

Calvary Baptist Church

A SYNTHESIS OF BIBLICAL DOCTRINE

A Statement

Presented in Hope of Glorifying Christ  
and Being Approved by Local Church Leadership

by

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## Bibliology

The sixty-six books of the Bible are “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. Lk. 16:10; Jn. 14:26; 2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Thes. 2:13; Eph. 2:20; 2 Pet. 3:15-16, etc.) making them God’s special revelation (cp. Rom. 1:20 with 3:21-26, 10:14) which can bring man into a proper relationship with God (2 Tim. 3:15). Though at times God appears to have dictated His Word (i.e., “thus says the Lord”), most often He providentially prepared and guided the human authors to write exactly what He intended to communicate (verbal plenary inspiration). Every inspired writing shares certain characteristics which include 1) veritability (Deut. 18:15-22), 2) doctrinal harmony (2 Thes. 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:2), 3) reception by Old and New Testament believers (Ex. 24:7; 1 Chron. 29:29; 1 Thes. 5:27; Col. 4:16), and 4) a Christological focus (Lk. 24:27, 44; 1 Pet. 1:11; for the NT, see Heb. 1:1-2; Jn. 14:26; Jn. 20:30).

Without doubt, God has preserved His Word. Importantly, He has not told us how He would do it. Certain linguistic and historical/theological factors must be considered in determining how God has chosen to preserve His Word. Linguistically, any translation will entail the modification or loss of certain word orders, distinctions (i.e., Greek has 24 relative pronouns), nuances, idioms, etc. Though word order and semantic range cannot always be perfectly “preserved,” a literal, word-for-word translation method along with a grammatical-historical hermeneutic preserves the ancient text in any language. Preservation cannot be limited to the word order, distinctions, nuances, or idioms of any translation.

Historically and theologically, biblical authors would sometimes quote from different versions (i.e., the Hebrew and Greek editions of the Old Testament; cf. Mt. 5:18), yet considered both to be the authoritative Word of God. The suggestion that some translation is a “perfectly preserved” text cannot account for the dynamics of language change and development and suggests the eventual need to exegete a translation to discover present meaning. This is really a Catholic notion (cp. Jerome’s Latin Vulgate) which may plunge its adherents into another Dark Ages as biblical interpretation becomes locked up to the aristocracy of a church or movement. As well, nearly 6000 Greek manuscripts exist today, some dating from possibly the first century. No other ancient literary work compares to the vast amount of biblical remains. God has certainly preserved His Word! Though few manuscripts seem to agree exactly with the others, their differences amount to a handful of words and phrases which affect no fundamental tenet of our faith.

## Theology Proper

God is one (Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29), which means He is a unity and is set apart from His creation (cf. Js. 1:17, 1 Pet. 1:24). Properly understood, this compels the admiration (Mk. 12:30; cp. Jn. 10:30; 2 Cor. 3:14; 2 Thes. 1:10) and obedience (Rom. 10:4) of His creatures which magnifies His glory (Eph. 1:5-6; Rev. 21:22-27). While God's oneness may be His most defining characteristic (cp. the importance of the *shemah* in Israel), He is also immanent, transcendent, and Triune.

God is immanent, interested in and involved with the affairs of His creation (Job 33:4; Prov. 20:27; Acts 17:27-28; Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:5-7). God is zealous for a meaningful relationship with humans (Ex. 20:3; Jn. 4:23; 1 Pet. 1:15-16), and has an ever-present interest in the welfare of creation (Jer. 23:23; Psalm 139; Prov. 15:3; Mt. 6:25-33; 10:29; 28:19-20; Heb. 4:13). God's terrestrial interests are primarily in man (Mt. 10:31), shown by his provision of salvation (1 Jn. 4:10; cf. 5:12). God's communicable attributes include His holiness (to a degree; 1 Pet. 1:15-16), righteousness (Ps. 19:8; Rom. 3:21-26), justice (Dan. 4:26), truth (Jn. 17:3), and love (Rom. 5:8). To argue that God is "loving" to the exclusion of His justice (and wrath; cf. Ps. 7:11; Jn. 3:36; Rev. 6:17) is a rejection of both His love and justice, and appropriately incurs the wrath of God (Rom. 6:1-2; Rom. 3:8). God is also trustworthy (Is. 46:9-10).

