

Joshua Perkins' Statement of Belief and Doctrine

1. Scripture

I believe that the canon of Scripture as we have it (66 books: Genesis - Revelation) is the complete, timeless, and inspired Word of God, given to us perfectly in the original texts (plenary verbal inspiration). The Scriptures teach us everything needed for salvation, fruitful living, and faithful ministry on this earth, and it is the supreme authority for practice and doctrine (*2 Tim. 3:14-17; Rom. 10:8-17; 2 Pet. 1:2-4*). I believe the Bible is to be interpreted literally following a grammatical-historical interpretation.

The Scriptures are Divinely inspired, meaning the men who wrote them, while they used their own native languages and styles, wrote only what God through the Holy Spirit told them to write. The original autographs were not human interpretations written by human initiative, but God's own words at His moving (*2 Pet. 1:20-21*). The Old Testament Hebrew canon is identified as scripture within the New Testament (*Rom. 1:1-2*). Jesus and the Apostles repeatedly use and quote the Old Testament as the authoritative word of God with a literal interpretation and as historically accurate (*Matt. 1:22-23; 12:3-5; 12:39-42, Acts 7; Rom. 4; 5:12-19; Heb. 11*). In addition to the Old Testament, the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (*Acts 2:42*). Christ is the foundation of the church (*Matt. 16:13-19*) which the New Testament authors and the Apostles, through inspiration and revelation, laid and built upon (*Eph. 2:20*). God revealed to them the "mystery" (the church and the ingathering of the Gentiles = *Eph. 3:4-7*), as well as the gospel of Jesus Christ and how He fulfilled the Old Testament. We are instructed to remember the commandments spoken through the Apostles (*2 Pet. 3:2; Ju. 1:17*). Peter identified Paul's letters as Scripture (*2 Pet. 3:15-16*). We can have confidence that the writings of the Apostles which God has preserved are indeed His inspired word. Another manifestation of Scripture's authority comes through the Holy Spirit's ministry in the believer. The Spirit helps us recognize the Word of God for what it is.

Accurate translations of the *original autographs* are vital to the Christian faith. The warning against adding to or taking away from any of the words of God's prophecy (*Rev. 22:18-19*), though specifically referring to Revelation, fairly applies to all of the Bible. Translation philosophies that take liberties in order to satisfy a particular theological bent are to be avoided. The best translation work gives the receiving language as close to a direct word for word/ thought for thought translation as possible in order to convey the actual meaning and understanding. No single translation in any language is the only "inspired once for all translation" for that specific language group. Jesus and other New Testament writers quoted the Greek translation of the Old Testament. The early church used translations. Since languages evolve over time, translation is an ongoing process that helps retain the original meaning in understandable form. As men carefully, faithfully, and accurately translate the original texts into our

spoken tongues today, we can be confident that God has given us His perfect word.

2. God

I believe that there is one God, the eternal self-existent Creator who is Himself three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is sovereign over all of His creation and there is no other God beside Him (*Is. 43:10-11; Is. 45:22-23*). He is infinitely holy, just, righteous, good, and wise. He is the source and sustainer of all life and all things. He has revealed Himself to us through His creation (*Rom. 1:18-21 = general revelation*) and more specifically through His inspired word (His character and His mighty works). God's personal name means "I am" (YHWH, traditionally translated in English as Jehovah God, or "LORD" = *Ex. 3:13-14*).

a. God the Father/the Godhead: God's existence is proclaimed, assumed, and unquestioned in Scripture. I believe God is the uncreated and eternal Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all things (*Gen. 1:1*).¹ God has no beginning or end, He has always existed and will exist eternally (*Rev. 4:8-11*). The Old Testament affirms the oneness of God (*Deu. 6:4; Ex. 20:3*), yet other Scriptures reveal this one God exists in three distinct persons (*Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14*), which we call the Trinity. The other two persons of the Godhead (the Son {Jesus} and the Holy Spirit) act in obedience to the Father's will, each having distinct works and roles, but all are equal and share the same nature and glory (*Gen. 1:1; 14:18-22; Ex. 3:14; Deu. 4:35; Matt. 28:19*).

God the Father is a spirit (*Jn. 4:24*), with no physical form. He is omnipresent (*Ps. 139:7-12; Prov. 15:3; Jer. 23:23-24*), omniscient (*Ps. 147:4-5; Matt. 6:4-8; Ps. 139*), omnipotent (*Rev. 19:6; Matt. 19:26; Lk. 1:34-37*), and infinite in His being. God is perfect in holiness, justice, and love (*1 Jn. 4:7-8*). God is good (*Lk. 18:19*)² in His character, with no guile or deceit or evil (*Deu. 32:3-4*), abounding in lovingkindness, ready to forgive, and slow to wrath (*Ex. 34:6-7*). He identifies Himself as the Father of Jesus Christ (*Jn. 3:16*). God is also the Heavenly Father of all who have come to a saving knowledge of His only begotten Son (*Jn. 1:14; 20:17; Rom. 4:11; 1 Pet. 1:3-5*). While slow to wrath, and willing that none should perish, God hates sin and has revealed His wrath against all unrighteousness (*Rom. 1:18*). It is God's desire that men be saved, and it was His will that the Son should die so that men may be saved (*Jn. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 3:9*). God is to be loved (*Matt. 22:37*), feared (*1 Pet. 1:17; 2:17; Ps. 34:9*), worshiped (*Ps. 29:2*), obeyed (*1 Jn. 5:1-4; Deu. 6:1-3*), and revered (*Heb. 12:28-29*). God is sovereign, He has complete control over creation, men, and the nations of the earth, working everything together to fulfill His eternal purposes in the earth (*Dan. 4:35; Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:4-5*).

