

Christianity Summarized in Three Pages

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Introduction

Are you a new Christian? Then this synopsis is for you! It summarizes the material you would learn in a “Christianity 101” class taught at a good church. The class will probably not be called by that name, but a 101 class will cover material like the following.

Bible

Christianity is based on the Bible. The Bible is a library of 66 smaller books, written over a span of 1,500 years by about 40 authors, then collected into a single volume. It describes important events in world history from God’s perspective. In it, God also tells us what he wants us to know about ourselves, Himself, and everything that has to do with life and death. God superintended its writing so that it is without error and authoritative down to the words. He directed it to be written across a significant span of time, so that the disclosure of information about Himself was parceled out progressively, not all at once. The Bible explains how the world was created, how people disobeyed God, the significant event called the flood, how the different languages came about. It describes God’s promises, the Law given to Israel, who Jesus is and what he did, what the church is all about, and about what is going to happen in the future. Read my “Bible Summarized in Three Pages” for more details.

Who God Is

God exists and has revealed himself in the Bible and through other means throughout history. God is the uncreated, living, infinite and eternal spirit who made all things. He planned everything, created the universe according to his plan, sustains it, and guides it to his intended end. He knows everything there is to know, including all true possibilities. He possesses perfect wisdom. He is everywhere present metaphysically. He is all-powerful and rules the universe. God exists as three persons in one deity. This concept is called the *Trinity*. Though it is hard to understand, it best explains the data about the self-disclosure of God. God is holy, righteous, and just. God is love, truth, and he is faithful. God is immutable in his constitution. God is merciful, full of grace. Although we can know God, we cannot know him exhaustively, thus we say God is incomprehensible. God is incorporeal, meaning that he does not have a body. He possesses intelligence, emotion, and will. He is unique and is identified as the only living and true God, the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. God is not the author or originator of sin, although he allowed it to come into existence by the will of his free creatures.

Who Jesus Is

Jesus is the second person of the three-in-one deity. Jesus added humanity to himself in the incarnation and by that means revealed God in human form to the world. This was accomplished through the virgin birth so that he became a perfect man in addition to being fully God. Jesus shares equally in the divine nature with the Father and Spirit; he is all the attributes of God just as is God the Father. He remains in

the God-man state today in Heaven. Jesus is the long-promised prophet, a priest, Messiah, and the returning king. Messiah is the Hebrew word for *Christ*, and it means “anointed one.”

What Jesus Did

Jesus lived on earth for about 33 years. He perfectly kept the Law of God given through Moses. This demonstrated his perfect righteousness and thus fitness to be the spotless “lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” For example, he lived in perfect submission to his parents. When Jesus died on the cross around 30 A.D., he did so as a substitute for sinners, offering himself in place of sinners to take the penalty of their sin and to offer to them his righteousness. God accepted his self-sacrifice so that after he died, he rose again, bodily, from the grave. He ascended to heaven, and there presently is seated at the right hand of God and acting as an advocate for his people before God the Father.

What People and Sin Are

God created the first man and woman—Adam and Eve—on the sixth day of the creation week. Human beings are made of matter and spirit so that they are living souls. When a person dies, their spirit departs, and the body/spirit connection is broken, resulting in what we might call a dead soul. God made the first couple innocent and sinless, but with a capacity to choose to disobey him. They did choose to disobey God, and thus the entire human race was plunged into a sad state of decay, death, and sin. Both natural evil (like weather disasters) and manmade evil arise from this source. This is called the “fall.” As a result, humans exist in a world that has a lot of misery in it. We have a major problem with sin. We have a share in the sin of our forefathers (a concept called imputed sin); we possess a sin nature that gives rise to our rebelliousness against God and right things; and we actively do sin by either acting as we should not, or not acting as we should. The result is that the penalty due for sin is death, both physical and spiritual death.

Salvation

Jesus freely offers to all people that they can be rescued from this plight. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:16-17). What must a person do to be rescued/saved? “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). Genuine “belief” includes trust and turning away from sin and self (Acts 20:21, Hebrews 6:1). If you have true faith, you embrace that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). Belief is not a leap into the dark or “blind faith.” It is a reasonable, well-founded, justified trust in God and in Jesus based on God’s own testimony and that of his people.

If you are a Christian, it is like being a brand new person. The old way of thinking, speaking, and acting is gone, and a new way of living has come.

Who the Holy Spirit Is

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the three-in-one deity. He is as genuine a divine person as the Father and Son; not an energy field or force. He is a person, with intellect, emotion, will, and shares all

the attributes of Deity with the Father and the Son. He is active in many of the works of God, and particularly in this era residing in the life of a Christian and the life of the church.

Church

The *universal church* consists of all the saved from the events of Acts 2 forward until the present day and up to a future event called the Rapture. The *local church* is a microcosm of that larger “abstract” body, and it is the group of Christian people who regularly meet for worship, instruction from Scripture, fellowship, evangelism, encouragement, accountability, and the ordinances. There are two ordinances, which are baptism by immersion in water, and the Lord’s Table. Both have a symbolic and memorial function, commanded by the Lord for his church to regularly remember his saving work.

When it is properly ordered, a local church is led by one or more pastors, served by one or more deacons, and serves one another through love using the spiritual gifts God has granted to each one, building one another up in the faith and reaching out to others to introduce them to Jesus Christ. Those spiritual gifts are granted to each person individually, and include special abilities like teaching, serving, exhorting, giving, leadership, and mercy.

Spiritual Disciplines

When you become Christian, you should have a desire to read the Bible, pray, gather with a good church to hear preaching and to participate in worship, and share your faith with others. You will desire to steward your resources, time, and body better. These are the Christian spiritual disciplines, but they are not ways to earn favor with God. Jesus did that, and our response is one of obedience to God’s will.

God’s will is for us to be sanctified (purified, more like Jesus). But our remaining sinful part (called the sin nature) does not want to live like that and instead pulls us back toward sin. By God’s grace and with his help, we can overcome that, and we must.

Angels

The Bible teaches that there is a large company of angels, created by God in the opening moments of the creation. They are not eternally existent in the past, but like humans they had a beginning and will continue forever into the future. They are spirit-beings, without a body, that all initially served God. Some chose to follow Lucifer in his proud rebellion against God and became *demons* or *fallen angels*. They can sometimes take the form of a human being. The holy angels exist to serve God and His people.

Eschatology

The Bible says that several things will happen in the future. On an individual scale, the Christian’s future consists of either death or the rapture, the latter of which includes resurrection of all the dead who belong to Jesus. Then the judgment, and eternal state. As far as the global scale, there are several major future events the Bible mentions, which are: the rapture of the church, the tribulation, the second coming of Christ, the millennial kingdom, several judgments, and the eternal state.