

Doctrinal Statement

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Bibliology: The Doctrine of Scripture

Overview

I believe that God has revealed himself through His Word which consists of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. In God's master plan, He sovereignly ordained the written Word to be the means by which His speech to mankind is forever immortalized and kept pure. I believe that the Bible is not simply a collection of unrelated books but a unified anthology. Despite being written over a span of around 1,500 years, nowhere in Scripture do we find self-contradictions. The writers themselves affirmed their unification by numerous quotations of other books (Rom. 10:15; 1 Pet. 2:6; Jam. 2:23). I believe that God uses His Word as a sword to convict of sin and bring man face to face with his culpability before a just Creator (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 7:7–12). The Bible, as the whole counsel of God, sufficiently teaches us everything that pertains to life and godliness and is able to make one wise unto salvation (2 Pet. 1:3; Tit. 2:12; 2 Tim. 3:15; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 10:9–10).

Revelation

General revelation: I believe that God has set up a witness to Himself through His natural revelation in creation and the created order (Rom. 1:19–20; Ps. 19:1–6). God's general revelation also includes His sovereign control over history as well as His placement of the conscience within each human (Dan. 4:35; Rom. 2:14–15). Those truths concerning God that are evident through His general revelation are His existence, His eternal power, and His divine nature, which are on display all around us so that humanity is "without excuse" when we choose to reject Him (Rom. 1:20). This knowledge on display through creation is sufficient to condemn mankind when it chooses to worship and serve creatures and self rather than the creator God (Rom. 1:25; Ps. 14:1).

Special revelation: I believe that God has chosen to reveal Himself throughout history in specific ways such as direct speech, prophets, angels, dreams, visions, Christ, and His Word. The culmination of His special revelation is the 66 books of the canon which is the essential source of all truth for mankind (Lk. 24:27; Jn. 5:39). God's Word describes for us who God is and what He has done. It is specifically the record of God's dealing with both the nation Israel as well as all of humanity. Through His Word, God has imparted the knowledge both of the Savior as well as His salvific plan for those who are condemned because of their sin and rejection of God (2 Tim. 3:16).

Inspiration

I believe that Scripture is the inspired (breathed-out) Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Th. 2:13). God's inspiration of the text of Scripture is both verbal and plenary, extending to each of the 66 books of the canon alone, thereby completing his revelation. The means by which God has imparted His Word to us is through the pen of human authors who were under the Spirit's direction (2 Pet. 1:20–21; Eph. 3:5). I do not believe the authors wrote as a result of direct dictation, except when expressly stating the exact words of God, but that the Spirit used their

personalities and experiences as He communicated the Word to each specific audience as well as to us. I believe that both the Old and New Testament writers affirm Scripture's inspiration (Ex. 4:22; Judg. 6:8; 1 Ki. 17:2; Acts 1:16). I believe that Jesus himself taught the divine origin of God's Word (Mt. 4:4). He affirms that Scripture is the truth from God (Jn. 17:17).

Inerrancy

I believe in the inerrancy of God's Word in its entirety as it was revealed in the original autographs. Since God's Word was both revealed and written down under the direction of the Spirit, I believe that God has kept it from error or distortion (2 Pet. 1:20–21). Therefore, none of the words of Scripture are corrupted or lack divine approval (Jn. 10:35). I believe we can defend the dependability of Scripture with complete confidence against any attack regarding its veracity (1 Pet. 3:15). Jesus Himself taught both the inerrancy and reliability of Scripture down to the very word and letter (Mt. 5:17–18). He affirmed Old Testament prophecies as trustworthy (Mt. 11:10; 19:4; 24:17). I believe that both the Old and New Testament writers affirm the inerrancy of what God has spoken (Ps. 19:7; Pro. 30:5; Rom. 3:4). I believe that all of the biblical prophecies will be fulfilled as they have been recorded in Scripture (Mt. 1:21; Mt. 8:17; Jn. 19:24; Acts 1:16). I believe that many prophecies have already been fulfilled giving further evidence to the reliability of Scripture (Is. 53; Mt. 27; Ps. 22:16–18; Lk. 23).

Preservation

I believe in the eternal preservation of the Bible by God Himself (Ps. 119:89). I believe that God continues to actively protect and uphold His Word as he has throughout the centuries (Is. 40:8; Mt. 5:18). We can be confident that we have all of God's Word even to this day and that none of it will pass away or lose its power (Mt. 24:35). I believe that the canon of Scripture is closed so that no word can be added or taken away from God's authoritative revelation to mankind (Rev. 22:18–19). While God has persevered His full counsel for us in His Word, there are minor textual variants between manuscripts that have been observed but in no way undermine the inspiration of Scripture. I believe that none of the textual variants in Scripture contradict one another doctrinally or alter the nature of God's revelation as completely authoritative (Ps. 19:7–11).

