

Statement of Faith – Andrew Minnick – June 2025

Conversion: When I was four years old my older brother challenged me to come to Christ (he had recently trusted Christ himself). I approached my mother who explained the gospel, and I remember praying to trust Christ for salvation. Because I was so young, I don't remember much of the incident, but since that day my faith has been in Christ alone for salvation. Over the years I have seen God's Spirit (Gal. 5) and God's parenting hand (Heb. 12) at work in my life.

Ministry Calling: As far back as I can remember I desired to preach God's Word. I remember at age twelve telling my father of this desire, and so throughout high school he gave me many opportunities to preach in the church, and the Lord blessed that ministry and so confirmed that giftedness and calling. When I was in mid-high school, a camp preacher was exhorting the men who were sensing God's calling to vocational preaching ministry but had not settled the issue, and that night I prayed with my father to commit my life to the gospel ministry. This burden to preach God's Word during those years was bound up together with a burden for missions in obedience to the Great Commission.

Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

The Existence of God: The greatest question is the existence of God, and God testifies to His eternal existence in Scripture as its fundamental truth (Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1; Heb. 1:1). That "He is," therefore, is something we "must believe": here is the foundational element of saving faith—accepting the truthfulness of God's testimony about Himself (Heb. 11:6). The universal sufficiency of God's self-revelation of His existence—not only in His written Word (Gen. 1:1), but also in creation (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20), in man's conscience (Rom. 1:32; 2:14–15), in Christ (Jn. 1:9), etc.—demonstrates that atheism is not fundamentally an intellectual choice of one unconvinced but rather a moral choice of one bent to sin (Ps. 14:1): the sinner is not rejecting impersonal evidence but is refusing to accept the truthfulness of God's personal testimony that He exists—refusing to believe God (Ps. 10:4; Rom. 1:18), which is the foundational element of sin (Gen. 3:1–5; Jn. 16:8–9; Heb. 3:12). God's self-revelation, however, is truthful because it is always consistent with Who He is (Ex. 3:14; 2 Tim. 2:13); the foundation of the veracity of God's self-revelation is the very character of God (Num. 23:19; Tit. 2:2; Heb. 6:13–19). Truly as Pilgrim said to Pliable (specifically about Scripture), we know that God's revelation is "certainly true" because "it was made by Him Who cannot lie." Thus, although evidential arguments—cosmological (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:20), teleological (Ps. 8:1–4; Acts 14:17), moral (Ps. 97:6–7; Rom. 1:32; 2:14–15), and transcendental (Prov. 1:7)—do point people to ways God has revealed Himself, argument itself will never be the cause of faith in God, for faith is the gift of God's Spirit (Deut. 29:4; 2 Cor. 2:14; 4:6; Eph. 2:8–9). This truth is actually the foundation of my understanding of all ministry: all sin is refusal to believe God's revelation, and God's Spirit alone can and must work faith in hearts.

The second greatest question is whether God can be known, and here again, God calls us to faith—the second foundational element of saving faith—in His promissory word that He will reward the genuine seeker with a knowing relationship with Himself (Heb. 11:6; cf. Prov. 8:17; Jn. 17:3). Once again, this is God's work of grace to move us to seek Him because fallen men do not naturally do so (Rom. 3:11; 1 Jn. 4:19).

The Works of God in Self-Revelation: God's self-revelation was not merely a reaction to the problem of sin but rather is inherent in the nature of God, for God has been revealing Himself by speech and action from the very beginning. Every one of God's works reveals Him and thus commands our praise (Ps. 111:2–3; 145:10), for His works are always finally for the purpose of His own glory (Rom. 11:36).

Theologians divide general revelation—given to all human beings and revealing God generally—from special revelation—given to a specific audience and revealing God more fully.

General Revelation: First, God has revealed Himself to all in creation (Ps. 8; 19:1–6; 33:6; 104; Rom. 1:18–20) for His glory (Ps. 8; Is. 43:7; Rev. 4:11). The Father (1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), the Son (Jn. 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2), and the Spirit (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30) worked together (Gen. 1:26) to create the universe in six literal, twenty-four-hour days (Gen. 1:31–2:3; Ex. 20:11) approximately six-to-ten thousand years ago. God brought the entire universe into being *ex nihilo* (Jn. 1:3; Rom. 4:17; Heb. 11:3) immediately/directly by nothing but His word (“and God said” 10x in Gen. 1; Ps. 33:6–9; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 11:3; 2 Pet. 3:5), not by a process of naturalistic evolution. Several textual points of God’s testimony (the only eyewitness one: Jn. 1:1) further preclude attempts to integrate this secular theory into the Biblical record—the gap theory, progressive creationism, and theistic evolution. First, Paul builds critical theology on the literal historicity of a single, first man named Adam (Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22, 45–49). Second, creation was made good (Gen. 1:31) without death until after the fall (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:56). Third, God created all life to reproduce “after its kind” (Gen. 1:11, 24).

