



BIBLICAL TRAINING CENTER

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Essentials vs. Non-Essentials – The Essentials Part 2

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Areas of Agreement – The Essentials

**** Summary of Last Week ****

1. Shared Christian Beliefs on the Bible

- Bible is **special revelation** from God.
- **Inspired** (from God), **infallible** (cannot fail), **inerrant** (without error).

2. Shared Christian Beliefs on God

- God's nature: **Trinity** (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).
- **God's qualities** (holy, just, righteous, truthful, merciful, loving, all-powerful, omnipresent, etc.)

3. Shared Christian Beliefs on Creation

- Creation **out of nothing** (*ex nihilo*).
- Genesis 1-3 describes **real events**.
- Creation was **originally good**.

4. Shared Christian Beliefs on Humanity

- Historicity of **Adam and Eve**.
- Humans created in the **image of God**.
- The event of **the Fall** and reality of **sin**.

Areas of Agreement – The Essentials

**** Starting Here Today ****

5. Shared Christian Beliefs on Christ

The Incarnation of Christ.

- Jesus Christ **existed eternally** as the second person of the Trinity before being **born as a human** (John 8:56-59; cf. Gen. 18). At the incarnation event, **humanity was added** to his person (John 1:1, 2, 14; Heb. 2:17; 4:15). Since the incarnation, Christ has had **two natures** (human and divine).
- Key idea: “**Full** divinity and **full** humanity were united in **one** person forever” (hypostatic union).

The virgin birth of Jesus.

- Jesus was **conceived miraculously** in Mary’s womb by the **Holy Spirit**, not a human father (Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 1:26-38).

The Sinlessness of Christ.

- Jesus was **born without sin** (Lk. 1:35).
- And he did not commit any sin but was **morally perfect** in every way (1 Pet. 1:19; Jn. 8:6).

Christ’s Resurrection.

- His **death, burial and resurrection** from the dead (Matt. 27:38; 59,60; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:18).
- The **miracle** of his **physical** resurrection (John 20:24-29; Luke 24:36-43; Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:3-8, 14, 17).

Scriptures

*Jesus’ **divine** nature.*

John 1:1 – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**

John 10:30-33 – Jesus said, “I and the Father are one.” 31 The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. 32 Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?”

33 The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because **you, being a man, make yourself God.**”

John 20:28 – Thomas answered him, “My Lord and **my God!**”

Colossians 1:15, 2:9 – He is the **image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation... For in him the whole **fullness of deity dwells bodily...**

*Jesus’ **human** nature.*

John 1:14 – And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

2 John 7 – For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess **the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh**. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

Sinlessness of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:21 – For He made **Him who knew no sin** to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Hebrews 4:15 – For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, **yet without sin.**

Luke 23:47 – So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “**Certainly this was a righteous Man!**”

John 1:29 – “...Behold! **The Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!

1 Peter 1:18, 19 – you were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb **without blemish and without spot.**”

6. Shared Christian Beliefs on Salvation

This is an area of big differences among Christians, but we do have a lot in common.

Salvation is historical.

- We all believe salvation is historical.
- **God intervened in the history** of humankind by sending His Son Jesus Christ to save us (1 Jn. 4:9-10; 1 Tim. 1:15).
- We also all believe in a **future salvation event** will happen at Jesus' second coming.

Exclusiveness of Christ.

- There is **no other way** to be saved but through **Jesus Christ** (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Substitutionary atonement of Christ.

- All Protestants believe in the “substitutionary atonement” of Christ.
- This is the idea that **Christ died in our place to pay** for our sins (Isa. 53:5; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; Matt. 20:28)

Salvation is by God's grace.

- All Christians believe salvation is only **by means of God's grace**.
- (Even Catholics believe this but disagree with protestants over **how this grace is obtained**; see next.)

Salvation by faith in Christ alone.

- Protestants believe in “**salvation by faith in the finished work of Christ alone**” (*sola fide*). Rom. 1:16-17; 4:5; 5:1; 9:30; 10:4; 11:6; Gal. 3:24; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9.
- Some protestants believe speaking in tongues and/or good works are evidence of genuine salvation. But these are **not the cause of grace**, but **the result of grace** that comes through faith.¹

¹ Some Protestants also believe in baptismal regeneration while maintaining *sola fide* (Lutherans, Anglicans and Methodists). For these, baptism is seen as a means through which God's grace is applied. See *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Baptismal Regeneration,” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptismal_regeneration.

Results of salvation.

- All protestants believe in these results of salvation:

| Doctrine | Summary | Key Verses |
|----------------|--|---|
| Regeneration | Literally “re-birth.” This is where “ born again ” comes from. | John 3:3; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:1; 4:22-24 |
| Justification | When God declares a person to be righteous ; they are saved from <i>penalty</i> of sin. | Rom. 8:1 |
| Adoption | Believers are adopted into God’s family; the believer now enjoys a privileged relationship . | John 1:12; Galatians 4:4, 5 |
| Propitiation | Means “to turn away God’s wrath” or “ to satisfy God on behalf of sinners.” | 1 John 2:2; 4:10 |
| Redemption | Means “ to buy back ” (i.e., from the ownership of sin and law). | 1 Pet. 1:18, 19 |
| Reconciliation | Means “ to bring back together. ” Idea is our sin separated us from God. But Christ’s sacrifice has brought us back together. | 2 Cor. 5:19, 20 |

Scriptures

No other way to heaven.

John 14:6 – Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. **No one** comes to the Father **except through me.**”

Jesus was our substitute.