Translation

I believe that God's desire is for His Word to be translated into the mother tongue of each human individual so they can read and hear His word in their own language (2 Tim. 3:16–17; Mt. 28:19–20). In English, there have been many faithful translators who have attempted to translate the Scriptures as accurately as possible from the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic texts. I believe it is both right and necessary to utilize these English translations that have remained faithful to the revealed Word. Some of the translations that I personally use are the ESV, NASB, NKJV, and KJV.

Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

The Existence of God

I believe that God exists as the One and only true God who is Lord of heaven and earth (Deut. 6:4). I believe that God's existence is proven by Scripture's assertions and further by nature's

own attestation (Col. 1:16–17; Ps. 19:1–2). I believe that, as Lord of all, God is both immanent and transcendent. He is immanent in His willingness to be near to us as humans even though we are but sinful human creations (Ps. 139; 145:18). God has chosen to make Himself known to mankind and even to be present with us (Is. 57:15). God is transcendent as the great God of the universe who rules over all (Is. 55:8–9; Dan. 4:25, 35). He is not held down by human affairs or the constraints of this world. God dwells far above them all and has control over the greatest as well as the smallest (Pro. 21:1). God has revealed Himself by many titles, but His personal name is Yahweh (Ex. 3:14; Is. 42:8).

The Nature of God

The Trinity

I believe that God's nature is seen through both the Trinity as well as His attributes (Mt. 5:48; Ps. 18:30). I believe that there is only one God but that this one God has three persons (Deut. 6:4; 1 Tit. 2:5). As three in one, God the Father is one in essence with both the Son and the Holy Spirit, though they each maintain their own distinct persons (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). These three persons are clearly presented in Scripture as having distinctive works that each perform; but even in each of these works, they work together as a unified whole (Mt. 3:16–17). This is a mystery revealed to us that must be accepted by faith since God is so far above our human comprehension (Rom. 11:33–34; Ps. 145:3).

God's Attributes

I believe that God's attributes convey His divine nature. We can categorize His attributes as incommunicable (not able to be shared by humans) and communicable (able to be shared by humans). Below is a representative list of some of His incommunicable and communicable attributes:

- Incommunicable
 - Immutability: God has been and will always be unchangeable (Mal. 3:6).
 - Omnipotence: God is all-powerful. There is nothing beyond His power to perform (Ps. 115:3; Dan. 4:35).
 - Omniscience: He knows all and sees all (Pro. 15:3).
 - Omnipresence: He is present in every place at all times (Jer. 23:23–24; Ps. 139).
 - Eternality: He has existed forever and will continue to exist forever in His perfection (Ps. 90:2).
 - Sovereignty: He governs the affairs of everything in His creation (Pro. 16:9; Is. 46:10).
- Communicable
 - Holiness: He is set apart (Ex. 15:11).
 - Goodness: He is the epitome of virtue and morality (Ps. 34:8).
 - Justice: Everything He does is fair and right as expressed in His revealed law (Deut. 32:4).
 - Love: He is perfect in His compassionate care and affectionate treatment of all His creations (1 Jn. 4:16).
 - Mercy: He shows compassion when He could judge and punish (Ps. 145:9; Eph. 2:4).
 - Righteousness: He is completely morally upright in all his ways (Ps. 145:17).

The Works of God

Creation

I believe that God created the earth in six literal days (Gen. 1). The creation narrative presents the beginning of all things by the miraculous utterance of God, speaking all things into existence. He created all things *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and without using evolution as commonly believed by many Christians and non-Christians. His role as the creator grants Him ownership over all His works (Col. 1:16; Deut. 10:14). There is nothing that is outside of His authority and control since He is the life-giver, initiator, and sustainer (Ps. 24:1). I believe that the works of God in creation show forth His handiwork and divine control over His universe (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 8:28).

Preservation and Providence

I believe that God actively preserves all that exists (Heb. 1:3). He is especially active in preserving His Word and the truth it contains (Is. 40:8; Mt. 24:35). His preservation is exercised through His providential control over the greatest as well as the smallest (Dan. 4:35). He performs miracles that display His divine right to alter the established laws of nature (Ps. 77:14). He is aware and sovereign over the workings of the created order as well as all His creatures (Mt. 10:29; Amos 5:8; Job 38–41). Nothing happens apart from His divine prerogative in allowing it (Pro. 16:33). God's providence extends to His control over the workings of mankind and all human governments and authorities (Ps. 2; Rom. 13:1; Dan. 4:17). He does not cause sin or wickedness; but He does allow humans the choice to do right or wrong, and He allows Satan and his demons to tempt humans with wickedness (Jas. 1:13; Job 1:12; Lk. 10:17; Deut. 30:15–20).