Second, God has revealed Himself in His subsequent sustaining of creation (Ps. 145:15–16; Neh. 9:6; Lk. 12:24–28; Acts 14:16–17; 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3) and providential administration of all things for His purposes to His decreed end (Ex. 9:16; Ps. 135:6–7; Prov. 16:1, 4, 9, 33; Is. 37:20; Dan. 4:35; Mt. 5:45; 17:26–28; Acts 4:27–28; Eph. 1:11). Nothing is outside the sovereign providence of God—not calamity (Is. 45:7; Amos 3:6), human rulers (Dan. 4:25; Ps. 75:6–7; Prov. 21:1; Rom. 13:1), evil spirits (Job 1:12; Lk. 8:32), world events (2 Kings 5:1; Is. 45:7), our lives (Job 23:14; Mt. 10:30), nor all human actions (Prov. 16:9, 33), even sinful ones (1 Sam. 2:25; Judg. 14:4; Acts 4:27–28). God always achieves His purposes (Dan. 4:35). God’s providence includes when the world is functioning with apparent normalcy (according to the laws of nature; Ps. 135:6–7; Lk. 12:24; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 1:3) and when things happen by apparent chance (Prov. 16:33). It also includes God’s occasionally doing miracles (Ex. 15:11; Josh. 10:13; Dan. 3:27)—God’s temporary suspension of the normal processes He built into the universe—for the purpose that men would know (Ex. 9:14) and glorify God (Ex. 9:16; 15:11; Jn. 2:11; 20:30–31), and often to certify new revelation (Deut. 34:10–12; 1 Kings 17:23–24; Jn. 14:11; Acts 2:22, 32; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). Scripture denies three apparently logical deductions from the doctrine of God’s absolute sovereignty, in each case instead calling us to believe despite a theological tension. First, God often works through means (e.g., faith), for He controls both the means and the ends (2 Thes. 2:13). As one of these means, prayer is not superfluous but rather is commanded by God (Mt. 7:7) and answered by God to accomplish His purposes (Jas. 5:16) for His glory (Jn. 14:13–14). Second, God is not the author of evil (Hab. 1:13; Jas. 1:13–14; 1 Jn. 1:5), though His sovereign plan does include the existence of evil, which He can use as a means for His glory (Gen. 50:20; Ex. 14:8; Rom. 5:20; 9:17, 22–23; Eph. 1:11). Third, although God is in ultimate control of all that men choose (Prov. 16:9; 20:24; Jer. 10:23; Acts 2:23a; 4:27–28; Eph. 2:10), man is responsible for his choices (Deut. 30:19; Lk. 13:3; Acts 2:23b; Rev. 3:20): man’s choice either to believe and thus live by God’s words or to reject and disobey is authentic (Deut. 28; Mt. 23:37). God uses those choices, both bad (Mk. 15:15; Acts 2:23) and good (Is. 44:28; 45:1), as a means to accomplish His purposes (Gen. 50:20; Phil. 1:12–13). In all this, God is entirely just (Rom. 9:14, 19–20).

Third, as the image of God, man himself reveals the God He images (Gen. 1:26–28; Gen. 5:1–3; Rom. 1:19a): seeing in ourselves special qualities—being creative and relational, enjoying what is good and beautiful, being condemned by a moral conscience, etc.—and seeing their ubiquitous presence in the human race reveal a Creator who made us like Himself.

God’s self-revealing acts of creation and providence call us to worship (Ps. 95:1–6; 148) by universally revealing to us His glory (Ps. 8; 19:1–6), including His existence and power (Rom. 1:19–20), uniqueness/holiness (Jer. 10:11; Is. 44:24), authority (Ps. 24; 89:11–12), wisdom (Ps. 104:24; Prov. 3:19; Jer. 51:15), eternity (Rom. 1:20), and goodness (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 119:64; Mt. 5:45; Acts 14:17).