¹ Gen. 1:1; 14:19-22; Dan. 4:2-5:23; Rev. 4:11

² Gen. 1:31 regarding creation (further: Gen. 14:19-22; Ex. 20:1-17)

b. God the Son/Jesus the Christ: I believe that Jesus is the Christ (*Matt. 16:15-20*) the Son of the living God. Jesus is the prophesied³ Messiah/King of Israel (*Ps. 2:4-12*),⁴ the Savior of the world (*Tit. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:2*), God's true Prophet (*Heb. 1:1-2; Acts 3:22-23; Jn. 15:15*) and our eternal Priest (*Heb. 4:14-7:28*), the rightful Judge of all things (*John 5:22; 2 Cor. 5:10*). Jesus is God (*Col. 2:9; Jer. 23:5-6; Is. 45:24; Jn. 1:1-18; 14:3*), but as the Son, He does not act of His own volition but acts in obedience (*Jn. 5:30*) to and in concert with the Father (*Jn. 1:2, 14; 5:17; 17:1-5*). Jesus played a part in creation (*Col. 1:16*) and eternally existed as one with the Father before His birth (*Jn. 8:56-58*). Jesus was miraculously born of a woman, Mary, a virgin who had not known a man (*Matt. 1:18-25; Is. 7:14*). Jesus in that moment became God incarnate with a truly human physical body. He is both Deity and man perfectly joined in one person, yet He was not born with a depraved nature. While on earth He lived a sinless, perfect life that satisfied all the demands of the law (*Heb. 4:15; 7:26-28*). Jesus also acted as Prophet, proclaiming God's word and preaching accurately the will of God. Of His own volition and in obedience to the will of the Father, He literally and physically died to pay the penalty of sin once and for all for any who will believe in Him. Jesus is the Lamb of God represented by the Old Testament sacrificial lamb who was promised to atone for and take away the sins of the world by the shedding of His blood (*Jn. 1:36; Is. 53; Rev. 5*). Through His death Jesus performed the office of High Priest sacrificing Himself once for sins and initiating a new covenant of grace with men who believe. Jesus was buried for three days and three nights, rose bodily from death (*1 Cor. 15:1-22*), and is currently seated at the Father's right hand in heaven (*Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 12:2*) waiting to return as God's appointed King of all things at the end of the age. Jesus continues His office of Priest in heaven; no more does He need to offer Himself, but He intercedes on our behalf before the Father (*Heb. 7:25; 8:1-6; Rom. 8:34*). As the promised seed of Abraham and David, Jesus will return to reign on a physical throne in Jerusalem when He comes to earth a second time at the end of the age to fulfill every promise and covenant made in Scripture. His rule will be absolute, just, and righteous. He will then also act as the Judge of all men, rewarding or condemning all according to their deeds (*Acts 10:42; 17:31; Jn. 5:22*).

c. God the Holy Spirit: I believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (*Matt. 28:19*). He is God (*Acts 5:3-4*). The Holy Spirit is not merely a power or force but is presented in Scripture as an individual (*Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 12:11*). He is the Comforter/Helper requested by Jesus to indwell true believers (*Jn. 14:16-17; 16:1-15; Rom. 8:9-11*). As the Comforter, He is a witness to those whom He indwells, giving confirmation of their salvation (*Rom. 8:16*) and empowering them to live a sanctified life (*Rom. 8:1-15*). He enlightens the eyes of believers to

³ *Is. 42:1-9; 50:4-10; parts of 52:13-53:12; Jer. 23:5-6; 33:14-17*

⁴ *Gen. 3:15 = Seed of a woman, Gen. 22:16-18 = Seed of Abraham, Gen. 49:10 = of the tribe of Judah; 2 Sam. 7:11-16 (Davidic covenant); Matt. 1:1-16 (Kingly line through Joseph); Lk. 3:23-38 (Direct descendant through Mary) = Seed of David*

understand the Scriptures (*John 14:26*). He convicts of sin and enables us to walk in God's ways if we indeed walk by the Spirit. He counsels believers, prompts, and leads them. The Holy Spirit is responsible for distributing spiritual gifts to the members of a church (*1 Cor. 12:7-11*).⁵ The Holy Spirit prays for us, making intercessions according to the will of the Father (*Rom. 8:26*). The Holy Spirit has a unique role in convicting unbelievers of sin (*Jn. 16:8*). The Spirit also plays a vital role in salvation, by giving new life and a new heart able to receive the gospel (*Tit. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 12:3; Acts 16:13*). Genesis records the Holy Spirit's presence at creation (*Gen. 1:2*). While the Holy Spirit dwells within every true believer's heart, not all believers are equally sensitive to the Spirit's leading (*Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 5:18*). The Holy Spirit and the flesh that is still present in a believer war against each other. Believers who walk according to the Spirit have victory over their flesh, while those who do not yield to the Spirit live defeated lives. For a believer to continue in sin and walk according to the flesh is to grieve the Holy Spirit who has sealed him for the day of redemption (*Eph. 4:30*). The Spirit produces certain fruits within the believer (*Gal. 5:22-25*) that are recognizable, and within the church there are men that may be identified as "full of the Spirit" (*Acts 6:3*). The Holy Spirit also played a significant role in the inspiration of Scripture (*Acts 1:16; 4:25*).

