

# Statement of Doctrine and Position

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## Experience of Salvation

The Lord saved me from my sin and His wrath through Christ shortly before my sixth birthday. I recall hearing my father's sermons on heaven and hell that caused fear about my eternal destiny. I spoke to my mother about my concern. She wisely discerned that I had no understanding of my sinfulness before God. She explained the concept of sin and told me to consider my standing before God. For several weeks after our conversation, I remember coming to a growing understanding of my sinfulness. I understood the implications and did not want anyone to know that I was a sinner. I can remember hiding away from the sight of others and trying to pray to God about my sin, but I didn't know what to pray or how to address God about my need.

My father asked to speak to me several weeks later. He showed me from John 3:16 that Christ came to die for sinners and to deliver the perishing. I refused to concede my sinful condition though I was very aware of it. After some time discussing the fact of my sin from Scripture with my Father, God gave me repentance to accept the Scripture's testimony and to freely admit my sinful state and need of Christ. God granted me the faith to call on Christ to save me, and my father baptized me a couple of years later by immersion.

## Call to Ministry

Commencing at the age of fourteen, a desire to preach God's word began to develop within me. I briefly considered several "secular" occupations but concluded that my primary desire was to enter full-time pastoral ministry. My father encouraged me to ask the Lord to confirm that desire.. I recall stumbling upon 1 Timothy 3:1 in an unfamiliar translation of the New Testament where the verse read, "If a man desires to be a pastor, he desires a good thing." That verse took hold of my heart, and through it, the Spirit confirmed that these desires were God-given. It has been my privilege to preach God's word since I was fifteen years old, and the response God's people have given to this ministry has further confirmed God's call on my life. I grew up in Australia as the son of missionaries, and I desire to return to that country to serve the Lord through church planting and ministry training. My primary desire is to serve Christ's body through full-time ministry, and it seems that I have been most suitably equipped to do that there.

## Bibliology: The Doctrine of Scripture

God has revealed Himself to humanity by many means throughout history, and these means may be categorized into two modes: general revelation and special revelation. These two modes differ in their (1) extent (what God has revealed) and (2) recipients (who receives the revelation).

God's **general revelation** extends to *every human being*. God mediates that revelation through creation (Ps. 19:1–6; 33:6; Rm. 1:19–20), the human conscience (Rm. 1:32; 2:14–15), and His providence in history (Ex. 9:16; Is. 37:20; Mt. 5:45; Ac. 14:17). General revelation is sufficient for man to perceive God's existence and certain aspects of His nature, including His power (Rm. 1:20), goodness (Mt. 5:45), and morality (Rm. 2:14–15). Though humanity has willfully suppressed this revelation, God's provision of it renders every man accountable before Him (Rm. 1:18–21; 2:1–2). General revelation is insufficient for salvation (Rm. 1:21; 10:13–14; 1Co. 1:21).

Means of God's **special revelation** are various and include visions (Ac. 10:10–16), dreams (Gn. 20:3), miraculous signs (Ps. 77:14; Mt. 15:31), prophetic utterance (Ep. 3:5), and theophanies (Ex. 3:2; cf. Mk. 12:26; Num. 12:8–9). The ultimate means whereby God has revealed Himself is **the incarnation of Jesus Christ** (Jn. 1:1, 14–18; Col. 2:2–3; Hb. 1:1–2; Rev. 19:13). Although not all occurrences of special revelation are recorded in the Bible (Rev. 10:4), Scripture alone, which testifies of Jesus Christ, is the only source of special revelation for man today (Lk. 24:27; 2Pe. 1:16–19).

**Inspiration** is the process whereby God breathed out His words through human authors. Inspiration was not wholly mechanistic (Lk. 1:1–3). It occurred as the Holy Spirit exercised such control of the human authors that the documents they produced were the very words of God to man (2Sa. 23:2; cf. Ac. 4:25; 2Ti. 3:16; 2Pe. 1:21). Scripture teaches the **verbal** (every word of Scripture; Mt. 5:18; 22:31–32; Lk. 16:17) and **plenary** (the entirety of Scripture; 2Ti. 3:16) inspiration of Scripture.. Inspiration extends to the **original autographs** alone. The Divine origin of Scripture and process of inspiration guarantees that Scripture is **inerrant** (free from error or untruthfulness though not necessarily free of scribal error; Ps. 12:6; Jn. 17:17), **authoritative** (determinative for faith and practice; Dt. 4:2; Ps. 119:4; Ac. 6:7; 2Ti. 3:15), and **sufficient** (containing everything man needs for life and godliness; Ps. 19:7–11; 2Ti. 3:14–4:2; 2Pe. 1:2–4).

**Canonicity** is the process whereby God's people **recognize** the definitive collection of divinely-inspired documents. The canon contains the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. Two foundations substantiate the extent of the canon. First, the Scripture writers themselves are conscious that what they write is from God (e.g., Lv. 1:1; Ho. 1:1), and these Scripture writers extend this recognition to other books in the canon, referring to these writings also as the word of God (e.g., Ac. 4:24–25). Second, I accept the canon of 66 books because it has proved itself historically to be self-authenticating. The Holy Spirit confirms the authority of the Scriptures in the heart of every believer. The nearly uniform witness of church history attests from the very beginning to the extent of the canon. Through these writings, the saints hear the authoritative voice of their Shepherd and King (Rm. 10:17; 1Co. 2:14). The completion of the theological foundation of the church as laid by the apostles terminated any anticipation of further revelation (Ep. 2:20; Rev. 22:18–19).

Although the *autographa* no longer exist (to the best of our knowledge), Scripture teaches that God has **preserved** His word (Ps. 119:152, 160; Mt. 24:35; 2Ti. 4:2). The absence of direction from God in Scripture regarding the favoring of specific lines or families of textual evidence means that any attempt to restrict the means of preservation to a particular family or line of manuscript evidence is arbitrary. God has preserved His word in the totality of textual witness available to believers throughout church history.

Christ's quotations from the Septuagint endorse all human production of faithful **translations** of Scripture and validate such translations as the word of God (Mt. 21:42). Therefore, any modern translation of Scripture that accurately reflects the autographs may be called the word of God. Responsible Christians recognize the need to use the best translations available in their language. Criteria by which to determine reliable translations include textual basis, translation philosophy, and understandability. Trustworthy English translations of the first choice are the ESV and NASB.

Scripture is fundamentally clear (**perspicuous**), especially regarding the truth that leads to eternal life (2Ti. 3:14–17). Nevertheless, like all human communication, Scripture requires careful **interpretation** and can be misinterpreted. The goal of interpretation is discerning the meaning with which the original author(s) invested the text (**authorial intent**). To determine the meaning of the text, the interpreter must read it very carefully within its **context**.

## Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

Scripture never formally argues for the existence of God; it is Scripture's fundamental presupposition (Gn. 1:1; Jn. 1:1). Nevertheless, God has graciously given evidence of His existence to man apart from Scriptural revelation (Rm. 1:19–20; Ps. 19:1–6). This evidence includes the creation (Rm. 1:20), the conscience and universal standards of human morality (Rm. 2:14–15), and the goodness of God (Ac. 14:17; Rm. 2:4). Man suppresses this evidence, preferring to worship creation rather than the Creator (Rm. 1:18–23). Ultimately, every man rejects the existence of God on moral, not intellectual grounds (Ps. 19:1–6; Rm. 1:19–23).

God is a spirit (Jn. 4:24), infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. He is ultimately incomprehensible (Ps. 139:6; Rm. 11:3). Nevertheless, He has revealed Himself in His word and His creation.

God is a **trinity**, or more properly, a tri-unity. The doctrine of the Trinity rests upon three truths that Scripture teaches regarding the person of God. (1) There is **one God** (Dt. 6:4; Is. 45:5, 21; Jn. 10:30). (2) God exists in **three persons**: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:16–17; 28:19; Ac. 2:32–33; 2Co. 13:14) who are each fully divine (Jn. 6:27; Mic. 5:2; 1Co. 2:11). (3) Each person of the trinity is **distinct** (Mt. 3:16–17; 27:46; Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Ga. 1:4; 4:6; Ep. 4:30; 1Pe. 1:21; 1Jn. 4:2). Thus, Scripture teaches that God is one being Who exists in three co-equal and co-eternal persons. These persons have existed in unity and fellowship from all eternity (Jn. 1:1; 1:18; Hb. 9:14).

God is infinitely glorious and praiseworthy in every respect of His person and works (1Ti. 1:17). He is holy, separate from His creation, and unique in His person and works (Ex. 15:11; Is. 6:3; 57:15). Therefore, He displays each of His attributes to an unparalleled and perfected degree. Theologians divide God's attributes into two categories: greatness and goodness. Attributes of greatness include God's self-existence, invisibility, immutability, infinity, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, sovereignty, eternality, and wisdom. Attributes of goodness include God's purity, righteousness, truth, faithfulness, love, mercy, and grace.

In all things, God **acts** finally in His own interest and for His own glory (Rm. 11:36). As He is a God of sovereign love, such acts of self-interest must necessarily be also acts of benevolence and love toward His people (Rm. 8:28). His love and mercy also compel Him often to superintend His actions for the good of all humanity (Mt. 5:45). God acts salvifically toward His people (see “Soteriology”). He acts generally toward all, and these actions may be categorized as acts of creation, providence, and miracles.

God **created** the universe directly (Gn. 1:31–2:4; Ex. 20:11), of nothing (Jn. 1:3; Rm. 4:17; Hb. 11:3), in the space of **six, literal, 24-hour days** (Ex. 20:11), by the word of His power (Gn. 1:3 et al.; Ps. 33:6; 2Co. 4:6), for the sake of His glory (Gn. 1:31; Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11), and all very good (Gn. 1:31). The Son of God was the primary agent of creation (Jn. 1:3; 1Co. 8:6; Col. 1:16) though all the members of the Godhead participated (Gn. 1:2; Ps. 33:6–9). God’s original creation bore no evidence of the depravity and misery to which Adam’s sin and God’s resulting curse subjected it (Gn. 1:4 et al.; 1:31). Secular theories of origins such as **evolution** and **theistic evolution** are unbiblical. Other theories of origins rely upon no firm exegetical support and should be rejected (e.g., gap theory, progressive creationism).

God’s **providence** is His sovereign activity in creation, governing, superintending, and leading all things to His intended goal. God’s providence includes His preservation of creation (Ne. 9:6; Col. 1:17; Hb. 1:3) and His government of the universe whereby He directs all things to His decreed purposes (Pr. 16:1, 4, 9, 33; Ep. 1:11). God often works through means (such as faith, 2Th. 2:13; or prayer, Jas. 5:17) in **concurrence** with man’s choices, but always in ultimate control (Jer. 10:23; Rm. 9:16). God’s government extends even to seemingly chance happenings (Pr. 16:33) and human choices (Ac. 2:23; 4:27–28; Ep. 2:10). Nevertheless, man remains fully accountable for his choices (Mt. 23:37; Rm. 9:19–20). God’s sovereign plan includes the existence of evil, and He uses it for His glory (Gn. 50:20; Rm. 5:20; 9:17, 22–23).

God has worked in supernatural ways that temporarily suspend natural law and exhibit an extraordinary act of power at specific points in history. These **miraculous acts** of God occur as unique demonstrations of God’s glory in creation (Ex. 9:16; 15:11; Jn. 2:11; 20:30–31) and to certify new revelation (1K. 17:23–24; Jn. 14:11; Ac. 2:22, 32; 2Co. 12:12; Hb. 2:4). Scripture gives no reason to expect or seek miraculous occurrences as normative today.

## Christology: The Doctrine of the Messiah

Scripture teaches the full deity and full humanity of Christ. As such, Jesus Christ is **one person**, partaking of two substances and thereby possessing **two natures** (Rm. 9:5). The Son of God has been equal with the Father from all eternity, but only in time did He take flesh and thus also become man (Jn. 1:1, 14–18; Phi. 2:5–8).

Scripture teaches the full **deity** of the Son of God and extends this ontology to the man, Jesus of Nazareth. Explicit assertions establish the deity of Christ (Is. 9:6; Jn. 1:1; Rm. 9:5; Phi. 2:6; Col. 1:19; Ti. 2:13; Hb. 1:3). He is called by God’s name, Yahweh (Jn. 8:85; Jn. 12:41; 1Co. 12:3; Hb. 1:8, 10–12; Rev. 2:1).

Scripture teaches the full **humanity** of Jesus Christ. Scripture states He was and remains a man (1Ti. 2:5; Hb. 2:14; 1Jn. 4:2; 2Jn. 7). His earthly existence included every element of a normal human lifecycle: birth, growth, and death. Christ possessed human attributes and expressed human needs (Mt. 4:1–11; 8:24; 24:36; 26:38; Lk. 2:7, 52; Jn. 19:30–33; Hb. 4:15). He did not partake of *fallen* human nature (Rm. 8:3–4).