Christology: The Doctrine of Jesus Christ

The Person of Christ

His Deity

I believe that Jesus is God. He is not just God-like but is himself God incarnate (Phil. 2:6; Jn. 1:1). Jesus tells people that He is God (Heb. 1:8; Jn. 5:18; 8:58). Other people in Scripture refer to Jesus as being God (Jn. 8:48; 20:28; Is. 9:6; Titus 2:13). We are told Jesus is the true God and eternal life (1 Jn. 5:20). Scripture shows us that Jesus possesses the same divine attributes as God, such as eternality, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability (Is. 9:6; Rev. 1:8; Heb. 1:3, 12; 13:8; Is. 44:6; Mt. 28:20; 18:20; Jn. 2:25; 14:23; 21:17; Phil. 3:21). Jesus also performs divine actions. He is the creator, sustainer, and sovereign over all (Jn. 1:3; Heb. 1:10; Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:3; Acts 4:10–12; Joel 2:32). Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, equal with God the Father and the Holy Spirit, though distinct in His person (1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 13:14). Jesus exists as one person with both a divine and a human nature.

His Humanity

I believe that Jesus is God come in human flesh (Jn. 1:14). I believe that as God incarnate, Jesus was born of a virgin (Is. 7:14; Lk. 1:34–35). He fulfills the prophecies regarding His birth in Bethlehem and being a Nazarene (Mic. 5:2; Mt. 2:23). As the God-man, Jesus is perfectly God while being completely human as well (Col. 2:9; Jn. 1:1; 1:14). He is the descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and has a clearly documented ancestral lineage (Gen. 12:3, 17:19; Num. 24:17; Mt. 1:1–17; Lk. 3:23–38). He took on a human body and had a natural birth (Phil.

2:7; Acts 2:22; Gal. 4:4; Mt. 1:18). He went through human development (Lk. 2:52). He physically died (Mt. 27:26, 30, 35; Mark 15:37, 44). He displays human desires and emotions (Jn. 13:21, 23; 17:3; Mark 3:4–5; 8:2, 10:14; Heb. 12:2; Mt. 26:37–38). As fully human, Jesus experienced pain, discomfort, hunger, thirst, and all the normal feelings and experiences that come with being a human and possessing a human body (Jn. 11:35; 19:28; Mt. 4:2; 8:24). I believe that Jesus lived a perfect life on this earth (Heb. 2:18; 4:15; 1 Cor. 10:13). Although He was completely human, He did not possess a sin nature (1 Jn. 3:5). I believe that Jesus was impeccable, which means that although He was tempted in every way like we have been, He was unable to sin since that would contradict His nature and who He is (Heb. 4:15; Jas. 1:13; 1 Pet. 2:22; Mt. 5:48).

The Work of Christ

I believe that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah (Jn. 4:25–26). As the Messiah, He is the mediator between God and humanity (1 Tit. 2:5). As our mediator, He performs the three offices of being the perfect prophet, priest, and king (Heb. 1:1–3).

Prophet

As the great Prophet, Jesus teaches us the way to a right relationship with God (Jn. 17:3; Rom. 5:8). Jesus refers to Himself as a prophet and as coming from God (Mk. 6:4; Jn. 8:42). He is the Word sent down from the Father, revealing who the Father is (Jn. 1:1–18; Mt. 11:27). God promised through the prophet Moses that He would send a prophet who would teach the ways of God to humanity (Deut. 18:15). He has the words of eternal life by which we can receive salvation (Jn. 6:68; 14:6). Jesus is God with us, proclaiming who God is and what He has done for sinful humanity (Is. 7:14; Jn 3:16; Eph. 1:9).

Priest

As our priest before God, Jesus was the sacrifice that appeased God's wrath (Jn. 3:36). Jesus' perfect life demonstrated His ability not only to take our sin, but to fulfill all righteousness as well (Mt. 3:15). His death on the cross paid the price for our sin as our substitute (Heb. 2:9). He willingly took on the judgment due us when He took our sin on himself and was crushed by God for our sin (Rom. 3:25; 8:32; Is. 53:10). I believe that Jesus died so that we might have life through His name (Jn. 20:31; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 10:10). Jesus' work on the cross was the culmination of His perfect obedience to the Father (Phil. 2:8). I believe that Jesus rose from the dead after three days (Heb. 2:14; Mt. 28:6; Lk. 24:6). I believe that Jesus sits at the right hand of God and will one day judge all peoples (Mark 16:19; Mt. 25:31–33). Jesus is the only one who can be our holy advocate before the Father as a result of His work on our behalf, and He continually intercedes for us before the throne of God even now (1 Jn 2:1; Heb. 7:25).

King

Jesus fulfills the Abrahamic covenant as the promised blessing to all people (Gen. 12:3). Jesus fulfills the Davidic covenant as the eternal king from the line of David (2 Sam. 7:13; Lk. 1:32; Is. 9:7). He was the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah to earth (Mt. 3:3). Jesus is the righteous king who will one day return to establish righteousness on the earth (Rev. 17:14; Ps. 96:13). Only those who submit to His lordship and kingship are able to obtain His promise of eternal life (Jn. 18:37).