“He [Jesus] was **pierced for our transgressions**, he was **crushed for our iniquities**; the punishment that **brought us peace** was **on him**, and **by his wounds** we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)

Receive this salvation by faith.

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that **whoever believes in him** should not perish but have eternal life.”

Different Views:

- **Salvation details:** What’s our role/God’s role in salvation? (e.g., monergism vs. synergism or Calvinism vs. Arminianism).
- **Eternal security:** Can a genuine Christian lose their salvation?
- Is there a second blessing for believers (aka, baptism of the Holy Spirit or “sinless perfection”)?

7. Shared Christian Beliefs on the Church

This is another area with lots of differences, but there’s also much we hold in common.

Jesus is the head of the Church.

- The church is **built on Christ**, the chief cornerstone (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20).

The invisible nature of the Church.

- There is an **invisible** aspect to the church. His church “body” is composed of all believers in Christ throughout all generations.

There are many valid visible churches.

- Protestants recognize there’s not one single church, but all visible churches today make up the body of Christ.
- Of course, there are some **cultic groups** that claim to be the only true church. But these are outside mainstream Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church also formally believes they are the only true visible manifestation of the body of Christ on earth. Protestants disagree.

Ordinances.

- All protestants believe in **two** ordinances: **baptism** and communion (aka, “the Lord’s Supper”).

Different Views:

- **Church government:** Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, “Moses-Model.”
- **Baptism:** *Who?* Infant vs. adult/believer baptism. *How?* Immersion, sprinkling or pouring.

- **Communion:** Real presence (Jesus is present somehow), spiritual presence (Jesus is there spiritually) or memorial only (we are simply to remember Jesus).
- **Women pastors:** Complementarian (men have mandate to be spiritual leaders) vs. Egalitarian (gender equality in the church).
- **Church values:** Topical, expository verse-by-verse, seeker sensitive, etc.
- **Worship styles:** Modern, hymns, no instruments, etc.

8. Shared Christian beliefs on Eschatology

It's no secret that Christians have different views about the end-times, but there is also much agreement of the essentials.

One life / death seals destiny.

- All Christian groups **reject re-incarnation**.
- All Christians believe there is **no chance for salvation after death** (Heb. 9:27).

Heaven.

- All believe in **heaven** (John 14:2-4; Heb. 12:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; 2 Pet. 3:12-13).
- Heaven is seen as a **place of bliss** lasting forever (Rev. 21:1-2, 9-27).

Rewards.

- All Christians believe in **degree of rewards** for the saved (Matt. 25:23; 1 Cor. 3:11-13; 2 Tim. 4:8)

Christ's Second Coming.

- All Christians believe Christ will **return bodily from heaven** at the **second coming** of Christ (Mark 14:62; Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7).²

Timing.

- Christians believe **Jesus can return at any moment** (this is called the **imminency of Christ**, 1 Thess. 5:1-3).
- Most Christian groups stress that "**no one knows**" when (Mt. 24:36; Mk. 13:32).
- Some have embarrassingly made predictions.³

² In the 1970s a teacher from Fuller Seminary named George Ladd began to teach a spiritual resurrection of Christ. This was a denial of his bodily resurrection. See Norman Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*, 3rd ed. (Matthews, NC: Bastion Books, 2019).

³ For example, the late Harold Camping predicted Jesus would return on 9/6/1994. When Jesus did not, he gave four more predictions which failed. See Shawn Nelson, "Allegorical Interpretation of the Bible," Nelson.ink, July 1, 2013, <https://nelson.ink/allegorical-interpretation-of-the-bible/>.

Resurrection.

- Christians believe that **all the dead** will rise again in **physical bodies** on the last day (John 5:28–29; Rev. 20:13–15).

Future judgment.

- All Christians believe only those who received Christ as savior will **escape judgment** (called the Great White Throne judgment, Rev. 20:11-15).
- Those who rejected Christ will be judged and sent to hell. (Matthew 7:21)

Hell.

- All Christians believe in **hell** (Rev. 20:11-15; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 9:27).
- Mainstream Christians believe hell **lasts for all eternity** (Matt. 25:41, 46; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:11; Rev. 20:10).⁴
- All Protestant groups **reject purgatory** (an intermediate state after death before heaven used for purification).

New heaven/earth.

- Christians believe this **present world will be destroyed** and recreated (2 Pet. 3:7,12-13; Rev. 21).

Scripture

Revelation 21:1–5 – 1 Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man**. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 **He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore**, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, **I am making all things new.**” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

John 11:25–26 – Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. **Do you believe this?**”

⁴ There is a growing belief in annihilationism today. This is the belief that hell does not last forever, but those cast into the Lake of Fire are eventually destroyed. John Stott, for example, held this view.

Different Views:

- **Views of the Millennium:** Some believe Christ will reign on the earth literally for 1,000 years. Others believe this is figurative, that Jesus reigning in our hearts today is the kingdom.
- **Understanding the book of Revelation:** It all happened in the past (**preterism**); it's a description of human history since Christ (**historicism**); it tells the struggle of good and evil but not meant to be taken literally (**idealism**); it's a description of real events that will take place in the future (**futurism**).
- **Replacement Theology:** God has a plan for the nation of Israel in the future (dispensationalism) vs. the Church is the recipient of God's Old Testament promises to the Jewish people (**replacement theology**).
- **The Rapture:** Timing of rapture and whether there even is a rapture (pre-, mid-, post-tribulationism).

Bibliography & Resources

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