

The Essentials of the Christian Faith Study #3

Saint Augustine said, “*In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*”

There are many things we find in scripture, and depending on the context, timeline of the event, and many other aspects, we can determine whether those things are for the Church today.

Some things are no longer normative in the New Testament Church. Some people disagree on things such as sign gifts, timing of events, and other things as well.

When something is not completely clear in scripture, we can agree to disagree on certain things.

However, certain beliefs are considered essential to the Christian faith. The Bible itself makes these beliefs non-negotiable.

The essentials of the Christian faith are the deity of Christ, the virgin birth of Christ, salvation by God’s grace through Jesus Christ alone and not by works...

the resurrection of Christ, the Gospel, the infallibility and inerrancy of scripture, the promise of a second coming from Jesus, and the Holy Trinity.

(The Trinity will be covered in the next study)

These are the main “essentials” that we should understand and believe if we are true followers of Jesus Christ.

1. **The deity of Christ.** (Jesus is fully man and fully God)

Jesus is God, who came to the Earth He created, in a human body. Jesus made it very clear to those around Him, especially the Pharisees and Sadducees, that He is God.

Psalm 110:1 The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool." NKJV

The LORD YHWH or Jehovah is the self-**existent** God.

My Lord Adonai, master or boss, is **another** name for God.

Strong's concordance says that Adonai can be used as a reference to God, or as a **parallel** with Yahweh (YHWH).

The inescapable fact is that by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, David called the Messiah "Lord," therefore making Him God.

600 years before Jesus came to earth, the prophet Jeremiah said,

Jeremiah 23:5 "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

Jeremiah 23:6 In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD (YHWH) OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." NKJV

What the critics fail to understand is what is known in Christian Theology as the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, which is a fancy way of saying Jesus is the only One who has a dual nature.

According to gotquestions.org, “*The hypostatic union is the term used to describe how God the Son, Jesus Christ, took on a human nature, yet remained fully God at the same time.*”

Jesus has always been God, and at the incarnation, Jesus took on flesh as Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Jesus is eternally the Godman, 100% God and 100% man, in one being, forevermore.

Jesus said in *Revelation 22:16*, “*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star.*” NKJV

In the *Gospel of Matthew*, the religious leaders thought Jesus could have come from David’s physical line, but they would not believe He was God the Son, so Jesus asked them a question.

Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

Matthew 22:42 saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David."

Matthew 22:43 He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:

Matthew 22:44 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'?

Matthew 22:45 If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"

Matthew 22:46 And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore. NKJV

After the religious leaders had asked several questions, and Jesus answered them all without any room for argument, they had nothing to **refute** His claims, and nothing left to say to Him.

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven you."

Mark 2:6 And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts,

Mark 2:7 "Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" NKJV

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

Colossians 2:9 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; NKJV

1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit, and these three are one.

See also: ***John 1:1, 14; John 10:30; John 5:17-18; John 20:28***

2. The virgin birth of Christ.

Jesus Christ is eternally God. He was together with the Father and the Holy Spirit from the beginning, and through Him all things were made. For man's redemption, He left heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary.

800 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah said,

Isaiah 7:14 “the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son and shall call His name Immanuel.” NKJV

This prophecy was fulfilled in Christ, so it was repeated in the New Testament.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

Matthew 1:20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Matthew 1:22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

Matthew 1:23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us.'" NKJV

3. Salvation by grace alone through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Ephesians 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. NKJV

Romans 3:23 and *Romans 6:23* tell us we are all sinners separated from God and deserving of eternal punishment for our sin.

Isaiah 59:2 Your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. NKJV

Jesus' death on the Cross paid for our sins, giving us access and ability to approach the throne of God and have an eternal relationship with Him. *Hebrews 4:16*

This gift of salvation was given to us by His grace, which can be defined as undeserved favor from the LORD.

An acrostic for grace explains God's grace: God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. NKJV

There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor or gain access to heaven apart from His grace.

Do all roads lead to God? Someday, everyone will stand before the judgment seat of God.

The question is whether you stand before Him innocent because you are covered by the blood of Christ, or will you stand before Him guilty and have to pay for your own sin?

Acts 4:12 "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." NKJV

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." NKJV

4. The resurrection of Christ.

The resurrection of Christ is the pivotal point of Christianity.

No other event in history, aside from Jesus' death on the Cross, is as significant to the Christian faith as His resurrection.

Why is the Resurrection of Christ so significant?

Jesus died, and after three days, He came back to life and rose again to reappear to His followers in bodily form. This was the ultimate proof that Jesus is who He said He is.

The Resurrection displayed His awesome power and glory.

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus demonstrated His ability to resurrect others like His friend Lazarus.

John 11:43 Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

John 11:44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go." NKJV

The Resurrection of Christ is **proof** that Jesus is who He said He is. If Jesus had only died, He would be no different than other religious leaders who have died.

Why did Jesus need to be raised from the dead?