The self-abasing act whereby the eternal Son of God took on human flesh and thus began also to be fully human is called the **incarnation**. The incarnation began at the **virgin conception** of Jesus of Nazareth, whereby the Holy Ghost overshadowed Mary so that the child born from her womb was to be called holy and the Son of God (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18–24; Lk. 1:34–37). Although Christ took on a second nature at the incarnation, this **hypostatic union** in no way confuses the two natures of Christ. Each nature retains its distinctive properties but is inseparable from the other. Christ's incarnation (as God in human flesh) continues eternally (1Ti. 2:5; Hb. 1:2–3).

Christ executes His **work as Israel's prophesied Messiah** in three offices: prophet, priest, and king. As prophet, He is Himself the word of God to man to reveal the Father and make known His will (Jn. 1:1, 18; 15:15; Ac. 3:22–26; Hb. 1:1–2). As priest, Christ represents the saints before God as both our propitiatory sacrifice whereby God's wrath is assuaged and as our advocate to make intercession for us (Hb. 2:17; 7:24–27; 10:12–14). As king, Christ rules over the realm of God's kingdom, subduing it to the glory of God (Lk. 11:20; Col. 1:13; Rev. 11:15).

Before the incarnation, the second person of the Godhead was active from all eternity. He participated in the eternal fellowship of the Trinity (Jn. 1:1; 17:5). In Him, the Father chose His own (Ep. 1:4). He was the Agent of creation (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16) and has sustained creation throughout history (Co. 1:17). The **angel of the Lord** in the Old Testament is most likely the pre-incarnate Christ (Gn. 16:10–13; 22:12; 31:11, 13; Ex. 3:2, 6).

Scripture presents the **atonement as the primary activity** in which Jesus Christ engaged. He completed this work at His first advent, which was the primary reason for the incarnation (Mk. 10:45). Scripture provides two causes of Christ's work of atonement. The first cause was the **love of God** for sinful humanity (Jn. 3:16; Rm. 5:8). The second cause was to glorify God by vindicating His **righteousness** (Rm. 1:16–17; 3:25). Jesus completed the work of atonement in four historical events. (1) Jesus Christ's **life** of perfect obedience to the law of God provides the foundation upon which God can impute to sinners the righteousness necessary for justification (Mt. 3:13–15; Rm. 8:3–4; 1Co. 1:30; Ga. 4:4–5; Phi. 3:8–9). He experienced real and significant temptation (Mt. 4:1–11; Hb. 2:18) and overcame it all in obedience through reliance upon the Spirit of God (Lk. 4:14). (2) Jesus Christ experienced **death** as God's penalty for our sins (Is. 53:4–6; Mt. 27:46; Lk. 23:33, 46; 2Co. 5:21). (3) The bodily **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the tomb after three days and three nights confirmed that God had accepted His work of atonement (Mt. 28:1–7; Rm. 4:24–25; 1Co. 15:1–8), and by it, He took to Himself the ability to save those who believe (Hb. 7:25; 1Co. 15:45). (4) The **ascension and session** of Jesus Christ to the Father's right hand signals the completion of His work (Rm. 8:34; Hb. 1:3; 10:12) and positions Him to make continuing intercession for the saints (Hb. 7:24–27).

Scripture interprets the theological significance of the death of Christ as follows. The atonement Christ provided was a **sacrifice** for sin to God (Hb. 9:24–28) whereby He

substituted Himself in the sinner's stead and fell under the wrath of God (Rm. 3:24–25). His work of sacrificial atonement resulted in **propitiation** (the satisfaction of God's righteous wrath against sin; Rm. 3:25; 1Jn. 4:10) and **expiation** (the forgiveness and removal of sin; Hb. 10:18–22). The atonement Jesus Christ provided was also **redemptive**, setting sinners free from their bondage to the Law (Ga. 3:13; 4:5), sin (Ep. 1:7), and the Devil (Hb. 2:14–15), and thereby delivering them from the present age (Ga. 1:4). His work of redemptive atonement makes the redeemed sinner the special possession of God (1Co. 6:19–20; Rev. 5:9–10). The atonement Jesus Christ provided brought about **reconciliation** between man and God and established a relationship of peace (Rm. 5:1, 10; 2Co. 5:18).

Scripture teaches that the atonement Christ provided is sufficient for all mankind (Jn. 1:29; 3:16–17; 6:51; 12:46–48; Rm. 3:25; 2Co. 5:14, 19; 1Ti. 2:1–6; 4:10; 2Pe. 2:1; 1Jn. 2:2). This accords with God's desire that all humanity experience salvation (Ezk. 18:23, 32; Jn. 3:17; 1Ti. 2:4; 2Pe. 3:9). Nevertheless, the **application** of the atonement is limited to certain people based upon two criteria. First, experiencing the benefits of Christ's redemption is conditioned upon **man's repentance and faith** (Mk. 1:15; Rm. 10:9–10). For this reason, the Gospel must be proclaimed to all (Is. 45:22; Mt. 11:28; 22:14; Lk. 14:16–24; Jn. 3:16; 12:32; Rm. 10:17). Nevertheless, the world God loved and for which He sent His Son is the world that loves the darkness rather than the light and will not come to the light (Jn. 3:16–20). Were the application of the atonement to rest finally upon the condition of man's repentance and faith, its application would extend to none (Jn. 6:44, 65), and Christ will have died in vain. For that reason, the second criteria concerning the extent of the atonement's application is determinative: **the election and effectual calling of God** (Jn. 10:15; 15:13; Ac. 3:16; 11:18; 18:27; Rm. 8:28–39; 1Co. 1:21–31; Ep. 1:4; 5:25; 1Th. 5:10; 1Ti. 1:14; 4:10; 2Pe. 1:1; Rev. 5:9–10). Therefore, the salvific effects of Christ's atonement extend to *every* man whom He chooses and calls (Rm. 8:28–30). Praise God for this!

Presently, Jesus Christ **sits at the Father's right hand**, awaiting the subjugation of His enemies (Ps. 110:1). Nevertheless, Jesus Christ remains active. He continues to **sustain** creation (Col. 1:17; Hb. 1:3). He **intercedes** for the saints (Rm. 8:34; Hb. 7:24–27). As the church's head, He is **building** (Mt. 16:18), **ruling** (Ep. 1:20–23; Rev. 1:13–20), and **perfecting** the body (Ep. 4:7–16). He accomplishes all this through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:16–18; Ac. 2:33).

