

A DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

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by
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Bibliology

Revelation: God has revealed himself and his will to man generally through creation (Ps 19:1-6; Rom 1:20), providence (Matt 5:45), and conscience (Rom 2:14-15). Through special revelation he has revealed himself through visions (Dan 8:1), dreams (Acts 2:17), prophecies (2 Pet 1:21), Jesus Christ, his Son (John 5:36-37; 14:10), and his written Word (2 Tim 3:16-17). This final means was accomplished by men through whom the Spirit of God worked (2 Pet 1:19-21) including prophets (Acts 3:21), kings (Prov 1:1), scribes (Ezra 7:6), shepherds (Amos 1:1), doctors (Col 4:14 cf. Luke. 1), and apostles (Rom 1:1). The writing took the form of replicating the exact words of God (Jer 2:1-3; Exod 20), recording visions (Rev 1:19), collecting and compiling various sources (Luke 1:1-4), and correspondence with local believers (Phlm 1) or churches (Eph 1:1).

Sufficiency: I believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible comprise the complete collection of Scripture given to man by God. This collection has Christ as its center (John 5:39-46), salvation as its end (2 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 1:10-12), and unity between believers as its product (Phil 2:1-2; Col 3:12-17; 1 Cor 1:10). The Scriptures contain everything the believer needs for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness (2 Tim 3:16-17). The Bible is sufficient in its purpose of conveying what God wants us to know about himself, ourselves, and fellow man (2 Pet 1:3-14).

Inspiration: These Scriptures are verbally and plenary inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16; Matt 5:18; Gal 3:16) in the original autographs, and are inerrant because God can only produce truth (John 17:17; Ps 19:7-9). The original autographs are completely inerrant in every area upon which they touch including (but not limited to) theology, history, and science. God cannot lie (2 Sam 7:28; Titus 1:2). Therefore, the Scriptures are without error and make no affirmations contrary to truth (Ps 12:6; 119:89; Prov 30:5; Matt 24:35). God's Word is infallible and will never lead the believer astray. His Word has been preserved through the abundance of manuscripts over the years and will be preserved (Matt 5:18; 1 Pet 1:23-25).

Canonicity: This vast collection of writings was compiled over a large span of time (Heb 1:1-4). The canon of Scripture was determined by God himself and merely recognized by man. At the time of Christ, the OT was understood to be the Word of God (Luke 24:44). In the NT era, the apostles and early church understood the writings to be God's revelation to man (2 Pet 3:15-16). They were accepted by means of various tests including: 1. Does the text align with other revelation? 2. Was it written or endorsed by an apostle? 3. Has the Church as a whole accepted this as Scripture? Those writings recognized as canonical have been compiled into the thirty-nine books of the OT and the twenty-seven books of the NT. The inspiration of Scripture is recognized because of its internal witness (Mark 12:26; Acts 1:16), direct declarations (Exod 32:15; 2 Sam 23:1-2), coherency and accuracy (John 10:34-38), recognition by God's people throughout the ages, but ultimately by faith. I accept the Bible as authoritative because it has God as its Author.

Hermeneutics: The believer should use basic hermeneutical principles when interpreting the Word of God. These include seeking the authorial intent by understanding literary devices, studying the grammatical relationships, and interpreting it in its historical and literary contexts in the scope of progressive revelation. This must be done through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Although not all people will be able to understand the original languages used in the Scriptures, faithful translations can still be understood as God's Word. A translation can be taken as authoritative as it reflects the originals. Jesus Christ used translations authoritatively (Matt 4:1-11).

Theology Proper

Person: God is the Creator (Gen 1:1), Sustainer (Job 38:33-37), and Savior (John 3:16) of this earth. He is the infinite and perfect Spirit (John 4:24). By him were all things created, all things exist, and all things have their end (Ps 147:5; 83:18; Heb 3:4; Rom 1:20; Jer 10:10). He is both transcendent and immanent, separate from all creation (Eph 4:6; Ps 97:9) yet knowable by man (Acts 17:24-25).

Existence: One may know that God exists by his creation (Ps 19; Rom 1:18-21), man's conscience (Rom 2:14-15), his provision and control (Matt 5:45; Acts 14:15-17), and the testimony of the Bible which assumes his existence (Gen 1:1; Rev 22:18). Ultimately, one must accept his existence by faith (Heb 11:6).

