

The Basics of Christianity

- This series is somewhat of an anomaly for me - and for this class
 - Previous series' have been focused on books of the Bible or (if they were topical) at least large, consecutive portions of scripture
 - The Basics of Christianity will be distinctly topical
 - Our theme each week will be established in multiple passages of scripture
 - We will make a certain assertion based on one passage, sometimes even one verse, and then explain the Biblical reasoning for that assertion using other Old and New Testament texts
 - This is not an unusual or unorthodox way of teaching
 - It is often employed when establishing a Biblical theology for a practical or cultural contemporary question
 - The question we're attempting to answer is what are the basics of Christianity?
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- Today's lesson is the only one of the six planned that departs from this more topical approach
 - As we examine Jesus' prayer for His disciples not long before His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension
 - This passage in John 17, often called the "high priestly prayer," gives us a reasonable outline for future discussion
 - Concepts that it mentions, in regard to disciples, need further explanation if we are to answer our key question for this class
 - But any mature believer recognizes how important these concepts are when explaining what Christian discipleship looks like
 - I hope we will find this idea reinforced in the text as we begin to study
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- Now, when one thinks of basics, they often think of the simplest explanations related to a topic - for beginners
 - This is not a simple passage
 - It is not one that would spring to mind when selecting scriptures for beginners
 - Portions are quite complex
 - We will not deal with all of those complexities in this hour
 - We have a different purpose
 - I hope you'll see what I mean as we begin...

John 17:1-2

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is

come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

- Several truths expressed in these opening lines are absolutely vital for our theological understanding
- Jesus, prays to His Father - the One True God - whom He has come to glorify
- He, as God's only Son, has been given power over all flesh
- And He has come to obtain eternal life for all those God has given Him

John 17:3

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

- This eternal life is in the knowledge of God and the Son He sent - Jesus
- Are you beginning to see the very basics of Christianity?
- The One True God
- His One and only Son
- Offering one way of salvation

John 17:4-5

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

- Jesus, One from old, from everlasting
- No beginning, no ending
- Was sent to earth by God
- To take on human form
- And to do the work His Father required
- In this context, that work is shortly coming to an end
- As He will soon die in our place and for our sins
- Then will overcome death, rising from the dead - being seen by many
- And will go back to His father in heaven

- The next portion tells of those left behind
- Those the Father has given to the Son
- That placed their faith in the Son and became His disciples

- Who would remain to proclaim the good news of the Son's work...

John 17:6-8

6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

- These disciples of Christ have observed and come to know that He is God's son
- They have believed and kept God's word
- And Jesus has been faithful to pass along His Father's word
- So they are prepared
- They have a relationship with God that has transformed them, made them new
- They have walked with the Son, coming to know Him in a greater way, hearing His teaching
- Now their great task lies before them...

John 17:9-10

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

- Soon to be no longer with them in physical body, He prays for them
- They belong to God
- And as He has glorified God - given a correct opinion of God to the world
- They will glorify Him, by reflecting His attributes
- And in His absence, they will bring the words of salvation and the teaching of God
- But they will need a supernatural unity to do it...

John 17:11

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

- A system for New Testament ministry will be provided and modeled not many days in the future

- As those who know the Father, through His Son are given commission
- And will assemble in local bodies to carry out His work
- Unified by His Spirit
- Informed by His scriptures
- Reliant upon one another for the accomplishment of their individual tasks
- Accountable to Him and to one another

John 17:12-13

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

- The scripture was fulfilled in the loss of Judas
- But the others - those who remained faithful would have joy
- One commentary said it this way:

"The joy here thought of is that which supported Him in all the sorrow and loneliness of His work on earth, and came from the never-failing source of the Father's presence with Him. He would have them fulfilled with the abundance of this joy."

- And believers throughout history, since the very time of His departure can give this testimony
- For it is His will, that we have His joy
- But as they did for Him, many challenges will come for anyone who follows...

John 17:14-16

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- For those who are "not of this world," because they are part of His heavenly family, hatred will be endured
- And commitment will be required
- A commitment that is only common to His own

- For it is not Jesus' will that they be delivered, but that they persevere
- In righteousness, understanding their citizenship in heaven
- This will be possible by His Holy Spirit, which will dwell in them
- And by His word...

John 17:17-19

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

- To be sanctified is to be set aside for a specific purpose
- We have already discussed a portion of this purpose for all His disciples
- God uses His word to set them apart in this way
- It changes them
- Gives them new perspectives
- Alters their thinking
- And provides tools that equip them to live in victory
- Because they have a mission in a foreign land - the world
- And as He was set apart, they must be set apart to do it
- We have taken as our own His prayer requests for these disciples
- Which is only right - if we have (as they did) faith in Him and a commitment to serve
- But the next portion of the text is where His prayer truly touches us
- Listen...

John 17:20

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

- The word of these disciples touched thousands
- From the three thousand saved under Peter's preaching in Acts 2:41, to the thousands reached by those they disciplined
- On and on throughout history to our present day
- They embraced the basics of Christianity and their implications
- Passed them along
- And became part of a world-transforming mission
- That reaches us
- And if you know Him, you are part of their heritage of faithfulness

- Which we must continue, together...

John 17:21-23

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

- Our unity will provide a foundation for outreach in the world
- If others are to believe the truth, that Jesus is the Son of God, we must work together to reveal it
- He alone can make it possible
- And it will be our privilege to be participants

- Based on this introduction, where can we expect this series to take us?
- You'll find the next five lessons loosely based on some of the points we addressed here

- Our first lesson is entitled "Repent and Believe the Gospel"
- It comes from a phrase in Mark 1:15
- This is what Jesus came into Galilee preaching
- Without this initial understanding, regarding the turning from sin to Christ, no other understanding can be obtained
- For salvation is where Christianity begins

- Then we'll move on to "The First and Great Commandment"
- We find it in Matthew 22:37-40

37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

- We'll address our relationship with God and others
- Speak of surrender and total commitment
- And explain our mission as disciples

- In the next week "Whatsoever I Have Commanded"
- This is based in Matthew 28:20

20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

- How much of what He commanded do we know?
- How do we learn?
- How do we expand the breadth and depth of our Biblical knowledge?
- This week will focus on growth in the scriptures

- The next lesson is called "Hold Fast to Sound Words"
- We find this phrase in 2 Timothy 1:13

13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

- What about broader, doctrinal understanding?
- How do we develop a theology based on the whole of the Bible?
- What are the key principals to understand?

- And finally "Faithfulness is Required"
- See 1 Corinthians 4:2

2 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

- How can we persevere?
- What must our key commitments be?
- What does long-term Christianity look like?

Christopher Harper, September 2021