God's immanence is balanced by His transcendence (Ps. 113:5-6; Ecc. 5:2; Is. 55:8-9; Jn. 8:23). God dwells in heaven (1 Kings 8:43; Ps. 102:19) as His perfect "otherness" humbles the Christian (Is. 6:5; Job 42:5-6) but also helps bind the Christian to God's holy character (cp. 2 Cor. 3:18; Js. 1:25). God's incommunicable attributes include His unity (or simplicity or consistency; cf. Deut. 6:4), eternity (Ex. 3:14; cf. Jn. 8:58; Rev. 1:8), invisibility (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:15-16), self-sufficiency (Acts 17:24-25), omnipotence (Gen. 17:1; 18:10-14; Jer. 32:17; Dan. 4:34-37; Mt. 19:26; Mk. 4:39; Rev. 1:8; over the Devil in 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 2:15; Rev. 20:10, 14-15), omniscience (Ps. 44:21; Mt. 9:24; Col. 2:3), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-11; Prov. 15:3), and unchangeableness (Ps. 102; Mal. 3:6).

While God is both immanent and transcendent, He is also Triune. This characteristic of God reveals His divine concern for creation (Heb. 2:14-18; Jn. 14:16-18). The Bible makes clear that God exists in three Persons, the Father (Gen. 2:4; Ex. 8:19; 18:11; Ps. 100:3; Dan. 3:29; Mt. 6:26; Jn. 6:27; 8:54; 1 Pet. 1:2), Son (Is. 7:14 [cf. Mt. 1:23]; Ps. 110; Hag. 2:7 [cf. Jn. 7:14; 2:19]; Mt. 28:19; Jn. 1:1; 8:48; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:17; 2:10; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 1:8, etc.), and Holy Spirit (Gen. 1:26; 11:7; Is. 6:8; Mt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10; 6:19). As already noted, God is one in three Persons. While an over-emphasis on His oneness may lead to modalism, and an over-emphasis on His threeness to tri-theism, both must be avoided as unbiblical.

## **Anthropology**

Man was made on the sixth day of creation (Gen. 1:26-28, 31; 2:7, 18-19) and was given life by the direct act of God (2:7). He has a soul, which means he is both material and immaterial (cf. Jn. 3:6; 2 Cor. 5:1-4). Man was to subdue and use earth's resources for his enjoyment and survival in harmonious relationship with God and his wife (1:27; 2:18-19), which he did until his fall in Genesis 3. Adam's disobedience affects all of his descendants mortally and spiritually (Rom. 5).

Man was made in the image of God, which means he was given dominion (1:26), made a relational creature ("male and female," 1:27), and given the ability to procreate (1:28). In this way man reflects God Who is Sovereign, Triune, and Creator. Though the fall skewed the image of God in man (Rom. 1:21-32), this image can be progressively restored when a person believes in Jesus Christ as Lord for salvation, sanctification (2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10), and glorification (Rom. 8:30).

## **Hamatiology**

Word studies of both OT<sup>1</sup> and NT<sup>2</sup> words yield the general conclusion that "sin" means "to fall short" or "miss the mark" of God's righteousness. The Bible declares that man's problem of suffering, pain, and evil are all the result of sin (Gen. 3:16-19; Rom. 5:12; Js. 1:14-15, 4:1; Rev. 21:3-4). While evolutionary and eastern mystical ideas of man's origins deny man's pristine beginning as created by an almighty and intelligent God, the Bible states that God created man (Gen. 1:26-28) and placed him in an ideal Garden of Eden (2:8). Though man was created "able not to sin" (Gen. 2:16-17), through the Devil's temptation and their own lusts (Gen. 3:1-6; cf. 1 Jn. 2:16) our first parents chose sinful autonomy rather than holy dependence. The woman was genuinely deceived by Satan (1 Tim. 2:14) while the man probably was not (Gen. 3:6). Their disobedience distorted their perception of themselves (3:7) and God (3:8), and resulted in a distortion of nature (3:17-19; Rom. 8:22).

God's curse upon the accomplices shows just how serious sin is. The serpent would be destroyed by a coming Royal Descendant<sup>3</sup> (or "Seed"; Gen. 3:15; 49:10; cf. Rom. 8:22-23; Gal. 3:16; 1 Jn.

