

Basic Christianity – Bible Outline

Week 4 – Grace, Not Works

Introduction/ Review / Questions

Goal: teach true meaning of Christianity by looking into the life, teachings, and claims of Christ. Do you know for certain that you have eternal life? (Yes, No, I don't know most common answer). Past 3 weeks review:

Week 1: Jesus' divine relationship to God through authority (1) as teacher, (2) over evil spirits, (3) sin, (4) over sickness, (5) over nature and death, (6) people.

Week 2: Not only great teacher, miraculous healer and Son of God, but that he came to die in our place as a substitution. God punishes sin, reconcile us to God as ransom.

Week 3: Resurrection Jesus victorious over sin and death. Ensures we will be raised, judged by Jesus, divided into righteous and wicked where the division is eternal.

Next three weeks: how we can be certain that we have eternal life.

Salvation by Grace, or Works?

If you were to die today, what would you say? On what basis would you claim to be "right" before him? Answer in two ways – on basis of our own righteousness, or on the merit of someone else. Religions of "Do" or "Done."

The Wrong Answer - What I Do (or don't do) (Mark 7:20-23)

"On what basis would God let you into heaven?" The wrong answer is by my own merit, my works, what I do or don't do. But there is nothing I can do to make myself right before God. Why? Because God's standard is 100% perfection. There is no room for error – and by that standard we all fail miserably. Remember VCR tape illustration (week 2), our record of sins, however large or small, separates us eternally from our holy and just God. *Read Mark 7:20-23.* Jesus explains that sin is not just a matter of doing, or saying, or even thinking wrong things. No, it is much more symptomatic than that. It's what is naturally in our hearts, it is who we are. Band-aid illustration.

The Right Answer – What Jesus Did (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Right answer is not our works, but in the person and work of Christ. *Read Eph. 2:8-9.* Christianity teaches that we are saved not of our own merit, but of God's free and loving GRACE alone. Grace is unmerited favor, it is to receive the opposite of what we deserve. And this unmerited favor is found in Christ (the stool), in his divine authority (leg 1), substitutionary death (leg 2) and resurrection (leg 3). Though free, the gift doesn't mean I can live corruptly because God is in business of forgiving. True faith is evidenced in obedience. We are justified by grace alone through faith alone, but never by the faith that is alone. Is that clear?

Summary and Conclusion

Religions tend to fall into one of two categories, religions of "Do", and "Done". The salvation of Christ and the Kingdom of God must be received as a gift; it cannot be achieved by human effort. It can only be entered by those who know they are helpless and sinful, without claim or merit on our own behalf – and turn and trust in Christ. This is how we can know for sure that we have eternal life. Like any gift that is offered to us, we must receive it. The same is true with God's grace. In the next two weeks we'll discuss how to receive the free gift of eternal life by repenting of our sin, and believing in Christ.

Homework – Mark: 1:15, 8:34-38, 9:43-48, 10:29-31.

Frequently Asked Questions (Mark 11-16)

Curse Fig Tree? Mark 11:12-14, 20-25. The passage appears to be an acted parable. The fig tree and the vine are two common symbols of Israel in the OT and NT. Christ has come to find that the tree bears no fruit or hope thereof, and is thus condemned (Luke 13:6-9). The cleansing of the temple is further verification that Israel was "barren" and would be judged.

Is Christ saying that we can literally move mountains? Mark 11:26. The language to "move mountains" or literally "uproot them" was a common rabbinic phrase (metaphor). Christ uses it as an example of the significant faith we are to exhibit in all aspects of our relationship with God, but particularly in prayer. When we pray we must believe and not doubt that it shall be answered (James 1:6). Yet even in our faith we must not assume we can "move mountains" at our will, for it is ultimately God's will that will be done (1 Jn 5:14).

What is the "abomination that causes desolation, and what is meant when it says this generation will not pass away"? Mark 13:14, 30. These are difficult questions, as are most that deal with prophecy and the final days. Regarding the first, most scholars seem to think that Jesus is referring to the siege of Jerusalem by Roman armies. The Roman eagles of the legions were held by the Jewish Zealots to be sacrilegious idols, or abominations. In AD 70 the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, and images of Caesar stood in its place. This generation most likely refers to the generation listening to Christ, as opposed to a people or the Jewish nation. "These things" might then be the temporal destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, which the present generation would have witnessed with great sadness and dismay.

Why did Jesus not know the date of his own return? Mark 13:32. At one level, this is a warning that we ought not to presume the time and dates of Christ's return. At another level, even in the omniscience of God some things are not known by Christ. It does not mean Christ is incapable of knowing, but rather in the flesh there are things he chooses not to know.

What is the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread? Mark 14:1. Passover was a yearly festival whereby Israel would remember what God had done for them while captives of Pharaoh. The final of the ten plagues in Egypt was that of the death of the firstborn. With the sacrificial blood of a lamb over the door frame, God "passed over" the children of Israel. The Feast of the Unleavened Bread (bread without yeast) followed for 7 days to commemorate the Lord's faithfulness and their deliverance from bondage (Exodus 12:1-30).

This is my body? Mark 14:22. The verse is not meant to suggest that the bread literally becomes the body (doctrine of transubstantiation) during the celebration of Communion. It is rather a picture of Christ broken for those he would redeem, and we take it in remembrance of him (1 Cor. 11:24).

Take this cup from me. Was Christ unwilling to die? Mark 14:36. No, Christ had come to do the will of his father, however, we get a glimpse of the anguish which Christ understood would come upon the cross, both physical and spiritual as he was separated from the Father.

Is the final section of Mark valid? Mark 16:9-20. There is strong evidence to suggest that these verses were not written by Mark, but rather by another many years later in an attempt to conclude what is a rather abrupt ending to the gospel. The style is unlike Mark, and does not link well to verses 1-8. Furthermore, the earliest manuscripts do not have verses 9-20. It was in the original KJV, so is included in the NIV with a footnote. Regardless, the ending does not alter the fundamentals of Christianity nor do we lose anything in its absence.