3. Creation

I believe that the Triune God created (*brought into existence = Gen. 1:1; Is. 42:5; Col. 1:16*) all things in six literal 24hr days, speaking some things into existence and forming others out of what He had made. I believe that God made all things good and perfect in His original design (*Gen. 1:31*), and that He made it orderly and with purpose.

The law interprets Genesis 1 as six literal days (*Ex. 20:8-11*). To say that creation was not six literal days is to be inconsistent with Genesis' use of the word "day," as well as the nature of Genesis as literal history. Jesus and the New Testament authors quoted and taught Genesis as literal history (*Heb. 4; Matt. 12:40-41*)⁶ and interpreted Genesis 1 as six 24-hour days. I believe any attempt to reconcile evolution with Scripture, or any view of creation that differs from the biblical authors', undermines the authority of Scripture and the whole of the Christian faith.

⁵ Spiritual gifts: All gifts given by the Spirit are for the purpose of service and edification within the local church. There is no exhaustive list of spiritual gifts in scripture (*Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:7-16; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11*). During the time of the apostles, as during the times of the prophets and Christ, miraculous gifts were given to authenticate those giving new revelation/prophesy (called sign gifts). New revelation ceased with the completion of the canon and there was no more need for sign gifts. Paul taught that sign gifts would one day cease (*1 Cor. 13:8-13*). There is no command in scripture for believers to perform miracles as an act of worship; instead, the NT places all of the weight on our obedience of scripture. I personally believe that all sign gifts ceased with the completion of the canon of scripture (cessationism). If someone insists on the practice of sign gifts today, at a minimum they must obey Paul's explicit commands in *1 Cor. 14* to govern the practice, otherwise it is not of God.

⁶ Further examples are *Matt. 10:15; 12:40-41; 19:3-6; 24:38-39; Mk. 10:3-9; 13:9; Lk. 4:25-27; 11:50-51; 17:28-32; Jn. 3:14; 5:45-47; 6:32-33, 49*; see also section on the Scripture.

4. Man

The apex of God's creation is man and woman whom He made in His own image (*Gen. 1:26-29; 2:7-24*). Man was intended to govern, care for, and enjoy the rest of creation under God's blessing and authority. Man was created to have a relationship and fellowship with God, and man's ultimate purpose is to glorify God (*1 Cor. 10:31; Rom. 11:36*). In God's image, man was created with an ability to reason, relate spiritually, have creative ability, have dominion over, and use the rest of creation (*Gen. 1:28-31; 2:8-16*). Man was also given a free will for which he is justly held accountable by God (*Ps. 139:1-3, 23-24; Gen. 6:5-8; Ps. 7:9; Jer. 11:20; Rev. 2:23; 20:11-15*). God created the first man and woman without sin, but through their disobedience all men became sinners (*Gen. 1:26-31; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Rom. 3:9-23*). God created only two genders: male and female (*Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7; 18-23*). God instituted human marriage with the creation of Adam and Eve (*Gen. 2:24*). Marriage is defined by God as the union of one man and one woman for life by covenant (*Mal. 2:14-16*), with the man as the head and the woman as a help suitable for the man (*New Testament expounding: Matt. 19:4-9; Eph. 5:22-33; Rom. 7:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6*). This union is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His church; as such marriage is a life-long union that should only be annulled by death (*Matt. 19:6; 1 Cor. 7:39*).⁷ God intended for marriage to result in procreation (*Gen. 1:27-28*). Marriage is the only way a man or woman may engage in sexual activity; any sex outside of marriage is fornication, adultery, or an abomination and is sin (*1 Cor. 6:9-10; 7:1-9, Heb. 13:4*).

5. Sin

I believe that sin and all of its consequences (including but not limited to death, sickness, separation from God, pain, sorrow, fruitless labor, vanity, eternal hell, etc...) are a result of man's disobedience to God's express demand, as outlined in Genesis 3. All humans sinned in their first father, Adam (*Rom. 5:12-19*). All men are born sinners from their conception (*Ps. 51:5*). Sin is universal in this world (*Rom. 3:10-20*). Romans 1:18-32 defines sin as the rejection of God and His law (things such as sex outside of marriage, stealing, etc...are all acting outside of God's commands or original design). The just consequence of sin is the wrath of God, and the penalty is death (*Rom. 6:23*).

God cursed all of creation because of man's sin. The imperfections with which we live are the product of man's sin and are not the original design of God (*Js. 4:1-3; 1 Jn. 2:15-17*). All physical creation groans under the weight of this curse (*Rom. 8:19-22*). Nature no longer submits to man as it once did, and it does not yield a perfect harvest or return for man's labor (*Gen. 3:17-19; 4:10-12; Ps. 67:6*). Thorns, venom, and damaging weather are effects of the fall of man.

⁷ The subject of divorce: (*Matt. 19:1-12; Deut. 24:1-4; Matt. 5:31-32, 1 Cor. 7:10-20, 39*). Jesus teaches that divorce was not in God's original design, and that divorce was only tolerated after the fall when a spouse found the other to be unfaithful/immoral and could no longer live with them. Once divorced, it was a sin for either partner to remarry if the marriage had been consummated.

Because men are no longer good stewards of creation, they damage and pollute the earth and misuse the resources given them.

6. Salvation

I believe that salvation is when a man is saved from sin and its penalty of God's wrath and condemnation and made alive in Christ to live with Him and have fellowship with God forever. Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith and is not in any part due to man's works or goodness (*Rom. 10:8-13; 6:23*).