Further, man's moral capacity and conscience reveals that God is moral and that He holds us accountable to His standard/law (Rom. 1:32; 2:14–15). This general revelation is sufficient that the unbeliever will stand before God without excuse, for He has suppressed what God has universally, clearly revealed (Rom. 1:18–20; 2:1–2, 12–16). General revelation is, however, insufficient for men to have redemption from their plight (Rom. 10:18). For this salvation, special revelation about Jesus through the written Word of God is necessary (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 17:24–31; Rom. 10:10–18; 1 Cor. 1:21). Common grace can work in support of special revelation about salvation to move men to repentance (Mt. 5:45; Acts 14:16–17; Rom. 2:4). General revelation is given to move men to seek after God, and when they do, Scripture's pattern is that God will send more light by special revelation (Josh. 2; Acts 10; 17; cf. Prov. 8:17).

Special Revelation: First, before Christ God revealed himself specially “in many times and in many ways” (Heb. 1:1)—audible speech (Gen. 3:9; 1 Kings 19), prophets (“thus saith the Lord”), direct providential or miraculous acts (Ex. 5:2, 6:6–7; 7:5; Ps. 77:14; Mt. 15:31), writing immediately with human form (Ex. 31:18; Dan. 5:5), theophanies/christophanies (Ex. 3:2; Num. 12:6–8), dreams/visions (Gen. 20:3; 1 Kings 3:5), angels (Acts 7:53), and even the mouth of a donkey (Num. 22). Second, in these last (eschatological) days, God has spoken through His Son in the incarnate Word (Heb. 1:2–3). Jesus revealed the Father in His visible incarnate life and teaching (Jn. 1:1, 14–18; 14:7, 9; Col. 1:15) and in the salvation He brought (Ps. 98:2; Rom. 1:17). And as the long-expected Prophet (Deut. 18:15–22; Jn. 7:40), Jesus spoke the Father's words (Jn. 8:28; 12:49; 17:8). Third, when Jesus returned to the Father, the Spirit directed the apostles to inscripturate the Father's revelation through Christ (Jn. 14:23–26; 16:12–15; Heb. 1:1–3; 2:1–4; note the same Father > Son > John (through the Spirit) pattern in Rev. 1:1–2). This written Word is, therefore, the climax of the Father's self-revealing speech through the Son which is the climax of God's self-revelation to mankind (2 Pet. 1:16–19). This climactic speech through the Son in the NT was added to the OT revelation that is also God's self-revealing Word (Ps. 19:7–14), for it was the same Spirit of Christ Who moved the OT writers by the same process to write in expectation of Christ (Lk. 24:27; 1 Pet. 1:10–11).

In conclusion, the foundation of our worldview is the existence of God and His character as a self-revealing God. God is not a failed communicator: He has revealed Himself such that on pain of eternity separated from Him, we must listen to His speech through His Son (Mt. 17:5; Heb. 2:1–3a; 12:25) and His written Word (Heb. 2:3b–4; 2 Pet. 1:19).

The Singleness and Identity of the True God: God has revealed that He is the only true and living God (Deut. 6:4; 32:39; Is. 45:5, 21–22; Jer. 10:10; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; 1 Tim. 2:5), and His self-revelation identifies Him among the many false gods. First, He is the God who created all (Gen. 2:4; Ps. 121:2; Is. 37:16). While other religions and so-called holy writings may describe a god who is creator, Romans 1:18–23 explains they are “suppressing” and “exchanging” the truth of general revelation. Cornelius responding to general revelation in faith and genuinely seeking after God is actually the exception. Therefore, second, God is not a god of the other nations but is the God of Israel Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:13–15). God did not need Israel to invent Him as did the gods of the other nations (Deut. 4:28; Ps. 115:4–8), but rather He is self-existent (Acts 17:24–25) and chose Israel's patriarchs (Deut. 7:7; Is. 41:8–10) and was her Father (Ex. 4:22; Is. 63:16–17). Later God revealed to His people His name, “the Lord” (*Yahweh*), that proclaims His self-existence (Ex. 3:14–15; 6:3). Third, He is the God who has revealed himself redemptively throughout Salvation History in the various forms of special revelation given to Israel (Rom. 9:3–5a), in sending His Son (Rom. 9:5b), and in the Scripture. He is the God who redeems not only Israel but the ends of the earth (Is. 45:20–22).

