



ANCHORED WEEK 1

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What is the difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone?

Background for the Topic

Today begins our series called ANCHORED. We want everyone in our church to be anchored firmly on the teachings of Scripture so that in every situation of life they will be equipped with right knowledge and able to live out their faith victoriously. We want people to not only know about God, but to truly know God. It's when we get to truly know God, His existence and His character, then it changes how we think and how we live.

C.H. Spurgeon said on January 7, 1855 as he opened his sermon at New Park Street Chapel:

"It has been said that 'the proper study of mankind is man.' I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God's elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father. There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God...Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

J.I. Packer, Knowing God, "What were we made for? To know God. What aims should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the eternal life that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. John 17:3 "This is eternal life that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment than anything else? The knowledge of God."

Packer goes on to say that there are **five basic truths, five foundation-principles** of the knowledge about God which Christians hold to:

1. God has spoken to man, and the Bible is His Word, given to us to make us wise unto salvation.
2. God is Lord and King over His world; He rules all things for His own glory, displaying His perfections in all that He does, in order that men and angels may worship and adore Him.
3. God is Savior, active in sovereign love through the Lord Jesus Christ to rescue believers from the guilt and power of sin, to adopt them as His sons, and to bless them accordingly.

4. God is Triune; there are within the Godhead three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; Spirit; and the work of salvation is one in which all three act together, the Father purposing redemption, the Son securing it, and the Spirit applying it.

5. Godliness means responding to God's revelation in trust and obedience, faith and worship, prayer and praise, submission and service. Life must be seen and lived in the light of God's Word.

On these foundational truths we discover the existence and character of God.

I. God Exists

- A. The Bible never argues for the existence of God, nor does any determine to argue for God's existence. Genesis 1:1 simply states: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." In fact, Psalm 14:1 "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God."

- B. There are 5 Arguments for the Existence of God (Ask the discussion question at the bottom after each of the arguments):
 1. **The Cosmological Argument** - Creation demands a Creator. Nothing exists without a cause. Of course, a painting without a painter? A watch without a watchmaker? A house without a builder? Creation itself cries out in defense of its Creator.
 2. **The Teleological Argument** - Creation was designed for a purpose. Creation is not random and meaningless, just as a watch was designed to tell time or a car built to drive or a house built to live in. Creation was designed with a purpose in mind.
 3. **The Ontological Argument** - Since existence is possible, and to exist is greater than to not exist, then God must exist (if God did not exist, then a greater being could be conceived, but that is self defeating—you can't have something greater than that which no greater can be conceived!). Therefore, God must exist.
 4. **The Anthropological Argument** - Since man has moral qualities for right and wrong decisions, they must be created from a being who also has moral qualities. Said Cardinal Newman: "Were it not for the voice speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist, or a pantheist, when I looked into the world." Some things are wrong, others right: love is right, hatred is wrong. Nor is a thing right because it pleases, or wrong because it displeases. Where did we get this standard of right and wrong? Morality is obligatory, not optional. Who made is obligatory? Who has a right to command my life? We must believe that there is a God, or believe that the very root of our nature is a lie.
 5. **The Cause Argument** - Patton wrote: "Belief in a self-existent, personal God is in harmony with all the facts of our mental and moral nature, as well as with all the phenomena of the natural world. If God exists, a universal belief in his existence is natural enough; the irresistible impulse to ask for a first cause is accounted for; or religious nature has an object; the uniformity of natural law finds an adequate explanation, and human history is vindicated from the charge of being a vast imposture. Atheism leaves all these matters without an explanation, and makes, not history alone, but our moral and intellectual nature itself, an imposture and a lie."

Scriptural evidence for the existence of God is never argued but stated. From the declaration of God's existence from the beginning (Genesis 1:1) to His witness throughout creation (Rom. 1:19-21) to His incarnation as a human being (John 1:1, 14; Philippians 2:5-8), God exists.

Discussion Question(s): How do these arguments impact or not impact your faith in God?

II. The Characteristics or Attributes of God

God is both infinite and personal. There are characteristics of God that we cannot identify with and others that we can. God has not been created and yet has created those in His own image to represent Him for the praise of His glory.

A. The Infinite Qualities of God

1. **Aseity** - Self-existence, God is God within Himself. God did not come into being by another power or means. Therefore, God has to be eternal and within Himself necessary for Him to exist at all- Isaiah 40:17-23, 28, Rev. 4:11; John 1:1-3
2. **Omni-Present** (Present at all times everywhere infinitely) - Psalm 139:7-12
3. **Omni-Science** (All-knowing over everything infinitely) - Psalm 139:1-6; 147:5
4. **Omni-Potent** (All-powerful over all things infinitely) - Jer. 32:27

B. The Personal Qualities of God

- (1) **God is always and in every situation loving** - Jeremiah 31:3 "The Lord said, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you'."
- (2) **God is always and in every situation faithful** - 2 Tim. 2:13 "if we are faithless, He remains faithful."
- (3) **God is always and in every situation consistent and just** - Num. 23:19 "God is not man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind." - Malachi 3:6 "For I the Lord do not change...". James 1:17 "Every good and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there no variation or shadow due to change." (Immutability of God)
- (4) **God is always and in every situation unified** - Deut. 6:4 "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." Jesus spoke of unity in the Trinity in John 17.
- (5) **God is always and in every situation at peace** - John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

(6) God is always and in every situation kind - Ps. 117: 2 *"For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!"*

(7) God is always and in every situation filled with joy - Nehemiah 8:10 *"And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

(8) God is always and in every situation patient - Num. 14:18 *'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.'* - 2 Pet. 3:9 *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promises, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance."*

(9) God is always and in every situation good - Ps. 106:1 *"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!"*

(10) God is always and in every situation in control - Isaiah 41:10 *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."*

Discuss these questions:

1. What about the existence and character of God encourages you the most or strengthens your faith? Why?
2. What about the existence and character of God challenges you or bothers you the most? Why?
3. As Christians, our lives are to align with God's life. Of all the attributes of God that are personal, which one do you need to ask the Holy Spirit to work a deeper work in you?

Now that we have studied the existence and character of God, in our worship service today we will look at the relevance of God...Why does God matter?

Assign next week's passage - John 1:1-14 The Doctrine of Christ

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 2

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What names can stir a heated conversation when you mention them at an office party?
Why is it that you can mention God with little to no pushback, but when you mention Jesus, there is an awkward silence or complete objection (especially when you suggest the exclusivity of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world?)

Background for the Topic

Today we continue in our series called ANCHORED. Last week we explored the Doctrine of God. This week, we probe deeper into the Trinity and look at the Doctrine of Christ. Jesus Christ provokes all kind of reaction from people. He is the central figure of all of history. Jews, Muslims, other religious sects and cults alike include Jesus in their stories or doctrines. With the exception of Christianity, Jesus is merely a good teacher, a reformer, a miracle worker, a failed revolutionary or a mysterious man of influence. Can we be ok with the other versions of Jesus or must we probe much deeper to consider who this man really is? Are we free to include Him among many other religious teachers such as Muhammed, Buddha, Confucius or Gandhi?

H.G. Wells, a British author, wrote: "I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as an historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all of history."

