

Doctrinal Statement | Tyler T.

Testimony and Calling

Personal Testimony

I had the delightful privilege of growing up in a Christian home on the mission field, hearing the gospel, and being aware of my sinfulness. While still very young, I began praying daily for forgiveness and deliverance from hell. One night, my mother explained that I could call on Christ for forgiveness once, and He would make me part of His family. I trusted Christ that night. For years after this, I battled with doubts. I struggled to reconcile my sinful actions and inclinations with being a Christian. Finally, at fifteen, I entrusted myself to Christ. I determined to place all my confidence in Christ, whatever the cost. I have not had significant doubts about my salvation since that time. I was baptized at age ten.

Calling to Ministry

From an early age, the Lord gave me a desire to follow my parents' footsteps into missions. At fourteen, I surrendered to full-time Christian service. At eighteen, after counsel from my parents, I decided to pursue training for missions until the Lord redirected me. In college, the Lord exposed me to and burdened me for unreached peoples. While working full-time after seminary, the Lord confirmed my sense of calling through involvement in our local church by giving Cassie and me opportunities to use our gifts. The final confirmation in God's calling to missions came through the recognition of our gifts and the sending of our local church (Acts 13:1-3).

Bibliology: The Doctrine of Scripture

Revelation—How has God revealed Himself?

I believe God discloses Himself to all mankind through **general revelation** in creation (Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-20), conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), and providence (Acts 14:17). Therefore, general revelation removes any excuse for rejecting God. However, general revelation is insufficient for salvation (Rom. 10:14-17). I believe God gave **special revelation** through dreams (Gen. 20:3), visions (Ezek. 1:1), preincarnate appearances of Christ (Judg. 6:11-14), and prophets (Joel 1:1). Special revelation culminated in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:14,18; Heb. 1:1-2) and the Scriptures that are "more sure" than human senses and experiences (2 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:1-4).

Inspiration—What is inspiration, and how did it happen?

I believe God breathed ("**inspired**") the original autographs of the Scripture so that the words of the Bible are the very Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). God used men directed by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures (2 Sam. 23:1-3; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Apart from passages indicating that God dictated His message (Jer. 2:1-3), the approximately forty men who wrote the Scriptures used their own faculties and gifts while being supernaturally guided along by the Spirit (2 Pet. 3:16). I believe that inspiration extended to every Word of the original autographs (**verbal**, Matt. 4:4; 5:18) and the entirety of the Scriptures (**plenary**, 2 Tim. 3:16).

Since the sacred Scriptures are God-breathed, I believe the Bible is also **inerrant** (without error) and **infallible** (incapable of error). The words recorded in Scripture are true (Jn. 17:17; Tit. 1:2) and claim to be God's Word, which cannot be proven false (Matt. 5:17-18; Jn. 10:35; 1 Thess. 2:13). God cannot lie and thus His Word to man is without error (Num. 23:19). The Spirit of God

bears witness with Scripture in our hearts persuading us of its truthfulness (Jn. 16:13-14; 1 Cor. 2:12; 1 Jn. 5:20).

Preservation—Do we still have the Word of God in the Bible?

I believe that God providentially **preserves** His Word in the totality of the original-language manuscripts and faithful translations of them (Matt. 24:35; Ps. 12:6-7). The original autographs apparently no longer exist, yet I believe that the original words are preserved in the available manuscripts (Ps. 119:152; Jn. 10:35). I believe the Old Testament is best preserved in the Masoretic text and the New Testament in the multiplicity of New Testament manuscripts.

Translation—How do I determine which translations to use?

I believe faithful translations of the available manuscripts are the Word of God inasmuch as they reflect the original manuscripts. In a derivative sense, we have the very words of God. The New Testament exemplifies this by quoting the Septuagint as authoritative (Matt. 1:22-23). I favor translations that adopt a formal equivalence approach.

Canon—Which books are part of the sacred Scriptures?

I believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments comprise the **canon** of the Scriptures. The Old Testament often speaks of itself as divine revelation (Lev. 1:1; Hos. 1:1). The writers of the Old Testament recognized their own writing as canonical (Josh. 1:7-9; Dan. 9:2). This demonstrates that the Scripture itself did not assume a fluid, ambiguous canon. Though intertestamental apocryphal books existed in Jesus' day, He referred to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms as the Old Testament Scripture (Matt. 5:17-18; Lk. 24:44-45). Jewish leaders recognized and Jesus confirmed the canonicity of the Old Testament (Mk. 7:9-13; Lk. 24:44; Acts 13:15). Jesus taught that His disciples would produce new revelation (Jn. 14:26; 16:13). The New Testament writers identified their own writings as sacred Scripture (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:16; Rev. 22:18-19) and prohibited the adding of other writings to the Scriptures (Dt. 4:2; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4, 19; Rev. 22:18-19).

Attributes—What is the Scripture like?

I believe that the Scriptures are **necessary** for salvation, and thus, a person must read or hear them to come to faith (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). The Scriptures are **sufficient** for the justification and sanctification of a believer (Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Pet. 1:3). The Scripture has the **authority** to speak to every issue of life (Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Though the Bible is not a science or psychology textbook, all its statements are accurate. The Scripture is self-attesting and self-authenticating. External arguments for the authority and dependability of the Bible are secondary because the authority of the Scriptures is found in the Scriptures themselves (Jn. 17:17).

When it comes to **interpretation**, I believe in the **clarity** (perspicuity) of the Scriptures, meaning that the message is understandable to ordinary people (Ps. 19:7; Matt. 11:25; 2 Tim. 2:15). I subscribe to a historical-grammatical **hermeneutic** that seeks to understand God's original message through the human writer in each passage of Scripture. The Spirit must provide **illumination** to enable correct interpretation of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Tim. 2:7). We should seek this illumination of our understanding through prayer (Ps. 119:18; Eph. 1:15-18).

Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

Existence of God—How do we know God exists?

I believe that the Bible presupposes the existence of God from beginning to end (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:9; Heb. 11:6). The Bible portrays God not only as existing but also as speaking (Gen. 1:3; Heb. 1:1; “Thus saith the Lord” throughout the prophets). By His speech, He created all things, which testify to His existence (Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9), and revealed Himself as the gracious Creator (Gen. 1:31; Matt. 5:45). Denying God’s existence is the epitome of folly. It evidences moral fallenness, not simply intellectual skepticism (Ps. 14:1; 2 Cor. 4:3-4). Because of the fallenness of the human heart, men intentionally suppress their knowledge of God (Rom. 1:18-32; Eph. 4:18) and thus need the illumination of the Holy Spirit to believe (Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 2:14). Though evidential and classical apologetic arguments can be useful, I practice a presuppositional apologetic that relies primarily on Scripture (1 Cor. 1:18-25; 1 Pet. 3:15) and secondarily on questioning the internal consistency of other worldviews (Acts 17:28; Rom. 1:18-20; 2:15; 2 Cor. 10:5). Scripture is the foundation of our knowledge and the self-authenticating testimony to its own truthfulness (Dt. 18:22; Ps. 119:160; Jn. 17:17; Heb. 4:12-13).