## **Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and as such, He is not a mere force or influence. Neither is He a third mode or expression of deity. Several lines of biblical evidence establish the **personhood** of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit possesses the three fundamental attributes of personhood: mind (1Co. 2:10–11), will (1Co. 12:11), and emotions (Ep. 4:30). Second, the Holy Spirit performs personal works, such as teaching (Jn. 14:26; 16:13; Ac. 15:28), convicting (Jn. 16:8), and interceding (Rm. 8:26–27). Third, the Holy Spirit relates to other persons and can be resisted (Ac. 7:51), blasphemed (Mt. 12:31–32), tested (Ac. 5:9), lied to (Ac. 5:3), quenched (1Th. 5:19), grieved (Ep. 4:30), and insulted (Hb. 10:29).

Scripture teaches the **full deity** of the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Several lines of biblical evidence support this claim. First, He is called God (Ac. 5:3–4). Second, He possesses divine attributes, including eternality (Hb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), and omniscience (1Co. 2:10–11). Third, He performs divine works, creating (Gn. 1:2; Jb. 33:4), inspiring the words of God (Ac. 1:16; 2Pe. 1:21), overshadowing Mary so that the child she bears is called “the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35), regenerating (Jn. 3:5–8; Ti. 3:5; cf. Jn. 1:13), and resurrecting (Rm. 8:11).

The Spirit of God is **active** in the Old Testament, exerting a **restraining** influence upon humanity’s descent into immorality (Gn. 6:3; Ps. 143:10) and **empowering** God’s representatives in the Israelite theocracy to accomplish their God-given roles (Ex. 31:1–6; Num. 11:17; Jdg. 6:34; 14:6; Ps. 51:11). In the life of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of God brought about the virgin conception (Lk. 1:35) and guided and empowered Jesus for His earthly ministry (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1–2a; Mt. 12:18; Lk. 4:1–18; 10:21; Jn. 1:32; 3:34). The Spirit of God is the divine Author of Scripture, breathing out the words (2Ti. 3:16) and guiding the human authors (2Sa. 23:2; 2Pe. 1:21).

The Spirit of God retains His role of **moral restraint** in the world today and will do so until the rapture of the church (2Th. 2:7). He **convicts** unbelievers of sin and their fallen condition before God (Jn. 16:8; 1Th. 1:5). He enables unbelievers to understand and embrace the Gospel (1Co. 2:9–14; 2Co. 3:14–17).

The Holy Spirit **regenerates** dead sinners, imparting spiritual life to them and inclining them toward Christ in faith (Jn. 3:5–8; Ti. 3:5). **Spirit baptism** is Christ’s work whereby through His gift of the Holy Spirit, believers are united to Christ and become members of His body at conversion (Mt. 3:11–12; Ac. 1:5; 2:1–14; 11:15–16; Rm. 16:7; 1Co. 12:13). The Spirit of God indwells all who belong to Christ (Rm. 8:9; 1Co. 6:19). This permanent residence of the Spirit within the believer and His subsequent ministry to believers is a seal (Ep. 1:13; 4:30) and pledge (2Co. 1:22; Ep. 1:14) of their heavenly inheritance.

The Spirit ministers to each believer throughout his life in the following ways: teaching (1Jn. 2:20, 27), assurance (Rm. 8:14–16), intercession (Rm. 8:26–27), guidance (Ac. 8:9), empowerment (1Co. 12:4, 7–9, 11; Acts 1:8), and sanctification (2Co. 3:18; Ga. 5:22–24). In addition, the Holy Spirit **gifts** the believer with grace to minister to the body of Christ, imparting to every believer at least one special ability to minister to the body of Christ (1Co. 12:7; 1Pe. 4:10). The purpose of the gifts is not self-exaltation but God’s glory and the church’s edification (Rm. 12:3–8; 1Co. 12–14; 1Pe. 4:10–11). **Sign gifts** (such as speaking in tongues and working miracles) occurred at Pentecost and afterward to attest to the new revelation from God spoken through the apostles (Jl. 2:28–32; Ac. 2:23; 4:16; 2Co. 12:12; Hb. 2:3–4). The death of the apostles and the close of the canon disposes believers not to seek such sign gifts today.

## Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels

Scripture teaches that God is attended in heaven by the holy angels, each an individual creation of God (Ne. 9:6; Ps. 148:2, 5) and thus not a race (Mt. 22:30). They are personal (Lk. 8:28; 15:10; Hb. 1:6; 1Pe. 1:12), non-corporeal, spiritual beings (Hb. 1:14; Lk. 24:39),

and their company is innumerable (Rev. 5:11). Originally, all were unfallen and holy (Jude 6). Angels exist today in both unfallen and fallen states.

The company of **unfallen angels** continues to be called holy (Mk. 8:38). They worship God continuously (Is. 6:3; Hb. 1:6; Rev. 5:11–12). Unfallen angels function toward the saints to (1) assist in answers to prayer (Ac. 12:5–11) and (2) guard and protect (Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Hb. 1:14). God redeems humanity to showcase His wisdom and grace to the angelic company (Lk. 15:10; 1Co. 4:9; Ep. 3:10; 1Ti. 5:21; 1Pe. 1:12). Angels will pour out upon earth the eschatological wrath of God (Gn. 19:13; Mt. 13:42; Ac. 12:23; 2Th. 1:7–8; Rev. 16).

Scripture teaches the existence of **Satan**, a fallen angel (Job 1:6; 2:1), previously named Lucifer, who was cast out of heaven for his pride (1Ti. 3:6) and now torments the children of God and will continue to do so until confined to the pit before the millennium (Is. 14:12–15; Ezk. 28:1–10; 1Pe. 5:8 Rev. 12; 20:1–3). Ezekiel 28:11–19 and Isaiah 14:12–14 likely describe his fall. This fallen angel seduced Adam and Eve to commit the same sin he did: aspiring in pride to be like God (Gn. 3:5; Is. 14:14). Satan (“adversary”) opposes God and His saints. By the death of Christ, the devil has been rendered ultimately powerless (Gn. 3:15; Jn. 16:11; Ep. 1:19–21; Col. 2:15; Hb. 2:14–15; 1Jn. 3:8). He will be confined to the abyss during the millennial reign of Christ on the earth (Rev. 20:1–3) before being consigned eternally to the lake of fire (Mt. 25:41; 1Co. 15:24; Rev. 20:10).

At his fall, Satan took with him one-third of the angelic company of heaven (Rev. 12:3–4), who joined him in his rebellion against God. These fallen spirits are referred to as “demons” (Jas. 2:19) and “unclean spirits” (Mk. 1:23). Some of these fallen angels were incarcerated and will remain so until their final judgment (2Pe. 2:4; Jude 6). Others remain free to assist Satan in his battle against God. They work with him for the downfall of humanity, especially the Messiah (Rev. 12) and the people of God (2Co. 12:7; Ep. 6:12). They are doomed to destruction (Mt. 25:41; 1Co. 6:3; 2Pe. 2:4; Jude 6).

