

DOCTRINE 1

UNIT ONE THE GOSPEL OF GOD

STARTING WITH THE GOSPEL

- ↳ What Doctrine Is.....
 - Christian doctrine is the explanation of the truth of God as he has revealed it to us.

- ↳ The Truth About God
 - Knowing the truth about God is extremely important to the human race.
 - Our hopes, values and behaviour come from our beliefs about God.
 - Human opinion about God is varied – as a race we do not know the truth.
 - It has become popular to suggest that no religion is nearer the truth than any other.

- ↳ Claiming to Know God
 - Christianity claims to know the truth about God.
 - It claims the power to be able to bring us to God so that we may say we know him.
 - This is inconsistent with other religions and a contradiction to popular relativism.
 - Christianity attributes human confusion about God to a dislocation in the relationship between God and humanity.
 - From God's side has come an act of reconciliation – 'the gospel'.

- This is “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

↳ Being Clear on the Gospel

- It is vital to explain the gospel, since it is through the gospel that we come to know God.
- The gospel can be investigated in many ways, but in this case the focus will be on the Gospel of John.

STARTING WITH THE GOSPEL

↳ The Plight of the Human Race

- The human race is suffering from a failure to relate properly to God.
- Salvation is what we ‘need’ – the human race is in danger.
- Salvation implies a crisis – John uses images of darkness and gloom to illustrate this.

↳ Human Darkness

- John begins by talking about Jesus, describing him as ‘the Word’.
- Jesus is said to be ‘the light of men’ (1:4) – if anyone can lighten the darkness, it is Jesus.
- The world did not recognise him – humans were ignorant of their maker.

↳ Ignorance

- Human ignorance can sound strange when we often glory in our intelligence.
- The beliefs of our ancestors are often regarded as ludicrous, primitive and superstitious.
- But we have made no advance in our knowledge of God.

↳ Corruption

- People refuse to come into the light in case the truth about them is exposed.
- This is why mere education is not enough to solve our problems.
- This corruption affects the whole world – in ‘the world’ humans tempt each other and encourage wickedness.

↳ Bondage to Sin

- God's law points out how we should live, and also reveals the extent of our sinfulness.
- Sin is bondage – it makes us captives and produces sinful deeds, words and thoughts.
- Pride and disobedience to God is the essence of sin.

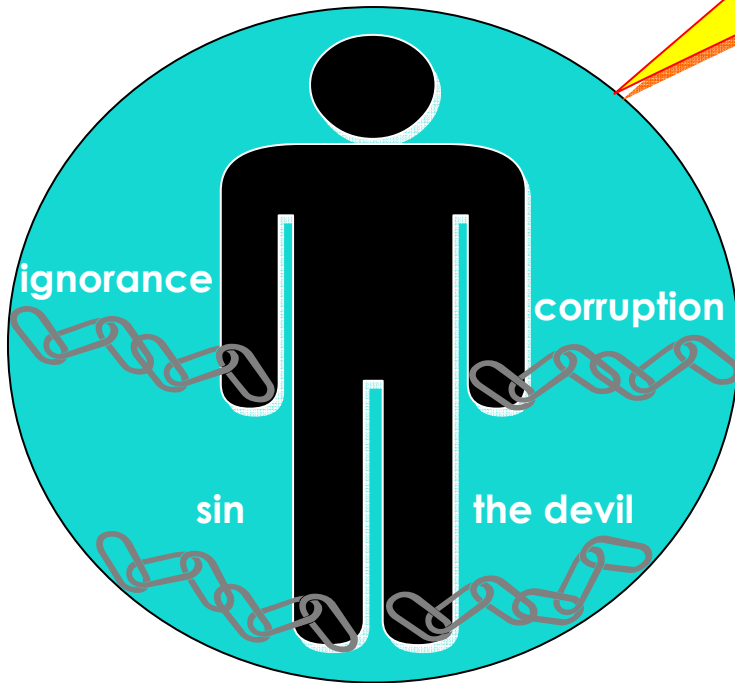
↳ Bondage to the Devil

- Humans love to be ‘free’ from the control of others, but this freedom is often an illusion.
- John describes the devil as ‘the prince of this world’ (16:11).
- The Bible sees us as victims of evil spiritual forces that encourage us to reject God.

↳ Wrath and Judgement

- God must oppose and condemn human rebellion – it would be wrong to ignore it.
- John speaks clearly about condemnation and judgement.
- He warns that God's wrath will remain on whoever rejects the Son – this wrath will be revealed on a day of judgement.

THE HUMAN PLIGHT



Facing
God's
Judgement

In bondage

THE COMING OF THE SAVIOUR

- ↳ The Love of God
 - We need God to save us – we can't escape the consequences of sin.
 - The Bible clearly attributes this salvation to God's love.
 - The message is of joy and hope, not gloom and despair.
 - This message is centered on Jesus Christ.

↳ Who Jesus Is

- Jesus came into a nation prepared for him – God had been creating his people long before the birth of Jesus.
- Jesus was rejected by his own people but through that rejection brought salvation.
- Jesus referred to Old Testament scriptures to vindicate him at times of controversy.
- Jesus was far more than just another prophet – as Son of God he has been with his Father from all eternity.
- Jesus is the perfect revelation of God.
- 'The Word became flesh' (1:14) – while never ceasing to be the Word, Jesus became human and dwelt amongst us.

↳ What Jesus Did

- Jesus' stated purpose was 'not to condemn the world, but to save the world through him' (3:17).
- He declared himself to be the source of saving life that the world needs.
- Part of his capacity to bring life is in the truth which he lived and spoke.
- John the Baptist calls Jesus 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (1:29).
- Jesus' work is to remove sin and therefore judgement, which he does through his sacrificial death.
- Jesus' death overcomes the forces which create the need for salvation, and open the way for us to know God.
- Jesus' claims were authenticated in his resurrection.
- Christianity is Christ – he is its heart, its gospel, its meaning.

APPLYING SALVATION

↳ God's Work

- The great dislocation between God and humanity is overcome from God's side.
- His work would be incomplete if he did not arrange for the gospel to be verified by eyewitnesses and preached.
- It would also be incomplete if he did not bring it home to us by his Spirit.
- The ability to respond appropriately to the gospel is a gift from God.

↳ Faith

- People persist in believing that they are good enough without the gospel.
- Pride makes us reluctant to admit human helplessness and the need for God to save us.
- Jesus told people that 'the work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent' (6:27-29).
- The way to salvation is by faith in Jesus.

↳ Repentance

- John does not mention repentance as being required for salvation.
- He does, however, emphasise Christ – and repentance is the appropriate response to Christ's rule.
- Faith requires us to renounce all other things and depend utterly on Christ.
- Faith and repentance aren't identical but involve one another and can't be divided.

↳ Abiding in Christ

- After his resurrection Jesus ascended to his Father – in his place he sent the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit is the one in whom both Father and Son are present with God's people.
- Jesus stresses the relationship of dependence between him and his disciples.
- Remaining in Christ involves a life of obedience – we abide in Christ by trusting and keeping his words.

CONCLUSION

- ↳ Christianity professes to know the truth about God and to be able to bring us to know him.
- ↳ The gospel is presented in different ways, but some key themes are always present.
- ↳ The need for salvation, the reality of judgement, the saving work of Jesus, the offer of forgiveness.
- ↳ There is hostility to the gospel from many quarters.
- ↳ Our first task is to offer a true account of the gospel as it was preached by Jesus.
- ↳ The gospel is relevant because sin and judgement are true, and the greatest need of every person is to be at peace with God.