In salvation, God gives faith to believe His word and to entrust ourselves to the redemptive work of Jesus His Son (*Heb. 12:2; Matt. 13:11; Jn. 6:65; Phil. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:4-5*). Through Him, we may stand cleansed by His blood and clothed in His righteousness (*Phil. 3:8-10*), born again with a new heart.

Salvation has multiple facets: justification, sanctification, glorification. The inability to differentiate between these three facets has led to many aberrant theologies. Each may be referred to or used as synonyms for salvation, but only justification is experientially completed in this life. All parts of salvation are assured and are considered as done, but the outworkings of some aspects of our salvation are not yet fully realized, such as our glorified bodies and perfect sinlessness. It is for this reason that part of our salvation is yet forward looking to something that will happen for those who believe, and we must strive to live in a way worthy of our calling and wait for the final consummation of our faith. Those who are saved are identified in Scripture as saints, the elect, the righteous, brethren, beloved, and God's children.

a. Atonement: The atonement is the appeasing of God's wrath for sin, a reconciliation (*Rom. 5:8-11*). The term is used in Levitical law (*Lev. 16*) for the kind of offering necessary to appease God's wrath for sin. The law required an unblemished, substitutionary blood sacrifice to pay for sin, and the offering of a scapegoat. After killing the blood sacrifice, the priests confessed the sins of the people while laying hands on the scapegoat, who was driven off into the wilderness never to return, as a picture of the permanent carrying away of sin. The Levitical sacrifices could not cleanse a heart of sin; they were pictorial to help us understand the nature of the work Jesus did when He sacrificed His own body and shed His own blood on our behalf (*Propitiation: Heb. 2:17; Rom. 3:21-26; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10*). Jesus did both the work of the bull and the scapegoat reconciling us to God by dealing permanently with our sin once and for all. When God sees the blood of Jesus applied to our sins, His wrath is turned away. God is satisfied that justice has been done, the law fulfilled; and we are reunited with Him (*Rom. 4:25-5:2; Is. 53*). Hebrews 9-10 explain Christ's priestly work of atonement and the nature and function of the Levitical law of atonement. While the majority of men reject and do not enjoy the benefits of Christ's atonement, I do not believe that the extent of the provision of Jesus' atonement is limited in any way. Jesus died for the sins of the world (*1 Jn. 2:2; Jn. 3:14-21*), not just for the elect.

b. Repentance: Repentance is recognition of personal guilt, sorrow for one's sin, and acceptance of justice of God in the penalty for sin (*Ps. 51:1-5*). Repentance is necessary for salvation; without it there is no forgiveness of sin (*Lk. 13:3-5*).

Jesus preached "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (*Mk. 1:15*). The apostles taught that one must repent of their sins in order to be saved (*Mk. 6:12; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20*). We are commanded to proclaim repentance for the forgiveness of sins (*Lk. 24:47*). The book of Revelation is full of commands and opportunity to repent.⁸ The word repentance is sometimes used in Scripture as a synonym of salvation (*2 Pet. 3:9; Rom. 2:4; Acts 11:18*). Faith in God's message results in repentance for our sin, confession, and calling upon the name of Jesus for salvation.

c. Faith: Faith is the substance or assurance of things hoped for or not seen (*Hebrews 11:1; 2 Cor. 5:7*). It is the belief that what God has said is true and that God will keep His word and act on it. We are saved by grace through faith.⁹

Faith is forward-looking (hope), because there are promised parts of salvation (sanctification and glorification) not yet completed in this life. Christians hope for them and live accordingly. Faith also looks forward toward reward and inheritance. Without faith it is impossible to please God (*Heb. 11:6*). Faith comes by hearing (*Rom. 10:17; Gal. 3:2*). Faith is a fruit of the Spirit of God (*Gal. 5:22*). Faith is dead if it does not result in action or bear fruit (*Js. 2*). Faith is used as a synonym for salvation and as a synonym for all that we believe.¹⁰

d. Justification: Justification is God's once-for-all legal declaration of a sinner to be righteous before the law (*Rom. 3:21-28*) that happens when a man repents of his sin and asks God in faith to save him through the work of Jesus Christ (*Rom. 10:9-13*). Once justified, a man is saved from the penalty of the law and enjoys the atonement of Christ and reconciliation with God.

All men are condemned legally, having broken God's law, both in Adam and by personal transgressions. Those who believe in Jesus, however, do not stand in their sin but rather un-condemned in Jesus' imputed righteousness (*Rom. 7:14-8:4*). A justified believer never loses his justified status, though he must still confess sin and seek forgiveness (*1 Jn. 1:8-10*). Justification is completed when a sinner puts his faith in Christ. After a man is declared righteous, the Holy Spirit begins the work of sanctification and seals him for his future glorification (*Eph. 1:3-14*). Romans 5 shows the results of justification: peace (vs. 1), reconciliation with God (vs. 10), and salvation from the wrath of God (vs. 9).

e. Regeneration: Regeneration is the miraculous "rebirth" or making new of a man's heart at the time of His salvation. Jesus taught that in order for a man

⁸ Several examples: *Rev. 2:5, 16, 21-22; 3:3, 19*

⁹ *Heb. 3:6-11; Rom. 1:17; 3:21-31; 5:1-2; Gal. 2:16; 3:8-26; Eph. 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 10:38; 11:1ff*