Character: Through an understanding of God's attributes one may understand more of his character. God is spirit – his essence is spiritual/incorporeal (John 4:24). He is a person, composed of emotion (1 John 4:8), intellect (1 John 3:20), and will (Eph 1:11).

Incommunicable Attributes: God is different from man in many ways. God is infinite (Ps 147:5), self-existent (Exod 3:14), independent (Acts 17:24-25; Job 41:11; Ps 50:10-12), unchangeable (Ps 102:25-27; Jam. 1:17; Mal 3:6), eternal (Ps 90:2; Job 36:26; Rev 1:8), omnipresent (Jer 23:23-24; Ps 139:7-10; 1 Kgs 8:27), sovereign (Eph 1:11), omniscient (1 John 3:20; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Ps 139:1-4), and majestic above all else (Isa 6:1-5; 1 Pet 1:14-16).

Communicable Attributes: God communicates some of his attributes to man. God is wise (Rom 11:33; 16:27; Job 12:13), true (John 17:3; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18; John 17:17), good (Ps 100:5), love (1 John 4:8; John 3:35), merciful (Matt 9:27; 2 Sam 24:14), gracious (Exod 33:19; Ps 119:132; 1 Pet 5:10), patient (Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; Jonah 4:2), holy (Exod 26:33; Ps 24:3), orderly (peace) (1 Cor 14:33), just (Deut 32:4; Gen 18:25), jealous (Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24), and wrathful (Deut 9:7-8; John 3:36).

Trinity: God is the three distinct persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bonded in perfect unity (Phil 2:1-12; Matt 3:13-17). While they are distinctly different persons, with separate functions, they are unified to complete a perfect whole (Matt 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Isa 48:16). The three persons of the Godhead are coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal, being one in essence yet three in distinction (Deut 6:4).

Present Activity: God is actively in control of the world today through preservation and providence. God's preservation is his continual involvement in the universe to maintain its existence, generally (Neh 9:6; Col 1:17), and specifically (Acts 17:28; Matt 6:26). God also has an active role in even the most "natural" events (Ps 135:7; 147:16-18; Acts 14:17). Providentially, God is sovereign over all creation to accomplish his purposes (Eph 1:11; Rom 13:1; Ps 148:8; Gal 1:15-16). God is separate from evil and sin (Jas 1:13), but he can use these acts for his glory (Gen 50:20; Acts 2:23). Man cannot do good without God's help (Phil 2:13; Eph 2:10), yet man is responsible for his actions (Rom 9:19-24).

Christology

Person: Christ, as the very eternal God (Mic 5:2; John 1:1), is of one substance and equal with the Father, the second person of the Trinity. Before the incarnation he was active in creating and sustaining the world (John 1:3; Col 1:17), sharing the Father's glory and love (John 17:5, 24), receiving worship (John 12:39-41 cf. Isa 6:1-5), and appearing as the Angel of the Lord (Gen 16:7-14; Exod 3:2-6).

Earthly Ministry: Jesus, one person yet having two whole and perfect natures without conversion or confusion, became the God man. His emptying was through humble addition (Phil 2:7). The means of his incarnation was the virgin conception (Isa 7:14; Luke 1:35). This was necessary to fulfill prophecy (Isa 7:14) and to have the right to rule as King (2 Sam 7:11 cf. Jer 22:24-30; Matt 1:1-16). He was tempted by real and legitimate temptations, yet was without sin (Heb 4:15). He endured these so that he may fully sympathize with man (Heb 2:18). Christ came to earth to reveal God (John 1:18) as the Prophet whom Moses foretold (Deut 18:15). He is the perfect revelation of the Father (Heb 1:1-3). He could provide redemption (1 John 4:10; Luke 19:10), be an example for humankind (1 Pet 2:21-23), share eternal life (John 10:10-11), destroy the works of the devil (Heb 2:14), and fulfill the promises of God (Isa 11:1-5).

Humanity: The evidence of Christ's full humanity is shown through his physical growth (Luke 2:6-7, 42, 52), his physical restrictions (Luke 22:43), temptation (Matt 4:1-11), suffering, and death (Matt 27:50, 57-60). Also, others saw him as a man (Acts 2:22; 1 Tim 2:5), he calls himself a man (John 8:40), he was given a human name (Matt 1:21) and had the human elements of body, both material (Matt 26:12) and immaterial (Matt 26:38). John declares that Jesus was human because he was heard, seen, looked upon, and touched (1 John 1:1-4).