## **Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man**

God created humanity on the sixth day of the creation week in His image and without sin (Gn. 1:26–31; Ec. 7:9; Rm. 5:12). God’s creation of man occurred as God took dust from the ground, formed the man, and breathed the breath of life into him (Gn. 2:7). God’s creation of woman occurred as God took a rib from Adam’s side, fashioning from it the woman (Gn. 2:21–22). The first couple enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God before the fall. God created man to have dominion over the earth, ruling and cultivating it to bring it to its maximum potential of bringing glory to God (Gn. 1:28; Ps. 8). The entire human race descended from this first couple (Gn. 1:28; Ac. 17:26; Rm. 5:12, 18).

God created man in His image, and therefore, man is the pinnacle of God’s creative work. The fall (see “Hamartiology”) corrupted the image of God in man, and yet even after the fall, humanity still bears the image of God and transmits it to his descendants (Gn. 5:1–3; 9:6; 1Co. 11:7; Jas. 3:9). God’s plan of redemption aims to restore the image of God in man through Christ (Rm. 8:28–30; 2Co. 3:18; Ep. 4:20–24; Col. 3:9–10; 1Jn. 3:2).

Man is a unity consisting of material and immaterial parts (Gn. 2:7; Mt. 10:28; 1Co. 7:34; 2Co. 7:1; Jas. 2:26; 3Jn. 2). The **material part** of man is the body, created by God, and thus,

originally holy and good (Gn. 1:31; 2:25). God expects man to use his body to worship God (Rm. 12:1; 1Co. 6:13–20; Phi. 1:22). The body perishes in death, and both the bodies of the saved and lost await resurrection (1Jn. 5:28–29).

The **immaterial part** of man is commonly spoken of in Scripture as the *soul* or *spirit*. Scripture does not clarify the origin of the immaterial part of man (compare passages such as Ps. 139:13; Is. 42:5; Zec. 12:1; Hb. 12:9 against passages such Gn. 1:27; 5:3; Ps. 51:5; Hb. 7:9–10). The immaterial part of man is composed of various faculties, including the mind (Rm. 8:5–7; Ep. 4:23), the will (Ep. 2:3; 2Pe. 1:21), the conscience (Rm. 2:15; 1Ti. 1:5; 4:2; Hb. 10:22), and emotions (Rm. 9:2).

God created humanity as **male and female** (Gn. 1:27). Together, these two genders compose the human species. The creation of man as male and female means that they are of **equal** value and spiritual standing before God. This has been true since creation and has persisted after the fall (Gn. 2:18–23; Rm. 5:12–21; 1Co. 11:9; 15:22; 1Ti. 2:13). Nevertheless, God has assigned different **roles** to men and women. The husband is the “head” over the wife, meaning that he possesses authority over her by God’s design (1Co. 11:3; Ep. 5:23). The wife must voluntarily subject herself to the husband’s headship (Ep. 5:22, 24, 33; Col. 3:18; 1Pe. 3:1–6). The fact that this arrangement abrades modern humanistic sensitivities is expected; in a fallen world, these two roles are fulfilled properly only through Spirit-filling (Ep. 5:18, 21, 23, 25). Male headship extends to the church as well. God prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men in the church (1Co. 14:33–36; 1Ti. 2:11–14; 3:2, 4–5; Ti. 1:6). This position is called **complementarianism**.

God instituted **marriage** as a life-long covenant relationship between one man and one woman (Pr. 2:16–17; Ec. 9:9; Ml. 2:14–16). The Bible explicitly forbids **homosexuality** as a violation of God’s original intent for human sexuality (Lv. 18:22; 20:13; 1Ti. 1:8–10). Victory over this lifestyle is possible in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1Co. 6:9–11). **Divorce** violates God’s original intention for marriage (Gn. 2:24–25; Ml. 2:14–16; Mt. 19:3–12). The only **grounds for divorce** are the desertion of an unbelieving spouse (1Co. 7:10–16). Nevertheless, the desertion of an unbelieving spouse does not give warrant for pursuing a divorce but only for allowing the unbeliever to depart. The only **grounds for remarriage** are the spouse’s death (Rm. 7:1–3; 1Co. 7:39). Jesus prohibits *any* other remarriage after divorce (Mt. 5:31–32; Mk. 10:11–12; Lk. 16:18; 1Co. 7:11). Divorced men must not hold the office of elder or deacon in the local church (1Ti. 3:2, 10, 12).

## Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

Sin is **transgressing** God’s law in act, attitude, or nature (1Jn. 3:4). Sin is **failing** to attain the standard of God’s perfection (Mt. 5:48; Rm. 3:23). Unbelief is the fundamental sin and the root of all other sins (Hb. 11:6). God’s law is revealed in Scripture and the human conscience, and violating either is sin (1Jn. 3:4; Rm. 14:23).

In the sovereign plan of God, sin **originated** with Satan in heaven when he aspired to be like God, and for his pride, God cast him out of heaven (see “Angelology”). Sin and corruption entered the world through the door Adam opened by his disobedience to God’s single command regarding the fruit of the tree of life (Gn. 3:6–7), bringing with it death (Rm. 5:12–19).

The sin of Adam, the **federal representative** of the entire human race and to whom all humanity is **naturally united**, negatively impacted the entire human race. This includes universal condemnation before God (Rm. 5:12–19) as well as the universal corruption of human nature so that all men are sinful and sinners (Rm. 3:10–23) from conception (Ps. 51:5; 58:3). This corruption and sin are total; man is **totally depraved**. This means that every part of man has been corrupted by the fall, including his heart (Jer. 17:9), mind (Ep. 4:17), will (Rm. 8:7), emotions (2Pe. 1:4; 3:3; Jude 16), affections (Jn. 3:19–20), conscience (Ti. 1:15), and body (Gn. 3:16, 19; Rm. 8:23). This renders man unable to obey the will of God in any respect (Is. 64:6; Rm. 8:7–8), including by coming to Christ (Jn. 1:13; 6:44, 65).

As a result of sin, the creation does not function as God intended, and humanity does not enjoy harmonious relationships with creation, other human beings, and God. Women experience pain in childbirth (Gn. 3:16). Man must toil to sustain his life (Gn. 3:17–19; Rm. 8:19–22). Human relationships experience tension and strife (Gn. 3:3–16; Jas. 4:1–3). Humanity is at enmity with God (Rm. 8:7).