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<sup>1</sup> *hatta, het, resha, and pasha, maal, sheqer, marah, asam, respectively.*

<sup>2</sup> *hamartia, anomia, adikia, paraptoma, and parabasis.*

<sup>3</sup> The Descendant will be referred to as both "Royal" and "Redeeming" throughout this paper; certain biblical and theological contexts sometimes emphasize one of His characteristics over the other, so I have tried to

3:8), while the woman would have pain in childbirth and desire futilely to usurp the authority of her husband (Gen. 3:16). Only with sorrow and through sweaty labor would the man reap the fruit of the land (3:17).

The undeniable presence of sin and evil in the world have caused some to conclude that God is either cruel or impotent; cruel because he could stop evil but does not, or impotent because he would stop it but cannot. God is neither cruel nor impotent. Ephesians 3:10 declares how God's willingness and ability to forgive sinners causes beings of the highest created order to marvel (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). Man is that free-agent whereby every excuse not to be "God-like" has been removed. Created "able not to sin," man chose Godless autonomy and plunged himself into sinful despair. Only God could redeem man from the dreadful consequences of sin, which He does to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:5-6).

Sin affects every human except He Who had no earthly father (Lk. 1:27; cf. Gen. 3:15, Is. 7:14). Because of Adam's sin in the garden, all of his descendants share in the doing and penalty of sin which results in death (this suggests the seminal transmission of physical and spiritual realities; cf. Rom. 5:12-19; cp. Heb. 7:9-10). The transmission of sin, which is active and extensive today (Rom. 3:23), will continue to the end of time as we know it (2 Tim. 3:13; Rev. 21:4). Through Christ's victory over the devil and death can Adam's race escape the power of sin and its consequences (Heb. 2:14-15; Rom. 8:4-5). No human attains sinless perfection until they are glorified with Christ (1 Jn. 1:8-10; 3:2).

### **Soteriology**

Romans 1 makes clear that all wickedness, injustice, pain, sorrow, and confusion result from unthankful, unregenerate hearts which refuse to "glorify God as God." Though God's "eternal power and Godhead" may be observed from creation (v.20), people still choose to suppress the truth of God by changing His glory into something from their own fallen imagination (v.23). While God's wrath abides on every sinful human (v. 18), undeniable evil in the world may point every man's conscience to the reality of his need for salvation.

Humans are the primary recipients of salvation (cf. Rom. 8:23). Because of the Genesis Fall, humans have been submerged into a deep and perpetuating (Rom. 5:12) quagmire of sin and its consequences. While articulating the curse upon the man and woman, God mercifully promised a Redeeming Descendant who would crush the power of the serpent though the Descendant himself would be mortally wounded (Gen. 3:15). As the Old Testament is basically a record of human failure,

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maintain those emphases. Of course, the "Royal Descendant" and "Redeeming Descendant" are one and the same Person.

the sinful quagmire deepened, culminating in the atrocious death of the Redeeming Descendant Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:11; Acts 7:52). Marvelously, Christ's apparent defeat was the glorious means of His prophesied victory (Is. 53:11; 42:3-4; Lk. 24:25-27; Heb. 2:14-15). While Christ's death and resurrection is preached "to the Jew first," it is also for the Gentile (Rom. 1:16; Eph. 2:14). The church age is a special time for Gentile reception of salvation (Rom. 11:25-32) provided by God's ἄπαξ παθεῖν ("once to suffer"; Heb. 9:26) Redeeming Descendant.

The content of salvation is described in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 where the apostle reminds a struggling church of the "gospel...by which [one] is saved" (vv.1-2). It was the message that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was...raised the third day according to the Scriptures." One must first hear, then receive, then "stand in" this gospel lest their faith be vain (v.1). The gospel is powerful (Rom. 1:16), propositional (1 Cor. 15:3-4), confrontational (Acts 17:30) truth which can save and protect (Eph. 6:17) individuals.

Salvation is administered through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:25, 27; 9:22, 26). This sacrifice is sufficient for all (Jn. 3:16-17), but efficacious only for some (Rev. 20:15). The dividing line between these is man's response to the gospel, which can be positive only by God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 11:18). Having been graced salvation by God (Phil. 1:29), the believer gazes into the glorious face of the One Who made him to become more and more like Jesus Christ Himself (Jn. 1:12; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10; Heb. 2:10). Eager anticipation of Christ's Return is integral to the believer's sanctification (Phil. 3:20; Heb. 4:8; 1 Pet. 1:5). While the believer must "work out his salvation with fear and trembling," he also is provided the assurance that "it is God who works [in him] to will and do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Salvation and sanctification culminate in eternal glory (Rom. 8:30; 2 Tim. 2:10; 2 Pet. 5:10).