Deity: Christ's full divinity is seen through the names of God given to him (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom 9:5 Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8), and his possession of the attributes of God such as eternity (John 8:58), self existence (John 1:3-4), and holiness (Luke 1:35). He also does divine works (John 1:3, 10; Col 1:17) and receives worship (Matt 14:33; John 20:28). He claimed to have the same authority as God, and perform the works of God such as giving life and judging (John 5:21-22).

Cross: The atonement was accomplished by Christ on the cross. Following his righteous life (Matt 3:15), Christ laid down his life as a perfect sacrifice in substitution for sinful man (Isa 53:6; Gal 1:4; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14). This involved more than merely giving man an example to follow, or paying a ransom to the Devil. Christ took on himself the sins of the world (Rev 5:9; Heb 9:28), satisfying the wrath of God (Rom 5:9).

Resurrection: Christ's resurrection was bodily in that he was recognizable (John 20:19-29), real (Luke 24:39), and changed (Phil 3:21). One may be certain of this due to his appearance (Matt 28:16-17), testimony of Scripture (1 Cor 15:12), and the empty tomb (Matt 28:6). Because of the resurrection of Christ, the Christian faith is not in vain (1 Cor 15:14).

Current Ministry: Currently Christ is ministering as High Priest (Heb 10:19-22), interceding for believers (Rom 8:34), and living as the head of the church (Eph 5:23). As head of the Church, he is building it (1 Cor 12:13; Acts 2:47; Eph 4:8, 11-13) and cleansing it (Eph 5:25-27). He will one day return for his followers in the Church (John 14:1-7) and when they see him they will be like him (1 John 3:2).

Pneumatology

Deity: The Holy Spirit is completely God and the third member of the Trinity. He is called God (Acts 5:3-4), he does divine works (Job 33:4), and he has divine attributes such as eternity (Heb 9:14), omniscience (1 Cor 2:10-11), and omnipresence (Ps 139:7-10). The believer becomes the temple of God and is indwelt by him (1 Cor 6:19).

Person: The Holy Spirit is a person who has intellect (1 Cor 2:10-11), will (1 Cor 12:11), and emotions (Rom 15:30). The Scriptures do not directly set out to prove his personhood, but rather assume it as they do God's existence. He is also considered a person by his actions of sending (Acts 13:2-4), directing (Acts 16:6-7), appointing (Acts 20:28), making intercession (Rom 8:26), searching and revealing (1 Cor 2:10). We are also told that he strives (Gen 6:3), teaches (Luke 12:12), speaks (1 Tim 4:1), and commands (Acts 8:29). Scriptures tell us that he has a mind (Rom 8:27; 1 Cor 2:11), affections (Eph 4:30), and exercises judgment (Acts 15:28), and is susceptible to personal mistreatment (insulted in Heb 10:29; lied to in Acts 5:3; blasphemed in Matt 12:32).

Old Testament Work: In the OT the Holy Spirit was involved in creation (Gen 1:2) and in revelation and inspiration (2 Pet 1:21; Matt 22:43-44; Acts 28:25). He specially equipped individuals and leaders to interpret dreams (Gen 41:38), construct the tabernacle (Exod 31:3), lead the nation of Israel (Num 11:25-26), and prophesy (1 Sam 19:20). The Scriptures seem to indicate that while he did give new birth (John 1:12-13), his indwelling ministry for every believer began at Pentecost (John 7:39; 14:16-17; Acts 2:1-4).

New Testament Work: The Holy Spirit was involved in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He played an active role in Christ's virgin birth (Luke 1:35), baptism (Matt 3:16), and resurrection (Rom 8:11). He also led Christ (Luke 4:1) and is a witness to Christ (Acts 5:30-32).

Current Work: The Spirit continues to work today as He convinces the world of unbelief, its need for righteousness, and danger of judgment (John 16:8-11). He is involved in the individual believer's life as one who renews (Titus 3:5), intercedes (Rom 8:26), illuminates the Word of God (1 Cor 2:12), and encourages him to do right (Rom 8:13). He also regenerates (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5), indwells (Rom 8:9), baptizes (1 Cor 12:13), and fills (Eph 5:18) the believer.