Romans 4:25 (He) was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of (FOR) our justification. NKJV

John Walvoord says, *"The resurrection is stated as proof of the efficiency of Christ's death. Having accomplished redemption by His death, Jesus Christ was raised because of our justification."*

Acts 10:39 We are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

Acts 10:40 Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

Acts 10:41 not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. NKJV

I believe Peter mentioned eating for a couple of reasons:

Peter mentioned eating because during the vision he received, he was told not to call unclean what God had cleansed.

Peter mentioned eating because Jesus' resurrection was an authentic bodily resurrection from the dead not just a spiritual resurrection as the Gnostics of his day taught.

1 Corinthians 15:5 ...and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve.

1 Corinthians 15:6 After that, He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

1 Corinthians 15:7 After that, He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. NKJV

All world religions are based on works, a powerless deity, or a person. The leaders of all other religions die and remain dead.

Only the Christian faith is based on Christ crucified and resurrected to life.

1 Corinthians 15:14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

1 Corinthians 15:15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up — if in fact the dead do not rise. NKJV

Only the Christian faith serves a risen, living God and Savior!

5. The Gospel and the payment for sin.

(Jesus' substitutionary atoning death on the cross)

The Gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ, His death on the Cross to pay for the sins of mankind, and His resurrection, which proved He is who He claimed to be, is central to the Christian faith.

The Gospel tells us how the Lord provides a way for sinners to be forgiven by accepting Jesus Christ's death and resurrection as a sacrifice for their sins.

Jesus' death satisfies God's justice and pays the debt of sin.

Since God is holy and just, He must punish sin, and Jesus, who is/was sinless, died as a perfect substitute in the sinner's place.

Faith in Jesus offers forgiveness and is the only path for reconciliation with God and freedom from sin's consequences.

Human effort cannot pay for sin or meet God's standard of justice and holiness; the only solution available is the Gospel.

Christ's forgiveness can restore a relationship with God, give eternal life, and provide freedom from the bondage of sin.

Paul gives a clear definition of the Gospel in *1 Corinthians*:

1 Corinthians 15:1 “I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand,

1 Corinthians 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

1 Corinthians 15:4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” NKJV

Paul wanted his readers to know just how important the Gospel was and that even the Old Testament scriptures foretold the Good News of the coming Gospel message.

The Biblical Gospel is so vital that Paul issued a warning about fake or other gospels to the Galatians:

Galatians 1:8 “But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

Galatians 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” NKJV

6. **The inerrancy of scripture** (in its original writing).

The belief in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture is one of the main “essentials” that we should understand and believe if we are true followers of Jesus Christ.

The Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments, is alone the only infallible inspired Word of God, and that its authority is ultimate, final, and eternal.

It cannot be added to, subtracted from, or superseded in any regard. The Bible is the source of all doctrine, instruction, correction, and reproof.

It contains all that is needed for guidance in godliness and practical Christian conduct.

All scripture is given by the inspiration of God. *i.e.*, the Bible is God-breathed, and it is wholly true in the original writings, and the Bible has all the authority of God’s own words.

The Bible is a collection of **66** different documents, written by approximately 40 different authors, who were separated by hundreds of miles (Africa, Asia, and Europe).

The Bible was written over a period of approximately 1500+ years (1446 BC – AD 95).

The Bible was written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

Yet, despite the differences in the writing styles and timing, the Bible is a perfectly consistent book.

Beginning with ***Genesis*** in the Old Testament, all the way into the New Testament, the Bible reveals the Lord's desire to restore mankind and bring sinners into a relationship with Him.

The Bible claims to be perfect, true, and containing the words of life and wisdom.

Psalm 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; NKJV

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. NKJV

Psalm 119:160 The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. NKJV

The Bible was written by God as He worked through human authors in a process called “inspiration.”

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

2 Timothy 3:17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. NKJV

Because the LORD is perfect, He is able to write a **perfect** letter to His creation and preserve it through the centuries.

We believe that all apparent contradictions within scripture can be explained by studying the rest of scripture.

If the Bible contained contradictions, then it would be proven that the LORD did not author the book.

We believe the Bible speaks the very word of God and is able to know our thoughts and the intents of our hearts.

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. NKJV

The Bible is our foundation for **faith** and practice, and therefore, if there are any doctrinal disagreements between people, we believe the Bible is the final court of arbitration.

Acts 17:10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Acts 17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. NKJV

7. The promise of a second coming of Christ.

Although there are different opinions about end-time events within mainstream Christianity, the bodily return of Christ is an essential belief for Christians.

The second coming of Jesus will be **literal**, and He will return bodily, in the same, resurrected, glorified body He had when He ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:9 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

Acts 1:10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

Acts 1:11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." NKJV

Sin was dealt with once and for all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:28 Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. NKJV

Today, Christians **eagerly** anticipate the future and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:18 Little children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. NKJV

In conclusion, there will be a bodily, personal second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the Saints, the Millennium, and the final judgment.

The final judgment will determine the eternal status of saints and the unbelievers, determined by their relationship to Jesus Christ.

We affirm with the Bible the final state of the New Heavens and New Earth.