The Multiple Persons of God: Scripture teaches two additional truths about this one true and living God named “Yahweh.” First, three Persons are each fully God—the Father (Jn. 6:27; Rom. 15:6; 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 1:3); the Son (Jn. 1:1; 5:17–18; 8:58–59; Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:8), and the Spirit (Acts 5:3–4; 1 Cor. 2:11; 3:16; 2 Cor. 3:17)—and so are the same in substance and co-equal in glory. Jesus (Jn. 8:58; 12:37–41; cf. Is. 6:1–4) and the Spirit (Rom. 2:29; cf. Deut. 30:6) are “Yahweh,” and each of the three Persons effected the divine self-revealing acts of creation (1 Cor. 8:6; Gen. 1:2; Jn. 1:3), redemption (Tit. 3:4–6), and authoring Scripture (Acts 3:18; Col. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21). Yet second, these three are distinct Persons. They have personal interactions (Mt. 3:16–17; Jn. 1:1–2; 14:26; Acts 2:33) and interpersonal relationships: the Father is the Father (Jn. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:3) and Sender of the Son (Gal. 4:4; 1 Jn. 4:14) and the Sender of the Spirit (Jn. 14:26; Gal. 4:6). And Scripture emphasizes the work of each Person in not only creation but also the plan of redemption (see the section for each Person below). The voluntary submission of the incarnate Son to the Father (Jn. 5:19; 8:28; 10:36; 14:10; 1 Cor. 15:28; Gal. 4:4) and that of the sent Spirit to both the Father and the Son (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Acts 2:33) are part of the Persons’ works in history—the economic Trinity—though they are eternally equal in Being—the ontological Trinity.

In conclusion, Scripture teaches the doctrine of the Trinity (or more properly, the Tri-unity): the one true and living God exists in three distinct co-equal and co-eternal Persons who each exist in the one divine essence (see the “trinitarian formula” in Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20–21; Rev. 1:4–5). Because each is eternal (Rom. 16:26; Heb. 9:14; 13:8) and because these three have existed in unity and fellowship from all eternity (Jn. 1:1; 1:18; Heb. 9:14), it is not that God occasionally manifests Himself in one of these three Persons; rather each Person has been and will be eternally fully God and yet distinct from the others.

The Perfections of God: God is simple, not segmented, and so His perfections are in perfect union, never conflicting (Ps. 85:10), because they are not merely characteristics that He possesses but are attributes integral to and comprising His entire being (e.g., 1 Jn. 4:8). Each can, therefore, be predicated upon the others. In all of His perfections, God is immutable: He is unchanging and unchangeable in Who and what He is (Ps. 25:6; 102:25–27; Mal. 3:6; Jas. 1:17) and in His ways (1 Sam. 15:29). And yet God does experience emotions (Ex. 32:10; Is. 62:5; Eph. 4:30), respond to people’s actions (Jon. 3:10), and answer prayer (Ex. 32:9–14; Jas. 5:16). As the Creator, God is thrice-holy (Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), that is, He is unique and in another category entirely from His creation. He infinitely transcends and is completely set apart from His creation, not only morally (Is. 6:3–7; Hab. 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:15) but in every way (Ex. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Is. 40:18, 25; 46:9; Jn. 1:3). Because God is Holy, He is glorious (Is. 6:3), a term that means “weighty” and majestic and thus worthy of all fear (Is. 8:13; Rev. 15:4) and praise/worship (Ex. 15:11; 1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 99:3). Therefore, because every other perfection of God is characterized by His holiness—He is unparalleled and perfect in His works (Ps. 145:17), in His righteousness (Is. 5:16), in His mercy (Hos. 11:9), in His power (Ps. 89:8), etc.—each is glorious and worthy of praise (Ex. 15:6; 2 Chron. 20:21; Ps. 7:17; 99:9; 107:8). God is zealous for this glory and worship of which He alone is worthy (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Ps. 19:1; 24:10; Is. 48:11).

God Should Be Praised for His Greatness (1 Chron. 16:25; Ps. 48:1; 145:3): God is independent (aseity): He is self-defining and self-existing (Ex. 3:14; Rev. 1:8), without cause (Jn. 5:26) and without need of sustaining (Job 41:11; Ps. 50:10–12; Acts 17:24–25). God is an incorporeal Spirit (Ex. 20:4; Jn. 4:24): He is invisible (Jn. 1:18; Col. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Jn. 4:12), and His attributes are nonmaterial (Rom. 1:19). Two clarifications are necessary: at times God has manifested His glory visually (Ex. 13:21; 33:20–23; 34:5–6; Lk. 3:22), but in some veiled, non-essential way since man cannot see God’s essence and live (Ex. 33:20; 1 Tim. 6:16); and though He is incorporeal, Scripture describes God bodily because He does things—seeing, hearing, speaking, etc.—for which we need a