Nature—What is God like?

Name—Who is God?

I believe that the God of the Bible identifies Himself by **name** as *Yahweh* or “I AM WHO I AM,” “the LORD God” (Ex. 3:13-15). This name, *Yahweh*, is God’s personal covenant name, which He revealed to His people (Gen. 12:1; Ex. 20:2). God’s various names reveal what He is like. *Yahweh*, related to the verb “to be,” reveals God’s self-existence and eternity. He identifies Himself as God (*Elohim*) and the God over all gods (Gen. 1:1; Dt. 10:17). His name “Lord,” demonstrates His sovereignty over all things (Gen. 15:2; Ps. 86:5).

Tri-unity—What does the Scripture teach about God’s Trinitarian nature?

I believe there is only one true and living God who is one in essence (Dt. 6:4; Is. 46:9; 1 Cor. 8:4; James 2:19). God exists in three, equal, and indivisible persons: the Father (Eph. 4:6), the Son (Heb. 1:1-2; 4:14), and the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:26; Matt. 28:19). The persons of the **Trinity** are the same singular eternal Being who are co-equal and co-eternal. The Scriptures refer to the Father (Jn. 17:3; Eph. 1:2), Son (Jn. 1:1,14; 20:28; Tit. 2:13), and Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4) as God. They are differentiated in Scripture by their relations to one another and distinguishing works (Matt. 3:16; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4-6).

Attributes—What are God’s perfections?

I believe that God’s **holiness** refers to His uniqueness and incomparable excellencies (Ex. 15:11; Is. 6:3). God’s glory manifests His holiness (Ex. 33:22; 34:6-7). God is the **Lord** of all creation and especially of His covenant people (Dt. 6:4-5; Is. 45:5-8; Rev. 4:11). God’s characteristics are often called His **attributes**. God’s attributes have historically been divided into **greatness** and **goodness**, or incommunicable (attributes God does not share with humans) and communicable (attributes God shares with humans). What follows is a summary and representative list of God’s attributes:

Greatness

- Aseity: He is self-existent and does not depend on anything outside of Himself (Ex. 3:14).
- Eternity: He has no beginning or end and exists outside of time (Ps. 90:2; Jn. 1:2).
- Immensity: He is not bound by space (1 Kings 8:27).

- Immutability: He is constant and does not change (Mal. 3:6).
- Omnipresence: He is always present, everywhere (Ps. 139:7-10).
- Omnipotence: He can do all His holy will and freely do all his pleasure (Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:35).
- Omniscience: He knows all things past, present, and future, and never learns anything (Ps. 139:1-4; 1 Jn. 3:20).

Goodness

- Faithfulness: He always acts consistently with His character and words (Ex. 34:5-7; Dt. 7:9, 10).
- Purity: He is separate from all sin and hates it (Lev. 11:44-45; Ps. 5:4; Jam. 1:13).
- Righteousness: He conforms to all standards of His character and law (Dt. 32:4; Ps. 11:7; Isa. 45:21).
- Justice: He is always fair (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 99:4), punishes the wicked, and rewards the righteous (Ps. 58:11; Ezek. 18:20).
- Truthfulness: He is without error, and His words and actions are always reliable (Num. 23:19; Tit. 1:2).
- Love: He desires and acts for the good of His creation (Jn. 3:16; 1 Jn. 4:7-9).
- Grace: He shows favor to the needy and undeserving (Eph. 1:7; 2:8; Tit. 2:11).
- Mercy: He shows kindness to those in difficult circumstances (2 Sam. 24:14; 2 Cor. 1:3).

Works of God—What great things has God done?

I believe that God **created** everything from nothing in six 24-hour days and rested on the seventh day (Gen. 1:1-2:1). God, in His **providence**, rules over His creatures and all their actions for His glory (Ps. 103:19; Ps. 135:6). In addition to **preserving** His creatures and creation (Neh. 9:6; Job 12:10; Ps. 119:90-91; Matt. 6:26), God **governs** all things in concurrence with men's actions to accomplish His purposes (Prov. 16:1, 3, 9, 33; Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:11). God performs extraordinary acts called **miracles** to demonstrate His power and glorify Himself (Ex. 15:11; Jn. 20:30-31). Miracles also authenticate the messenger and the revelation from God (Ex. 4:1-5; 1 Kings 17:24; Jn. 14:11; Heb. 2:4) and occurred primarily in three brief periods in biblical history: the establishing of God's covenant with Israel (Moses and Joshua), the prophets' ministries in warning sinful Israel (Elijah, Elisha), and the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles (Acts 2:22; 2 Cor. 12:12).

Father—Who is the Father, and what are His unique works?

I believe that the Father is fully God (Jn. 6:27; 20:17; 1 Pet 1:2). God the Father is the eternal Father of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:3). He is the Father of Israel corporately (Ex. 4:22; Gal. 4:1-4), and individually of believers in Christ (Jn. 1:12; 20:17; Rom. 8:15; 1 Jn. 3:1). The Father's unique works include initiating creation (Ps. 33:6-7; Mk. 10:6; Heb. 1:2), planning and accomplishing redemption (Eph. 1:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:2), sending the Son to propitiate His wrath (Jn. 3:16; 20:21; Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 4:10), raising Christ from the dead (Acts 2:24, 32; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 1:1), and sending the Spirit to draw sinners to salvation (Jn. 14:26; 16:7-8).

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

Personhood of Christ—Who is Jesus?

I believe that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19) and the eternal Son of the Father (Jn. 1:1-2; 20:31). He is simultaneously one and the same essence with the Father and the Spirit while being distinct from them in His person (Jn. 1:14; Col. 2:9). He is **one person** in **two** distinct and unmixed **natures**: God and man (Rom. 1:3-4; 9:5; Col. 2:9). Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, existing as the Son of the Father from eternity (Jn. 1:1-4; 3:16; 17:5; Gal. 4:4).

Deity of Christ—How do we know Jesus is God?