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Person of the Holy Spirit

I believe the Holy Spirit is a divine person and not just an impersonal force (Jn. 14:26). I believe the Holy Spirit is deity and one with both the Father and the Son (Mt. 28:19). The Holy Spirit's titles confirm His deity. He is called the "Spirit of God," the "Holy Spirit," and the "Spirit of Jesus" (1 Cor. 2:11; 3:16; 6:19; Rom. 8:9–11). The Spirit is equated with God when Paul tells Ananias that when he lied against God, he was lying against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3–4). I believe the Holy Spirit has a mind and an intellect (Rom. 8:27). We are told that the Spirit is able to search and examine things, thereby showing that He has cognitive abilities (1 Cor. 2:10; Jn. 5:39). He is able to be grieved, blasphemed, lied to, resisted, and tested (Eph. 4:30; Mt. 12:31–32; Acts 5:3; 7:51; 1 Jn. 4:1).

The Work of the Holy Spirit

As the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit performs actions that are always in keeping with the work of the Father and Son (Jn. 14:26). I believe the Holy Spirit was active in creation. The Spirit is seen moving over the face of the water as God is creating the world (Gen. 1:2). I believe the authors of Scripture wrote as they were led by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20–21). The apostles' words were taught by the Holy Spirit specifically, not as a result of man's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:13). I believe that Jesus himself was filled with the Spirit and was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Spirit (Lk. 1:35; 4:1). I believe the Holy Spirit is responsible for the regeneration and renewal of the believer (Tit. 3:5; Jn 3:5–8). He is the one who convicts sinners and brings them to the point of salvation (Jn. 16:8). I believe that Christ "baptizes" the believer into His body by the Holy Spirit at conversion, thereby unifying the believer with Himself and fellow believers (Mt. 3:11; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; Eph. 4:4–6). The Spirit uses the Word of God to work in the hearts of both believers and unbelievers (1 Pet. 1:23). He teaches, helps, instructs, convicts, comforts, intercedes, and commands (Jn. 14:16, 26; 16:8, 13; Rom. 8:26–27; Acts 8:29). I believe the Holy Spirit is active in sanctifying us as believers and gives us the strength to become more like Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2). We are being made to be more and more like Christ each day by the Holy Spirit's work in our lives (Heb. 10:14–15). We put to death the old man through the work of the Spirit and walk worthy of the Lord through the Spirit's enablement (Gal. 5:24–25; Eph. 4:1). The Spirit is responsible for giving us His "fruit" as we walk in step with His guidance (Gal. 5:16, 22–25). We are now unified in One Spirit as the body of Christ since we each have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit inside of us (Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit fills believers as they take in the Word of God and let the Spirit use it to influence and control them (Eph. 5:18). I believe the Holy Spirit gives gifts to the saints. The Spirit distributes gifts to believers for the edification of the body and in the service of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:10–11; Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:11–12). I believe that what are often claimed to be the manifestations of the sign gifts (i.e., prophecy, healing, tongues, miracles) have ceased (1 Cor. 12:7–10; 14:6–12).

Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels

Good Angels

I believe that before the creation of the world, God created angelic beings to perform His bidding and worship Him (Col. 1:16; Ps. 91:11; 103:20). Angels have performed many different roles

throughout human history. God has used angels in the past as his messengers to mankind, guardians and protectors of His servants, instruments of judgment on sinners, worshippers on earth and before the throne of God, and combatants against Satan and the demonic forces (Ps. 34:7; Ex. 23:20; Dan. 6:22; Lk. 4:10; Jude 1:9; Rev. 4:8; 19:10) Angels were active in ministering to Jesus, testifying of his resurrection, and present at his ascension (Mt. 4:11; 28:5–6; Acts 1:10–11). There are many angels; however, only two are referenced by name in Scripture (besides Lucifer), Gabriel and Michael (Lk. 1:26; Jude 1:9).

Fallen Angels

I believe that demons are fallen angels that chose to follow Lucifer (i.e., Satan) in his rebellion against God (Rev. 12:3, 9). Demons are the servants of Satan who carry out all kinds of wicked acts, such as possessing certain unbelievers, deceiving people, teaching doctrines contrary to God, physically oppressing people, and fighting against God's children (Mt. 12:22, 43–45; 1 Tim. 4:1; Eph. 6:12). Satan and the demons are only able to act under the ultimate authority of God who has allowed them for a time to roam about the earth (Job 1:7, 12; 2:2, 6; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Jn. 4:4; Lk. 10:17). These demons will share in Satan's punishment for eternity due to their revolt against God (2 Pet. 2:4; Mt. 9:29; Jude 6; Rev. 20:10).