Napoleon, at his defeat at Waterloo, said, "I know men, and I tell you, Jesus Christ was no mere man... Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires; but on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him."

Historian, Kenneth Stott Latourette, said, "As the centuries pass, the evidence is accumulating that, measured by His effect on history, Jesus is the most influential life ever lived on this planet."

The issue people have with Jesus stems from the same issue the Pharisees, Jewish religious leaders in Jesus' day, had with Him. Jesus did not fit within their expectations or desire for the Messiah. They could not get past this to see the real Jesus. Their misunderstanding kept them from knowing Him, and that is what keeps people from knowing Him today. One writer said, "Our ideas about Jesus get in the way of our understanding of Him. The challenge is to allow Jesus to speak for Himself. Instead of confirming or refuting our concept of Him, allowing Him to define Himself."

I. Jesus is Both God and Man

This is the central question surrounding the Doctrine of Christ. To understand who Jesus was and is, you have to look at what Jesus said about Himself and what Scripture teaches based on Jesus' own claims.

A. Jesus Claimed to be Fully Human

The Bible describes Jesus' birth being miraculous (Luke 2), but like any other baby. He is described in physical and emotional terms.

"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (Luke 2:52).

"Early in the morning, as He was on His way back to the city, He was hungry" (Matthew 21:18).

"Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour" (John 4:6).

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

"For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18).

"Jesus wept" (John 11:35).

Discussion Question: What grabs your attention or bothers you about the humanity of Jesus from these verses? In what ways did Jesus share in our humanity? What about these verses helps you to know Jesus more?

B. Jesus Claimed to be Fully God

This is where many theologians speak of Jesus as the "God-Man", where Jesus is considered to be 100% human and 100% God. Jesus spoke of Himself in terms that obviously went beyond the realm of humanity. Jesus Himself said, "Before Abraham was I Am" (YHWH). Perhaps the most direct and concise witness to His claim to be God, Jesus was saying that He was the identification of the most profound understanding of

God among the Jews. Jesus used the language God used with Moses on Mt. Sinai when He was identifying Himself to the people of Israel. The I Am, the always present and eternal One. Jesus' statement placed Him far beyond His physical birth in Bethlehem and any origin of being. Revelation sites Jesus saying of Himself,

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and end." Those statements could not be made by a mere human being unless he is delusional or insane, unless what He is saying is true.

"Jesus asked His disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' But what about you? He asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven'" (Matthew 16:13-17).

In general, what did Jesus' disciples believe about His identity?

In your opinion, what prompted Peter to give his response?

What was Jesus claiming about Himself and what did He say about His purpose?

"I and the Father are one'. Again the Jews picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?' 'We are not stoning you for any of these,' replied the Jews, 'but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God'" (John 10:30-33).

Were the Jews justified in being offended by Jesus' words? Why or why not?

What offends people about Jesus' identity today? Why?

Matthew 14:22, 25-33

What evidence of Jesus' deity is present in this story?

What does this story teach us about the person and character of Jesus Christ?

II. Jesus is Both Savior and Lord

"The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." C.S. Lewis, author

"Jesus does not give recipes that show the way to God as other teachers of religion do. He is Himself the way." Karl Barth, philosopher

To know the purpose for Jesus coming is of paramount importance. For other religions of world, Jesus' mission was as a teacher, healer, philosopher and guide. However, Jesus told us there was more to His coming than teaching how to live or to find rest from life's hardships. Jesus came as both our Savior and our Lord. That is, Jesus came to deliver us from our sin and to rule over our life.

Choose one to several of these passages to examine and discuss the questions below:

1. **Matthew 1:21** "An angel came to Joseph and gave him insight to his future with Mary: 'She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.'"
2. **John 10:7-11** "Therefore Jesus said again, 'I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them, I am the gate; whoever entered through Me will be saved. He will come and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to kill, steal and destroy, but I have come that they may have life and life more abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.'"
3. **Luke 19:10** "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."
4. **John 6:38-40** "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I myself will raise him up on the last day."
5. **Isaiah 53:5-6** "But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to His own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."
6. **Rom. 5:8** "But demonstrates His own love toward us in this; while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
7. **1 Corinthians 15:3-8** "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."

Discussion Question:

From these passages, what do they say about what Jesus came to do and why? (Look at them closely and pull out everything mentioned in the passages. Use these questions in discussion groups)

What are the indications of His Lordship from these verses?

What are the implications from to your life and to the ministry of this life group?

Quotable Moment:

*He began His ministry by being hungry, yet He is the Bread of Life.
Jesus ended His earthly ministry by being thirsty, yet He is the Living Water.
Jesus was weary, yet He is our rest.
Jesus paid tribute,, yet He is the King.
Jesus was accused of having a demon, yet He cast out demons.
Jesus wept, yet He wipes away our tears.
Jesus was sold for thirty pieces of silver, yet He redeemed the world.
Jesus was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, yet He is the Good Shepherd.
Jesus died, yet by His death He destroyed the power of death.
~ Gregory of Nazianzus, A.D. 381*

Wrap up:

The doctrine of Jesus is about the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. Being God and Man, Jesus came into the world to redeem it as the perfect sacrifice. Not only did Jesus die as a sacrifice for humanity's sin, He conquered death by rising from death. Jesus promised that He would return and if Jesus is God at all, His word will stand. Jesus was the ultimate teacher who also healed diseases, but He was much more. His mission was much more.

Assign Next Week's Passage: John 14, 16

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 3

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What is your favorite mystery movie or book?

Mysteries are interesting. The unknown keeps us curious and grabs our attention. We love finding out the solution to a mysterious plot or the true nature of a mysterious character. Nothing for the Christian is as mysterious as the Holy Spirit. The problem is that our curiosity has been cut short by attention on everything else but the Holy Spirit. Some believers claim lots of knowledge of the Holy Spirit, while others cannot seem to figure out who or what is the truth about the Holy Spirit. So, we are going to look at Who is the Holy Spirit? Who has the Holy Spirit? What Does the Holy Spirit Do? And How Does One Live and Walk with the Holy Spirit?

Background for the Topic

Today we continue our series called ANCHORED. We want everyone in our church to be anchored firmly on the teachings of Scripture so that in every situation of life they will be equipped with right knowledge and able to live out their faith victoriously. We want people to not only know about God, but to truly know God. It's when we get to truly know God, His existence and His character, then it changes how we think and how we live. This session will deal with the Holy Spirit.