¹⁰ Examples: *Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22, 27; 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:5; Col. 1:4, 23; 2:7; 1 Tim. 3:9; 5:8; Tit. 1:13; etc.*

to enter the Kingdom of God he “must be born again” (*Jn. 3:3*). This new birthing is a sovereign act of God accomplished by the Spirit (*Jn. 3:5-8; Eph. 2:1-9*). Our response of faith to the Gospel is a product of the new birth, because without a new heart able to believe we would never have faith (*Phil. 1:6, 29; Jn. 6:43-65*). We are saved, not on the basis of deeds performed, but mercifully by the renewing of the Holy Spirit (*Titus 3:4-7*). Without this supernatural act, we in our flesh would be wholly unable to please God (*Rom. 8:1-16*), but because of the work of the Spirit in a believer’s life, he is able to die to the flesh and be made alive in Christ. The new birth makes a believer a son of God.

f. Adoption: Adoption is the process by which we receive our inheritance as heirs of God and experience the redemption of our body (*Rom. 8:14-23; Gal. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:4-14; 1 Jn. 3:1-2; Jn. 17:13-23*). New birth brings us into the family of God, and gives us the first fruits of the Spirit (*Rom. 8:23*), but we are left in a sinful body, the flesh. As sons we are heirs of the inheritance, but have not yet received the inheritance (our glorification and a new body in sinless perfection like Christ = *Eph. 1:4-14*). Adoption is the receiving of that promised inheritance. Scriptures referring to the adoption of God’s sons present adoption as something to come for which we hope and wait. The whole creation under the weight of sin’s curse is groaning and waiting for our completed “adoption as sons” so that it too may be released from corruption (*Rom. 8:18-25*).

g. Sanctification: Sanctification is growing more and more into the image of God and His holiness. Sanctification begins after justification but is not actually complete until our glorification is realized.

Sanctification is a process of growth, which may suffer setbacks and failures. Christians are not capable of achieving sinless perfection in this life (*1 Jn. 1:9*). Without the Holy Spirit, sanctification is impossible; but believers are repeatedly commanded to grow:

- to “walk by the Spirit” (*Gal. 5:16-25*)
- to “add to our faith” (*2 Pet. 1:4-11*)
- to “know how to possess our body in sanctification” (*1 Thes. 1:4-8*)
- to “fight the good fight and keep the commandment” (*1 Tim. 6:12-16*)
- to “work out our salvation” (*Phil. 2:12*)
- to “adorn the doctrine of God by denying ungodliness” (*Tit. 2:10-13*)
- to “grow in grace” (*2 Pet. 3:18*)
- to “study to show ourselves approved” (*2 Tim. 2:15*)
- to “live in a manner becoming of our calling...striving to please God” (*Col. 1:9-12*)
- to “present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice” (*Rom. 12:1-2*)
- to “press on for the prize” (*Phil. 3:12-21*)
- to “seek things above” (*Col. 3:1-3*)
- to genuinely apply the doctrine of our salvation (*Heb. 10:19-13:9*).

Sanctification is completed when we see Jesus and are made like Him and given an incorruptible body prepared for eternity. Efforts in sanctification evidence the Holy Spirit's work within. If there is no external evidence of fruit, a person's salvation may rightly be called into question (*Js. 2:14-26*). Romans 6 deals with the concept of sanctification (6:19, 22). Because we have been justified and given new birth in Christ, we have died to sin and been made alive to righteousness and life in Christ. We live imperfectly now because of the presence of the flesh and its corrupted lusts/passions. Believers are able to defeat the flesh by renewing their minds with the Word of God and being conformed to it (*Rom. 12:1-2*). 1 Peter 4:1-5:11 gives a picture of progressive sanctification leading to eternal glory in Christ.

h. Glorification: Glorification is the final act or full realization of our salvation (*Rom. 8:17-25*). To be glorified is to have the glory that Jesus and the Father share given to us that we may be like them (not as deities, but as perfected created beings). It will include a new incorruptible body united with a fully sanctified heart that will no longer sin or desire it. This is the end result of our justification and is the perfecting of our sanctification. Our glorification is promised and certain.

i. Security of Believer: I believe that all who have truly called upon Jesus for salvation in faith are now eternally secure in the hand of their Father. Salvation cannot be lost (*Jn. 10:27-29; 1Jn. 2:19*). The One who started a good work in us will complete it unto the day of Christ (*Phil. 1:6*). We may have full assurance that He who chose us will not let us fall away into unbelief (*Jn. 6:37-40; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; 1 Pet. 1:5*).

Christ's sheep hear His voice, and He knows them, giving to them eternal life. Eternal security is limited to those whom God knows. While believers are secure in Christ (*Rom. 8:29-39*), Scripture gives repeated warnings to believers to examine ourselves (*2 Cor. 13:5*), to make our calling and election sure (*2 Pet. 1:10*), etc. (*cf. Heb. 2:1-4; 4:12-13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29*). Those who deceive themselves will be outside the kingdom and experience God's wrath and punishment.

7. The Church

I believe the church (*Eph. 2:19-3:21*) is the united body of true believers in Jesus Christ. The cornerstone of the church is Christ (*1 Peter 2:4*), and Christ is also the builder (*Matt. 16:18*) and the foundation (*1 Cor. 3:10-11*) laid by the prophets and the Apostles (*Eph. 2:19-22*). The Church exists to bear witness of Christ and make disciples of Him until He returns (*Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-18; Acts 1:8*). All believers in the New Testament era may be called the universal church. Local churches are specific bodies of believers joined by geographical proximity and common covenant together for the purpose of obeying the scriptural command to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (*Heb. 10:23-25*).