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man

The Origin of Man

I believe that man was created by God in the garden of Eden (Gen. 1:26–27; Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3; Gen. 2:7). I believe that man was created directly and immediately by the word of God (Eph. 2:10; Mt. 19:4; Ps. 33:6; Heb. 11:3). The human body itself was created by God, not by the process of evolution (Ps. 139:13–14). Adam was created from dust and the breath of God, and Eve was created by God out of Adam's rib (Gen. 2:7, 21–22). I believe that God is the author of every human life, starting at conception (Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:44; Ps. 139:13–16).

The Nature of Man

I believe that humans were created in the image of God with the ability to possess certain communicable attributes of God (Gen. 1:27; 1 Cor. 11:7, *see Theology Proper*). I believe that man is made up of both a soul and a body (Mt. 10:28; Jas. 2:26). God has given man both a physical and a spiritual existence whereby he can live and interact with the things in this world as well as outside this world (1 Cor. 2:14–15; 6:19–20). Included in the immaterial part of humans are the mind, will, conscience, and flesh (Rom. 2:15; 8:5; Heb. 10:22; Jas. 4:7). I believe that God distinctly created humans to be one of two sexes, either male or female (Gen. 5:2; Mt. 19:4). Males and females are distinct from one another in their physical makeup and their roles; yet they are of the same flesh and blood and are of equal worth in God's eyes (Gen. 2:23; Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 11:3). I believe that God created marriage to be the joining of one male and one female for life in a covenant together (Eph. 5:22–32). The marriage covenant is meant to be a picture of the union between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22–32). God perfectly designed marriage to include sexual intimacy and the joining together into one body the husband and the wife (Gen. 2:24). Any other sexual intimacy outside of marriage is a direct violation of God's law (Ex. 20:14; Heb. 13:4). Scripture teaches that marriage is meant to last until the death of either of the spouses (1 Cor. 7:39). Divorce, therefore, goes against God's design for marriage

(Mt. 19:8). I believe that if a spouse divorces and gets remarried, they are committing adultery except for potentially in cases involving moral unfaithfulness (Lk. 16:18). It may be that the exception clause given in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 leaves the door open for the divorce and remarriage of a spouse if they are on the innocent end of sexual unfaithfulness. Even in such cases, divorce is a last resort since God's desire is for the reconciliation of married couples and never for divorce to occur (1 Cor. 7:12–16). In my view, a divorced and remarried man would not meet the qualifications of an elder/pastor being a one–woman–man, but he would be encouraged to serve in the church and exercise his spiritual gifts in other areas (1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). I believe that God has given to mankind clear tasks while living on this earth. We are, first and foremost, to glorify God with every part of our being (Mk. 12:20; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11). We are to have dominion over the earth that God has created and steward it well (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15). We are to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). Ultimately, we will present ourselves before the Lord in heaven as servants who were either faithful or unfaithful to Him (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rom. 14:12; Mt. 25:21).

The Fall of Man

I believe that in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve transgressed God's law and fell into sin (Gen. 3:6). The fall of man has corrupted man's once perfect nature and plunged our race into total rebellion against God (Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Eph. 2:1–3). Because of that corruption, humans are unable to truly honor God or do right apart from His transforming work of grace (Rom. 3:10–12). As a result of the fall, sin was imputed to every human being and every human became deserving of death (Rom. 3:23; 5:12). Every human is born with a sin nature and a desire to break God's law (Ps. 51:5). I believe that even after the fall, we continue to possess the image of God although it has been marred by sin (1 Cor. 11:7). Humans are no longer sinless like God and are no longer pure before Him (Gen. 3:7).

Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

The Origin of Human Sinfulness

I believe that man's sin in the garden of Eden has plunged our race into rebellion against God (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 5:12). As a result of Adam's sin, sin has been imputed to the whole human race so that we are all condemned before God and guilty of punishment (Rom. 5:18–19; Rev. 21:8). We all from birth follow in the same rebellion against God as Adam and are born with a sin nature that is devoid of any spiritual life (Ps. 51:5; 1 Jn. 1:8). Scripture teaches the universality of sin and our moral corruption. There are none righteous before God (Rom. 3:10). We are all deserving of God's righteous judgment and punishment for our rebellion and disobedience by spending eternity in hell (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:15). Scripture teaches that our iniquities and transgressions are ultimately and primarily committed against God himself (Rom. 1:19–21; 1 Cor. 10:31; Gen. 39:9; Acts 5:4). This is the primary problem with sin since we were created by God to worship and obey Him (Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11). I believe that the presence of pain, suffering, and death in our world can be traced back to man's sin and rejection of God's rule (Gen. 3:16–19; Rom. 5:17; 1 Cor. 11:30).