The penalty for sin is **death**, and in Adam, every human being stands under the just condemnation of God and is subject to death (Rm. 5:12–19). There are three aspects of death to which fallen man is subject: (1) spiritual death—separation from the life and knowledge of God (Jn. 17:3; Ep. 2:1–3; 4:17–19); (2) physical death—the separation of the spirit from the body (Rm. 5:12–21; Hb. 9:27; Jas. 2:26); and (3) eternal death—separation from God forever in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

Scripture indicates that **infants who die** before their ability to recognize and understand their accountability before God will be delivered from the curse of Adam’s sin based on Christ’s atonement. Although they stand in solidarity with Adam and are thus subject to condemnation because of sin, Scripture recognizes a certain level of moral ignorance in infants and young children (Dt. 1:39; Is. 7:15; Jon. 4:11). God reserves for Himself the ability to work salvifically in the unborn and has demonstrated that ability in Scripture (Lk. 1:15, 41, 44). David found comfort in the confidence that he would see his infant son again (2Sa. 12:23; cf. 2Sa. 18:33; cf. 1Th. 4:13). While God requires repentance and faith as a condition of salvation, these two are not the cause of salvation, and Scripture teaches that both are gifts from God (Ep. 2:8–9; 2Ti. 2:25). Therefore, the mental inability to repent and believe does not impede God’s ability to extend the benefits of Christ’s atonement to infants any more than does the moral inability of able-bodied sinners. This would extend to those who experience severe mental disabilities. Ultimately, salvation belongs to the Lord. Hallelujah!

## Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

God’s answer to the problem of universal human depravity and sin is the message of salvation known in Scripture as the Gospel. This salvation is not a single historical event but a process commencing before the foundation of the world and reaching forward as far as eternity future. It is entirely the work of a gracious God.

Salvation begins with the work of God. Long before God created the world, He was already at work for the salvation and eternal bliss of His own. Before the world began, God chose Christ as the anointed One through whom He would bring justice to the nations (both in

salvation and judgment; Is. 42:1). In His foreknowledge, He set His love upon some (1Th. 2:13; Rm. 8:29; 1Pe. 1:2), determining to save specific individuals and choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world (Ep. 1:4). In time, God effectually called these foreknown individuals to receive the application of salvation (Rm. 8:28–30; 1Co. 1:21–28). *Thus, predestinarian salvation is entirely the work of a gracious God! Hallelujah!*

Christ's work of redemption in His humiliation and exaltation accomplished several purposes, including establishing God's law (Rm. 3:31), demonstrating God's righteousness (Rm. 3:25), manifesting His love (Rm. 5:8), and effecting propitiation (Rm. 3:25). Christ came to do the will of the Father (Hb. 10:5–9) both actively and passively.

Christ's **active obedience** means that throughout His earthly life, Christ always did those things that were pleasing in the sight of God (Jn. 8:29). This active obedience of Christ to the will of God throughout His life was God's means of accomplishing in humanity what the law could not do (Rm. 8:3–4). Fallen humanity is unable to satisfy the law of God, but Christ came to fulfill the law in its entirety (Mt. 5:17) and as its goal (Rm. 10:4). This righteousness of Christ God imputes to men of faith (Rm. 4:1–9) as an alien righteousness (Phi. 3:9) but which God nevertheless counts as a believer's own righteousness (1Co. 1:30) before Him.

Christ's **passive obedience** refers to His submission to the pain and suffering He underwent during the incarnation because of humanity's sin. This suffering falls into three categories: (1) the experience of life in a sin-cursed world, including His inhabiting the likeness of sinful flesh (Rm. 8:3), (2) the suffering of the agony and death of the cross, and (3) His bearing of human sin in His person (Is. 53:6, 10; Ac. 4:27–28; 2Co. 5:21). He suffered **the wrath of God** and the penalty for sin (death; Rm. 3:23) at the hand of God (Is. 53:6, 10; Ac. 4:27–28; 2Co. 5:21) in place of sinners upon whom that same wrath must have justly fallen. The result of Christ's work is the **propitiation** (satisfaction) of God's wrath against sinners (Rm. 3:24), absolution (forgiveness), and expiation (removal) of sins (Hb. 10:18). Christ wrought for sinners a **vicarious penal substitutionary atonement**. *Thus, redemptive-historical salvation is entirely the work of a gracious God! Hallelujah!*

In applying **redemption** to humanity, God issues a **general call** to all humanity to look to Him for salvation (Is. 45:22; Ac. 17:30). The only guarantee that any man will respond to God's general call is God's gracious activity whereby He **effectually calls** the elect (and only the elect) to Himself (Rm. 1:6–7; 1Co. 1:2, 9, 24, 26; 2Ti. 1:9) through the proclamation of the Gospel and the subjective ministry of the Holy Spirit (Rm. 10:13–17; 2Th. 2:13–14). This effectual calling guarantees that the elect respond willingly to Christ with saving faith and thereby experience the benefits of salvation (Jn. 6:37; Rm. 8:28–30; cf. Ac. 16:14; Ep. 1:18; 1Pe. 2:9; 2Pe. 1:3).

Those whom God effectually calls, He unites to Christ in real, actual, living union (1Co. 1:30). Union with Christ is how God actualizes all the other aspects of salvation, including election (Ep. 1:4; but cf. Rm. 16:7), predestination (Ep. 1:5), the bestowal of grace (Ep. 1:6), resurrection to new life (2Co. 5:17), redemption (Rm. 3:24; Ep. 1:7), justification (Rm. 3:26; 8:1; Phi. 3:9), imputation (2Co. 5:21; Phi. 3:9), reconciliation (Rm. 5:1), sanctification (1Co. 1:30), sealing (Ep. 1:13), and glorification (Ep. 1:10).

Every sinner responds to God's effectual call with repentance and faith. **Repentance** is a change of disposition that involves the entire inner man (mind, Ps. 51:3; affections, 2Co. 7:9–10; will, Is. 55:6–7; Ac. 3:19) and inevitably results in a change of action (Mt. 3:8; Ac. 26:20). For this reason, Scripture can speak of repentance in connection with deeds (e.g., Rev. 9:20–21). God requires repentance of humanity as a prerequisite of salvation (Mk. 1:15; Ac. 17:30–31). Repentance is a gift of God (Ac. 5:30–31; 11:18; 2Ti. 2:25).