body. God is infinite (Job 5:9; 11:7–9): He is eternal in time (Ps. 90:2; 106:48; Is. 44:6; Mic. 5:2; Rom. 16:26; 1 Tim. 1:17) but not bound or measured by it (Ps. 90:4; Is. 46:9–10; 2 Pet. 3:8); omnipresent in the totality of His being in space (Ps. 139:7–12; Jer. 23:23–24) but not bound by or contained in it (1 Kings 8:27); omniscient and all-wise in knowledge (Ps. 147:5; Rom. 11:33) both actual (Ps. 139:2) and possible (2 Kings 13:19; Mt. 11:21–23) and not bound by a decision to not know what men will choose (i.e., open theism; Deut. 31:21; Jn. 6:64); and omnipotent in power (Gen. 17:1; 18:14; Jer. 32:17; Dan. 4:35; Mt. 19:26; Lk. 1:37) but not bound by ability to sin (Jas. 1:13; 1 Jn. 1:5), i.e., to act inconsistent with His own character (2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; also, God cannot act illogically among His perfections within Himself, such as making a rock too big for his power to lift).

God Should Be Praised for His Goodness (Ps. 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 135:3): First, God is morally good—a righteous God. It is not that He conforms to but rather that He is the standard (Deut. 32:4). God’s moral goodness means that He is righteous and just in all His ways (Ps. 145:17). All God’s works are good because God Himself is good (Ps. 119:68), and so God’s self-revelation is a revelation of “all my goodness” (Ex. 33:19). God is holy in His goodness, for “no one is good except God alone” (Lk. 18:19). God is wrathful upon all that is contrary to His righteous nature (Ps. 7:11; Nah. 1:6–7; Rom. 1:18; 3:25; Eph. 5:6; Rev. 20:11–15) and just in His judgment (Gen. 18:25; Ps. 89:14; Zeph. 3:5), faithfully punishing wrongdoing (Ezra 9:15; Dan. 9:7, 14; Rom. 1:18) and rewarding righteousness (1 Kings 8:32; Ps. 58:11). There is no conflict between God’s righteous wrath on sin and His making us righteous; rather God’s wrath on Jesus in our place reveals God’s righteousness (Rom. 1:16; 3:25–26). God’s moral goodness also means that He is truthful in all His words (Jn. 14:6; 1 Jn. 5:20). God cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Rom. 3:4; Tit. 1:2) but rather is always faithful and true to His own character (Ex. 3:14; 2 Tim. 2:13), Word (Ps. 33:4; 138:2) and covenant love (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:22–23). The defining trait of God’s self-revelation is His truthfulness, both in the OT (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 103:8) and in the NT (Jn. 1:14). God’s Words, therefore, are dependable (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:23). Second, God is benevolently good—a God of love (1 Jn. 4:8). God is eternally love (Ps. 25:6; 136; Jer. 31:3; Jn. 17:24; 1 Jn. 4:8), as revealed in sending His Son (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8) and choosing us to be His sons (Eph. 1:4–5). Thus, there is no conflict between God’s love for sinners and God’s just and righteous wrath on sin and the sinner, for the gospel reveals both. And on all men God pours out His common grace (Ps. 145:9; Mt. 5:45), is slow to anger toward the wicked (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 3:8; 103:8; Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9), and delights in repentance (Ezek. 18:23; Neh. 9:17). He is also a God of special grace and rich mercy toward those who embrace Christ (Lk. 1:50; Eph. 2:4).

Bibliology: The Doctrine of Scripture

Inspiration: Scripture is the *theopneustos*—the breathing out, the very speech—of God (2 Tim. 3:16). God spoke, sometimes through dictation (Ex. 34:27; Is. 38:4; Jer. 30:2; Rev. 2:1; 14:13), but most often by supernaturally moving the human authors (2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:15–16) through the natural human processes of research, reason, memory, vocabulary selection, writing style, etc. (Dan. 12:8; Lk. 1:1–3; 1 Cor. 1:14–16; 2 Cor. 10:10–11; 1 Pet. 1:10–11), so that the end product is the very speech of God (2 Sam. 23:1–3; Mt. 1:22; 2:15; 15:4 [cf. Mk. 7:10]; 22:31; Lk. 11:49; Acts 1:16; 4:24–25; 13:22–25, 32; 28:25; Rom. 9:25; 1 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 5:5–6; 1 Pet. 1:11). Inspiration is propositional: the words of Scripture are always God’s words; they do not merely become God’s words existentially at times as taught by Neo-Orthodoxy (1 Thes. 2:13). Inspiration is plenary: Scripture is the speech of God in its entirety (Prov. 30:5; 2 Tim. 3:16). Inspiration is verbal: Scripture does not merely record God’s thoughts conceptually but rather is God’s very words down to each individual word form (Mt. 22:31–32; Gal. 3:16) and stroke of the pen (Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17). God’s word is thus inerrant (Ps. 12:6; 19:7–9; Prov. 30:5; Mt. 5:18; Jn. 17:17; Rev. 22:6) because God cannot speak dishonestly (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18) and never has need to repent of mistaken speech (Num. 23:19). Inerrancy extends to not only theology but all matters including science and history (Jesus took these narratives as fact:

Mt. 12:3–4, 40–42; Lk. 4:25–27; and Paul builds theology on a historical Adam: Rom. 5:12–21; 1 Cor. 15:21–22, 45–49). God’s word is, therefore, authoritative—our supreme and final authority for faith and practice (Deut. 4:2; Ps. 119:4; Acts 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:15; 4:1–3), for it is living and stands in judgment over us (Is. 66:2; Eccl. 12:13–14; Mt. 4:4; Heb. 2:1–4; 4:12). God’s Word is eternal (Mt. 24:35), immutable/indestructible (Jn. 10:35), and infallible (Josh. 23:14; Is. 55:11; Mt. 5:18). Although some occurrences of special revelation prior to the close of the NT canon are not recorded in Scripture (e.g., Rev. 10:4), as the climax of God’s speech to mankind, Scripture is His fully sufficient self-revelation (Ps. 19:7–11; 2 Tim. 3:14–4:2; 2 Pet. 1:2–4). Though Scripture does not answer every question (Rom. 11:33), it does reveal what God requires of us (Deut. 29:29) and all that we need for salvation (2 Tim. 3:14–15; cf. Jn. 6:63) and for living a subsequent life pleasing to Him for His glory (Mt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:3). This includes God revealing principles of His thinking with the expectation that we make good and necessary inferences and applications about what is pleasing to Him (Eph. 5:10; Phil. 1:9–10; Heb. 5:14). God wants us not only to know what He has explicitly said but, beyond that, to come to think like Him about things He has not explicitly addressed (Rom. 12:2).

Canonicity: After speaking in many portions and ways throughout redemptive history, God’s declaration that Scripture is His final, climactic, sufficient self-revelation demands a closed canon, for a different canon would be a different revelation of God. Thus, our fundamental confidence in the canon is that God is not a failed self-revealer: He knows what books He wrote to reveal Himself, and it is simply neither possible nor true that God found the process of ensuring we have the correct books either too exhausting or too complicated. Accordingly, Scripture calls itself “Scripture,” recognizing itself to be a definitive body of written speech from God (Lk. 24:45; Jn. 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:16) that must not be taken from or added to (Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18): God’s process of inspiration produced a limited corpus of writings intended by God to be gathered together as “Scripture.” Canonicity is, therefore, not a human decision but rather the process whereby God’s Spirit (Jn. 16:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:14) confirmed in the hearts of His people the inspiration and authority of this specific collection of documents. For example, Scripture writers were often aware that their own (Lev. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:10–11) and others’ writings (Dan. 9:2; 2 Pet. 3:16) were from God. And more broadly, to those who believe (Jn. 7:17) words from God are self-attesting (Lk. 24:32): in them the believer hears God’s voice (Is. 66:2; Jn. 10:27; Rom. 10:17; 1 Cor. 2:14) because their inherent life and authority are obvious (Jer. 23:28–29; Heb. 4:12) and because they change the hearer (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thes. 2:13). Contrary to liberal theology, God’s people recognized the divine origin of each book soon after it was written and added it to the OT canon (Ex. 24:3–8; Deut. 10:4–5; 17:18; 28:58; 31:9, 24–26; Josh. 1:7; 8:31, 32; 24:26; 1 Kings 2:3; 16:34; Dan. 9:2, 6, 11; Ezra 6:18; 2 Chron. 32:32; 36:22; Lk. 24:44). Jesus and the apostles approved the product of this OT canon process (Mt. 5:17–18; Lk. 24:44–45; 2 Pet. 1:20–21), thus authenticating the process itself as viable also for the coming NT canon promised by Christ through the apostles (Jn. 14:26; 16:13–14). By this process the true church universally came to recognize the 27 books of the NT along with the 39 books of the OT (not the Pseudepigrapha or Apocrypha) to be “Scripture,” the closed canon that is the fully sufficient climax of God’s self-revelation.