God planned the salvation of individuals before time (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 11:36; Rev. 13:8). In Romans 9:20-24 the apostle Paul anticipated the logical question some may ask about God's fairness in creating: "If God predestined the salvation of some, did He also predestine the damnation of others?" This question of God's fairness is not valid, as the apostle answers, "O man, who are you who is questioning (ἀνταποκρινόμενος) God?" God, as God, has the right to patiently endure the vessels of wrath fitted (κατηρτισμένα; aorist middle participle, suggesting action by the vessel of wrath to self) for destruction, and to make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which He prepared (aorist active indicative; God doing the action) for glory. While God initiates and maintains the believer's salvation (Jn. 6:44; Rom. 5:8; Titus 3:5), men are responsible for rejecting salvation, and in such cases will be damned for their sin. God's sovereign choice and man's free will are held in tension in Scripture, and never seem to be answered in purely "Arminian" or "Calvinistic" categories.

True salvation is more than an “easy-believism,” the idea that one may make mental assent to the claims of Christ, perhaps “pray a prayer,” and be “saved” with few or no signs of true repentance (cf. Jn. 2:19). Similarly, true salvation does not entail “Lordship” notions that eliminate biblical sanctification categories (cf. 1 Cor. 3:2; Gal. 4:19). Though Christ will not be received on certain “conditions” (Lk. 14:26; Matt. 8:19-22), salvation is followed by progressive sanctification (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 2:14; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Believers are eternally secure (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Jn. 5:13; Eph. 2:7). If a professing believer persists in sin, he may be unregenerate (Mt. 4:16-17; 1 Jn. 2:19) or appointed an early death (1 Cor. 5:5).

### Christology

Jesus Christ is the Royal, Redeeming Descendant first promised in Genesis 3:15 and is completely divine (cf. Matt. 13:41 [Lk. 12:8-9; 15:10]; Mk. 2:5; Matt. 25:31-46; Mk. 2:27-28 [Ex. 20:8-11]; Jn. 1:30-31 [14:7-9]; Jn. 8:58 [Ex. 3:14]; Jn. 20:28; Heb. 1:3; 1:8; Col. 1:15-20; 2:9; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:10 [Gen. 18:25; Joel 3:12]; Phil. 2:5-11; κυριος in the New Testament, etc.) and human (Lk. 2:52; Jn. 1:14; 1 Jn. 1:1-3; 4:2-3). Though completely human, he was (and is) without sin (Rom. 5:19; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Jn. 3:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; cf. Jn. 8:46; 8:49; 15:10), made possible by His divine nature (Jn. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:45-47) and miraculous virgin birth by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:18-25 and Lk. 1:26-38; Rom. 5:12).

Christ has eternally existed<sup>4</sup> (Is. 9:6; Mic. 5:2; Jn. 8:58; 17:5; Lk. 22:70; Phil. 2:6; Heb. 13:8; 1 Pet. 1:20; 1 Jn. 1:1; Rev. 1:8, etc.) and is the agent of all creation (Heb. 1:10-12; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 11:36). He was pre-incarnate in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord (Num. 22:32-35; Jdg. 6:13-14; 13:16) while His Spirit led in the recording of Scripture (1 Pet. 1:11). He was born as a man to fulfill prophecy (Gen. 3:15, cf. Is. 46:9-10), to destroy the devil and the devil’s death (1 Jn. 3:8), to confirm the love and promises of God (1 Jn. 4:10; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:20), and to bring many sons to glory (Heb. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:20; Col. 3:4). His death on the cross provided the perfect sacrifice for sin (Is. 53:5-6; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 3:21-26; Heb. 4:15; 9:26; 1 Pet. 1:19, etc.) while His resurrection validates His messianic claims and God the Father’s acceptance of Him (Rom. 1:4). As High Priest and Intercessor for His people (Heb. 8:1), He now awaits His coming earthly rule as David’s Son (Acts 1:6-7; 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 20:1-6) which will be followed by His eternal rest with all believers (1 Cor. 15:28; Rev. 21:4).

