**Heresies**

There were many erroneous teachings about Jesus in the early centuries of Christianity. Some incorrect ideas of who Jesus was became accepted by many Christians and some even lasted many decades until they died off in favor of the true Apostolic teaching.

These false beliefs were called “heresies”. The word heresy comes from the Greek word ”haireo” which means to choose. The idea is that these false teachings were *chosen* by Christians contrary to the Apostolic teaching which comes Divinely protected by Christ.

But people chose to follow either their own ideas or a popular idea presented by another Christian about the faith. Someone believing a *heresy* is called a *heretic*.

 3 ancient heresies that mischaracterized who Jesus was:

ARIANISM:  (1.      Jesus was a Divine being, but not the same substance as the Father.  He was a created being, He had a beginning – created by the Father.)

     This heresy was started in the 3rd century by a bishop named Arius.   This heretical belief spread throughout the Roman Empire and divided Christianity to such an extent that it led to the first Christian Council (after the Jerusalem Council recorded in Acts 15) - the Council of Nicea.  The Roman Emperor Constantine, called all the Christian leaders together in AD325 to settle this dispute in a town called Nicea (in what is now Turkey).

Why did Constantine care?  Because hundreds of thousands of pagans had converted to Christianity by then and they had become a positive influence that had a unifying effect on the Empire.  But Constantine knew that a fractured Christian community threatened the harmony of his Empire.

Arguments were presented to the 318 leaders by both Arius and those representing the traditional, Apostolic position that Jesus was in fact, God.  The final vote was 316-2 against Arius and the statement defining the divinity of Jesus as "the same substance" as God the Father was written into the "Nicene Creed".

2.      DOCETISM:  Jesus was Divine, but actually only Spirit who only appeared to have a human body.  His human form was only an illusion to those who saw Him.

3.     MODALISM or Sabellianism: God is one God, but acts in 3 modes – the Son (Jesus) being one of the modes of God.  Kind of like saying I am one person, but I can assume 3 modes: a brother, a son, and a father - all at the same time. This heresy denied that God was 3 Persons and therefore rejected that Jesus was a distinct Person and rejected what the Apostles taught - the Trinity: One God in 3 persons.