The local church provides believers with a means of corporate worship (*Col. 3:16*), accountability and discipline (*Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5*), discipleship (*Matt. 28:18-20*), teaching/preaching/instruction in righteousness (*2 Tim. 3:14-4:2*), fellowship (*Acts 2:42*), observance of the ordinances (*Acts 2:41-42*), and united service for Christ within their local and global context by fulfilling the Great Commission (*Matt. 28:18-20*). Scripture gives many examples of local churches in the New Testament; each one was autonomous and independent with no overreaching authority besides the Headship of Christ and the authority of God's Word.

The church is not synonymous with the nation Israel. While the nation of Israel and the church are intrinsically linked and their futures interdependent, the Bible maintains their distinctness. Both Jewish and Gentile believers are in the church. However, the church is distinct from national Israel, has not replaced Israel, has not supplanted God's designs for the nation Israel, and has not usurped God's promises or covenants with Israel which God will yet fulfill (*Rom. 11; Is. 9:1-7; Jer. 31:31-40; Jer. 33:14-22; Eze. 36:22-38*).

a. Nature: The church is a united (*Col. 3:12-15*) body (*Eph. 1:22-23*) of individual believers in Christ, and it is the temple for the Spirit of God (*Eph. 2:19-22*). Each church member has a different role or gift so that the whole body can grow together, function together, and mature (*1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 4:11-16*). The church has offices of leadership (*Phil. 1:1*). These offices are elders/pastors (*1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 14:23; 15:4; 20:17, 28; Js. 5:14; Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9*) who oversee and shepherd, and deacons (*Acts 6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13*) who serve alongside the elders and tend to a church's physical needs. Local churches should seek to add to its number new converts and disciple those who are part of the body. The church is responsible for raising up and commissioning new pastors, evangelists, and missionaries to go to other places with the gospel (*Acts 13:1-4*). The church is also given the burden of supporting God's work around the world, through prayer, material support, and sending of their own members (*3 Jn. 1:5-8; Phil. 4:10-20*).

b. Ordinances: There are two ordinances given to the church. Each is pictorial or symbolic, representing spiritual realities and past events and publicly identifying participants with Christ. The ordinances are for believers only and do not possess any saving power. If a Christian refuses to participate he is in disobedience and limits the Lord's blessing and use of him in this life.

1. Baptism is a one-time, commanded act that publicly identifies a new believer with Jesus. It visually represents the reality of our death, burial, and resurrection with Christ (*Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12*). Baptism is to be accomplished through complete immersion in water (*Acts 8:35-39*) in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (*Matt. 28:18-20*).

2. The Lord's Table or Supper (*Matt. 26:26-30; Lk. 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-34*) is a remembrance of Jesus' death and sacrificial work. It is to be observed corporately when a local congregation gathers for worship. The frequency of

observance is not specified. The practice consists of eating unleavened bread and drinking the fruit of the vine as Jesus commanded. The observance is a solemn thing, and a time when believers should sit in judgment of themselves and search their hearts for sin to be sure they are living in a way that matches their profession of faith in Christ. Improper observance or unworthy partaking is punishable by God.

8. Angels

Angels are supernatural, created, spiritual beings made to serve God and minister to Him. There are orders and different kinds of angels,¹¹ each with specific jobs. God has used angels to interact with men, sometimes as messengers or to fulfill tasks on earth (*examples: Lk. 1:11-19; Gen. 3:24; Lk. 2:8-15*). We are unable to see angels unless God enables us (*2 Kgs. 6:15-17*) to interact with them. They are called the "Sons of God" (*Job 1:6*) or the heavenly host (*Lk. 2:9-15*). Angels have access to both heaven and earth (*Job 1:6; Gen. 28:12*). Some angels have the appearance of men, some are winged, and some are creatures that we cannot even imagine. The time of their creation is unknown to us, but they witnessed creation and rejoiced in it (*Job 38:4-7*).

Satan and Demons: Satan and the demons are angels who have fallen from their sinless state (*Eze. 28:12-19*). The time when Satan and his demons fell is unknown to us. Satan attempted to exalt himself above God and rebelled. He convinced some of the angels to join him. Satan is at odds with the purposes of God and has declared war on all who are obedient to God including the church (*Rev. 12:3-4; 7-17*). Demons have supernatural power, but they are limited by God (*Job 1:8-12; 2:1-7*). Their powers include the ability to afflict, influence, and inhabit men, appear to men or give visions, and manipulate weather and nature. Satan accuses the saints (*Rev. 12:10*), attempting to turn God against them, or afflicting their conscience in a way that is debilitating. Satan is the father of lies (*Jn. 8.44*), being the first to deceive in the Garden of Eden. Fallen angels know their time of freedom is limited and are intent on inflicting as much damage as possible upon man. Demonic activity is well documented and occurs today. God has all authority over the angels, and in His authority believers may resist Satan (*Js. 4:7*).