In confirmation of the church’s recognition, the requirement of Jesus’ personal discipleship (Acts 1:21–22; cf. Mk. 3:14–15) limited the gift of the apostle (through whom Jesus said the NT would be given: Jn. 14:26; 16:13–14) to the first century. Further, the gifts of apostles and prophets and the initial preaching of the gospel and the revelation of the NT that came through them was the church’s “foundation” (i.e., never to be repeated; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20). Because the gifts of revelation ceased with the close of the NT canon, we should not seek additional revelation today beyond the sufficient canon (the prohibition of Rev. 22:18 can be applied ultimately to the canon). Further, miraculous sign gifts were given to authenticate (Heb. 2:4) this climactic, foundational speech of the Father through the

Son (Heb. 1:1–2; 2:1–3a) and subsequently through the NT writers/apostles (Heb. 2:3b; cf. Acts 2:22; 4:16; 2 Cor. 12:12). Therefore, contrary to the Pentecostal, Charismatic, and Third Wave movements, these miraculous signs as gifts given to men ceased near the close of the NT canon, and so believers today should not seek these gifts, including the gift of tongues (1 Cor. 13:8–13).

Preservation in Transmission: Scripture speaks of only the original autographs—never of manuscript copies—as being the direct speech of God by the process of inspiration and therefore completely without error (2 Pet. 1:20–21). Manuscript copies are, therefore, God’s inspired Word to the extent that they say what God said in the original autographs. The presence of variants in the manuscripts we possess is not troubling ultimately because we have God’s promise to preserve His self-revelation in His Word for all generations (Ps. 119:89, 152, 160; Is. 40:6–8; Mt. 5:18; 24:14, 35; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Pet. 1:23–25). Regarding the OT, God preserved His Word through the painstaking work of the scribes, and Jesus and the apostles certified the results of that preservation process by their unqualified quotation of the OT. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (AD 1947–56) demonstrates that over the intervening 700–1,000 years between their writing and our previously oldest copy of the OT, the text of the OT varied almost nil. Regarding the NT, though the copying process was much more rushed and less accurate, God has preserved His Word by giving us a vast multiplicity of texts that are reasonably close to the autographs in time. When we compare these manuscripts, we find no variant readings where we cannot establish the wording of the autograph, and our theology is affected by which variant is original. Because God never directs us to favor a particular edition of the Greek text as being His only preserved Word, any such selection is arbitrary. Rather the eclectic approach to textual criticism—using all manuscripts—best fits with God’s chosen method to preserve the NT—giving us all those manuscripts. And as God providentially allows archeological discovery of more manuscripts, textual criticism must be an ongoing process.

Translation: God’s character as a self-revealing God and His desire for all men to hear His speech with understanding (Mt. 28:19–20; 1 Cor. 14) mandates the translation of God’s Word into vernaculars. Scripture speaks of only the original autographs—never of translations—as being the direct speech of God by the process of inspiration and therefore completely without error (2 Pet. 1:20–21). However, Jesus’ and the NT authors’ use of the LXX (Mt. 21:42) approves the use of even imperfect translations (as all translations are) as the authoritative Word of God, for they are exactly that to the extent that they say faithfully what God said in the original autographs. To be thus faithful, they must both accurately reflect God’s words in the original language and also accurately speak those words in the target language (a necessary element of this accuracy is readability). Verbal inspiration means that the precise wording of Scripture is critical, which dictates following formal equivalence insofar as possible without sacrificing accuracy (including readability) in the target language. Further, the morphing of languages over time requires periodic translation updates so they continue to be both accurate and readable. I have concluded that the English translations that best meet these criteria in 2025 are the NASB and the ESV.

Interpretation: Scripture teaches its own perspicuity: Although we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor. 13:12) and Scripture contains things hard to understand (2 Pet. 3:16), Scripture is sufficiently clear (Ps. 119:105, 130) that God faults the interpreter when Scripture is misinterpreted (Mt. 19:4; Jn. 3:10; 2 Pet. 3:16). Thus, although we can always learn more from Scripture, it is sufficiently clear for us to be “wise unto salvation” (Jn. 6:63; 2 Tim. 3:14–15) and to live pleasing to God (Mt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:3). This perspicuity comes for believers through the Spirit’s necessary gifts of illumination to grasp the meaning and significance of God’s words (Ps. 119:18; Mt. 22:29; Jn. 16:13; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27; cf. Lk. 24:45) and of faith to accept them and respond in obedience (1 Cor. 2:14; 1 Thes. 2:13). Apart