Gifts: The Holy Spirit gave instantly useable and controllable signs and gifts (1 Cor 14:27-33) according to His own will (1 Cor 12:11; Heb 2:4), for the purpose of service (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Pet 4:11) and edification (1 Cor 14:5). Certain miraculous gifts and revelatory gifts were necessary for the transitional period during the book of Acts in order to validate the message. Paul was the final apostle (1 Cor 15:8) and James was not replaced (Acts 12:2), signaling the end of the gift of the apostle. The Church has been built on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20), so the prophet's work is complete. Tongues, the speaking of foreign languages (Acts 2; 11:16-17), were closely related to prophecy (1 Cor 14:1-5; Acts 2:17-18), and therefore have ceased in their transitory function. Each believer is called to serve one another (Gal 5:13), exhort one another (Heb 10:25), give (2 Cor 9:7), make disciples (Matt 28:19), be kind (Eph 4:32), walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7), and witness (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit makes it possible for every believer to be obedient in these activities.

Angelology

Nature: Angels are God's created beings, who are individual persons, and heavenly creatures (Gen 1; Job 1:6; 38:7). Angels are spirits (Heb 1:14), who cannot marry or reproduce (Mark 12:25), but were created all at one time to glorify God (Ps 103:20; Isa 6:2-3; Luke 2:14; Rev 5:11-12). They also minister to the elect (Heb 1:14; 13:2), help with children (Matt 18:10), and wage war against Satan's forces (Dan 10:12-14; Rev 12:7).

Kinds: Several angels are mentioned by name in Scripture such as Michael the archangel (Jude 9), Gabriel (Dan 9:21; Luke 1:26), and Satan. The two categories of angels mentioned are the Cherubim who were placed outside the garden (Gen 3:24), and the Seraphim who surround the throne of God (Isa 6:3).

Satan: Satan, the enemy (1 Pet 5:8), sinned and received God's condemnation (1 Tim 3:6). He is a real person with intelligence, emotion, and will (2 Cor 2:11; 11:3; Rev 12:17; Jude 9; Matt 25:41). Some of the titles which he has been given include the Devil (Matt 4:1), Beelzebub (Matt 12:24), Adversary (1 Pet 5:8), Enemy (Matt 13:25, 28, 39), the Father of lies (John 8:44), and Tempter (1 Thess 3:5). Satan's main work is to oppose God in every way (1 John 1:5 cf. Acts 26:18; 1 John 4:8 cf. 1 John 3:10; John 1:4 cf. 1 John 3:12). He also sought to disqualify Christ (Matt 4:1-11), destroy him (Matt 2:16 cf. Rev 12:1-6), and dissuade him (Matt 16:21-23). In relation to the world, he deceives (Rev 20:3), blinds (2 Cor 4:4), and destroys the nations (Rev 16:13-14).

Demons: Demons are also angels (Luke 10:17-20), banished from heaven along with Satan (Rev 12:3-9), and are now unclean, evil, and seducing (Matt 10:1; Luke 7:21; Matt 12:45; 1 Tim 4:1). With their knowledge (Acts 16:16), supernatural strength (Acts 19:16), and miraculous ability (Rev 16:14), these demons make formidable foes in opposing God's program and people (Eph 6:11-12), and influence the world (Dan 10:13, 20; Ps 106:36-38; 1 Tim 4:1-3; Jas 3:14-16).

The Believer's Response: A believer's attitude toward Satan should involve resisting him (Jas 4:7), watching for him and his tactics (1 Pet 5:8), putting on the whole armor of God (Eph 6:10-17), and using prayer (Eph 6:18). Believers can be attacked and influenced by demons (Luke 4:2; 2 Cor 12:7; Eph 6:12; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:8). However, true believers cannot be possessed (controlled) by demons because of the indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Tim 1:14) who is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Anthropology

Creation: By faith (Heb 11:3), I believe that God created all things (Acts 4:24), by his spoken word (Gen 1:3-26), in the span of six literal twenty-four hour days (Gen 1:5, 8, 13; Exod 20:11; 31:17). God rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3). God specifically and supernaturally created man by forming him from dust (Gen 2:7). Man was created a little lower than the angels (Heb 2:6-7), and not from any other life form (Gen 2:7) on the sixth and final day of creation (Gen 1:27).

