, progression of time, or conclusion. It is an eternal and never-ending begetting. Jesus himself affirmed this by saying, “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself”—John 5, verse 26. Thus, from all eternity, the Father communicates his identical nature to his Son. Jesus declares himself and his Father to be one, in the true sense of the words. They are one as to their Godhead, eternity, power, and glory. The Son is truly God together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we believe, based on the Bible, that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.

This does not mean that we can comprehend this eternal generation of the Son by the Father. It merely means that we believe what the Bible teaches, namely, that Jesus is the only and natural Son of the Father. God has many adopted children, but he has only one begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Albeit that we cannot comprehend the eternal generation of the Son by the Father, nevertheless the confession that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God is of utmost importance. Salvation is at stake here. For if Christ be not truly God, we are not saved, for only a Savior who is truly God can save us.

During the apostolic period, heretics already denied the divinity of Christ. They attempted to arrive at a rational explanation why the Bible refers to Jesus as the only begotten Son of God. They could not explain with their philosophies why Jesus is God and man, and therefore they did not want to accept that Jesus is truly God and truly man. We already observe this in the epistles of the Apostle John. All who deny, either that Jesus is the Son of God, or that Jesus the Son of God became man, are designated by John as the antichrist. He writes in 1 John 4, verse 3, “And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.” A certain Arius, born around 250 AD, was a notorious heretic during the early history of Christianity, who concluded that Jesus was the most important of all creatures, but not the eternal Son of the eternal God. It caused a lot of unrest and strife in the Christian church. Others taught that the name “Son of God” must be viewed as an honorary title, rather than being taken literally.

Islam believes that Jesus was indeed a prophet, but it rejects the notion that he is God’s Son. They believe that Allah is alone and without any person being co-equal with him—and there’s also that he has no son. Though Jehovah’s Witnesses designate Jesus as the supreme example, and the superior witness of Jehovah, they do not acknowledge him to be God. He is merely the one who proclaims God’s message. However, at the baptism of Jesus, God declared audibly from heaven, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). Modern theologians also deny that Jesus is the Son of God. They consider him to be the greatest Jew, a noble man, a humanist, or a role model for neighborly love, but not the Son of God. There are also quite a few religious factions who deny the Biblical testimony that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God.

What is actually at stake here? Why is the confession that Jesus is the only begotten Son of God so significant? The answer is that if Jesus is not truly God, then there is no Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23). Then the incarnation of God’s Son did not occur, and Jesus would be no more than a mere man, though he might be an extraordinary man. But if Jesus is not truly God, he

is not God manifest in the flesh, as Paul states, in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16. Then it would also not be true what Paul writes, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” We would then neither be reconciled to God at all, nor redeemed by God. If Jesus would not be truly God, the resurrection would merely be the resurrection of a mere man, rather than the resurrection of the divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification” Romans 4, verse 25.

In short, if Jesus were not the Son of God who suffered and died in our place, arose from the dead, and is now seated at God’s right hand, our hope would be a delusion. We would then have trusted in a mere man for our salvation. Our worship of Jesus would then be rank idolatry, for we would be rendering divine worship to a mere man. But thanks be to God! God himself, in his Son Jesus Christ, has come into this world to rescue sinners from eternal destruction. Jesus came forth from the Father. He is God’s only begotten Son. Why else would the Bible refer to God as Father, if he does not have a Son? Our Savior is the only begotten Son of God.

The Christian confesses also that he believes in *Jesus Christ our Lord*. In this Confession, we encounter the three preeminent names of our Redeemer, namely, *Jesus*, *Christ*, and *Lord*. The Redeemer’s personal name is Jesus, that is, “Savior.” The angel Gabriel said to Mary, “And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS” (Luke 1:31). The name Jesus means, “Jehovah saves!” The name Jesus reveals who Jesus is, namely, the Savior, who came into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Jesus is also called *the Christ*, that is, “the anointed one.” The Hebrew equivalent is “Messiah.” Andrew told his brother Simon, “We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ” (John 1:41). When we confess that Jesus is the Christ, we ascribe to him all that the Old Testament heralded of God’s Messiah. The apostles, in their preaching, continually proved from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Christ—the promised Messiah. Acts 17 tells us what the custom was which the apostle followed in the preaching in the Jewish synagogue, “Then Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ” (Acts 17:2–3). Jesus is the Christ, means he is the Anointed One.

During the Old Testament, the prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with holy oil. This signified that God had called them to their office, and it implied the promise that God would equip them for their work. Jesus has been anointed by God to be Prophet, Priest, and King. To that end, he was anointed with the Holy Spirit. Matthew tells us what John the Baptist saw after Jesus had been baptized by him, “And, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him” (Matthew 3:16). It had been prophesied that the Messiah would be anointed with the Holy Spirit. In Isaiah 61, the Messiah says, “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isaiah 61:1–2). When Jesus read this portion from Isaiah, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he said, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears”—Luke 4, verse 21. Thereby Jesus designated himself to be the promised Messiah.

Jesus was gifted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach and to perform miracles. But not in the same measure as, for example, the prophet Elijah. Jesus had the Spirit without measure. John 3, verse 34 says, “For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” In the home of Cornelius, the centurion, Peter declared that “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power”—Acts 10, verse 38. Jesus is God’s Anointed One—the Messiah, and in him is fulfilled, “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD”—Isaiah 11, verse 2.