9. Eschatology

I believe that until Christ returns there will be increasing apostasy and the world will be as it was before the flood (*2 Tim. 3:13; Matt. 24:6-14; Lk. 17:26*). There will be wars, rumors of wars, violence, great evil, and men going about their lives with no consideration of God or His judgment. I believe that we are currently living in a period of time of undefined length referred to in Scripture as the time of the gentiles (*Lk. 21:24; Rom. 11:25; Jn. 10:16*; also called by theologians "the

¹¹ Seraphim (*Is. 6:2-6*), Cherubim (*Ex. 37:7-9* and *Heb. 9:5*), and archangel (*Jude 1:9*)

age of the church"). This age started with the institution of the church and will last until the beginning of a seven-year period of time known as the Tribulation. I believe in a literal, future seven-year Tribulation and a literal future millennial earthly reign of Christ. I believe in a pretribulational rapture of the church.¹²

a. Heaven: I believe in a literal heaven. The Kingdom of God is referred to as the kingdom of Heaven (*Matt. 3:2*). Heaven is God's eternal abode and contains a throne room (*Rev. 4:1-11*) and a heavenly temple of which the Jewish temple was a representation (*Rev. 15:1-8; Heb. 9:21-24*). Jesus is currently seated there while awaiting His time to return to earth as its King (*Acts 1:9-11; 2:33*). God now reigns in heaven absolutely (*Ps. 2*), for Jesus prays that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven (*Matt. 6:9-10*). Jesus is currently preparing homes for His disciples (all Christians) in heaven (*Jn. 14:2-3*). Heaven is described as a place of light and the glory of God (*Rev. 22:5*), and a place of worship and praise where the angels of God are (*Rev. 4:5-11*). Heaven is not of this earth, but the New Jerusalem will descend from it. After The Great White Throne Judgment, God will make His abode among men and there will be access to heaven from a new earth. Heaven will also be a place of reward (*Matt. 5:12*) with no sorrow or fear or sin or pain.

b. Hell: I believe in a literal hell, created by God for the punishment of both fallen angels as well as men (*2 Pet. 2:4*). Hell is a place of final everlasting torment and punishment from which there is no escape or relief. Hell is described in terms of darkness, eternal fire, and gnashing of teeth (*Matt. 8:12; 13:42; 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30*). In addition to Satan and the demons, every man or woman not found written in the book of life will be cast into hell for eternity (*Rev. 20:10-15*) at the final judgment.

Hades is a temporary place of judgment for those who have died as unrepentant sinners holding them until the final judgment when they are thrown into the lake of fire. Before Christ, sinners and saints were temporarily kept in locations after death, the one for sinners being a place of torment (*Lk. 16*). In *Hades* and the lake of fire men have full cognizance and can reflect on their life.

c. The order of end time events: At some unknown and imminent time (*Matt. 24:36-39*) Jesus will rapture His church; those in the grave shall rise first and those alive will follow them into heaven when the trumpet sounds (*1 Thes. 4:13-18*). At some point after the rapture, the Antichrist will come to power and bring

¹² Plain reading of the texts allows for a mid or post-tribulation rapture. Texts on the issue are hard to synthesize or harmonize. I personally believe in a pretribulational rapture because the imminence of the Lord's return, the fact that God allows His saints to endure hardship and suffering (from man and the universal consequences of sin in this life) but He has not destined them for His wrath and judgment, and examples of God removing saints from situations of Divine judgment (Noah and Lot). My faith will not be shaken if I am proven wrong regarding the timing of the rapture. I do maintain very firmly a literal 7-year tribulation followed by a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ on the throne of David.

into effect a literal seven-year period called the Tribulation (*2 Thes. 2; Rev. 13*).¹³ In the middle of the Tribulation he will enter the temple and declare himself to be deity. His reign begins with a temporary peace followed by war against God's saints and the nation Israel. God will then pour His wrath on the earth through distinct judgments. Those who choose to believe in God in that day must remain faithful until the end. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will come to earth as the Sovereign Messiah with an army and a sword and will defeat His enemies (Armageddon) and bind Satan and his fallen angels for a thousand-year millennial reign (*Rev. 19:11-20:6*). At the end of the Tribulation there is a resurrection of the saints saved and killed during the Tribulation. (Those who rise before the Tribulation and after the Tribulation are part of what is called the first resurrection. They are blessed in that the second death has no power over them). The Millennium begins with the marriage supper of the Lamb. During the Millennium Jesus and His saints reign in absolute righteousness and some of the Edenic conditions are restored and there is peace. Men born on the earth during the Millennium will have the choice to believe or reject God. At the end of the Millennium, Satan will once again be released, and he will lead men in one final battle (*Rev. 20:7-10*) to cast off God and His rule. At that time Jesus will completely crush all opponents and will cast Satan and his angels eternally into the Lake of Fire. After this, all of the dead will be resurrected and every living being both past and present will be judged before The Great White Throne (*Rev. 20:11-15*). Those not found in the book of life will be cast into the Lake of Fire as well as death itself and all of Hades. Those found in the book of life will be with God for eternity. Heaven and earth will be made new. New Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven, and God will finally dwell among men again in perfect harmony (*Rev. 21-22*). All sin will be erased, and everything will be restored to the way God intended it. Men will finally be completely glorified to please God and live righteously before Him in joy to serve Him forever.

10. Separation

“Be ye Holy (set apart), for I am Holy” (*1 Pet. 1:15-16*). I believe that God has commanded His true followers through every period of human history to live lives in obedience to His express commands. The primary law of God is that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (*Matt. 22:35-40*). How we live is a test of what we truly love (*1 Jn. 2:3-6*). The unsaved world is attempting to cast off God, His Messiah, and Their rule (*Ps. 2*) and exercise self-rule. Man-made culture (how we eat, dress, work, relate to others, worship, educate, govern, talk, make music, build homes, express sexuality, find pleasure, etc.) is affected by this rebellion (*1 Jn. 2:15-18*). To live in obedience to God is to live contrary to fallen culture (*Ps. 119:128*). God does not remove saints from the world because

¹³ The 70th week noted in Dan. 9:24-27, all 69 of the other periods of 7 have been fulfilled, we are currently in a period of time known as the time of the Gentiles. When this time is over, we will see the final period of seven years (the tribulation) bring to a close the ordained weeks decreed for Israel and Jerusalem after which Christ will return to earth as a physical and earthly King for the beginning of the millennium.