"Very few seem to be interested in the Holy Spirit...Why, were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit there would be no gospel, no faith, no Church, not Christianity in the world at all." - J.I. Packer

"The Holy Spirit has long been the Cinderella of the Trinity. The other two sisters have gone to the theological ball; the Holy Spirit got left out every time." - Alister McGrath, author

"The Christian life is a the life of Christ in us; without moment-by-moment reliance on the Holy Spirit, this level of living is impossible." - Ken Boa, author

1. Who is the Holy Spirit?

Scripture never refers to the Holy Spirit as an 'it', but always in the personal pronoun 'He'. Often people do not know how to refer to an unborn baby and call the baby 'it'. However, after the baby is born, that same person can never call the baby an 'it', because there is a greater closeness and awareness of the personhood of the baby. The reason many people do not know what to call the Holy Spirit is that they are

not intimately familiar with the Holy Spirit enough to know Him as a real Person. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

A. The Holy Spirit is Present at Creation - Gen. 1:2

B. The Holy Spirit is Present Everywhere at All Times - Ps. 139:7-8

C. The Holy Spirit is Present to Guide Every Believer into the Truth - John 16:13-14

The Holy Spirit is hard to describe and understand by many, but there are ways to describe the Holy Spirit within the Trinity:

One Man

Three functions

- Father to His children
- Son to his parents
- Husband to his wife

One Egg

Three parts

- Shell-protection
- White - nourishment
- Yolk - fertilization

Water

Three states

- Liquid
- Vapor
- Solid

Man

Three parts

- Body
- Soul
- Spirit

The Holy Spirit perfectly displays a submissive but equal role as God. How is the Holy Spirit described from these passages?

a. 1 Thess. 5:19 _____

b. John 7:38-39 _____

c. John 1:32 _____

2. Who Has the Holy Spirit?

A. The Holy Spirit is available to those who believe in Jesus Christ - John 7:38-39

B. The Holy Spirit lives within every believer - 1 Cor. 3:16

The Holy Spirit dwells within believers who call on the name of Jesus Christ. He lives within as the presence of God, the guide to truth and the One who helps believers understand who they are in Christ. Those who do not believe in Jesus do not receive the Holy Spirit (John 5:40). People will choose to be their own guide or feel like they do not need to believe in something they cannot see. These people fail to understand the deep riches of God's wisdom. However, those who do believe gain insight into God's wisdom that helps them navigate the issues of life.

3. What Does the Holy Spirit Do?

There are five essential parts to the function of the Holy Spirit:

- A. The Spirit bears witness to Jesus Christ - John 14:26**
- B. The Spirit applies the redemptive work of Christ in the human heart - John 16:7-15**
- C. The Spirit works personally and progressively to form Christlikeness in all believers - Rom. 8:23-27**
- D. The Spirit empowers us to be His witness throughout the world - Acts 1:8**
- E. The Spirit gifts us with spiritual abilities for the building up of the Church and glorification of Jesus Christ - 1 Cor. 12:1-11**

Discussion:

- (1) Looking at each passage, what do these passages have to do with us?
- (2) What will the Holy Spirit do for us?
- (3) What claims are made by the Spirit?

4. How Does One Live and Walk with the Holy Spirit?

A. We recognize that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit - 1 Cor. 6:19-20

The temple of the Holy Spirit is another way of saying that the Spirit dwells within us. He has permanent residence in us. If a person takes up permanent residence in your house, then they become like a member of the family. As a member of the family, you reorganize your home and life to incorporate them. The same goes with the Holy Spirit. You allow Him to reorganize your life so that He has an avenue into each part of your life.

Question: Knowing that the Holy Spirit lives within you, how differently do we look at the every day conduct of our lives...what we see, think on or do?

B. We recognize the conflict between walking in our flesh and walking in the Spirit - Gal. 5:16-26

To walk in the Spirit is not gratify the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh are "against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do" (5:17). Paul assumes in the verse that our primary and most pressing desires will be to satisfy the desires of the Spirit. To not want this in our life is to be sin and be controlled by a force we have

allowed to have dominion over us. As a follower of Jesus Christ, our redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ has made possible the Spirit to dominate and control our conduct and attitudes. To allow anything other than this is to be controlled by that which is inferior, our flesh. Paul outlines the works of the flesh in a non-exhaustive manner in Gal. 5:19-21. He contrasts the works of the flesh by the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-23. The linchpin for the Spirit's dominance and work in the believer is that we who "belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (24).

Discussion Questions:

- (1) Why does Paul refer to the list in Gal. 5:22-23 as fruit?
- (2) In 5:25, Paul goes on to say, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit." What does Paul mean by keeping in step with the Spirit?
- (3) What will you do this week to exhibit the Holy Spirit's work in you?

Assign next week's passage - Next Week is VBS. Pray for the Gospel to find fertile hearts. There will be a stand alone study provided. Stay tuned.

Sunday, June 23 We will study the Doctrine of Scripture - 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 4

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

How many of you read the operator's manual when you buy something new?

Background for the Topic

The Bible. This book Christians call the Bible has been the most hotly debated book in history. More copies have been sold and distributed than all the books written combined. The Bible's validity has been challenged for centuries, military campaigns have been waged over it, religions have been formed, cults and sects organized, debates from every viewpoint initiated, martyrs slain for preaching it, indigenous people groups taught it in their own language and lives changed in every corner of the globe. This solitary book, with one message and one main character with hundreds of supporting characters have ignited the world with hope, conviction and truth. During this study, we look at the Doctrine of Scripture and explore...

- (1) *What is the Bible?*
- (2) *Why was the Bible Written?*
- (3) *Is the Bible Relevant?*
- (4) *What Does the Bible Say about Itself?*

1. What is the Bible?

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) summarizes the doctrine of the Bible this way:

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Simple facts about the Bible are these:

- (1) The Bible is a collection of 66 Books, ranging from Genesis to Revelation that are divided up into two major sections, The Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27).
- (2) While the Bible is made up of 66 books, it contains one story, the meta-narrative that is the redemption of all creation.

- (3) Forty different writers over 1,500 years to produce the Bible. Of the writers, there were kings and priests; peasant and prophets; philosophers and fishermen; poets and scholars.
- (4) The bible was written on three different continents in three different languages.
- (5) The Bible has been read and translated in more languages and by more people than any other book in human history.

2. Why was the Bible Written?

Texts have replaced emails for the most part just as emails replaced letters. Back in the day, letters were the primary way to communicate. Letters were a way for couples in particular to stay connected, especially before the invention of phones (not to mention mobile phones). Couples would write their most intimate thoughts for one another in an attempt to bridge the gap of distance between them. One writer asked, "Could it be the Bible is meant to connect us intimately and personally to God? That would make it far more than a theological treatise, wouldn't it? Instead of a document designed to fill us with knowledge, the Scriptures would be a divine love letter for us."

Consider the various reasons why the Bible was written:

A. For God to reveal Himself to people

The bible is the source for finite people to know an infinite God. From its pages, humanity is able to get a glimpse into the character and conduct of Almighty God.

For example:

"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him!" John 14:21

B. For People to Know How to Live

"Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'" Deut. 4:6

"Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." Joshua 1:8

C. For God to Reveal How He Interacts with People Through Time

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways." Heb. 1:1

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Rom. 15:4

Discussion Questions:

- (1) Does the Bible strike you as relevant and practical for the issues of life today? Why or Why not?
- (2) In what does it encourage you and challenge knowing that God went to great lengths to manifest Himself through the Bible?