Image of God: God created man in his image (Gen 1:27), by creating him with the purpose to love (John 17:24-26 cf. Matt 22:36-39), as a moral being (Gen 2:17), as one having dominion (Ps 8), and as spiritual (Gen 2:7,9; John 4:23-24). This image must be respected (Gen 9:6; Exod 20:13). The image of God was marred but not lost in the fall (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9; 1 Cor 11:7). Through the work of redemption, regenerate people are in the process of being renewed in the image of God (Col 3:10).

Sinfulness: Although created good, because of Adam's disobedience in the garden all of humankind became sinful (Rom 5:12). This one event has consequences in every area of man's life and being. For this reason the Creator sent a Redeemer "in order that the world might be saved through him" (John 3:17). Those who reject the gift of God will be subjugated to eternal torment (Rev 20:15).

Constitution: Man was created as both a physical and spiritual being (Matt 10:28). Apart from the soul, the body is dead (Jas 2:26). Apart from the body, the soul groans for the immortal body (2 Cor 5:1-10). The immaterial man contains elements which overlap such as soul and spirit (John 12:27; 13:21; Luke 1:46-47), the heart (Prov 4:23; 14:10; Isa 6:10), and mind (Rom 7:25; 8:7; Eph 2:3).

Origin of the Soul: The soul of a man is formed as a result of a union of a man and a woman (Heb 7:9-10; Gen 5:3; 46:26). Man has the God-given ability to procreate man physically and spiritually (Ps 51:5; Ps 139:13-15; Jer 1:5). Through this procreation process, all men are directly linked to Adam's headship of the human race, bringing the whole human race into the original sin (Rom 5:1-21). The virgin birth of Christ is unique in that this sinful nature was not passed on, therefore Jesus Christ was without sin (Heb 4:15).

Manhood and Womanhood: God instituted marriage which involves the leaving of one's father and mother, a cleaving, or permanent clinging or welding (Gen 2:24), and a uniting (by God, Mark 10:9) of a man and woman. This union was specifically designed by God to be between one man and one woman, with all other arrangements being perversions of this gift (Rom 1:24-27). In this relationship, man was given the role of leadership (Gen 3:16; Eph 5:22-24).

Purpose: The coming Millennial Kingdom will allow man to experience life much like it was in the beginning (Gen 2:8-25). For this day we long and hope, the day when we can perfectly "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Hamartiology

Definition: Sin is any word, thought, or deed that does not match up with God's law or his moral character (Rom 3:23; 1 John 5:17). One sins when he disobeys God, fails to do what is right (Jas 4:17), or violates his own conscience (Rom 14:23). The Bible uses various words to describe sin. These include "transgression," or rebellion (Ps 51:1), "iniquity," or being deformed or twisted (1 Sam 3:13; Isa 53:6), "trespasses," or overstepping God's law (Matt 6:14), and "sin," or missing the mark (Gen 20:9; Num 14:40; Ps 51:4).

Origin: Sin entered the human race when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, choosing to intentionally disobey God's command (Gen 3:6; Rom 5:12; 1 Tim 2:14). In so doing, Adam plunged the entire human race into sin and death (Rom 5:12). This resulted in Adam's ejection from the garden (Gen 3:24) and the suffering of spiritual and physical death (Rom 5:12; Eph 2:1-10). God is not the source of sin and is not to be blamed for the sin (Deut 32:4; Gen 18:25; Job 34:10; cf. Jas 1:13).

Effect of Original Sin: Man became enslaved to sin (Rom 3:9-11), was legally guilty (Rom 5:16, 18; Gen 3:7), and was alienated from God and fellow man (Gal 5:19-21). These same punishments were passed on to all men because of Adam's role as head and father of all humankind (Rom 5:12; Heb 7:9-10; Eph 2:3). This plunged the entire human race into sin, and man can now be nothing but sinful (Rom 5:12-21; Gen 6:5). Because man is corrupt, parents conceive children who are corrupt (Ps 51:5; Lev 12:1-8; 15:16-24). Just as Adam's sin cast the whole human race into sin (Rom 5:12), so the second and perfect Adam, Jesus Christ, provided a sacrifice for man (Rom 5:19). At the cross Christ became the substitute for man in taking the just punishment of God for sin (1 John 2:2). Man is totally depraved in that every man (Rom 3:10, 3:23), and every part of man, has been affected by sin (Rom 1:18-3:20) and deserving of death (Rom 6:23). This includes his body (Rom 8:10), his mind (Rom 12:2), his will (Rom 3:11), and his heart (Jer 17:9). In this state, man can desire to do right, but cannot do anything that pleases God or merits his salvation (Rom 3:9-23; Eph 2:1,8).