Jesus is also called *Lord*, that is, “possessor, owner, or master.” This title was used in Bible times for a slave owner. It is synonymous with the word “master,” and thus, a title that is expressive of possession and authority. God calls himself the Lord and Possessor of Israel. When Moses demanded of Pharaoh that he would set Israel free, he said to Pharaoh, “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1). God referred to himself as Israel’s Lord and expressed

his exclusive claim upon the people of Israel. Already at his birth, the angels announced that Jesus is Christ and Lord. The angels said to the shepherds, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Particularly following his resurrection, Jesus is referred to as *Lord*. Peter said, on the day of Pentecost, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). By raising Jesus from the dead, God demonstrated who Jesus was, namely, Lord, and Messiah. Thomas, therefore, confessed of Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The title, *Lord*, is expressive of power and dominion. The apostle says, "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living"—Romans 14, verse 9. Jesus possesses authority. Jesus said to his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). The day will come that all creatures will bow before him and confess him to be Lord, "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"—Philippians 2, verses 10 and 11.

Most importantly, Jesus is the Lord of his church. He has purchased his church and delivered her from the power of sin and Satan, thereby establishing her to be his possession. It is said of the believers, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"—1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19. He ransomed his people from hell with his blood. The elect are the reward upon Jesus' labors. It was prophesied, in Isaiah 53, verse 11, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Thus, Jesus became both Lord and possessor of his church. He paid the price for her redemption on Golgotha. Not only did he redeem his people by his blood, but he is also actively engaged in delivering them from the powers of sin and Satan, by the renewing ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We think ourselves to be free, but in reality, we are slaves. In Adam's fall, all men have come under the power and dominion of Satan. Rather than lords, we have become slaves. We are enslaved to our sins, even more than a drug addict. The Jews boasted of the fact that they were Abraham's descendants and had never been slaves. Jesus responded, however, by saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin"—John 8, verse 34. Sin enslaves! Sin renders us not only to be its slaves, but also subjects us to the cruel bondage of the devil. Sin is the chain by which the devil binds us. Sin has brought us under Satan's cruel dominion.

Jesus delivers men from this slavery. This is the glory of Christianity. It sets sinners free from the dominion of sin and Satan. It makes them a new man. God's children have been delivered from the power of darkness. They have been translated into another kingdom. Colossians 1, verse 13 says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Therefore the Christians call Jesus their Lord. God has delivered each of them from the power of sin and Satan by regenerating and renewing them by the Holy Spirit. He finds them often wandering far from God, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, blinded by Satan and without God in the world. But, so did the apostle write, "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love whereby he loved us, . . . hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace you are saved)" (Ephesians 2:4).

When God converts sinners, he breaks the dominion of sin, dwelling within them, and pours forth his love into their hearts. Consequently, they will, with a godly sorrow, bid farewell to all former sins and evil ways, and they will begin to serve God in newness of spirit, as is said in Romans 7, verse 6. Jesus then ascends the throne of our hearts and will incline us to embrace him willingly, as Lord and Master. We will then have a new Lord and a new Master. Before being saved, the devil was our lord and master, but now Jesus is our Lord and Master. God's children wholeheartedly concur with the people of Israel, when, after they had been delivered from Babylon, said, "O LORD our God, other lords beside you have had dominion over us: but by you only will we make mention of your name"—Isaiah 26, verse 13. Jesus, the good Shepherd, sought them when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God. He sought and he found them and made them his willing subjects. This creates a blessed bond between Christ and the believing soul—a bond that never will be broken. A body cemented together by love. It is a sacred union, a bond of sovereign grace that never will be rent in twain. It makes the believers and Christ one body.

It is noteworthy that the Apostles' Creed, in confessing that Jesus is Lord, does not speak of *the* Lord, but rather, of *our* Lord. The Christian believes in Jesus Christ our Lord. The Christian does not merely acknowledge that Jesus is a Lord, but rather, that he is his or her Lord. This expresses amazement and gratitude. The Christian may know himself to have received a new Lord and new Master. The Christian confesses regarding Jesus, "He is my Lord!"

"What think ye of Christ?" (Matthew 22:42) Jesus posed this question to his disciples. Upon having heard what men thought of him, he asked his disciples very pointedly, "But whom say ye that I am?"—Matthew 16, verse 15. The question is, Who is Jesus for you? Has he become indispensable and precious to you? Is your heart knitted with him? The Jesus who saves is not merely the Jesus we confess with our lips. The Jesus who saves me is the Jesus who dwells in my heart by faith. Peter says, concerning believers, "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). Only a true faith, a faith of the heart, unites with Christ. True faith is known by accepting the whole Christ. It accepts Jesus not only as his Savior, but also as his Lord. How important it is to recognize that upon embracing Jesus as our Savior, we also embrace him as our Lord! You cannot have Christ for your Savior, unless you also have him as your Lord. The complete Christ must be embraced. A true believer will not embrace Jesus merely to be delivered from hell and damnation. He or she will also embrace him as King, to be governed by him and will manifest this by a new walk of life. Jesus said, Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but who does the will of my Father in heaven. He even spoke that on the day of his return, Many will say, Lord, Lord. And then I will declare to them: I never knew you, depart from me, you who practice lawlessness (Matthew 7:22–23). When we accept Christ as Savior, we also accept him as our Lord and King to rule over us. Jesus taught, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" Matthew 7, verse 20.