Scripture teaches that **faith** is also a prerequisite for salvation (Rm. 1:17; 10:9–10). Faith also is a gift of God (Ac. 18:27; Ep. 1:19–20; 2:8–9; Phi. 1:29). Faith evidences itself inevitably in good works (Jas. 2:14–26). Faith is the instrumental cause of *experiential* union with Christ (Ga. 2:20; Ep. 2:4–10; Col. 2:12) and is, therefore, the instrument by which believers enter into the entire experience of salvation (Ep. 1:3).

God blesses those in Christ with the double graces of justification and sanctification.

**Justification** is a **forensic declaration** of God whereby He righteously pronounces the ungodly to be righteous (Rm. 4:5). **Imputation** is an act of God whereby He credits a man's sin to Christ, and credits the righteousness of Christ to that man's account (Rm. 4:1–16; 5:15–18; 2Co. 5:21; Phi. 3:7–11) and must not be confused with justification. Imputation is the grounds of justification so that justification is not a legal fiction but is, in fact, justifiable (Rm. 3:25). The opposite of justification is **condemnation** (Mt. 12:37).

**Sanctification** is the act of setting apart a thing or person for divine usage or favor.

Scripture teaches three stages of the sanctification of those in Christ. First, God sanctifies the objects of His grace in **positional sanctification** at conversion (1Co. 6:11; Ac. 20:32). Second, throughout the saint's subsequent life on earth, God so energizes the believer's will and ability so that he is enabled to work out the Gospel in all its practical implications in his life (Rm. 6:19; Phi. 2:12–13; 2Co. 3:18; Hb. 12:14; 1Pe. 1:15; 2Pe. 3:18), resulting in greater measures of holiness and conformity to the image of Christ (Rm. 12:1–2; 2Co. 3:18; Col. 3:10). This is **progressive sanctification**. Scripture also teaches that God consummates a saint's sanctification in His presence. This third stage is commonly called glorification and is **permanent sanctification** (1Th. 5:23; Hb. 12:23; Rev. 21:27). All sanctification is fundamentally an act of God (Phi. 2:12–13; 1Th. 5:23).

A true believer can never lose salvation but will be preserved by the power of the Lord unto His coming (Jn. 6:38–40; 10:27–29; Rm. 8:28–39; 2Ti. 1:12; 1Pe. 1:4–5). Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that only those who hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end are partakers of Christ (Hb. 3:12–14). Thus, perseverance is the evidence, not the basis, of salvation and identifies the one who will be finally saved (Jn. 8:31–32; Col. 1:22–23; 1Jn. 2:19). *Thus, mystical (experiential) salvation is entirely the work of a gracious God! Hallelujah! Salvation belongs unto the Lord (Jon. 2:9).*

## **Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church**

The **universal church** is that body composed of all the redeemed in the present age (Mt. 16:18; 1Co. 12:28; Ep. 5:25). It is the place where Christ manifests the reign of His mediatorial kingdom in the present age (Ac. 2:22–36; Rm. 14:17; 1Co. 4:20; Ep. 1:20–23; Col. 1:13). The church was inaugurated at Pentecost with the descent of the Spirit of God (Mt. 16:18; Ac. 1:5–8; 2:1–47; 11:15; 1Co. 12:13) and incorporates both Jewish and Gentile

believers during the present age (Ga. 3:28; Ep. 2:11–21; Col. 3:11). The New Testament uses four images to describe the church: (1) **the body of Christ** (Rm. 12:5; 1Co. 12:12, 27; Ep. 1:22–23; 4:15–16; Col. 2:19); (2) **the bride of Christ** (Ep. 5:23–27; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9); (3) **the temple of the Spirit** and a **priesthood** (1Co. 3:17; 2Co. 6:16; Ep. 2:21; 1Pe. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6); **the pillar and support of the truth** (1Ti. 3:15).

The **local church** exists throughout the earth as localized expressions of the body of Christ (Ac. 13:1; 2Co. 1:1; Col. 4:15). The essential marks of a local church include (1) the public proclamation of the word of God (1Ti. 4:13; 2Ti. 4:2–3; Ti. 2:1), (2) the faithful administration of the ordinances to make visible the Gospel and its body-forming effects (Ac. 2:42; Rm. 6:1–5; 1Co. 10:15–22; 11:17–34), and (3) the regular gathering of believers bound together by common confession and covenant (1Co. 14:23–25; Hb. 10:25).

The ultimate purpose for which the church exists is **the glory of God** (Ep. 3:10, 20–21). God accomplishes this goal through the local church, a body of believers who have covenanted together to fulfill Christ’s mission for the church: the **making and maturing of disciples within the body of Christ** for His glory and the glory of the Father (Mt. 28:18–20; Ep. 4:11–16). The Great Commission defines church’s mission (Mt. 28:18–20; cf. 18:15–20).

Christ expects every believer to visibly identify with a local church and enter its **membership** through water baptism (Rm. 6:3–4; 1Co. 12:13). The entire life of the body hangs upon church membership. A member of a local church supports that church with his faithful attendance (Hb. 10:25), regular, cheerful, voluntary, and sacrificial giving (1Co. 16:2; 2Co. 9:7; 1Ti. 6:17–19) and the exercise of his spiritual gifts (1Co. 12). He also takes joint responsibility for the oversight and spiritual health of the other members of the body (Mt. 18:15–20; 1Co. 12; Ep. 4:11–16).

Christ is the head of His church (Co. 1:18), and He **governs** her through His word and Spirit. Elders who possess the ability to teach the Scriptures mediate the authority of Christ within the congregation through their rule (1Ti. 3:1–2; 5:17), and the Spirit-indwelt congregation affirms and follows that leadership (1Th. 5:12–14; Hb. 13:17). The New Testament is clear that the congregation bears final authority to act in matters such as church discipline (Mt. 18:17; 1Co. 5:4–6; 2Co. 2:6–7), the election of leaders (Ac. 6:1–6), and doctrinal controversy (Ac. 15:3–4, 22–23; cf. 1Jn. 4:1). The New Testament lays out this model of church government, and it might best be termed *elder-led congregationalism*.

The New Testament speaks of two different **offices** in the local church. The first office most frequently bears the title **elder**. *Every* local church in the New Testament is depicted as shepherded by multiple elders (Ac. 14:23; 20:17; Phi. 1:1; Ti. 1:5). Because all who hold this office are involved in ruling the church in Christ’s stead, all elders must be able to teach and apply His word (1Ti. 3:2; 5:17; Ti. 1:9). Some devote themselves solely to teaching and preaching the word of God and should be remunerated accordingly (Ac. 6:3–4; 1Co. 9:1–12; 1Ti. 5:17). Elders and their families must meet specific qualifications (1Ti. 3:1–7; Ti. 1:5–9). The second office bears the title **deacon** (Ac. 6:1; 1Ti. 3:8). Deacons function to assist the elders in the administration of the church (Ac. 19:22) so that they can concentrate on preaching and prayer (Ac. 6:3–4) and so that the Gospel is not defamed (Ac. 6:2, 7). Deacons and their families must meet specific qualifications (1Ti. 3:8–13; see Ac. 6:3, 5).