Sacrifice for Sin: Because of God's holiness and man's sin, Adam and Eve were forced from the garden (Gen 3:22-24). There was a promise of a Redeemer found in the midst of God's judgment for their sin (Gen 3:15) who would "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). The OT blood sacrifices were foreshadows of the perfect sacrifice which would one day be made on the cross (Heb 9:22). This was accomplished on the cross as Jesus shed his blood for our ransom (1 Pet 1:18-19). Through this sacrifice, believers have been brought near (Eph 2:13) and purified (Heb 9:14). This sacrifice for sin is effective for those who have placed their faith in Christ alone (Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6).

Believer and Sin: Although the believer has been delivered by God from the power of sin (1 Cor 10:13), he is still plagued by the presence of sin. If someone claims to have no sin he is lying to himself (1 John 1:8). Sin hinders fellowship with God and causes a loss of joy, but through the conviction of the Spirit (John 16:8), and repentance and confession by the believer, communion with God is again possible (1 John 1:5-10).

Future of Sin: In the Millennium, during Christ's reign on earth, sin will be perfectly judged and punished (Zech 5:1-4). Following the Millennium, sin will be eradicated in the eternal state. Until that time God has given earthly rulers to deal with wrong doers (Rom 13:1-7), and the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin (John 16:8-9).

Soteriology

Guilt: Christ's sacrifice was necessary for salvation because of man's sinfulness (Eph 2:1-7). Guilt was imputed to the whole of humankind because of Adam's sin in the garden (Rom 5:12). As a result, all men are completely depraved, that is, affected by sin in every area of our person (Eph 2:3).

The Gospel: The Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for ungodly sinners deserving God's wrath (1 Cor 15:3-4; Rom 3:23; 1:18). In order to receive salvation, man must believe this Gospel (John 1:12; 3:16-18, 36; 5:24). This faith must involve knowledge of his own sinfulness (Acts 2:38), Jesus' position (John 20:30-31) and sacrifice (Rom 10:9-10). Confession, baptism, and works are the outcome of this saving faith, not the means (Eph 2:8-9).

Christ's Death: Christ's death was a substitutionary atonement for man (1 Pet 3:18). Christ redeems men by his shed blood (Titus 2:14; Eph 2:13), buying them back as one would a slave (1 Cor 6:20; Col 1:14; Eph 1:7). This death initiated the change necessary to make peace with God (Col 1:21-22; Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18-20). He was the propitiation for man's sins, the sacrifice that fully satisfied the righteous demands of God toward the sinner (1 John 2:2; 4:10; Rom 3:25; 5:1).

Effect: The sacrifice of Christ on the cross had a universal effect (Rom 5:18). Not all will be saved (Rev 20:15), but Christ's death paid for the guilt of Adam's sin (Rom 5:12-21). Christ's atonement is unlimited in value (John 3:16; Acts 2:21; 10:43; Rom 10:13), but particular in effect (John 10:14-15; Eph 5:25).

Justification: Salvation is man's deliverance from his sin. This is the act whereby God legally justifies him, or declares him righteous (Acts 13:38-39; Rom 4:6-7; 5:9-11; 2 Cor 5:19). There is regeneration, or a rebirth of a redeemed person (Titus 3:5), forgiveness, a removal of the sinner's charges (Col 2:13), and adoption (Rom 8:14-17), or a joining of God's family as an adult son and heir (Eph 1:5).

Work of God prior to salvation: Left to himself, in his natural state, no one would choose God. Man is completely opposed to God (Rom 3:10-12; 8:7). His mind is absolutely evil (Gen 6:5), empty (Rom 1:21), foolish (Rom 1:22), and blind (2 Cor 4:4, 1 Cor 2:14, Eph 4:17-18). The unsaved man's heart is deceitful and wicked (Jer 17:9), vile (Rom 1:26), and blind (Eph 4:18). In this state, he is without excuse (Rom 1:20) and the wrath of God is against him (Rom 6:23; Rom 1:18; Eph 2:1-3). Humans are not waiting to be condemned, they are already condemned (John 3:18). Because of man's total inability to seek after God (Rom 3:11) the Holy Spirit must do a work in his heart before he is able to seek after God (Acts 16:14). However, while yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly (Rom 5:8). God loved men in spite of their sin (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9; Rom 5:8), causing Christ to take the sinner's place and suffer God's wrath (1 Pet 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21).