The Nature of Sin

I believe that sin is any word, thought, or action that “misses the mark” of adherence to God’s law and His perfect holiness (Rom. 3:23). Sin is not simply making a mistake or messing up; it is direct rebellion against the Lordship of Christ and a rejection of God’s established Word (Lk. 6:46; 1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is also not just the commission of unrighteous acts, but also the omission of righteous acts that are commanded in Scripture (Jas. 4:17). Sin is the product of temptation that has been yielded to by the flesh (Jas. 1:14–15). I believe sin separates us from God (Is. 59:2). God cannot allow sin into His presence which means that we are completely cut off from him due to our culpability (Ps. 5:4; 37:9). His eyes are too pure “to behold evil,” meaning He cannot commit evil or condone any wickedness at all (Hab. 1:13). Even our supposedly good deeds are called “filthy rags” due to the permeation of sin in everything we do and our inability to earn merit before God through self-initiated acts (Is. 64:6). I believe in the total depravity of man. Total depravity does not mean that we always choose to do the worst thing possible, but that as humans every part of our being is affected by sin and incapable of truly honoring God (Rom. 7:18; Eph. 2:1–3; Jer. 17:9; Gen. 6:5). As totally depraved sinners, we cannot come before God with any righteousness of our own (Tit. 3:5). The Bible teaches that apart from Christ, we are dead in our sins and slaves to iniquity (Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:1; Rom. 6:6, 16).

Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

I believe that the central message of the Bible revolves around the life and ministry of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7–10; Gal. 4:4–5). At the climax of Jesus’ work on this earth is His death in our place, resurrection from the grave, and His offer of salvation from sin which gives us everlasting life with Him in heaven (Acts 4:11–12; Jn. 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:3). The doctrine of salvation, therefore, is key to understanding God’s plan for fallen mankind and His solution to our problem of sin. There are various terms used to describe the process by which God chooses and saves sinners and what that salvation entails for us as humans.

Election

I believe that the order of God’s salvation is as follows: foreknowledge, then predestination, then calling (Rom. 8:29). I believe that God foreknew before the foundation of the world those whom he would save and who are the elect (Rom. 8:29; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jn. 6:37, 44; Mk. 13:20). The elect are those individuals whom God predestined would receive His call of salvation and would respond with genuine repentance and faith in Christ (Rom. 8:30; Jn. 15:16; Eph. 1:4–5). At the moment of repentance and faith, a believer is justified by God to be later glorified in heaven. I believe, therefore, that all believers are a part of God’s elect and necessary recipients of his salvation (Eph. 2:4–9). I believe that a person who is called by God must respond to that call in order for conversion to occur (Acts 2:38). The doctrines of God’s sovereignty and man’s free will go hand in hand in salvation so that they are inextricably intertwined (Jn. 5:40; 6:65; 15:16; Rom. 10:9). It would be a mistake to hold to one while rejecting the other, even though we cannot completely comprehend the inner workings of these doctrines. I believe that a person must repent of his sin and believe in the salvific work of Christ in order to be saved (Mt. 3:2; Acts 3:19; 17:30; Rom. 10:9–10).

Salvation and Justification

I believe that a sinner is saved by God when he truly repents of his sin and puts his faith in the work of Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:15; Mt. 4:17; Acts 3:19; Rom. 3:22; 10:9–10). God’s promise to all who turn to Him in repentance and faith is complete forgiveness of sin due to the mediatorial work of Christ and His death in our place (Acts 4:12; Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:8). This work of God is called regeneration: the Holy Spirit grants new life to a spiritually dead sinner, transforming him completely in the inner man (Tit. 3:5; Ez. 36:26; 2 Cor. 5:17; Acts 2:38). The Bible describes salvation as being “born again” to new life in Christ (Jn. 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23). I believe at the moment of conversion the sinner is justified before God, and therefore, able to stand before him without guilt due to Christ’s work on his behalf (Rom. 5:1; 8:33–34; Tit. 3:7). Justification is not something that continues over a period of time but is God’s once-for-all declaration that a sinner is righteous (Rom. 3:26). Furthermore, justification cannot be earned but is a free gift of God (Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8–9). I believe that God’s grace must be active in a person’s life if he is going to come to salvation (Tit. 2:11; Jn. 1:16; Eph. 2:8). I believe that Christ vicariously atoned for the sin of mankind by taking our sin on himself and dying on the cross in our place (2 Cor. 5:20–21; Heb. 9:22). Without the substitutionary death of Christ for us, we would have no hope of salvation or reconciliation (Heb. 9:14; Jn. 1:29). I believe that regeneration occurs when God imparts new life into an individual who is dead in his sins (Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:13). The Bible also speaks of salvation as redemption: being bought back from the slave market of sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14).