3. Is the Bible Credible?

A. Archeology testifies to the credibility of the Bible

Everyday discoveries are being made that lend credibility to the authenticity of the Bible. Recently, an exciting discovery was made that continued to prove the Bible's accuracy. Hank Berrein, in *The Daily Wire*, wrote about a recent discovery in Jerusalem around the excavations of the City of David. He writes: "A clay seal found in Jerusalem has given further evidence of the reign of the famed Biblical Jewish King Josiah, who is noteworthy in Jewish history as the king who brought the Jewish people back to observance of the Torah after the nefarious reign of his predecessor Manasseh. Discovered by the Israel Antiquities Authority and Tel Aviv University, the seal was found underneath a current-day car park; the archaeological team found evidence of a large building that featured ornate architecture and tiled floors that was later burned by the Babylonians when they conquered Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Those features enabled archaeologists to identify the building as an administrative center for the Jewish government of the king."

Dr. Bryant Wood, archeologist for the Associates for Biblical Research, wrote: "Probably the Dead Sea Scrolls have had the greatest Biblical impact. They have provided Old Testament manuscripts approximately 1,000 years older than our previous oldest manuscript. The Dead Sea Scrolls have demonstrated that the Old Testament was accurately transmitted during this interval. In addition, they provide a wealth of information on the times leading up to, and during, the life of Christ."

One writer said, "Today, we possess over 5,600 ancient greek manuscripts for the New Testament, and 19,000 copies in other ancient languages. Latin and Coptic copies go back to the 2nd century. We even have a papyrus fragment of the Gospel of John from 29 years after it was first written. Complete columns of the New Testament date to the 4th century A.D. Compare this with the second best-preserved literary work of antiquity, Homer's Iliad, which has only 643 preserved manuscripts. The Iliad is believed to have been written in the 8th century B.C."

B. Prophecy testifies to the credibility of the Bible

Outside of archeology, the prophetic fulfillment of the Bible is another way to determine the credibility of the Bible. Hugh Ross, astrophysicist, writes: "Approximately 2,500 prophecies appear in the pages of the Bible, about 2,000 of which already have been fulfilled to the letter - no errors. Since the probability for any one of these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance averages less than one in ten, and since the prophecies are for the most part independent of one another, the odds for all these prophecies having been fulfilled by chance without error is less than one in 10^{2000} !"

All you need to do is look in a parallel bible to see how many prophecies made about Jesus in the Old Testament were literally fulfilled and testified in the New Testament.

Discussion Question: *Knowing the credibility of the archeological evidence and the prophetic evidence, how does that increase your confidence in reading and communicating the Bible's message?*

4. What Does the Bible Say About Itself?

There are three main passages that speak to what the Bible says about itself.

A. Psalm 19:7-11

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward."

B. 2 Peter 1:18-21

"For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son,[a] with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

C. 2 Timothy 3:14-17

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

Discussion Question: (1) What are the implications of the Bible's own self-testimony and claims?

(2) What can you do to help someone gain a greater confidence in the Bible?

(3) How does the Doctrine of Scripture encourage you to make disciples?

Assign Next Week's Passage: Next Sunday is Patriotic Celebration - we will have a one-off study surrounding this celebration. The following week, July 7 we will study the Doctrine of Man - Genesis 1-3; Romans 1-3

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 5

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What would you say are the best and worst qualities you have seen in humanity?

Today, we will look at the Doctrine of Man. While people come in various shapes, sizes, colors, backgrounds and the like, people are the critical component to the plan of God. You may like people or dislike people. You may be introverted with people or extroverted with people. You may like to be around lots of people or as few as you can get by with, but the one thing you cannot avoid is people.

Background for the Topic

The Doctrine of Man from a biblical standpoint deals with the origin of man in the context of his beginning and his fall resulting in a changed nature that can only be transformed by the supernatural work of God through Jesus Christ.

The Baptist Faith and Message describes the Doctrine of Man this way:

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherited a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

The study of man is called anthropology...a discourse of man. The term anthropology can be the study of the doctrine of man from a biblical standpoint (The Moody Handbook of Theology). When the Doctrine of Man is explored his/her origin, fall, worth and redemption are the major elements. This study, as part of our Anchored sermon series, will comprise those four elements, even though we could go so much further in the subject.

I. Man's Origin

A. God created man - Gen. 1:26

1. Why did God create man?

God created man for His own glory. While the Bible is clear that God is complete without man and man does not fill a need for God, man and all of creation glorify Him and bring God joy (Isaiah 43:7; Eph. 1:11-12). God did not create man because He was lonely. God had perfect communion, love and fellowship within the Trinity (John 17:5, 24).

Knowing that God created man for His own glory, man is to "do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). This fact alone is evidence of man's significance. Even though God did not need to create anything for Him to be complete, He created man for a relationship with Him that would result on man bringing glory to God as Creator, but also shows man that he is important to God Himself. Man, then, finds his worth and value in the purpose and love of God shown toward them.

2. What is man's purpose for life?

The purpose of every person's life is to bring glory to God. "When we are speaking with respect to God Himself, that is a good summary of our purpose. But when we think of our own interests, we make the happy discovery that we are to enjoy God and take delight in Him and in our relationship to Him. When we realize that God created us to glorify Him, and when we start to act in ways that fulfill that purpose, then we begin to experience an intensity of joy in the Lord that we have never before known." (Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine*).

B. God created man in His own image - Gen. 1:26-27

1. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Of all the creatures God made, only one, man, has the distinction: "in the image of God." In a society that believes God does not exist and man is a product of chance, there is no difference between the animal kingdom and mankind. However, the Bible is clear when it teaches that man is in the image of God, made in the likeness of God and represents God. That inherently separates man from animals given the highest degree of creation for man who possesses characteristics of relationship unlike anything in creation.

2. What is the difference between the image of God and the likeness of God in man?

Genesis 1:26 tells us that when God made man He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Image and likeness are two different words in the Hebrew with different meanings. In reality, the two words informed the readers that man was like God and would represent God. Of course, man's intellectual ability, moral purity, spiritual nature, dominion over the earth, creativity, ability to make ethical choices, and

immortality are obvious parts of the image of God and how we represent God as His likeness. For the Hebrew mind, they did not have to so specifically define the two terms to know the difference. "In fact, as we read the rest of Scripture, we realize that a full understanding of man's likeness to God would require a full understanding of who God is in His being and in His actions and a full understanding of who man is and what he does. The more we know about God and man the more similarities we will recognize and the more fully we will understand what Scripture means when it says that man is in the image of God. The expression refers in every way in which man is like God" (Grudem).

II. Man's Fall

A. What is sin and how did man fall?

Sin is the act or omission to act in a situation that offends the character of God or the direction of God against Him or that which He has created. "Sin is a transgression of the law of God. Sin is a failure to conform to the standard of God. Sin is a principle within man. Sin is a rebellion against God. Sin is wrongful acts toward God and man" (Paul Ennis, Moody Handbook of Theology). Sin originated in the heart of men and in the willful acts of angels. God is not the source of sin and does not cause people to sin (James 1:13). However, God did give man the free will to make choices and inherent in that ability is the possibility that man would choose to go in a different direction from God. Man made that choice in the garden when Adam and Eve questioned the word of God, believing that God was hiding something from them and rebelled against the direct command of God. Their choice ushered sin into the world through imputation (or charging man's sin), allowing sin the free rein to flow through every single human life. In fact, at the Fall, everything in creation was impacted, including every person who would ever take on a human nature.