I believe that Christ is **fully God**. Jesus is God in every sense that God is God (1 John 1:1; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8; 1 Jn. 5:20). Being coequal (Jn. 10:30) and coeternal (Jn. 8:38) with the Father, He is of one essence with God (Jn. 10:30).

I believe that the Bible clearly teaches the deity of Jesus with the following arguments: Jesus is **called God** (Isa. 9:6; Jn. 1:1; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:19; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:3). The **intertextual argument** for Jesus' deity demonstrates how Old Testament passages that refer to God also refer to Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Isa. 40:3 & Matt. 3:3; Isa. 6:1 & Jn. 12:41; Mal. 3:1; Lk. 1:76). He is identified with **divine designations or names** such as Yahweh (Isa. 40:3; Matt. 3:3), I AM (Jn. 8:58), Lord (Isa. 6:1; Jn. 12:41), Son of God (Jn. 5:17-30), and Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14; Matt. 26:63-66). He possesses **divine attributes** of eternity (Jn. 8:58), omnipotence (Matt. 8:26-27), omnipresence (Matt. 28:20), omniscience (Jn. 2:23-25), and sinlessness (Heb. 4:15). He performs **divine works** such as creation (Col. 1:16), preservation (Col. 1:17), authority to forgive sins (Mk. 2:7, 10-11), miracles (Jn. 20:31), and judgment (Jn. 5:22-23). Finally, Jesus welcomed **worship** (Jn. 5:23; 20:28; Heb. 1:6). Jesus had to be God to offer Himself as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of all people and not just for one person (Isa. 53:6; Heb. 10:11-13).

Humanity of Christ—How do we know Jesus is man?

Jesus, the eternal Son, became **fully human** by taking on flesh and being made in the likeness of men (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7) to redeem sinful humanity (Matt. 1:21). Jesus is human in every sense that mankind is human. Jesus was born of a **virgin** in a sinless state (Matt. 1:23). His virgin birth was given as a sign to Israel that the Messiah had arrived (Isa. 7:14). From eternity, Jesus possesses a divine nature, but in His incarnation, he chose to voluntarily accept the limitations of humanity by taking on a human nature. Fully God and fully man, His **person** remains undivided and His **natures** unmixed (1 Tim. 2:5). After His ascension, Jesus continues to be incarnate ("in flesh") at the right hand of God (Lk. 22:69; Acts 2:33). Jesus had to be fully human to offer Himself as a sacrifice that could atone for the sins of other people (Heb. 2:14). The Scripture argues for His humanity by **asserting His humanity** (Acts 17:31; 1 Tim. 2:5) and by describing Him with **human attributes** (body: Lk. 2:7; thirst: Jn. 4:7; hunger Matt. 4:2; weariness Mk. 6:31; emotions Heb. 5:7; development Lk. 2:52; temptation Matt. 4:1-14).

Offices of Christ—Who accomplishes our redemption?

I believe that Jesus is our Redeemer who fulfills the offices of prophet, priest, and king. Jesus is the **prophet** who reveals Himself as the Word of God and the salvation of mankind (Jn. 1:1,14; Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus is the **priest** who offers Himself up as the once-for-all sacrifice to restore mankind to God (Heb. 2:17) and intercedes on behalf of sinners (Heb. 7:24-25). Jesus is the **king** who rules over His people and will reign over all creation (Ps. 110:1; 1 Cor. 15:25-26).

Work of Christ—What works does Jesus perform?

Pre-incarnate Works

I believe that as the second person of the Trinity, the Son has been at work from eternity. He enjoyed fellowship with the Father before creation (Jn. 17:5). He created the universe (Col. 1:16). During the events recorded in the Old Testament, Christ presented the word of the Lord by appearing as the Angel of Yahweh (Gen. 31:11-13).

First Advent Works

I believe Jesus humbled Himself by being born into this world to live a **sinless life** (Rom. 5:19; Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8). His **miracles** attested to His identity as the Messiah (Isa. 29:18; 32:3; 35:5-6). Jesus established the internal rule of His **kingdom** in human hearts through the preaching of the gospel (Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 17:21; Jn. 18:36). He was **tempted** without sin so that He can sympathize with those He came to save (Matt. 4:1-14; Heb. 4:15). He endured the miseries of this world, the terrible **death** of the cross, and **burial** for three days (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 4:4). Jesus offered Himself as a penal substitutionary (vicarious) **atonement** for sinful mankind (2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Pet. 3:18). He shed His blood as a **propitiation** (turning away God's holy wrath) for man's sin (Rom. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17-18; 1 Jn. 4:10). His sacrifice provided for the **expiation** (payment of sin's penalty) of man's sin (Rom. 8:33; Heb. 10:18-22) and resulted in the **redemption** (ransom or buying back) (Rom. 3:24) and **reconciliation** of sinful man to God (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18). The atonement extends to all mankind, including each individual, and is applied only to those who believe (Rom. 3:25; 1 Tim. 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:2).

I believe Jesus **rose bodily** from the tomb after three days (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 55-57). While Jesus' body lay in the tomb, He was in paradise, not hell (Lk. 23:43,46; Jn. 19:30). Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in His resurrection, fulfilling the promises in the David Covenant (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7 & Acts 13:33; Rom. 1:3-4). His resurrection authenticates His identity as the Christ and Lord (Rom. 1:4; Acts 2:36). After rising, He appeared to many people (1 Cor. 15:6).

Present Works

I believe that forty days after His resurrection, Jesus **ascended** to heaven where He **rules** at the Father's right hand (Acts 1:3,9; Jn. 17:5; Phil. 2:7-9). Jesus is at work today **sustaining** the universe (Col. 1:17) and **governing** over the affairs of mankind (Eph. 1:20-23). He **intercedes** for believers before the throne of God (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25). He is **building** His church (Matt. 16:18), **maturing** His Body (Eph. 4:7-16), and **accompanying** His people everywhere they go (Matt. 28:20).

Second Advent Works

I believe Jesus will **return** bodily (Acts 1:11) and deliver the church from future tribulation wrath (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; 4:14-17). He will establish a **millennial kingdom** (Rev. 20:6), **judge** the world (Jn. 5:22-29; Rev. 20:11), and finally, **rule** eternally over the new creation (Rev. 22:3).

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Personality—Who is the Holy Spirit?

I believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 1:21-23; 13:14; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Jude 20-21). He is a **person** rather than an impersonal force or extension of the Father or Son. The uncreated Spirit **proceeds** from the Father and is **sent** by the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:26; 15:26). He possesses **personal attributes** such as intelligence (Isa.