Old Testament: Salvation in the OT was not secured by observing the Law. A Jew realized that he could not perfectly keep the law. If he were able to, salvation would be owed to him (Rom 2:6-7). Rather, Christ's righteousness was credited to the account of those who lived by faith (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4).

Election: Election is God's choosing individuals according to his own sovereign pleasure (Eph 1:11). It is not determined by any unseen merit (Titus 3:5). This election was from eternity past (Eph 1:4), not conditional upon man in any way (2 Tim 1:9; Rom 9:11), and does not diminish man's responsibility

(Acts 16:31). Scripture establishes the biblical definition of “foreknowledge” as the perfect, active plan of God (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:20).

Sanctification: The sanctification of a believer involves three stages: positional, progressive, and perfective sanctification. At salvation, the believer is positionally made a saint before God (1 Cor 1:2; 6:11; Heb 10:10). As the believer begins to grow, he progressively becomes more like Christ (1 Thess 4:2-4) through the means of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:16-24), God’s Word (Ps 119:11), Christ’s intercession (Heb 7:25), the local church (Heb 10:24-25), and God’s chastening (Heb 12:10). And at the rapture of the Church, the believer will finally be made perfect (Eph 5:26-27; Jude 24-25; 1 John 3:2).

Perseverance: God the Father, choosing the believer from eternity past (Eph 1:4), has the power to keep him secure (Rom 8:28-30) by His great love (Rom 5:7-10). The Son redeemed the believer (Eph 1:7), removed God’s wrath (Rom 3:25), justified the believer (Rom 5:1) and keeps him (Jude 1). The Holy Spirit, regenerated (Titus 3:5), indwells forever (John 14:17), and seals the believer for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30). In addition to the security of the believer from God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God’s Word as well is used to encourage perseverance until the end (Heb 6:1-8).

Ecclesiology

Origin: The church is God's present day means of delivering the Gospel to a lost world (Acts 1:4-8). The Church was a mystery revealed in the NT (Eph 5:32), coming into existence on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1-4 cf. 11:15; 1 Cor 12:13).

Universal Church: The universal Church is defined as the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; 5:30; Col 1:18), the people of God (1 Pet 2:9-10), a temple (1 Cor 3:1-17) and the bride of Christ (Eph 5:23; 2 Cor 11:2). The Scriptures also describe it as the building (Eph 2:11-20) and the flock of God (John 10:16 cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:3). This Church is composed of extreme diversity (Gal 3:25-29) because it finds its unity in the person of Christ (Eph 2:13-15) as one people (1 Pet 2:9-10). The universal Church is the invisible assembly of those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit after placing their faith in Christ (Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Col 1:18). This assembly is made up of all believers from Pentecost until the rapture (1 Cor 12:13).

Local Church: A local church is made up of Gospel believing individuals (Eph 1; Phil 1:1-11; Col 1:1-8) baptized in water in demonstration of their conversion (Acts 16:31-34), recognizably covenanting together (1 Cor 1:2,10; 1 Thess 1:1,4; 2 Thess 1:1,3; Phil 1:1; 4:15; Col 4:15,16), regularly meeting around God's Word (Heb 13:7; Acts 20:26-27; 1 Tim 4:13), under legitimate leadership (Titus 1:5-7; 1 Pet 5:1-2), administering baptism and the Lord's table (1 Cor 11:17-34). The task of the church is to glorify God through the evangelization of the lost (Matt 28:18-20) and the edification of the believers (Eph 4:11-16).

Leadership: While Christ is the head of the church (Eph 1:22), the Scriptures teach that elders are to guide and direct the flock (Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Tim 5:17) as the congregation makes decisions as a body (Rom 12:16; 1 Cor 1:10; 2 Cor 13:11). The NT congregation elected deacons (Acts 6:3-5) and elders (Acts 14:23), and exercised discipline (1 Cor 5:4-5; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15). This form of church government is most closely followed in Congregationalism. The two officers of the local church are the pastors to shepherd the flock (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), and the deacon as subordinate and auxiliary to the congregation (1 Tim 3:8-13). The office of the pastor is also called "elder" (1 Pet 5:1), "overseer" (1 Tim 3:2), and "shepherd" (1 Pet 5:2). His duty is to equip the saints (Eph 4:12). The qualifications for those who would aspire to this office are found in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1.