B. What did sin do the image of God in man?

When Adam and Eve sinned, God's image was distorted but not lost. "Man's moral purity has been lost, and his sinful character certainly does not reflect God's holiness. His intellect is corrupted by falsehood and misunderstanding; his speech no longer continually glorifies God; his relationships are often governed by selfishness rather than love, and so forth. Though man is still in the image of God, in every aspect of life some parts of that image have been distorted or lost. In short, 'God made man upright, but they have sought out many devices' (Eccl. 7:29). After the fall, then, we are still in God's image - we are still like God and we still represent God - but the image of God in us is distorted; we are less fully like God than we were before the entrance of sin" (Grudem).

III. Man's Redemption

A. How does the redemption of Christ begin the process of the recovery of God's image?

Through the redemption of Jesus Christ, His work on the cross, the image of God in man can progressively and permanently be restored. That is, from the moment of salvation, we become more and more like God. Col. 3:10 says that believers have put on the new man "which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." The more we gain understanding from God's word and live out His truth in our lives,

we begin to think more and more like God thinks Himself. This should be the ordinary course of life for every believer.

B. How does Christ complete the realization of God's purpose in creating man?

God's purpose in creating man is for man to bring glory to God. The most visible way this happens is man acting in the likeness of God's character. In Christ, there is moral purity, eternal life and love that goes beyond conditions. Since Jesus is the image bearer of God for man, to be like Christ is to be in the image of God. "In Jesus we see human likeness to God as it was intended to be, and it should cause us to rejoice that God has predestined us 'to be conformed to the image of His son' (Rom. 8:29). We will be like Him when Christ appears (1 John 3:2). The process by which this happens is sanctification.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it do in the human experience when man is seen as no greater of a creation than the animals?
2. How does the image of God and likeness of God encourage you to live more like God?
3. How did the fall of man impact every human life?
4. How did the fall of man reveal the necessity of redemption?
5. What type of life does God desire knowing that He made us in His own image?
6. How are you living within that image and what areas of life are not reflecting the image of God?

Assign Next Week's Passage: John 3; Romans 3 & 6

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 6

THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What has been the greatest change in your life since getting out of high school or college?

Today, we are going to look at the most life-changing aspect of God's creative purpose. Knowing that people are not perfect, that includes you, and knowing that God would never be able to have a relationship with you or you with Him because of your sin, God did something for you that no one else could do. He did it out of His love for you! He did it to redeem you! He did it to make you whole again! He did it because without it, you would have no chance to live eternally with Him or to live the abundant life that He designed you to live. What God did for you has the power to change everything about your life... how you live it, where you live it and how many people you will influence along the way.

Background for the Topic

Today, we will study the most pivotal doctrines in the entirety of God's word. In fact, this doctrine is the culmination of the overall metanarrative of the Bible. The Doctrine of Salvation tells us the story of God's redemption after the fall of man and explains what God has in mind for every person. The topic is too large for one lesson, so the attempt we will make in this study is to give the basics and point people to the greater outworking of salvation in a Christian's life.

In this study, we will explore on a broad scale the...

- (1) *The Atonement*
- (2) *Regeneration*
- (3) *Eternal Security*

In the sermon to follow, we will explore Repentance, Faith and Grace: What is the Process of Salvation.

The Baptist Faith and Message gives us a succinct and clear definition of the doctrine:

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense

salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

This simple, yet profound statement, encapsulates the work of God through Jesus Christ on the cross and the victory over death through the resurrection that affords not only forgiveness from our sin and a home in heaven with God Himself, but it also transforms every part of the believer to live out and be the image bearer of God. We will explore the various aspects of this definition looking at the atonement, regeneration and eternal security.

I. The Atonement

Atonement at its very core has been described as being “at one” with God. In other words, all accounts against God through the fall have been reconciled and we are at peace with God. The atonement of Jesus Christ through His death made this accounting possible. It was Jesus Christ who took upon Himself the debt that every person owed due to the impact of sin in the world and how it flowed through every person. Jesus was able to do what the law could not do (Romans 8:3-4) by securing for us peace with God apart from any good works we could do on our own. That work of Jesus Christ on the cross made peace with God satisfying the demand of righteousness and taking upon Himself all the debt we owed.

There are six words that help us define Atonement:

- A. **Substitution** - The death of Jesus was substitutionary. That is, when Jesus died on the cross He died in your place, taking upon Himself the penalty that you owed. Jesus took the punishment that God’s holiness demanded against sin and transferred it on to Jesus. He bore our sins in his body on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). He suffered once to bear the sins of others (Heb. 9:28). The most concise verse about the substitutionary death of Christ is 2 Corinthians 5:21 “He who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.”
- B. **Redemption** - The word redemption means “to purchase in the marketplace.” This word often had to do with the sale of slaves. “The word is used to describe the believer being purchased out of the slavemarket of sin and set free from sin’s bondage. The purchase price for the believer’s freedom and release from sin was the death of Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Enns, *Soteriology*).
- C. **Reconciliation** - The word reconciliation is an accounting term. It means to make peace. Reconciliation is that of making peace with God. Sin had created a barrier between God and man, but through the death of Jesus Christ, He made it possible to be at peace with God and experience true, lasting, abundant life (Rom. 5:1-10).
- D. **Propitiation** - This word means that the death of Christ fully satisfied all the righteous demands of God toward the sinner (Enns, 325). Simply put, when the believer comes to God through Jesus Christ, he comes in union with Christ, and all the work Jesus did on the cross spares them from receiving the wrath of God. Propitiation literally means that Jesus Christ covered all our sin under His blood. This is from the picture of the blood covering the mercy of God in the holy of holies and the blood the sacrificial lamb covering the sins of the people.

- E. **Forgiveness** - This word is the most familiar of all the words related to salvation. Forgiveness is the legal act of God by which He removes the charges of guilt held against the sinner because proper satisfaction has been made. In short, the act of forgiveness by God is Him cancelling the debt of sin (Col. 2:13) and releasing us from its penalty.
- F. **Justification** - This word is the positive side of the equation which says that sinners who trust in Jesus Christ are declared righteous by God. Again, this is a legal act of God where He declares the person righteous based on the blood of Jesus Christ - "just as if" they had never sinned. There are two aspects to justification: (1) The pardon or removal of sin (Rom. 4:6-7; 5:9-11) and (2) The bestowal of righteousness through the grace of God (Rom. 3:24). "Through justification God maintains His integrity and His standard, yet is able to enter into fellowship with sinners because they have the very righteousness of Christ imputed to them" (Enns).

Discussion Questions: Which one of the six related words for the Atonement grabs your attention the most? How does this word impact your daily life?

II. Regeneration

Regeneration is another aspect to salvation that leads us to the very familiar term: "born again". Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3 "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Implied in this verse is the fact that something new takes place at salvation. Grudem describes regeneration from this standpoint. He said, "Regeneration is a secret act of God in which He imparts new spiritual life." How does this new life happen and who is responsible for its living out?