11:2; Rom. 8:26-27; 1 Cor. 2:11), will (1 Cor. 12:11), and love (Rom. 15:30). He gives **commands** to believers (Acts 13:3-4; 16:6) and can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). He performs **personal works** in salvation including conviction (Jn. 16:8), regeneration (Tit. 3:5), and indwelling and sealing believers (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13).

Deity—Is the Holy Spirit God?

I believe the Holy Spirit is **God**, coequal, coexistent, and coeternal with the Father and the Son. The Scripture affirms the Spirit's deity by presenting Him as equal in **divine relationship** with other members of the Godhead (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). The Bible also ascribes **divine titles** to the Spirit by calling Him God (Acts 5:3-4) and Lord (2 Cor. 3:17). Describing believers as the temple of God, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 then describes the Holy Spirit as the God who indwells believers (Isa. 40:13-15; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). The Holy Spirit also possesses **divine attributes**. He is omniscient (Jn. 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:10-11), omnipotent (Lk. 1:35; Rom. 15:19), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-8), and eternal (Heb. 9:14). He also demonstrates **divine works** that can only be done by God (see below).

Works—What works does the Holy Spirit perform?

I believe that the Spirit had a direct role in the **creation** of the universe. The Spirit was present at the beginning of **creation** (Gen. 1:2) and will be present in the **end** (Rev. 22:17). The Spirit also created **life** in mankind (Gen. 2:7; Job 33:4). The Holy Spirit **restrains evil** in the world (Gen. 6:3; 2 Thess. 2:7). The Spirit empowers His people for **special tasks** (Ex. 31:1-6; Num. 11:17). The Holy Spirit **inspired** the Holy Scriptures (2 Sam. 23:1-3; Matt. 22:43; 2 Pet. 1:21). The Spirit was the agent in the **virgin birth** by miraculous intervention, not physical relations (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18, 20, 23). He **anointed** Jesus as the Messiah for ministry (Jn. 1:32-35) and **filled** Jesus (Lk. 4:1). He directed and **empowered** Jesus' miraculous earthly ministry (Lk. 4:14; Mk. 1:12). He enabled Jesus' sacrificial **death** (Heb. 9:14) and **resurrection** (Rom. 8:11) and **glorifies** the Son (Jn. 16:14).

I believe that the Spirit **convicts** the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). He **illuminates** and **teaches** human hearts and minds to understand the significance of the Scripture and accept the gospel (Jn. 14:26; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 2:10-12). To those who believe, the Spirit works **regeneration** giving new birth to those who had been dead in sin (Jn. 3:1-16; Eph. 2:1-9; Tit. 3:5). At conversion, believers are **baptized** into the Spirit and brought into union with Christ and His body (Matt. 3:11; Lk. 3:16; 1 Cor. 12:13). The Spirit **indwells** all believers (1 Cor. 3:16), providing the **seal** and **guarantee** of an inheritance in glory (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30). He **fills** those who dwell richly on the Word (Eph. 5:18; Col. 3:16), **empowering** believers to minister (Acts 1:8; 4:31). He enables **mortification** of sin (Rom. 8:13) and **sanctifies** believers (2 Cor. 3:18). He **guides** (Jn. 16:13) and **assures** true believers (Rom. 8:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:24).

Spiritual Gifts—What gifts does the Holy Spirit give?

I believe that the Spirit gives special abilities (**gifts**) to each believer in the church for edification (1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 12:7). The Spirit gives diverse gifts to help the church function as a unified body (1 Cor. 12:14-31). Scripture gives three lists of spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:11). Since these lists differ, I believe the lists are illustrative and not exhaustive. I believe that **sign gifts** and prophetic gifts were meant to lay the church's foundation and ceased around the time of the closing of the canon of Scripture (Heb. 2:2-3). According to the Scriptural pattern, miracles and signs served to authenticate new revelation—especially in the time of Moses, the prophets (1 Kings 18:36-39), and Jesus and His apostles (Jn. 20:30-31; 2 Cor. 12:12).

The sign gifts served to authenticate the message of the apostles in the early church (healing: Acts 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 28; tongues: Acts 2, 8, 10, 19). The gift of “tongues,” which means languages, is speaking in a foreign language that the speaker did not know before the bestowal of that gift (Acts 2:4-11; 1 Cor. 14:6-12, 27). To be the spiritual gift described in Scripture, the practice of tongues must conform to the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:26-35. Also, Scripture teaches that not all believers have all gifts, contrary to many Pentecostal groups claiming tongues as evidence of the Holy Spirit’s baptism (1 Cor. 12:27-31).

Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels

Origin—What is the origin of angels?

I believe God **created** angels (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:2, 5). He made them during or before the six days of creation (Gen. 2:1; Ex. 20:11; Job 38:4-7). Unlike mankind, angels were not made in God’s image (Gen. 1:26-27; Heb. 2:14-17), and though there are innumerable angels (Rev. 5:11), they do not propagate (Matt. 22:30).

Characteristics—What are angels like?

I believe angels are **spirits** (Heb. 1:14) and **invisible** unless God reveals them (2 Kings 6:17). They also appear in human form (Acts 1:10). Angels are **superior** to mankind (Ps. 8:6-8) in that they possess supernatural powers (Matt. 28:2; 2 Pet. 2:11; Rev. 12:7-8), are called mighty (Ps. 29:1; 89:6), can destroy armies (2 Kings. 19:35) and move quickly (Rev. 7:1-2). However, they are not all-powerful (Dan. 10:13) or all-knowing (1 Pet. 1:12) and should not be worshipped (Col. 2:18). Angels are **inferior** to mankind in that Jesus took on human flesh (Heb. 2:14-17), they serve mankind (Heb. 1:14), they will be judged by man (1 Cor. 6:3), and fallen angels are not redeemed (Heb. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:12; Jude 6). Angels were originally **good** (Jude 6). They are **personal** (Lk. 8:28; 15:10; Heb. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:12), and given various **descriptions** in Scripture: angels (Ps. 78:49; Rev. 5:11); sons of God (Job 1:6); cherubim (Gen. 3:24; Ezek. 10:1) and seraphim (Isa. 6:2); and rulers, authorities, and spiritual forces (Ps. 89:6, 7; Eph. 6:12).

Role—What do angels do?