The **ordinances** of the church are water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christ gave the ordinances to the local church, and they should be observed only within that context.

**Baptism** occurs once in the life of every believer (Ac. 2:41, et al.; Hb. 8:11) as he is immersed in water (Mk. 1:5; Jn. 3:23; Ac. 8:38–39; Rm. 6:3–4) to symbolize his union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rm. 6:3–4; Col. 2:12), his cleansing from sin (Ac. 2:38; 22:16), possession by the triune God (Mt. 28:19), and to depict his status as a member of the body of Christ (1Co. 12:13).

The church observes the **Lord's Supper** repeatedly as the gathered members of the body of Christ enact a Gospel memorial, remembering the redemptive work of Christ, partaking of those elements that symbolize His body and blood, and enacting their common participation in Christ and His body (1Co. 10:17; 11:17–34) visibly. The elements employed are broken bread and the fruit of the vine consumed separately (Mt. 26:26–28; Mt. 14:22–24; Lk. 22:19–20; 1Co. 11:23–25).

**Church discipline** is the mechanism whereby the church ensures its purity, disciplines its members, and pursues its spiritual health. Christ outlines the procedure of church discipline (Mt. 18:15–20). The epistles expand Christ's teaching in certain circumstances (1Co. 5:1–5; Ga. 1:6–9). Church discipline begins at the level of personal confrontation, and Matthew 18:15–20 invests every member of a local church with His authority for the spiritual oversight of other members of that church. They possess this authority for one another's edification (2Co. 10:8). The criterion for ex-communication is impenitence. The New Testament gives direction regarding the discipline of false teachers in an assembly (Rm. 16:17–18; 1Ti. 3:9–10; Ti. 3:10) and cases in which a church leader has sinned (1Ti. 5:19–25). In any case, where genuine repentance and sorrow over sin are shown, the offender must be forgiven (2Co. 2:5–11).

**Ecclesiastical unity** is the product of the fundamental unity of the body of Christ through the indwelling Spirit. Any effort to unite churches at the cost of orthodoxy is unscriptural (Romans 16:17–18). This principle extends to association because association can compromise the Gospel (Ga. 2:11–16). Thus, I align myself with the separatist tradition of **historic Fundamentalism**.

The church and the **civil government** must be kept separate since they operate in two different spheres (Mt. 22:21; Jn. 8:36; Ac. 5:29). The believer bears specific responsibilities to the state (Rm. 13:1–5; Ac. 5:29; 1Pe. 2:13–15; Mt. 22:17–21; 1Pe. 2:17; 1Ti. 2:1–2).

## Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things

Scripture testifies to the **personal eschatological** experience every human being must expect. Physical death separates man's material and immaterial components (Ec. 12:7). At death, every person's body begins the process of decomposition, but the spirit continues to live and enters immediately into *Hades* (Lk. 16:22–23) or the presence of the Lord (2Co. 5:1–8; Phi. 1:23). At the consummation of the present age, two resurrections occur (Da. 12:2; Jn. 5:25–29). The bodies of the righteous dead are raised to be with Christ in the presence of God forever in glorified bodies (1Th. 4:17; Rev. 5:9–10), and the wicked dead are raised and reunited with their bodies to stand before the great white judgment throne and to enter the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–15).

The best systematic presentation of Scripture's teaching regarding general eschatology is **progressive dispensational premillennialism**. The following explains the events of eschatology in their chronological development.

Scripture teaches believers to expect the **imminent return** of Jesus Christ in the clouds to raise and rapture His own. The saints will rise to meet Christ in the air and be with Him forever (1Th. 4:13-18; 1Co. 15:51-53) and will appear before the judgment seat where Christ will evaluate them for reward or loss (Rm. 14:10; 1Co. 3:11-15; 2Co. 5:9-10; 1Jn. 2:28).

After the rapture of the church, the **Tribulation** will commence upon the earth (Rev. 3:10; 6-19). Christ will pour out the righteous wrath of God upon recalcitrant earth-dwellers (1Th. 5:1-3; 2Th. 2:12; Rev. 6:15-17; 14:7). The tribulation climaxes when the Messiah appears from heaven at the Second Coming to destroy all His enemies (Zec. 14:1-5; Rev. 19:11-21).

The Tribulation will climax with the **Second Coming of Jesus Christ** in power and glory to rule the world with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:11-21), separating the sheep from the goats (Mt. 25:31-46), gathering His wheat into the barn and clearing the threshing floor of the chaff by fire (Lk. 3:17). With His saints, Christ will commence a literal reign on earth lasting 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4-6), fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (e.g., Is. 2:1-5).

At the end of His reign, Satan will be consigned eternally to a literal Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:7-10). Christ will raise the wicked dead, and they will appear in their bodies before a great white throne to also be consigned to the Lake of Fire (or *gehenna*; Mk. 9:43-44) in their bodies (Mt. 18:8) for all eternity (Rev. 14:9-12) to experience physical and spiritual torment forever (Mt. 8:12; 13:41-42, 49-50; 18:8; 25:41, 46; 2Th. 1:9). The last enemy Christ will destroy is death itself, and He will cast it along with *Hades* into the Lake of Fire (1Co. 15:20-28; Rev. 20:14).

Having conquered all His foes, Christ delivers a subdued kingdom to the Father (1Co. 15:26-28), and they commence their unbroken reign through all eternity. The realm they rule is a new creation of **new heavens and a new earth**. New Jerusalem is the centerpiece of the new creation. God's people inhabit this new creation for all eternity (2Pe. 3:7ff; Rev. 21-22). Sin and its effects are banished (Rev. 21:4; 22:3). In the New Jerusalem, humanity enjoys direct fellowship with God (Rev. 22:1-4), the ultimate goal of the New Covenant (Jer. 31:33; cf. Rev. 21:3). All that Christ accomplishes in time and for eternity is for the glory of God the Father (1Co. 15:28; Phi. 2:9-11).

Praise be to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Praise be unto the Lamb forever and ever!  
Praise be unto His eternal Spirit of power, glory, and life!

Amen.