- A. **Regeneration is the Complete Work of God in the Believer** - Rather than salvation being some of God and some of man, salvation is a work that only God could do. We play an active part, but in regeneration, we play no active role at all. **John 1:12-13 "But to all who receive Him, who believed on His name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood not of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."** Just as a child has no role in their own birth, children of God do not have an active role in birthing themselves spiritually. This is exclusively a work of God. This same principle is mentioned in Ezekiel 36:26-27 "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes and be careful to observe My ordinances." This verse is clear that God is the initiator and active agent of transformation.
- B. **Regeneration is the Mysterious Work of God in the Believer** - Salvation is mysterious because we cannot tell how God brings life from death. People are living and breathing, but yet, the Bible says that they are dead (Eph. 2:1). Jesus spoke about the mystery of regeneration in John 3:8 "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit." Regeneration is an instantaneous work of God that effects the entire person. One moment we are dead and the next moment we are alive. One

moment we are walking in darkness, unable to understand the work of God, and the next moment we are walking in light and can clearly see the life God wants us to live. We are not sure how God does this or what happens within us, but the evidence of a changed person is all that is needed.

- C. **Regeneration is the Work of God to Give Us the Ability to Believe** - Before a person can believe with saving faith, God must give them the ability to believe. Regeneration is that work of God where God initiates faith, giving us the ability to believe and then, the evidence of a changed life is seen. The Bible does not command a person to be born again, but rather, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."
- D. **Regeneration Results in a Changed Life** - The work of Jesus Christ on the cross was so magnanimous that it had to afford a major transformation in the life of all those covered by it. By believing, a Christian enters a life that goes from willful, consistent sin, to a life that is repulsed by sin and leans on the Holy Spirit to empower them not to sin (1 John 3:9; 5:1). The evidence of regeneration is not continuing in sin but also bearing fruit (Gal. 5:22-23). The life of the believer will be so changed that false living will be clear and deception will be detected, no matter how clever the disguise (Matthew 7:15-23).

Discussion Questions: What aspects of regeneration challenges you the most? What aspects encourages you to live out your faith radically? Why?

III. Eternal Security

The part of salvation that has given people the most confusion through the years is that of its eternal nature. Does God save people eternally? Is it possible for a person to sin away their day of grace? Does a person who prayed a prayer as a child but never really lived it get in? These are all tough questions but clearly answered when you look at the biblical definition of salvation.

- A. **The Securing Work of God the Father** - Eternal security is defined as the work of God to secure every person who comes to faith in Him without losing them to their own sinful choices after regeneration. Jesus said in John 10:28-29 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to Me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." Believers are secure because salvation is God's work secured from eternity past (Eph. 1:4). The Father predestined believers to come to the status of sonship in Christ (Enns, 340; Eph. 1:5). The Father has the power to keep all those who come to Him (Rom. 8:28-30).
- B. **The Securing Work of God in Christ** - What Christ did on the cross cannot be undone or weakened by man's sin. Jesus Christ redeemed the believer, removed the wrath of God from him, justified the believer, provided forgiveness for him and continues to intercede for the believer (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:25; 5:1; Col. 2:13; John 17:24; Heb. 7:25). If a believer could lose their salvation then he would have had to gain it on his own or the work of Jesus on the cross rendered ineffective.

C. **The Securing Work of the Holy Spirit** - The Holy Spirit brings conviction of sin to the believer (John 16), but then dwells in the believer (John 14:17). He seals the believer for the day of redemption, as an engagement ring would to a couple before marriage (Eph. 4:30). How could one say that a sin or a host of sins could undo what the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has done to secure salvation? This is not to say that believers live perfectly, but that in Christ, their sins are covered by God's grace. Fellowship may be hindered as would between a child and parent, but the relationship can never be broken because it was forged through blood.

Discussion Questions: Knowing that you are secure in Jesus Christ, how does it impact the way you live, make decisions and even deal with sin in your life? Does security in Jesus Christ give you greater confidence to live boldly? If yes, in what ways could you live your life more boldly? What would have to change?

Assign Next Week's Passage: Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:42-47

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 7

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What do you like the most and what do you like the least about Church?

Without a doubt, that question will get a myriad of responses, some good and some bad. The Church has been defined differently down through the centuries, used as a battering ram of deception and corruption, maligned as a house of hypocrisy and seen as an irrelevant use of one's time and money. While the Church has gone through the throws all of this, it remains the one thing God chooses to use to proclaim His message of redemption to the entire world. Like it or not, the Church is here to stay because the One who created the Church, died for the Church, called the Church and built the Church is God Himself.

Background for the Topic

The Doctrine of the Church is the reality of what God did to encapsulate His redemptive work through people following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Church being made up of every tongue, tribe, people and nation who follow Jesus exclusively as Savior and Lord is God's expression of His nature, character and conduct among the people of the world. The Church carries out the work of God being His body expressing His love, compassion, justice, kindness, tenderness, and peace to a world lost and in rebellion to God. The Church is the light of Christ lived out in human form.

The word Church comes from a combination of a Scottish word Kirk and the German word Kirche, both deriving from the Greek word kuriakon or kurios, meaning Lord or "belonging to the Lord." The English word for Church translates the Greek word Ekklesia, which means to call out or the called out ones.

The first mention of the word in the New Testament was Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." When Jesus referred to Peter, He was not saying that He would build the church on Peter but on the true confession that Peter spoke, namely, that Jesus was the Messiah. Also, Jesus was not referring to the local church but the universal church, the myriad of believers in the present age and every age until the Lord's return.

In this study, we will discover the definitions of the Church, the duties of the Church and functions of the Church.

I. The Definitions of the Church

A. Local and Universal Church

The Church is expressed as both local congregations and the universal church. The local church is the most common use of the word. The New Testament speaks of the local church as a congregation of Christ followers gathered together for worship, fellowship, service and witness. Local expressions of the church began after Pentecost (Acts 2) in Jerusalem and then spread through Asia Minor, Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica and in the home of Philemon, as described in Acts and letters of the Apostle Paul. Early believers did not have buildings in which to meet, therefore, the church was not identified as a church building but a group of people called out for a specific purpose. It was not until the time of Constantine and beyond that Church became synonymous with a building. As the people came together in homes, they met to hear the Word of God taught, serve one another, pray for and with one another, fellowship, observe the Lord's supper and be sent out to various places as missionaries of the Gospel. The net result was that the Lord added to their number everyday. Churches were planted and the Gospel spread across the globe.

The universal expression of the Church is the total makeup of the Church around the world. These are men and women, baptized into Christ, that form the body of Christ. This is what Jesus said He would build (Matthew 16:18). The universal is sometimes referred to as the invisible church and the local church as the visible church (Enns, 348).

B. The Formation of the Church

The Church was first mentioned in Matthew 16:18 by Jesus as being built on the reality of the spoken word that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. This truth is the foundation for the church. The Church was not built at that moment. When Jesus said these words, He was speaking in future terms. It was not until Pentecost (Acts 2) that the promised Holy Spirit came and empowered the disciples to evangelize. From that moment, regeneration of people began and with each conversion the Church grew. First Corinthians 12:13 tells us that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in baptizing believers into one body, the body of Christ that comprises the Church. "At the moment of regeneration, the Holy Spirit places believers into union with Christ. Ephesians 1:22-23 identifies the church as the Body of Christ, stressing this union with Christ that all believers are brought into at the moment of conversion" (Enns, Ecclesiology, 349).