I believe God made angels to offer **praise** to God (Ps. 103:20; Isa. 6:1-3; Lk. 15:10; Rev. 4:6-8) and **deliver God’s Word** to people (Acts 7:53). Angels also **serve** God’s people (Ps. 34:7; 91:11; Heb. 1:14) and carry out God’s **judgment** (2 Sam. 24:16-17; Matt. 13:41-42). “The **angel of the Lord**” is rightly understood as an appearance of Christ in the Old Testament to communicate a specific message (Gen. 22:11-18; Ex. 3:2-10; Judg. 2:1).¹

Fallen Angels—Why are some angels bad?

I believe **Satan** was created good (Gen. 1:31; Job 38:7). Satan rebelled against God and was cast out of the presence of God (Ezek. 28:12-17; Lk. 10:18; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:9). Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin and has been tempting man with lies ever since (Gen. 3; Jn. 8:44). Satan is the enemy of God and the prince of this world (Rev. 12:9-10; Eph. 2:2). Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from believing the gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan led a rebellion of **fallen angels** who rebelled against God and who do Satan’s bidding (Rev. 12:3-4; Eph. 6:12). These fallen angels are called “demons” (James 2:19) and “unclean spirits” (Mk. 1:23). Satan’s

¹ A theophany is a manifestation of God and a Christophany refers to a physical appearance of the pre-incarnate Son.

defeat and **judgment** began with Christ's resurrection and will culminate with God casting Satan, his angels, and the lost into the lake of fire for eternity (Col. 2:12-15; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

I believe Christians are engaged in **spiritual warfare** (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan and his demons can perform supernatural attacks, influence, tempt, and possess people (Job. 1:12-19; 2:7; Lk. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:9; Mk. 5:2-5). Believers should guard against unbelief and sinful behavior (Eph. 6:11; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14). Christians wage spiritual warfare through the ordinary means of the gospel, Scriptures, and prayer (Matt. 4:4,7,10; James 4:7-10; Eph. 6:14-18). Believers should not speak to the devil, since even the archangel Michael did not rebuke the devil (Jude 8-9). Believers can be tempted but not possessed or "demonized" (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Jn. 4:4; 1 Jn. 5:18).

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man

Origin and Purpose—When and why was man created?

I believe God originally made man to enjoy God's presence (Gen. 3:8; Ps. 73:25-26). The chief end of man is to **glorify God** in every part of life (Rom. 11:36; Rev. 4:11). God directly **created** man and woman holy and good on the sixth day of the creation week (Gen. 1:26, 31). God first made the man from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), and then the woman from the man's rib (Gen. 2:21-22). All humans descend from this couple—Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20; Acts 17:26). Adam was a real, historical man responsible for the fall of mankind into sin (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22).

Image of God—What is man's place in creation?

I believe that God made man as the apex of His creation in His own **image and likeness** (Gen. 1:27; Col. 3:10). This image extends beyond rationality (Gen. 2:19-20), morality (Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 2:14-16; Eph. 4:24), relational nature (Gen. 3:8-9), spirituality (Gen. 2:7), or dominion (Gen. 1:28) to encompass the whole person in his totality. The image of God in man gives humans dignity and worth (Gen. 9:6; Lev. 24:17; Matt. 6:26). God made man vice-regent over the creation by giving him **dominion** over the creation (Gen. 1:28; Psalm 8:6-8). At the Fall, the image was **corrupted** but not lost (Gen. 3:6; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7). Therefore, all human life is valuable at all stages, making abortion and euthanasia wrong (Ex. 21:22-25; Ps. 51:5; 139:13-17). God is **restoring** the image of God in believers and will complete this work in glory (Col. 3:10; Phil. 1:6).

Composition—How are humans composed?

I believe that God made man with a material (**body**) and immaterial (**soul**) part (Gen. 2:7; Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 7:34). Scripture refers to the soul and spirit interchangeably (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:9) and uses other terms to refer to the immaterial part of man: heart (Prov. 4:13; 27:19), mind (Matt. 5:19), will (Rom. 10:9-10), and conscience (Rom. 2:15). Like the material part of man, the immaterial is passed on through natural generation (Gen. 5:3; Acts 17:26; Heb. 7:9-10). Both the material and immaterial parts of man were **good** before the Fall (Gen. 1:31; 2:25), and both were corrupted by sin (Rom. 1:21). Humans act and think based on what they love (Prov. 1:7; James 1:13-15). At conversion, the old man is put to death (Col. 3:9). The **flesh** refers to the unredeemable sinful inclination that remains with a believer (Rom. 7:18; 13:14; Gal. 5:17) but has been crucified with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). Believers become partakers of the divine nature as they grow in a personal knowledge of God, mortify the flesh, and live unto righteousness (Rom. 6:11-14; 2 Pet. 1:3-4, 24).

Male and Female—Did God make man gendered?

I believe that God created man **male and female** and that there are only two sexes, with gender rooted in and inseparable from sex (Gen. 1:27). God established **marriage** as a lifelong union between one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6). In marriage, the man is to serve as a leader by loving and sacrificing for his wife, just as Christ did for the church (Eph. 5:25-29; Col. 3:19). The woman is to submit to her husband as to Christ (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18). God's design is for the man to work and provide for his family (Gen. 3:17-19) while the wife cares for the family and home (Gen. 3:16; Prov. 31:10-31; Tit. 2:4). I believe divorce and remarriage is prohibited in Scripture (Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:16; Mk. 10:9-12; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:39) with two possible exceptions: abandonment (1 Cor. 7:10-15) and persistent infidelity (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). I would not perform a remarriage of a divorced person.

Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

Definition of Sin—What is sin?

I believe sin is failing to do God's will in act, speech, or attitude. Scripture variously describes sin: the transgression of the law (1 Jn. 3:4), refusing to submit to God's law (1 Jn. 5:4), violating God's standard (1 Jn. 5:17), missing the mark of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), unbelief (Heb. 11:6), failing to do good (James. 4:17), and violating one's conscience (Rom. 14:23).

Origin of Sin—When did sin begin in man?

I believe God is not responsible for sin even though it is part of His sovereign plan (Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:3-5). Though Satan fell into sin before humans, man fell into sin when Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-6). In Adam all sinned, making all men sinners (Rom. 5:12, 19). Even though sin is passed down from Adam, every person is responsible for his own sin (James 1:13-14; 4:1-2).

Results of Sin—What are the consequences of sin?