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<sup>4</sup> The fact that Christ is called “firstborn” in Col. 1:15 refers to His being the first human to rise from the dead (cf. 1:18); it cannot mean that Christ was created. Verse 16 makes clear that “all things” were created *by Him* (εν αυτω εκτισθη παντα εν τοις ουρανοις και επι της γης). The eternal sonship of Christ guards against modalism, exalts humanity to its proper place of nobility as being made in the image of God, and presents Christ as the pattern and example for, and the purpose of all creation.

## Pneumatology

God's Spirit was active in creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13), gives and sustains corporeal life (not in the pantheistic sense; cf. Gen. 2:7; Acts 17:25), and is intimately aware of man's moral, intellectual, and spiritual condition (Gen. 6:3; Prov. 20:27). He empowered Old Testament leaders (Ex. 31:3; 35:31; Jdg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam. 16:13, etc.) and prophets (Num. 11:17, 25-26; 24:2; 1 Sam. 10:6; cf. "Yahweh's Servant" in Is. 11:2; 42:1; 59:21), and is the promised Divine Agent whereby Israel would obey Yahweh (Ez. 36:27; 37:14; and the Gentiles, Joel 2:28-32). God's Spirit will never be taken from New Testament believers (Rom. 8:1-30, Eph. 1:13-14; cf. Ps. 51:11, 1 Sam. 18:12).

The Holy Spirit "overshadowed" Mary in the conception of Christ (Mt. 1:18), and was active in other events surrounding Christ's birth (Lk. 1:15, 41, 67). The Holy Spirit descended upon Christ at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17), signifying Christ's role as Suffering Servant, His identity with mankind, and His part in the Trinity. Through the Holy Spirit Christ resisted Satan (4:1), cast out demons (12:28), performed miracles (Lk. 4:18), "spoke the words of God" (Jn. 3:34), and offered Himself as a perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 9:14). To assign the Spirit's work in Christ to the devil was deemed by Christ to be unforgivable (Matt. 12:22-29; Mk. 3:29), probably signifying a consistent, hardened rejection of Christ's divine nature and mission. The Holy Spirit is the "other Comforter" (Jn. 14:16; cf. v.18) believers would receive during Christ's absence.

The Holy Spirit was sent by Christ on the Day of Pentecost, signifying the start of the church-age (Acts 2; cf. "Ecclesiology" below). Believers spoke "with other tongues" (2:4; cf. 8:4-25; 10:44-46; cf. Mk. 13:11), a phenomenon limited to that transitional period between the Old Covenant and confirmation of the New one (1 Cor. 14:22; Heb. 2:3-4). The gifts of apostleship and prophecy were likewise limited to this transitional period (Lk. 6:13; Acts 1:2, 25-26; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 2 Pet. 3:2; Rev. 21:4; cf. Jn. 14:26; 1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:15-16). The Spirit also empowered bold apostolic witness (Acts 1:8; 4:8; 13:9).

Believers are "the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19) and may "walk" in Him (Gal. 5:16) and "be filled" with Him (Eph. 5:18), or they may "grieve" (Eph. 4:30) and "quench" (1 Thess. 5:19) Him. The Holy Spirit comforts (Jn. 14:26) and seals (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5) believers as the down-payment of their inheritance "until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:13-14). He thus provides them with eternal security and assurance of answered prayers (Rom. 8:15-17, 27-39). He also gives gifts to believers (1 Cor. 12:7-11; Eph. 4:11) which result in the sanctification and unification of Christ's church



(Eph. 4:11-16). The Spirit is the means by which each believer “bears fruit,” or produces spiritual qualities such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

### Angelology

Angels are created beings (Col. 1:16) who, in the OT, were involved in the narrowing of the Messianic line (Gen. 18), executing judgment on Israel (2 Sam. 24:16), protecting the saints (Ps. 34:7; 91:11), worshipping in the presence of God (Is. 6:2), and the general carrying out of God’s will as messengers to humans (cf. Dan. 9:20-27; 10:13; 12:1; Ps. 103:20; Ez. 10:1-3). In the New Testament angels predicted (Lk. 1:26-38) and announced (2:8-15) the birth of Christ, and were involved in Christ’s life, resurrection, and ascension (Mt. 2:19; Mk. 1:13; Lk. 2:13; Jn. 20:12; Acts 1:10-11). Angels helped early Christians escape harm (Acts 5:9; 12:5-11), directed the lost to evangelistic believers (10:1-7; and vice-versa, 8:26; this is the “angel of the Lord,” perhaps a reference to Christ – cf. “Christology” above), and encouraged weary saints (Acts 27:23-25). Therefore their primary function is to minister to those who will be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14). Though angels exercise greater knowledge and power than humans (cf. Heb. 2:7-9), they will one day be judged by saved humanity (1 Cor. 6:3).