Sanctification and Glorification

I believe that as believers we are daily being sanctified by the work of Christ in our lives (Jn. 17:17; Heb. 13:12). There are two types of sanctification: positional and progressive. Positional sanctification takes place at conversion, when God sanctifies us completely so that our position before Him is no longer as slaves to sin but as slaves to righteousness (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 6:6–7). Progressive sanctification is an ongoing process whereby God makes us more and more like Christ as we yield to His Spirit’s control (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; Gal. 5:16). We are continually being changed into the image of Christ as we daily seek Him and rely on the transforming work of His Spirit through the Word (2 Cor. 3:18; Mt. 6:33). I believe that every believer will be glorified with Christ when He calls us home to glory with him (Col. 3:4; Phil. 3:20–21). Once glorified, we will be with the Lord forever, praising and worshiping Him for eternity (Rev. 5:11–13).

Union with Christ

I believe that every true believer is united with Christ in an inseparable bond (Jn. 15:5; Eph. 4:4–5; Rom. 6:3–6). Our union with Christ enables us to live according to the new man which is in Christ, putting to death the things of the flesh (Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 5:17). I believe that we are born into God’s family at salvation (Jn. 1:12–13; 1 Jn. 5:4). I believe that this adoption makes us joint heirs with Christ in heaven as children and sons of God where we will dwell with Christ forever (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:5). I believe that through Christ, we can have a renewed fellowship and relationship with God (Is. 57:15; 1 Tim. 2:5). Just as Adam’s sin plunged us all into enmity with God, so through Christ’s sacrifice we all can be restored to fellowship with God (1 Pet. 3:18). Since Christ has already paid the price, I believe that the offer of salvation has been extended to the whole world through Him (2 Cor. 5:14–15; Jn. 3:16).

Eternal Security

I believe that those whom Jesus has saved He will keep until He takes them to heaven (Phil.1:6). Our relationship with Christ cannot be taken away from us or lost since He himself has guaranteed our eternal security and has promised that nothing can take a believer out of His loving hand (Jn. 6:37; 10:28; 1 Jn. 2:19). If salvation were able to be lost, then it would not be given on the basis of faith alone through Christ alone (Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). These facts should give great assurance to every believer who has genuinely repented of their sin and put their faith in the salvific work of Christ alone (Jn. 5:24; 1 Jn. 5:11–13). The accompanying fruit in the life of a believer is tangible evidence that there has been an inner heart change affected only by the Spirit of God, but it is not salvation itself (Mt. 7:16; Jas. 2:14–17).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

The Universal Church

I believe the universal church is the complete body of Christ on earth in every continent and country (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 5:23). This body is made up of every truly born-again believer who is now a part of the church of Christ (Eph. 2:19). Therefore, we have a command from God to be unified as brothers and sisters in Christ with all believers (Eph. 4:3; Acts 9:31). There is a unity that we experience as Christians since we are all unified under the shed blood of Christ and His atonement for the sins of the world (Eph. 5:25; Gal. 3:28). Christ promised that He would build this universal church and that He would protect it from every onslaught of the devil (Mt. 16:18).

The Local Church

I believe that God establishes local “assemblies” of believers in order to carry out God’s purpose of reaching the lost and growing together into Christlikeness. I believe that Christ works through individual bodies of believers scattered across the world to accomplish his will in specific locales (Acts 14:23; Gal. 1:2; 2 Cor. 8:1). The local church’s purpose is to edify the believers and worship God in everything it does and follow the example given to us by the churches in the New Testament (Eph. 4:11–16). As a body, we are each responsible to build up the believers around us and to encourage them in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:11). The local church is vital in the role of evangelizing the lost as it is the agent by which Christ expands His kingdom on this earth (Acts 13:1–3). We are responsible to reach the community around us through Christ and add them to our assembly so that we can further disciple them (Mt. 28:19–20).

Church Leadership

I believe that the head of the church is Jesus Christ himself (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). I believe that underneath Christ’s headship, the Lord raises up qualified men to lead and serve the church body (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Tit. 1:5–9). The two offices in the church are that of elder/pastor and deacon. The early church in Acts and in the New Testament epistles sets the example for some of the activities of the church leadership (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Tit.1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1; Jas. 5:1). I believe that specific elders/pastors are gifted and set aside for the ministry of preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor. 9:14; Jas. 3:1). Although Scripture speaks clearly of a plurality of elders/pastors who help lead the church, the ultimate governance of the church should be the assembly as a whole (Acts 6:3; 15:22; Mt. 18:17).

Church Membership

I believe that believers are called to commit themselves to a local church for the purposes of mutual edification, accountability, the use of their Spiritual gifts, and as an act of their submission to their God-given authority (1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Jas. 5:16; Rom. 12:6; 1 Pet. 4:10; Heb. 13:7, 17). A church is to be a unified body serving together under the headship of Christ. This unity necessitates a commitment to Christ and to each other that is humanly impossible and self-sacrificing to the extreme (Eph. 4:3; Phil. 2:2; Rom. 12:4–5; Mt. 7:12; 23:11; Acts 2:44–45).