Adam served as a representative of all people. When he sinned, all people received **imputed guilt** and an **inherited sin nature** (original sin) (Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12,19). People in their sin do not seek God or seek to do good (Rom. 3:10-12, 8:7-8). Sinful man is corrupt in every part of his being, in other words, **totally depraved** (Gen. 6:5; Eccl. 9:3; Jer. 17:9). This does not mean that sinners are as bad as they can be, but that the corruption of sin contaminates every faculty (mind, heart, and will) making them unable to do spiritual good (Rom. 1:21; 8:7-8). In addition to inherited guilt, sinners are under **condemnation** because of their own sin (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23; Rom 5:18). God's wrath remains on sinners, and they will be judged for their sin (Rom. 1:18; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:11-12).

Redeemed sinners still battle the **flesh** (Rom. 7:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:11) but can have victory through the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-17; 1 Cor. 10:13). Sin also caused the creation itself to suffer corruption under God's curse and require restoration (Gen. 3:18-19; Rom. 8:20-22).

God predicted Adam and Eve's **death** for eating the forbidden fruit. **Spiritual death** is the relational separation from God that Adam and Eve experienced immediately after sinning and that all sinners experience (Gen. 3:8-9; Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:1-2). **Physical death** is the separation of the spirit from the body (Gen. 3:19; Matt. 10:28). **Eternal death** or the second death is separation from God forever in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15).

Questions of Sin—What issues arise because of sin?

I believe God abhors, cannot tolerate, and judges all sin (Ps. 5:5; 11:5; Hab. 1:13; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16). However, there are **degrees of sin**. Scripture describes some commands as weightier matters (Matt. 23:23) and lesser commands (Matt. 5:19). Scripture describes some sins as particularly heinous to God (Ps. 5:5-6; Prov. 6:16), as abominations (homosexuality—Lev. 18:22; 20:13; idolatry—Dt. 27:15; injustice—Prov. 17:15, 20:10; lying—Prov. 12:22; pride—Prov. 16:5), or contrary to nature (Rom. 1:26-27). Scripture teaches that there is an **unpardonable sin** (Matt. 12:31-32; Mk 3:28-30). This sin is a willful rejection of God, ascribing the works of the Holy to the Devil. Those who are concerned about committing this sin have not committed it.

A terrible consequence of the fall is **infant death**. Though Scripture indicates that even infants are sinful (Ps. 51:5; 58:3), it also teaches that God shows mercy to those not mature or developed enough to respond to the gospel (2 Sam. 12:23; Jon. 4:11).

I believe the Scriptures answer the **problem of evil**. Because God's ways are inscrutable, humans cannot understand or question God (Dt. 29:29; Dan. 4:35). Three Scriptural arguments serve as a theodicy (justification of God). First, God is sovereign over evil (Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). God is not the origin of evil, nor can he be guilty of any sin (Gen 18:25; Dt. 32:4; Job 34:10; James 1:13). Second, the triune God determined beforehand that Christ would go to the cross to deal with sin and its effects (Acts 2:23). Christ experienced all the pains of this sinful world, suffered, and died to redeem humans from the curse of sin (Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Pet. 3:18). Finally, every worldview has the issue of answering the problem of evil. Christianity gives the only answer that provides hope and restoration instead of nihilism.

Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

God is at work to restore his fallen creation to Himself for His own glory (Rom. 11:33-36; Eph. 1:6,12,14). The salvation of sinful mankind began in God's sovereign decrees before the foundation of the world and ends in the resurrection and glorification of believers.

Preparation for Salvation—How does God work before salvation?

I believe God shows His **common grace** by meeting material needs (Matt. 5:45) and restraining sin (Rom. 2:4; 2 Thess. 2:6-7). Additionally, God shows **special grace** by effecting salvation from sin through His unmerited kindness (Matt. 11:27; Jn. 17:9). God set His love on specific individuals (2 Thess. 2:13) and **foreknew** them. This means he had a personal, intimate knowledge of them ahead of time, and not just prior knowledge that they would come to faith (Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Pet. 1:2). Those God foreknew, He also **predestined** (marked off boundaries beforehand) to the adoption as sons and conformity to Christ (Eph. 1:4,11; Rom. 8:29-30). God **elected** or chose certain individuals as the objects of His saving grace (Jn. 6:37). This selection took place before the foundation of the world and is not based on a person's merits or choices but on God's good pleasure (Rom. 9:11, 15; Eph. 1:4). Rather than diminishing a believer's obligation to evangelize, election guarantees that some will be saved through the proclamation of the gospel (Acts 18:9-11; 2 Tim. 2:10).

I believe that according to the riches of His grace, God sent Jesus Christ to bring salvation to sinners (Eph. 1:7; Tit. 2:11). Jesus' death on the cross **atoned** for the sins of humanity, providing a covering for sins (Ex. 32:30; Rom. 3:25; 5:1). Christ's atonement was not limited to those who would believe (Lev. 16:17; Jn. 1:29; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 10:29; 2 Pet. 2:11; Jn. 2:2) but it is

effectual only for those who believe (Jn. 3:16-18, 36; Rom. 3:25; 1 Tim. 4:10). The following are other key terms related to the atonement:

- **Reconciliation**—Bringing man as the offender back to peace in a relationship with God who has been offended (Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20-21)
- **Propitiation**—The satisfaction and removal of God's righteous *wrath* upon the sinner through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17, 9:5; 1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10)
- **Expiation**—Forgiveness or redress for sin's *guilt* through Christ's substitutionary sacrifice (Heb. 10:18-22).
- **Vicarious penal substitution**—Christ's legal standing in the place of sinful people in His death, burial, and resurrection (Isa. 53:4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:18).
- **Imputation**—Crediting the sinner's sin to Christ and Christ's righteousness to the sinner (Phil. 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:18; 2 Cor. 5:21). Christ's righteousness includes His submission to pain and suffering during his incarnation (*passive obedience*—Matt. 3:15; Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30) and His active fulfilling of God's will on earth (*active obedience*—Isa. 53:6, 12; Jn. 1:29; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 9:28; 1 Pet. 2:24)

Salvation Applied—How does God work at salvation?

I believe God extends a **general call** of salvation to all sinners (Isa. 45:22; Acts 17:30) and that Christians are responsible to proclaim the gospel to all people (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Because of human depravity, sinners are unable to respond to the call for salvation in Christ unless they are drawn by God (Jn. 6:44,65; 1 Cor. 1:22-23). God **effectually calls** only those He elected to voluntarily place their saving faith in Christ (Jn. 6:44-45; Rom. 1:7; 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24; 2 Tim. 1:9).