Evil angels are also created beings who were alive and active in the Old Testament (Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37; Is. 13:21, etc.), as they were (Matt. 12:22-29; 15:22-28; 17:14-20; Mk. 5:1-16) and are (and are doomed; 1 Cor. 2:6; Col. 2:10, 15) in the New Testament. Satan, or “the devil,” is their chief and is known as the “tempter” (Mt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), “Beelzebub” (Mt. 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 19), “enemy” (Mt. 13:39), “evil one” (Mt. 13:19, 38; 1 Jn. 2:13; 3:12; 5:18), “Belial” (2 Cor. 6:15), “adversary” (1 Pet. 5:8), “deceiver” (Rev. 12:9), “great dragon” (Rev. 12:3), “father of lies” (Jn. 8:44), “murderer” (Jn. 8:44), and “sinner” (1 Jn. 3:8).<sup>5</sup> Once a cherub (Is. 14:12-13; Ez. 28:14-19), Satan fell from heaven because he exerted proud will against Almighty God, thus securing his eternal suffering and damnation (1 Tim. 3:6; Rev. 20:10). He leads his rebellious legion in accusing righteous individuals before God (Job 1:9; Zech. 3:1-2; Rev. 12:10), twisting Scripture to secure worship for himself (Mt. 4:1-11), convincing vulnerable Christians to replace spiritual purposes with carnal ones (Mt. 16:23), “snatching” the truth from human hearts to sap spiritual life and fruit (Mk. 4:15), physically oppressing people (Lk. 13:16), creating a mindset in believers conducive for justifying an unforgiving spirit (2 Cor. 2:11), counterfeiting righteousness and sound doctrine (2 Cor. 11:14), and using people or governments to hinder the spread of the gospel and Christian encouragement (1 Thess. 2:18; cf. other activities in Eph. 6:11; Heb. 2:14; 2

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<sup>5</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 472.

Thess. 2:4, 10-12; Rev. 20:10). Fortunately the eternal destruction of this wicked rebel has been divinely forecasted (Rev. 20:10).

Demons themselves are most known for inflicting physical and spiritual torment (Mk. 1:26; 9:17-25; Acts 8:7; Lk. 8:27; 8:37). They may influence people from without (1 Cor. 12:3, Job 4:15) and possess unbelievers (Mt. 17:15; Mk. 5:5; Lk. 8:27; Acts 19:16). While physical illness sometimes stems from demonic activity in the New Testament (Mt. 17:14-18), this is not always the case. Importantly, when Jesus exorcised a demon, He did it authoritatively as a mark of the Spirit of God (Mt. 12:28; cf. Lk. 11:20). Christ ultimately thwarted demonic hosts with His crucifixion and resurrection (Col. 2:10, 15). While Jesus invested His apostles with the ability to authoritatively cast out demons (Lk. 10:17), it seems most reasonable that Christians today, if confronted with a situation that demanded exorcism of a demon, be prayerful, use primarily the Scriptures when confronting it, and read (and speak, if necessary) authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ.

### **Ecclesiology**

Though the Old Testament makes reference to “the salvation of the Gentiles” (Is. 49:6; 60; cf. Gen. 49:10; Ex. 19:6), there is no clear indication that the New Testament church was a concept revealed to Old Testament believers. Indeed, the apostle Paul declares that equality between Jew and Gentile was a revelation “hid” from the people of God in ages past (Eph. 3:8-10).

The first mention of the church is made by Jesus Christ Himself in Matthew 16:18 in answer to Peter’s confession that Jesus is “the Christ.” Referring to Peter’s confession, Jesus said, “upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:16) is “being built up a spiritual house...to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 2:5).

At least three observations show that the church began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). First, the author of Hebrews distinguishes between God’s Old Covenant people and His New Covenant people who have “come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn...to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than Abel’s blood spoke” (12:18-21). These verses indicate the church could not have existed before Christ’s sacrifice. Second, Christ commanded His disciples after his death and resurrection to make disciples and baptize converts. This they began doing on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4, 38-41). Third, Ephesians 3:1-6 declares that the church was a mystery in the Old Testament era.

