

Basic Christianity

Five weeks exploring the foundations of the faith



Rooted: Sunday, 7-8pm, 14 April – 12 May 2024

Teaching, then Q&A.

All welcome. All questions welcome!

Basic Christianity



- Five weeks to explore the foundations ...
 - *“But I’m already a Christian”*
 - *We can never hear the gospel too often!*
 - *This could help you to be clearer and bolder in sharing your faith.*
 - *“But I have lots more questions!” or “This doesn’t quite scratch where I’m itching.”*
 - *Don’t give up! Ask one of the ministry team, or a Christian friend here at St John’s. Most of us took longer than five weeks to figure this out!*
 - *“I want to become a Christian.”*
 - *Wonderful! These five weeks will help you to do that.*

A suggestion ...



- Why not read one of the gospels while we study BC?
- John wrote his gospel ...
 - “... *that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*” (20.31).
- Luke wrote his gospel ...
 - “... *so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.*” (1.4)
- Matthew and Mark are also available!

Five big questions:



1. *How can we know about God?*
 - *Revelation: God speaks to humanity in Jesus, and in his Word.*
2. *When did it all start?*
 - *Roots: God made us to know him.*
3. *Why did it go wrong?*
 - *Rebellion: we did it our way, otherwise known as sin.*
4. *Who will save us?*
 - *Rescue: God sends Jesus to be our Saviour.*
5. *What does the future hold?*
 - *Renewal or ruin? Heaven and hell are coming.*

Basic Christianity



Revelation
(week 1)

Rebellion
(week 3)



Ruin

Roots
(week 2)

Rescue
(week 4)

Renewal
(week 5)



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How can we know about God?



- Drop the “how”: *can we know about God?*
 - *In other words, is he there? If he’s not real, he can’t speak!*
 - *What do you think as we begin – and why?*
 - *A big question for 10 year old me! I put God to the test ...*
 - *... and he failed.*
 - *But I was asking the wrong question:*
 - *I wanted God to prove his existence to me ...*
 - *... but I wasn’t listening to the answer he had given.*

How can we know about God?



- Can you think of how God *might* speak to us?
 - *Our ideas, dreams or intuitions?*
 - *How could we have be sure about our answers?*
 - *Human tradition or religion?*
 - *They just tell us about other people's ideas, dreams and intuitions of who God might be!*
 - *All our knowledge of God is guesswork ...*
 - *... unless he reveals something of himself to us.*
 - *So does he? That's the question!*

How can we know about God?



- What's my middle name and favourite colour?
 - *How might you try and work that out?*
 - *You could make some guesses (and some of them might be educated ones!) but unless I tell you, you won't know.*
- The Bible introduces us to the talking God.
 - *It claims to be "God's word" – the Creator speaking to us.*
 - *If that just might be true, we should investigate it.*
 - *If it really is true, we should believe it!*

Revelation: God speaks



- He speaks powerfully, personally and perfectly.
- His final word is Jesus, his Son.
- We have his reliable word to us in the Bible.



Powerful, personal and perfect



- God's word is powerful:
 - *Through his word, God creates – he speaks and it is:*
 - *“¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.”*
 - *God re-creates by his word too: Peter says Christians “have been born again ... through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Pet 1.23)*
 - *“... my word that goes out from my mouth ... will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55.11)*

Powerful, personal and perfect



- God's word is **personal**, eg:
 - *“Now the LORD spoke to Moses ...” (Exodus 6.13)*
 - *“At that time the LORD spoke through Isaiah ...” (Isaiah 20.2)*
 - *“The word of the LORD came to me, saying ...” (Jeremiah 1.4)*
 - *“We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2.13)*

Powerful, personal and perfect



- God's word is **perfect**:
 - *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.” (2 Tim 3.16)*
 - *“the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.” (Psalm 12.6)*
- As such, faith in God and his word are inseparable:
 - *“You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word.” (Psalm 119.114)*

Jesus is God's final Word



- *He is therefore powerful, personal and perfect:*
 - *“¹ In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.” (Heb 1.1-3)*

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 - *The “various ways” include “the writing on the wall” (Daniel 5.5) and through a donkey! (Numbers 22.28): but it is far more wonderful that God has spoken once for all in his Son!*

Jesus is God's final Word



- John introduces us to the Word made flesh:
 - *¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. ¹⁸ No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.*
 - *The Word is with God and is God: the Trinity.*
 - *We have seen his glory: eyewitness testimony.*
 - *“full of grace and truth”: trustworthy and compassionate*
 - *“... has made him known”: in Jesus, we can know God personally.*

The Bible is God's reliable word



- If Jesus is God's final word to us, how do we hear it?
 - *We haven't seen Jesus – we were born at the wrong time!*
- The Bible is made up of **two**

The Bible is God's reliable word



- If Jesus is God's final word to us, how do we hear it?
 - *We haven't seen Jesus – we were born at the wrong time!*
- The Bible is made up of **two testaments**.
 - *The Old Testament is God's promise to send a Saviour and King*
 - *We have not met Moses or Isaiah, but the Old Testament records God's word to us through them.*
 - *The New Testament is God keeping his promise – in Jesus.*
 - *We have not seen Jesus, but the New Testament records the careful witness of those who did: remember Luke's purpose – "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." (Luke 1.4)*

The Bible is God's reliable word



- The New Testament is a record of witnesses:
 - *To replace Judas, Peter said: “²¹ ... it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²² beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection.” (Acts 1.21f)*
 - *John wrote, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.” (1 John 1.1)*

Revelation: God speaks



- God speaks powerfully, and personally and perfectly ...
 - *so we should listen to him with*
 - *humility (since he is God) and*
 - *confidence (since he wants us to hear, understand and believe)*
- God speaks his final word in Jesus
 - *so we should find out about Jesus if we want to know God.*
- God speaks reliably in the Bible
 - *so we should seek our knowledge of God in his book – not in our intuition, religious tradition or elsewhere.*

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Jesus and the Old Testament



- “⁴⁴ He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, ‘This is what is written: the Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ (Luke 24.44-47)

Jesus and the New Testament



- *14.26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.*
- *15.26 When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father – the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father – he will testify about me. ²⁷ And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.*
- *16.13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.*

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