C. The Descriptions of the Church

1. **Body.** The most visually descriptive word for the Church is the Body. This metaphor illustrates the connection between the head and the body. Christ said that He was the Head of the Church and the His followers are the body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The head is the seat of authority and the informs the body about how to perform. In like manner, Jesus is the authority over the body and tells the body what to do. The word also demonstrates the unity of the connection between Christ and His followers. Both Jew and Gentile coming together by faith in Christ, baptized into Christ, there is no distinction, but through them flow the Spirit who gives grace gifts to all for the common good of the people.
2. **Bride.** The word that depicts the covenant commitment of Christ to believers is the word Bride. It pictures a binding, loving relationship where Christ takes the role of protector and caretaker over His bride. Ephesians 5:2, 25 give us the expression of love between Christ and all believers.

While the Church is not all together with Christ in glory, He has guaranteed the consummation of the marriage through sealing the Church with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

3. **Building.** The Church is also called the Building of God (Eph. 2:20). Jesus is the chief cornerstone and the people of God are the stones built one upon another as a temple of God's dwelling. Building is not to define the church to a solitary structure, but to relate the connectivity of one person to another person all under the banner of Christ. The Church is fitted together, working together, and growing as an organism (Eph. 2:21; 1 Pet. 2:5).
4. **Priesthood.** Again, 1 Pet. 2:9 lets us know that the Church is a culmination of a royal priesthood, a massive collection of Christ followers who enter directly in to the Holy of Holies for worship. Whereas in the Old Testament, the Holy of Holies was an unapproachable place for those not Levites, in the New Testament, Jesus paved the way for all people who believe to be their own priest. The work of their redemption already done through the cross of Jesus Christ, now believers could approach God cleansed by Christ's blood and reconciled to the Father.
5. **Flock.** One of the most intimate expressions of the Church is the word Flock. It illustrates the tenderness of relationship as sheep to a shepherd. Israel had this distinction (Psalm 23; Ps. 80:1). Jesus referred to His disciples and all those who would hence forth follow Him as His sheep (John 10).
6. **Branches.** In John 15 Jesus describes those who would follow Him as the branches of a vine. He was the vine and the church would be the branches. Jesus used this illustration to communicate the vital nature of remaining in Him for nourishment and fruitfulness. Without Him, the Church would not be able to do anything of eternal value.

Discussion Questions: Which one of the descriptions of the Church listed above do you identify with the most? What is it about that description that helps you to see the Church in a positive light? How does it challenge you to live for Christ daily?

II. The Purposes of the Church

Obviously, if the Lord Jesus died for the Church and instituted the Church as the extension of Himself in the world, the Church has distinct purpose. From Acts 2:42-47 and various other passages, we get a clear picture of God's purpose for His Church.

- A. **Worship.** The Church's primary purpose and focus is upward, the worship of Almighty God. The Church has no room to boast in itself, but the mark of a genuine church is worship of God. We are directed to worship through singing, teaching, and giving thanks to God (Col. 3:16). "Worship in the church is not merely a preparation for something else; it is in itself fulfilling the major purpose of the church with reference to its Lord" (Grudem, 373). Worship does not encompass the outward

expressions of praise but involves the entire presentation of the believer's being before God (Rom. 12:1-2).

- B. **Prayer.** While prayer could be included in Worship and is a part of our worship, the early church made prayer the priority for the health of the church. Prayer can be the most neglected priority of the Church, but it is without a doubt, the most necessary if the church is going to experience the power of the Holy Spirit unhindered.
- C. **Teaching.** One of the major responsibilities of the Church is the maturity of believers so they in turn will grow to be disciples who make disciples (Col. 1:28; 2 Timothy 2:2). The path to maturity is the instruction of God's people in God's word, living it out before a community of believers and as a witness to a watching world. When the Church gathers, they do not just gather as a group but they come together under biblical instruction, challenged and held accountable to live out the truth. Through this the Church is nurtured and grows strong.
- D. **Fellowship.** When the body of Christ comes together, there is an opportunity for their lives to intermingle. Biblical fellowship is not a meal they would eat on Sunday or conversations they would have by the coffee maker. Biblical fellowship was intensive times of introspection, encouragement, challenge, and care. Often this would take place around the Lord's table as they would remember the Lord's death and resurrection. Many times this meant going from house to house making sure that believers were cared for and nurtured.
- E. **Mercy and Evangelism.** The Church has the primary purpose in the world of showing mercy to unbelievers and sharing the Gospel with them (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus gave His disciples His final command and that was to be on mission for Him. As you go, make disciples and teaching them to obey His commands. The work of the Church is to be active in the world spreading the message of hope and forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions: Which one of the purpose are we doing well as a local church? Which one do you personally need to work on in your Christian walk?

III. The Ordinances of the Church

In the Protestant Church, the main two ordinances of the Church are baptism and the Lord's Supper. The word ordinance is sacrament. These are observances that give a sign of our faith in Christ.

- A. **Baptism.** For Christians, baptism is the outward identification of the inward reality of faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritually, baptism takes place at conversion where the believer is immersed into Christ's death and raised to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Baptism takes place after a person has come to faith in Christ as a witness of their faith before a community of believers. The mode of baptism is immersion because the meaning of the word means to dip, immerse or plunge. Mark 1:10 says that when Jesus was baptized He went down into the Jordan and came up out of the water. Acts 8:34-39 records the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch who asked to be baptized. One each mention

of the water, there is a reference to going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Each reference strongly suggesting immersion as the mode. Finally, Christians should not believe in any salvific power with the water. The bible never claims that water baptism has saving power, but every time that baptism is the secondary expression of the primary step of faith. Therefore, baptism is not required for salvation.

- B. **Lord's Supper.** The second ordinance of the church is the Lord's Supper or Communion. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the last supper Jesus shared with His disciples on the night before His crucifixion. The ordinance is also in observance of Jesus' own words to do this so that the church would remember specifically what Jesus did for them on the cross. The Lord's Supper is made up of two parts: the body and the blood. From the Old Testament observance of Passover where God passed over the houses with blood on the lintels and doorposts to the New Testament observance of the blood being applied over the believer's life, the Lord's Supper illustrates the work of God from the beginning through His redemptive story. When Christians celebrate this (as they have since Pentecost - Acts 4:42-47), they use bread for Christ's body and wine (or grape juice) for the blood. Protestant Christians do not believe as Catholics that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ (doctrine of transubstantiation). Christians believe that the elements are symbols to be remembered. The Lord's Supper is therefore a witness to the world of the work of Christ on the cross making a New Covenant for every person who comes to faith in Jesus Christ.

Discussion Questions: In what ways do baptism and the Lord's Supper impact the way you view the work of God in the world? What does it mean for the world where you live?

Assign Next Week's Passage: Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 21

Close in Prayer



ANCHORED WEEK 8

THE DOCTRINE OF FUTURE THINGS

Open in Prayer

Welcome/Introductions

Ask a hook question [Ask a thought provoking question to get the group focused]

What did you think the world would be like in 2020 when you were a kid?