Though the church has a universal nature (Acts 8:3; 1 Cor. 10:32; 15:9; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18, 24), it is also clear that the “universal church” is made up of local ones (Acts 8:1; 14:23; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; 16:19; Col. 4:15; Tit. 1:5, etc.). A person may join a local church upon his profession of faith and post-conversion baptism (Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41-42). Though membership is not mentioned formally in the New Testament, the idea is certainly present (metaphorically in 1 Cor. 12:12). Members are accountable to one another (Gal. 6:1), must mark and avoid unruly attendees (1 Cor. 5:5; Rom. 16:17; 1 Jn. 2:19), and form a community that is distinguished from “outsiders” (1 Pet. 2:9).

Members have the privilege of observing two ordinances, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Baptism is by immersion (cf. βαπτίζω in the NT, particularly in Acts; i.e., 2:41; 8:36; 10:47) into membership and displays symbolically the spiritual reality of faith in Christ and death to sin (Rom. 6:4-6). It demonstrates a repentant, obedient, and thankful heart in light of Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Pet. 3:21), and should be done “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28:19). The Lord’s Supper, usually a shared meal in the NT, may be taken by members in a local church assembly after they examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28). It symbolizes Christ’s atoning death and anticipates His Return (Mt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 11:26).

Members of a church help in the sanctification of each other by mutually encouraging purity and accountability (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25). They must “redeem the time” with outsiders by “letting their light shine,” or witnessing the gospel of grace (Eph. 5:16; Mt. 5:16). The church holds up and declares the truth of God, and prevents it from “slipping away” in a world of pagan ideals (1 Tim. 3:15). The pastor/missionary especially must be biblically faithful, articulate, and persistent (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Both the pastor/missionary and deacons must be qualified (1 Tim. 3:2-7; 1 Tim. 3:8-13; cf. Acts 6:1-6). While women may teach children and other women (Titus 2:4-5), they may not be lead teachers in the church (1 Tim. 2:12-14). All believers are “a holy priesthood” able to be productive in God’s economy (1 Pet. 2:5; Jn. 15:5, 8) and “show forth the praises” of God to an unbelieving world (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. Ex. 19:6). As the church was formed to be an eternal demonstration of God’s glorious grace (Eph. 2:7), each true member of the church is forever secure.

Every New Testament church will have biblical (“Baptist”) distinctives which include<sup>6</sup>:

- The Bible is the only rule for faith and practice (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 3:2).
- Each believer is a priest before God (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6) and can access (Heb. 10:19-21) and serve (1 Pet. 2:9ff) Him, and later reign with Him (Rev. 5:9-10).

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Fred Moritz, Baptist Polity class notes, Maranatha Baptist Seminary, Watertown, Wisconsin, October 2010.

- Each believer has soul liberty (1 Cor. 2:13).
- The local church is autonomous (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; 1 Pet. 5:3).
- Church members must be regenerate and immersed (Acts 2:41, 47)
- There are only two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's supper (cf. above discussion).
- The church must be separate from the state (Mt. 22:21).
- The church must be separate ethically and ecclesiastically (2 Jn. 10-11).

A definition of "church" may thus be provided: "the church is an organized assembly of immersed believers, having New Testament officers, gathered together for fellowship, to practice the ordinances, and to carry out the great commission."<sup>7</sup>

### **Eschatology**

Conservative evangelical views of the last things generally fall into one of three categories, including dispensational pre-millennialism, historic pre-millennialism, and reformed amillennialism. Because I believe in a literal, grammatical, historical reading of Scripture, I am a dispensational premillennialist. This section will be developed by discussing the nature of the Millennium, the eschatological relationship between Israel and the Church, the nature of the tribulation, the rapture of the church, and finally the nature of death and eternal dwelling places.