I believe faith and repentance are inseparably joined in true **conversion** (Mk. 1:15; Lk. 13:3, 5; 24:46-47; Acts 20:21) because both involve the entire inner man. **Repentance** requires a change of mind (Ps. 51:3) and of heart, which in godly grief and hatred of sin turns to God to strive to obey (Matt. 3:8; Acts 3:19; 2 Cor. 7:9-10). **Faith** involves the mind (Rom. 10:14, 17; 1 Cor. 15:1-4), affections (Jn. 20:30-31; Rom. 10:9-10; Heb. 11:1), and will (Jn. 1:12; 3:16; 6:37; Acts 16:31). Repentance (Acts 5:30-31; 2 Tim. 2:25) and faith (Acts 18:27; Eph. 1:19-20; 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29) are gifts from God; therefore, they are not meritorious but lead to good works in those who have been converted (Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26).

I believe that at conversion, believers are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27), thereby entering into **union with Christ** in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:1). This union with Christ actualizes the other benefits of salvation (Rom. 6:1-14; 8:2; Col. 2:10). **Regeneration** delivers from spiritual death and imparts new life at conversion (Jn. 3:3; Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3; 3:18). Regeneration constitutes a new man (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10), a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), a new mind (Rom. 8:6-8), and a new heart (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26-27; Heb. 8:10). In Christ, believers are also baptized in (Lk. 3:13; 1 Cor. 12:1-4, 13) and indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19).

I believe that in **justification** God righteously and forensically declares the ungodly to be righteous (Rom. 3:12-26; 4:5; 5:12). God imputes Christ's record to sinners and the record of sinners to Christ (Rom. 4:1-16; 5:15-18; 2 Cor. 5:21). Justification is a gift received by faith alone (Rom. 3:24; Gal. 2:16; Phil. 3:8-9) and delivers the believer from eternal condemnation (Rom. 8:1). I believe that God grants adoption or sonship to those who put their faith in Christ and that this **adoption** will be consummated in the resurrection (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:23).

Salvation Continued—How does God continue the work of salvation?

I believe every believer is positionally sanctified at conversion (1 Cor. 6:11; Acts 20:32), and that progressive **sanctification** or growth in holiness continues after conversion (Rom. 6:19; 1 Pet. 1:15). This transformation occurs through the Holy Spirit's power (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; Gal. 5:22), transforms believers (2 Pet. 3:18), and renews their inner man (Col. 3:10). Sanctification is the work of God (1 Thess. 5:23). A believer works out his own salvation knowing that both the willingness and the working come from God (Phil. 2:12-13; Heb. 13:21). God has given several **means** of sanctification by which a believer grows in holiness and conformity to Jesus Christ: the Word (Jn. 17:17; Rom. 12:2), prayer (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6), worship (Eph. 5:18), fellowship (1 Jn. 1:7), the ordinances (Acts 2:42), and church discipline (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20). God grants **assurance** to those He has redeemed. Objective assurance rests on the efficacy of Christ's work revealed in the Scripture (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Jn. 5:12-13). Subjective assurance arises through the Holy Spirit bearing witness with the believer's spirit (Rom. 8:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13) and bearing spiritual fruit (Jn. 15:5, 8, 16; Gal. 5:22-23).

Salvation Consummated—How does God finish the work of salvation?

I believe in the **security** of every believer's salvation (2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:3-5). True believers cannot lose their salvation because God promises to preserve His people to spend all eternity with Him (Jn. 3:36; 6:38-40; 10:27-29; 1 Thess. 5:23-24). Scripture affirms that God empowers a Christian's **perseverance** in the faith (Matt. 10:22; Jn. 8:31-32; Heb. 10:39; 1 Pet. 1:5). Believers must take warnings of falling away seriously as they persevere (Jn. 15:1-7; Col. 1:22-23; Heb. 3:14; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2 Pet. 3:17). Turning away from Christ after professing Christianity proves that the initial confession was not genuine (1 Jn. 2:19).

I believe in the **glorification** of the saints who will be delivered from all the effects of sin (Rom. 7:24) and will be transformed into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Jn. 3:2). In the **resurrection** on the last day, believers will receive new bodies (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:1-5; Phil. 3:20-21). This new body will be heavenly, imperishable, glorious, powerful, and immortal (1 Cor. 15:35-57).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

Nature—What is the church?

I believe that there is one, holy, **universal** church, consisting of all the redeemed under the New Covenant (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25). Christ manifests His reign in His kingdom in the church age through the church (Acts 2:22-36; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 1:22-23). The church **began** at Pentecost when Christ fulfilled His promise to send His Spirit (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-47; 11:15; 1 Cor. 12:13). Jesus is the head (Col. 1:18) and the builder of the church (Matt. 16:18). The Scripture uses various **images** to explain the nature and function of God's people in community—family (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:1-2), body (1 Cor. 12:12-27), temple of God (2 Cor. 6:16-18), household of God (1 Tim. 3:15), and bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2).

I believe that God made covenant promises that still particularly apply to **Israel** as God's chosen people (Jer. 33:14; Rom. 11:1-2). God graciously provided redemption for His people through the **covenants** (Ps. 103:17-18; Eph. 2:11-13): Noahic (Gen. 9:8-13), Abrahamic (Gen. 12:2-3), Mosaic (Ex. 20; Heb. 10:1), Davidic (2 Sam. 7:16; Lk. 1:32-33), and New (Jer. 31:31-34). Israel was to keep the law to draw the world to God as a light to the nations (Dt. 4:5-8; Ps. 67), even though they could only be saved by faith in God and His word (Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17). The **kingdom of God** includes God's rule over all creation and His command to people to

rule under His greater rule (Gen. 1:28; Dan. 4:35). It has been inaugurated in the church age (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam 7:13-15; Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13), as many of the promises to Israel have been extended to the church (Rom. 11:17-33; Heb. 8:8-12). The church has not replaced Israel (Rom. 9:3-5; Rev. 21:12). The kingdom is spreading through the Great Commission and will culminate in fulfilling all God's promises to the people of God (Rev. 20:4-6).

I believe that **local churches** are expressions of the universal church, the one body of Christ (2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 4:15-16). The New Testament refers to local churches that are geographically located (Acts 13:1), multiple (1 Cor. 11:8), differentiated (1 Cor. 11:16), and self-governed (Acts 20:17). Scripture implies **church membership** by speaking of adding and removing people from a church (Acts 2:41; Matt. 18:17). Local church membership consists of regenerate members based on a credible profession of faith and baptism (Acts. 2:41, 47). Church membership enables accountability to confront and restore fellow members living contrary to their profession (Gal. 6:1; Phil. 2:2-3; Heb. 10:24-25). The **marks** of a true church are regular gatherings (1 Cor. 14:23-25; Heb. 10:25), preaching of the Word (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2-3; Tit. 2:1), and proper administering of the ordinances (Acts 2:42). Any regular assembly that self-consciously does these things can be considered a church (Matt. 18:20).