He intends for them to be witnesses to the world. But God does not intend for His people to live like the fallen world (*Jn. 17:13-21; Eph. 4:17-5:21*). God intends for His people to evaluate culture and make choices to please God in everything that they do (*1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 5:7-10*). As time and cultures change, these universal principles do not. Christians must not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of their mind (*Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:17-24*). Matters of separation have no bearing on one's justification; they are not and can never be salvific. They are a matter of personal sanctification and are the outworking or visible fruit of justification. Every command in the New Testament to not live like the world is given to the saved, not the unsaved. If a professing believer is not attempting to live a life of holiness, he is in direct disobedience and opens the door for his salvation to be called into question (*Js. 2:14-26; 1 Cor. 6:9-20*).

a. Personal: Personal separation is each individual believer choosing how he will live to glorify and please God in this life. Personal separation includes obeying direct commands in Scripture, and the application of Scriptural principles to create personal standards to govern behavior (*example: 1 Cor. 8:1-13*). Because every Christian has different tastes, strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, training, maturity, environment, etc. personal separation will look different from believer to believer and that is alright (*Rom. 14*). However, every believer is responsible to obey God's commands and to make choices in matters of freedom so as to please God and not cause a stumbling block for believers around him (*1 Cor. 8:9-13*). Express commands in Scripture are not negotiable; men have no choice in these matters. Where Scripture does not give explicit directions, the believer does have liberty, but his choices should be based on proper criteria (such as: what Scriptural principles could apply, will my choice cause another Christian to stumble, will this help or hinder my being a witness to the unsaved world, am I giving allowance to personal weakness or lust that could draw my heart/thinking away from God, is this being done to please God or please myself {*1 Cor. 8-9*}). These considerations should govern every part of a believer's life including how he dresses, works, what music he listens to, what kind of entertainments he partakes in, how he eats, speaks, how he relates to human government, etc. A believer should be very easy to distinguish from the unredeemed world around him.

Friendships are also governed by separation (*Prov. 13:20*). When the primary influencers in our lives are the unsaved (unsaved friends, secular news, worldly entertainments, secular schools of thought or science, marketing, secular law or political thought, etc.) we will adopt the world's values and be conformed to the world instead of being transformed by the renewing of our mind by Scripture (*Rom 12:1-2*). Personal separation is directly related to how much we allow Scripture, and thus God, to shape our thinking versus the world. Friendships must be intentional: friendship with the world creates enmity with the Father (*1 Jn. 1:15*); unsaved relationships should be viewed as an attempt to witness for Christ (*Jn. 17:14-18; Acts 1:8*).

Personal separation is an extremely important part of sanctification, but personal choices/standards do not become the criteria by which Christians judge one another (*Matt. 7:1-5*). Exalting personal standards or applications of Scripture to the same level/authority as Scripture was the very sin of the Pharisees (*Matt. 15:1-9; Is. 29:13*). Romans 14:1-13 teaches that in matters of conscience/freedom, we are accountable for our choices, but must not despise brothers who differ. Each man will stand before God and give account individually for his life. This does not apply to the breaking of clear Scriptural commands; in these matters God has already judged, and we are not to let another Christian brother remain in sin. If a professing Christian is living in sin, fellow believers not only have the right, but they are commanded to confront that brother in love for his own good (*Lk. 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:20; Gal. 6:1-2*).

b. Ecclesiastical: Ecclesiastical separation is the attempt of every local church to obey God's commands, defend the faith, maintain purity from the world and sin, and disciple its members to love God and His ways. Churches need clearly identified rules and standards in order to function in unity. Churches do not have the liberty individuals do in matters of separation. Churches contain believers of differing maturities, environments, and temptations, and must accommodate even the most fragile saint. Public corporate worship is not a place for exercising personal liberty or choice; it is a place for mutual edification and building up of believers in Christ for the purpose of good works. The church is the platform for instruction and maturing and discipline. Members should submit to the authorities that God has placed over them. The church has authority from God to discipline members who have fallen into sin. Churches cannot tolerate within their membership believers who live in a way that is contrary to Scripture (*1 Cor. 5:1-13*).¹⁴

Scripture contains many directives and principles to govern how churches conduct public worship. Worship must be free from worldly philosophy, value, and style (*2 Cor. 6:14-7:1*). Worship must be orderly, and excellent (*1 Cor. 14:40*). Furthermore, as the pillar and defense of the truth, churches must separate from any other church or institution that teaches false doctrine or associates freely with others who compromise the gospel or preach a false gospel.¹⁵

¹⁴ Attendees of a church and members are not the same thing. Many unsaved may be attending a church, but only true believers can be covenanted together as a corporate body. As such, the expectations set on members will be higher than those for guests. Unsaved individuals cannot be expected to act like saved individuals.

¹⁵ *1 Tim. 3:15-4:11; Gal. 2:11-3:1; Phil. 3:2-3; 1 Thes. 5:21; 2 Thes. 2:2-3, 15; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; 6:20; Rev. 2:1-7; 2:12-3:6; 3:14-22*