One of the greatest mysteries of the Bible and the Christian life is the mystery about the future. Either people are apathetic to it and have decided they can do nothing to change it so why bother thinking about it, or people are paranoid about it and can think of nothing but the future, the study of future things (eschatology) is something everyone thinks about in someone at one time or the other. Death is man's last frontier. To know what is beyond the veil is the subject of thousands of books, philosophies and religions. For Christians, there are many commonalities among their understanding, but then again there are many differences. The differences mainly surround how and when the Lord will come back. The dividing lines are between Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, Historic Premillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism. Confused yet? Each view has an advocate and each view has been strongly debated for centuries. Time will not allow this study to delve that deeply into the subject. This study will not look at each argument or dissect the Book of Revelation or the Old Testament books of prophecy unless they speak directly the subject matter. The purpose of this Bible study is to lay out the facts that are obvious and leave the heavily debated views to theologians. There are certainties that have strong biblical foundations and those are the subjects tackled in this study.

Background for the Topic

The Doctrine of Future Things has to do with what happens when a person dies, when and how Christ will return and what does the Bible say about the future. One author put in like this:

"Although we cannot know everything about the future, God knows everything about the future and He has in Scripture told us about the major events yet to come in the history of the universe. About these events occurring we can have absolute confidence because God is never wrong and never lies."

Future things have to do with death, Heaven, Hell, the Return of Christ, the Resurrection of the Dead, the Final Judgment and the Eternal State.

I. The Reality of Death

For every person across the human race, death is a reality (Heb. 9:27). The Bible speaks about death in many different ways, but mainly the death of the physical body, not the soul. The body may die, but the soul, the life-principle of man, lives on (Enns, Mt. 10:28; Luke 12:4-5). Death can be defined as the end of the physical life through the separation of body and soul (James 2:26). When God made man, he made him out of the dust of the ground. When man dies, he goes back to the dust. All of this takes place because sin entered the world and corrupted the creative design of God spreading to every person through the first man Adam (Rom. 5:12). Romans 6:23 says that the "wages of sin is death."

Some theologians and religious sects, even some mainstream believers, believe that when a person dies they are annihilated (they cease to exist). The doctrine of annihilationism is widely believed by people who cannot come to terms with the reality of hell or the reality that God would punish someone infinitely for a finite period of sin. The Bible teaches that life continues for believers and unbelievers alike after death. The clearest teaching and picture of this come from Jesus' own words recorded in Luke 16:19-31.

Discussion Question: What bothers you the most about the reality of death?

II. The Reality of Heaven

Orthodox Christianity teaches the reality of two places after death: Heaven and Hell. The word for heaven in both Hebrew and Greek means "that which is above". The Bible uses three words for heaven:

- (1) **The Atmospheric Heaven.** The space surrounding the earth up to six miles is known as the troposphere.
- (2) **The Celestial Heaven.** Then there is the space containing the sun, moon, stars and planets.
- (3) **The Dwelling Place of God.** This could be what Paul was speaking of when he mentions "the third heaven." This heaven is a real place where God dwells outside of time and space as we experience them (John 14:1-3; Ps. 2:4; Joshua 10:11; Deut. 26:15). From this heaven, God blesses, establishes His sovereign plan and prepares the dwelling places of the redeemed.

When the Bible speaks about heaven, the dwelling place of God, there are two important aspects to it:

- A. **The Occupants of Heaven.** The bible is clear that only the redeemed, those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord will occupy Heaven (Rev. 20:15; John 14:1-3; John 3:16; and many more). Jesus taught that only those on the narrow path that led to life would enter (Matthew 7:13-14). In fact, there would be many who thought they should be admitted to heaven but are turned away because they trusted in their deeds (Matthew 7:21-23).
- B. **New Jerusalem.** One of the most important aspects of heaven is the city called New Jerusalem (Revelation 21-22). As one part of the new heavens and new earth, the new city is massive in length covering the width of the United States from North Carolina to Colorado and from Maine to Florida. The height of the city goes well into the troposphere demanding that believers new glorified bodies

will be equipped for new atmospheric air. While New Jerusalem is massive, the main component of heaven will be the intimate fellowship enjoyed by every occupant. Along with intimacy in the presence of Christ, all the sorrows of life in a fallen world will be gone (Rev. 21:4). All that will be left will be the beauty of the new city (Rev. 21:9-26).

Discussion Question: What about Heaven are you looking forward to the most?

III. The Reality of Hell

Hell is described in the Bible as Sheol, hades, Gehenna, Tartaroo and the Abyss. Hell is a reality because Jesus spoke about Hell more than Heaven. Hell is the place of final and eternal punishment for sin (Matthew 24:51; 25:30, 46).

- A. **The Occupants of Hell.** Those who spend eternity in Hell will be those who have rejected the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ choosing to stand before God in their own good deeds. They are called the dead (Eph. 2:1) or those who live in darkness and live according to their own desires (Romans 1:18-32).
- B. **The Place of Hell.** When the Bible describes Hell from the teachings of Jesus and then in Revelation, it uses words phrases like: "unquenchable fire" (Mt. 3:12); "furnace of fire" (Mt. 13:42, 50); "Outer darkness" (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30); "eternal fire" (Mt. 25:41); "the lake that burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8); "the lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20). For unbelievers, there is no purgatory or second chance beyond death. They will be judged by their deeds and condemned by their deeds being casted into the lake of fire at the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Discussion Question: Why do people struggle with believing in Hell? If it is true, why doesn't it change the way we proclaim the Gospel?

IV. The Reality of the Return of Christ

Mentioned more than 300 times in Scripture, the return of Jesus Christ is a critical doctrine as Christians consider future things. Christ taught that his return would be literal and physical, just as they had seen Him while on earth. Believers would also be comforted by his return because He would be bringing them to a prepared place (John 14:1-3). Jesus taught that the place would be definite but the time for His return would not be revealed (Mt. 24:36). Saints were to be prepared for His return by living faithfully and being strong in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

The return of Christ was declared throughout the church to also describe the eternal nature of heaven. Notice how 1 Thess. 4:15-18 describes this event: "For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and

with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.”

V. The Reality of the Final Judgment and the Eternal State

When life is over, there will be two judgments, one for believers and one for unbelievers. The one for believers will be the Bema Seat judgment where the Christians works after salvation are judged. 2 Cor. 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” The lives of believers will be reflected in this judgment and their motivations measured (1 Cor. 3:14-15; 4:5). Believers home in heaven will be secure because they will have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit until this Day.

For unbelievers, they will stand before God to give account of their lives. This happens at the end of time, when God wipes out all things and before He recreates all things (Rev. 21:1-4). The final judgment will take place before the throne of God, called the Great White Throne judgment. The books will be opened and names read. Those whose names are not written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire.

The Bible is also clear that both states are eternal. God created mankind as eternal beings with the possibility of being with Him eternally. The sin done on the earth has universal ramifications. Therefore, the consequences of sin have eternal consequences. If a person comes under the authority and covering of Jesus Christ, their sins are eternally pardoned, but if a person decides to go around the cross, they will stand before God without the covering of the blood of Christ. “Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin.” (Heb. 9:22).

Discussion Questions: Knowing the eternal realities of Heaven and Hell and the coming judgment, how should it influence the way we live? What challenges you or bothers you about future things?