Activities—What does the Church do?

I believe the church **exists** to glorify God by displaying His love and wisdom (Eph. 3:10). The **church's mission** is to make and mature disciples of Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). The basic **practices** of the church include teaching, fellowship, prayer, and the ordinances (Acts 2:42). As churches gather, they should also seek to worship the Lord through congregational singing (Eph. 5:8; Col. 3:16), reading of Scripture (1 Tim. 4:13), and the exercising of the spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10). The **two ordinances** signify and identify believers with the person and work of Christ. **Baptism** immerses in water one who professes faith in Christ as a symbol of spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 8:12; Rom. 6:3-5). The **Lord's Table** is for baptized believers who eat the bread and drink the cup in fellowship together to proclaim the Lord's death and their own participation in His saving benefits (Matt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:26). Jesus outlined a four-step process to follow in **church discipline**: (1) individual confrontation, (2) small group confrontation, (3) corporate confrontation, (4) excommunication (Matt. 18:15-20). The goals of church discipline are restoration of the offender (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2:6-8), deterrence from sin (1 Tim. 5:20), and protection of Christ's name (Rom. 2:24; 1 Cor. 6:6). Biblically faithful churches and organizations should collaborate for the sake of the Gospel and evangelism (Jn. 13:35; 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:2). Scripture also implies the necessity of **ecclesiastical separation** through commands to separate from impurity, false teachers, and unruly brothers (2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 2 Jn. 9-11).

Structure—How is the church organized?

I believe that Christ is the **head** of the church (Col. 1:18). God has given each congregation the responsibility to govern itself (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1, 8). The **congregation** makes critical decisions (Acts 6:5; 13:1-3; 15:22; 1 Cor. 5:4-5:2; 2 Cor 8:19) and shares accountability in the church (1 Cor. 4:4-5; Gal. 6:1-3). The church has two offices: **elders** and **deacons**. Each church ideally should have a plurality of godly elders (Acts. 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1). The New Testament also presents a pattern where each church has a primary pastoral leader (Acts 15:13; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Rev. 1:20). **Pastors** are responsible to rule, shepherd, and teach the congregation (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17). All elders must be able to teach but some gain their living from the preaching of

the word (1 Tim. 5:17). **Deacons** assist by coordinating practical care of the church (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). God ordained **civil government** to maintain order in society (Rom. 13:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:13-14) while the church operates in a different sphere to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). Thus, the church should be separate from the civil government (Jn. 18:36).

Eschatology: The Doctrine of End Times

Eschatological Framework—How should the study of end times be approached?

I believe that **dispensational premillennialism** best accounts for God's work throughout redemptive history. Several important biblical concepts support this position. The church is **distinct from Israel** (Acts 15:12-21; Eph. 2:11-16), and God has yet to fulfill some of His covenant promises to Israel (Jer. 31:31-37; Rom. 11:25-29). Without abrogating the literal fulfillment of God's covenant promises to Israel, the church enjoys an inauguration of the spiritual blessings of the new covenant promises made to Israel (Acts 2:22-36; 2 Cor. 3:5-8; Gal. 3:6-8; Eph. 2:11-19; Heb. 8:6-13). The **Day of the Lord** refers to the entirety of the events described as the Lord's coming, which will include judgment on human kingdoms (Dan. 7:24-27; Zeph. 1:14-18; Zech. 14:5-9; 1 Thess. 5:2). The Scripture clearly teaches that Christ's return is **imminent** or can happen at any time (Matt. 24:36-39, 42-44, 50; 25:6-13; Mk. 13:32-37; Lk. 12:40; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 12, 20). No one knows the timing of His coming (Matt. 24:42, 44, 50; 25:13), and His sudden return will leave no time for preparation (Lk. 17:32-37).

Death—What happens to people at death?

I believe that all people will experience **death** except those caught up at the rapture (Eccl. 9:5; Heb. 9:27). Physical death separates the body from the spirit (Eccl. 12:7; James 2:26). At death, each person's soul goes either to hell or heaven in what is called the **intermediate state**. Believers immediately enter God's presence in **heaven** (2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:23). For unbelievers, however, upon death, the spirit immediately goes to **hell (Hades)**, where they will suffer consciously for their sin (Lk. 16:22-23; 2 Thess. 1:9).

General Eschatology—How do the end times unfold?

I believe the next event in redemptive history is the imminent, pretribulation, bodily return of Christ to **rapture** believers, raising those in Christ who have died to meet Christ in the air (Matt. 24:42, 44; Jn. 14:31; 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11). By being "caught up," believers will be delivered from God's wrath in the tribulation (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10). Believers will experience bodily **resurrection** and **glorification** at the rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Jn. 3:2) and will then appear before the **Judgment Seat of Christ** to receive their reward for deeds done in their life (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10).

I believe God will pour out His wrath during a seven-year-long **tribulation** (Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:29-31; 2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 6-16). Diabolically empowered (2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:2), the **Anti-Christ** will sign a treaty with Israel (Dan. 9:27) to begin the tribulation period (Dan. 11:36-45; 2 Thess. 2:3-4; Rev. 13:1ff). At the mid-point of the tribulation, the Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel (Rev. 12:6) and set up a false religion (Dan. 7:25; Matt. 25:15; Rev. 13:5-8), resulting in God pouring out His wrath during the second half of the tribulation—the **Great Tribulation** (Zech. 1:14-18; Matt. 24:21). God will use this difficult time to cause all Israel to repent and receive Him as their King (Zech. 12:10-13:1; Rom. 11:25-27). At the end of the tribulation, Jesus will destroy His enemies at the **Battle of Armageddon** and restore His reign on earth (Zech. 14:3-9; Matt. 24:30-31; Rev. 16:13-16; 19:11-21).

Following the tribulation, the righteous dead will be raised (Rev. 20:4-6). Jesus' **Second Coming** will begin his personal rule over the creation for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-7). At the **Millennium**, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10). All lost humanity will be judged for their deeds at the **Great White Throne Judgment** and thrown, body and spirit, into the **lake of fire** to experience conscious, eternal punishment (2 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 20:11-15). This is the **Second Death** (Rev. 20:14). The Lord will usher in a **new heaven** and **earth** along with the **new Jerusalem**, where God will dwell with His people who will live and rule with Him forever (2 Pet. 3:5-13; Rev. 21; 22:5).