Ordinances: The church has been given the ordinance of believer's baptism as a testimony to the believer's association with Christ as a disciple (Acts 2:38) and participating in death and resurrection with Christ (commanded in Matt 28:19 and illustrated in Acts 8:38; 16:29-34). The second ordinance given to the church is the Lord's Supper which is to be performed as a memorial to Christ's death (1 Cor 11:24-25), and His return (1 Cor 11:26). This is to be done in the context of the local church, solemnly and with great care (1 Cor 11:28).

Authority: The church finds its absolute authority for faith and practice in the NT (2 Tim 3:16-17). The believer must beware of those preaching another gospel (Gal 1:6-9), teaching false doctrine (Acts 20:26-31), rejecting reproof of their sin (1 Cor 5:11), or failing to obey what is written (2 Thess 3:6,14). The believer must separate from these.

Eschatology

Distinction: Death is a separation that affects both the physical and spiritual parts of man. Physical death involves the separation of the soul from the body (Jas 2:26), immediately causing the believer to go to be with the Lord (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23), and the unsaved to go to hell (Luke 16:19-31). Eternal death is a permanent separation from God (Rev 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

Punishment: Hell is a real and literal place of eternal torment (Matt 25:41, 46) for people who are conscious of their present and past (Luke 16:27). Hell is a place of darkness with “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 13:42; 24:51; Luke 13:28). Eventually Hell will be cast into the lake of fire with death and all unbelievers (Rev 20:14).

Reward: The saints will live forever in fellowship with God in the presence of Christ (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Thess 5:10) because of the justifying work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The eternal life given is a gift from God (Rom 6:23) and is in no way able to be earned (Titus 3:5-6).

Rapture: The rapture is the catching away of the Church before the tribulation (1 Thess 4:16-17; 1 Cor 15:51-54; John 14:1-3). Following this catching away of believers, God will refocus on Israel (Rom 11:11, 25). During the tribulation, God will pour out his wrath on all those who have rejected him (Rev 6:17 cf. 1 Thess 5:9; Rev 3:10). Key aspects in the tribulation include the persecution of Israel (Matt 24:9, 22; Rev 12:17), the salvation of multitudes (Rev 7), and the rise and dominion of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:1-17; Rev 13:1-18).

Millenium: I believe Revelation places the Second Coming of Christ at the end of the tribulation (Rev 19:11-21) at the Battle of Armageddon. At this time Christ will usher in the thousand-year earthly reign bringing peace, equality, justice, prosperity, and glory (Rev 20:4; 19:16; Isa 11:2-5). This is a fulfillment of the covenants offered to Israel in the OT (Dan 2:34,44; Ps 72:6-11; Isa 2:2-4; 9:6-7; 35:1-10; Jer 23:5-8). This physical reign of Christ is the consummation prayed for and desired (Matt 6:10; Luke 19:11; Rev 11:15) by every one who has been transferred from the domain of darkness to the kingdom of Christ (Col 1:13).

Resurrection: The resurrection may be classified under two resurrections, just and unjust. The just, including those dead in Christ at the rapture (1 Thess 4:16), those saved in the tribulation (Rev 20:4), and OT saints (Dan. 12:1-2). The unjust, including all unbelievers, will be raised after the millennium for the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

Judgment: The Bible addresses a variety of judgments which will take place in the future. Believers will have their earthly works examined (1 Cor 3:11-15; 2 Cor 5:10). The Gentiles will be judged for their rebellion (Matt 25:31-46; Joel 3:2) and the belief of the surviving Jews will be evaluated (Ezek 20:37-38). Christ and believers will judge the fallen angels (Jude 6; 1 Cor 6:3). Finally, the unsaved will be judged for their rejection of Jesus Christ (Rev 20:11-15).

Restoration: The old earth will be dissolved with a great fire (2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:1) and the new earth is like Eden – free from sin (Rev 21:2-22:5). Christ’s rule with His saints is an everlasting reign as promised in the OT covenants (2 Sam 7:12-13; Dan. 2:35; Rev 21:3, 7, 22-27).