Church Discipline

I believe the church is responsible to discipline wayward, unrepentant believers after following the teaching of Matthew 18:15–17. The church should not be complacent with wrongdoing and allow sin to dwell in the church (1 Cor. 5:2, 11). The goal of church discipline is the restoration of the brother and reinstatement back into the church (2 Cor. 2:6; Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19–20). The discipline should never be done in anger or revenge but in love and holy sincerity (Gal. 6:1).

Church Ordinances

Baptism

I believe that believer's baptism is commanded in Scripture and is one of two church ordinances. The early church practiced baptism and the public identification of a new believer with Christ (Acts 2:41; 8:38). This act of symbolism does not save a sinner but is a visible representation of being buried with Christ in His death and raised again to new life (Rom. 6:3–4; 1 Pet. 3:21). Baptism is a key part of the great commission (Mt. 28:19–20).

The Lord's Supper

I believe the Lord's Supper is the second church ordinance that should be practiced by every local body of believers. Christ commanded that we observe this ordinance until His second coming (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 10:16). It is a visible reminder of the work of Christ on the cross as He shed His blood and gave His body to save us from our sin (1 Cor. 11:25; Mt. 26:26–29). The Lord's Supper is not the literal flesh and blood of Jesus but a symbolic testimony of our remembrance of Christ's sacrifice (1 Cor. 11:26). We remember Christ's work on the cross and His substitutionary death as we partake of the elements as a unified body (2 Cor. 5:21).

Images of the Church

I believe that the various images used to describe the church in the Bible serve to convey its function and nature. The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22–23; 1 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 12:4–5). We are unified in the body under the head which is Christ (Col. 1:18). Christ is the bride of the church (Eph. 5:23). This shows the extent of His love for us in the most precious of human relationships. The church is described as a building with Christ as the cornerstone on which it is built (Eph. 2:20; Ps. 118:2; Lk. 20:17; 1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is our shepherd, and we are the sheep of his flock (Ps. 23; Jn. 10:16). The members of the church are described in familial terms such as brother and sister (Heb. 13:1; Jas. 4:11; Mk. 3:35; 1 Cor. 11:33). Each of these images shows our union with Christ from a different perspective, and they highlight the type of relationship we have with him which can never be broken.

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the End Times

I believe that the end times are really just the beginning as they usher in the rest of eternity (Mt. 25:46). I believe that every human will die except for those who are taken up by the rapture (Eccl. 9:5). Death is the inevitable fate of every person due to the sin of Adam (Gen. 2:17; 3:19). Apart from those who accept Christ's offer of forgiveness, every sinner will experience the just punishment of God in the lake of fire for eternity (Rom. 6:23).

I believe in the pretribulational rapture of the church and premillennial return of Christ to the earth.

- I believe that the coming of Christ is imminent and will happen when He calls believers to be with himself at the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16–17; 5:1–9; 1 Pet. 4:7).
- I believe that the rapture will signal the beginning of the tribulation (Mt. 24:21; Rev. 3:10). This event will last for seven years and will be a time of God's wrath being poured out on the earth (1 Thess. 1:10). At some point during the tribulation, believers will stand at the judgment seat of Christ where they will receive the rewards for their labors (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). This will not be a judgment of condemnation but one of acts of service or the lack thereof (some will receive great rewards, while others will receive only a little).
- I believe that at the end of the tribulation Christ will return to reign for a thousand years on the earth (Rev. 20). In this period, believers from all the ages will reign with Christ while Satan is bound in the pit (Rev. 20:1–6).
- I believe that once the thousand years are over, Satan will lead a last rebellion (Rev. 20:7–10). Christ will triumph over Satan's forces and throw Satan into the lake of fire for all of eternity.
- I believe that following Christ's victory, all unbelievers will stand before the great white throne judgment of Christ where they will be condemned for their sin (Rev. 20:11–15). Whoever's name is not written in Christ's book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire with Satan.

I believe that God has not abandoned His chosen people Israel (Gen. 17:4–8). God has promised a future for His people and that there will be a day when they repent and turn back to Him (Rom. 11:1, 26–27; Deut. 30:3; Zech. 12:10; Jer. 33:8).

I believe that every human will continue to live somewhere forever after death. The human soul is immortal and, therefore, will never cease to exist but will continue on forever (Dan. 12:2; 1 Cor. 15:53). Scripture is clear that there are only two eternal destinations for humans.

- I believe that all believers in Jesus will spend eternity in heaven with him (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; Rom. 6:23). Immediately after death, believers are present with the Lord in heaven (Lk. 23:43). Those who are dead in Christ will be united with their bodies at the rapture when Christ comes for His church (1 Thess. 4:16). Heaven will be the perfect dwelling place of all the redeemed saints who will praise God for eternity (Rev. 1:6, 21:4).
- I believe that all those who reject Christ's offer of salvation will spend eternity in the lake of fire together with Satan and the demons (Rev. 20:10; Mt. 25:41). This is a place of eternal torment and punishment for rejection of God (2 Thess. 1:9; Mk. 9:43).