History is moving toward the prophesied thousand-year reign of Christ, also known as the Millennium (Rev. 20:1-6). Unlike any other time in history (Mt. 4:8; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8), Satan will be bound only to be loosed for a short time afterward to rally ungodly kingdom inhabitants. He will quickly be defeated and cast into the lake of fire to suffer eternal torment (Rev. 20:10). Because Christ's kingdom will be geopolitical (Mt. 19:28; Acts 1:6; 26:6-7; cf. 2 Sam. 7:11-16; Is. 9:7; 11:9; 65:20-25; Zech. 14:16-21) and He Himself will rule in it (i.e., not just His spirit; Mt. 19:28; Acts 1:10-11; Dan. 7:13; Mt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7; 20:16), believers properly expect a future, glorious, millennial reign of Christ on the earth where they will rule and reign with him. The Millennium will be followed by the Eternal Kingdom (Rev. 21:1-5; 1 Cor. 15:28).

Contrary to the teaching of replacement theologies (cf. Gal. 3:28 and Col. 3:11 often used by them), Israel and the Church are separate entities. Christ taught their separateness (Mt. 23:37-39; 24:15 [cf. Dan. 9:27]), as did the apostle Paul (Rom. 11:25-32). God's present grafting of the Gentiles into the

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<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Larry Oats, Ecclesiology class notes, Maranatha Baptist Seminary, Watertown, Wisconsin, 2008.

“olive tree” of salvation (Rom. 11:17,24; Eph. 3:6) actually plays a role in the future national salvation of Jews (Rom. 11:25-26; cf. Is. 59:20). The “great tribulation” described by Christ in Matthew 24 describes the timing and nature of this salvation.

The “great tribulation” will follow the abomination of desolation (foretold by Daniel) in the holy place of the temple (Matt. 24:15). This neither happened before Christ appeared (cf. 1 Macc. 1:48) nor shortly after he ascended (cf. temple desecration in 70 A.D.), as both of these possibilities miss the 3½ year mark of Messiah’s coming in clouds identified by Daniel (12:11-12; cp. 9:27; Matt. 24:15). Though there are many “tribulation” passages in the NT that refer to the church, the “great tribulation” of Matthew 24:15 seems to point to a future *Jewish* tribulation period.

Two important passages in the NT describe a seizing of believers to be with Christ where He *is*, not necessarily to where He *is coming* (Jn 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).<sup>8</sup> These, along with 1 Corinthians 15:51-57 and Revelation 3:10 make no reference to a “tribulation” for believers; rather, Revelation 3:10 describes being saved “out of” (ἐκ) the hour of wrath, which means believers would physically escape the Great Tribulation.<sup>9</sup> Being seized by Christ as these passages indicate to enjoy the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:7-9) and to reign with Christ in His Kingdom is the believer’s “blessed hope” (cf. 1 Cor. 15:27-28).

Physical death results from spiritual death (Gen. 2:17; 5:4; Rom. 6:23; Rom. 7:5; Js. 1:15). The soul of an unbelieving person who dies dwells in *Hades* (cf. Mt. 16:18; Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:27; Rev. 1:18; cp. *Gehenna* in Mt. 5:30, 23:33, and Lk. 12:5 as a synonym for the Lake of Fire), doomed to face the Great White Throne judgment and experience the “second death” which is eternal suffering in The Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:10, 14-15; cf. the parallelism of Matt. 25:46; Mk. 9:43-48; Is. 66:24). The soul of a believing person who dies is “present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8; cf. Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7; cf. Rev. 13:6) and awaits his glorious resurrection body (2 Cor. 5:4). In this resurrection body the believer will share in Christ’s millennial rule and enjoy the bliss of the eternal kingdom (often called “heaven”; cf. Rev. 21:1-4). Believers (dead or alive at the time of the rapture) will be judged at Christ’s *bema* seat before the Millennium (2 Cor. 5:10), while unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment after the Millennium (Rev. 20:12-15). God presently imparts His life to believers which sanctifies (Rom. 15:16; 1

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<sup>8</sup> Neither does the post-tribulation position square with Matthew 25:31-46 (parable of the judgment of the sheep and goats).

<sup>9</sup> though see Svigel, “The Apocalypse of John and the Rapture of the Church: A Re-evaluation,” who argues that this is probably only secondary or corroborative evidence for the rapture; he submits that “the male child” who was “seized to God and to His throne” [12:5] is a reference to the church.

Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13) and renews (2 Cor. 4:16) them through the Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of their glorious resurrection inheritance (Eph. 1:14; Jn. 1:12; cp. the “eternal life” of Tit. 3:7; 1 Jn. 5:13).

“Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name among all nations...”

Luke 24:46-47

Let us walk worthy of God, Who has called us into His kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12