from this work of the Spirit, unbelievers can come to only a certain level of intellectual understanding of Scripture (Ezek. 12:3; Jn. 16:8–11; 1 Cor. 2:14). However, understanding is not automatic, and so the doctrine of perspicuity assumes our responsibility to use the means God has given for interpretation (Neh. 8:8)—gifted teachers (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11), diligent study (Ezra 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:15), development of discernment (Heb. 5:14), and employing a hermeneutic that best fits with the nature of Scripture as God’s self-revelation. This hermeneutic should be (1) characteristically literal/normal, following rules of grammar and syntax, because God gave His words in ordinary language (which includes the use of figures of speech as obvious exceptions); (2) historical, because the revelation and the occasions in which it was given are historical events (Dan. 9:1–2; Lk. 1:1–5); (3) contextual, both immediate and canonical, because Scripture explains Scripture (Mt. 22:23–33; Jn. 5:39; Acts 15:15; 17:11); and (4) in keeping with the progress of revelation throughout the unified canon of Scripture. Thus, my hermeneutic is “grammatical-historical” and “dispensational.”

In conclusion, the Bible stands unique among the so-called holy books of the world as the loving self-revelation of God, given so that men can know Him and revel in that relationship. Our response must be to listen (2 Pet. 1:19; Heb. 2:1–4) and respond in humble faith (Is. 66:1–2) because although we think that we stand in judgment over Scripture—“will I believe it or not?”—Scripture actually stands in judgment over us (Heb. 4:11–13) and condemns all who do not believe it (Heb. 12:25).

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man

Man was created by the direct act of God (Gen. 2:7, 21–22) as God’s image (Gen. 1:27; 5:1–2; 9:6; Jas. 3:9) for the purpose of ruling over creation as God’s viceregent (Gen. 1:26–28; Ps. 8). Man is God’s image ontologically: God shared the communicable attributes of His nature with man, and so man is a means of God’s self-revelation. Man was made with knowledge of God’s existence and moral rightness and with God’s moral law etched within (Rom. 2:14–15) yet in innocent holiness (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 7:29), enjoying fellowship with God (Gen. 3:8) and the blessing of God (Gen. 1:28; 5:2). The image of God is holistic: it comprises both the body and the immaterial part of man (Gen. 1:27; Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 15:49). Though the locus of the person is the immaterial part (Lk. 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23–24), the immaterial and material parts are an inextricable, holistic unity (Prov. 17:22; Jas. 2:26) and the redemption of the body is integral to and the capstone of our redemption (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 5:1–5). Making man in God’s image also included God’s infusion of His life and breath into that body (Gen. 2:7). Thus, as the image of God, human life in the body has special sanctity (Gen. 9:6). Because this sacred existence as a person known by God begins at conception (Gen. 25:23–26; 38:27–30; Job 31:15–18; Ps. 22:9–10; Is. 44:2; Judg. 13:3–5; Ps. 139:13–16; Is. 49:1; Jer. 1:5; Lk. 1:15, 41–44; Gal. 1:15; note that in Jer. 20:17, cessation of life in the womb is considered the death of a person), abortion at any stage is murder (Ex. 21:22–25).

Adam and Eve’s respective genders—male and female—were an aspect of their physical, bodily “creating”/“making” (Gen. 1:27; Mt. 19:4; Mk. 10:6), and so are determined and assigned by God for all subsequent humans in the origination of their body by conception (Ps. 139:13–16). Because God requires men and women to live in accordance with their individual bodily assignment (e.g., Deut. 22:5), intentionally altering one’s physical gender or identifying or living as a gender other than the one assigned at conception is sin (1 Cor. 6:9–10). Though the genders are equal in personhood, value, dignity, importance, and spiritual standing before God (Joel 2:28–29; 1 Cor. 11:11–12; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7), God’s creation of them included assigning each a distinct yet complimentary, interdependent role that together are the foundation of society (i.e., a complementarian position) (Gen. 2:18, 23; 1 Cor. 11:3, 9; Col. 3:18–19). As creation realities, these roles transcend all cultures and are permanent. Although these roles apply to varying degrees outside the home (e.g., in the church: 1 Cor. 14:34–35; 1 Tim. 2:11–14; 3:2, 4–5; Tit. 1:6), as the apex of their fulfilment God created and blessed the institution of marriage

(Gen. 1:27–28; 2:20–25) as the exclusive covenant union (Prov. 2:16–17; Mal. 2:14–16) of strictly one man and one woman (Mk. 10:6–8) for as long as they both shall live (Eccl. 9:9; Mk. 10:6–9; Rom. 7:2–3; 1 Cor. 7:39). Sexual activity within the bounds of heterosexual marriage is honorable but outside marriage is sin (1 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 13:4), including homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26–27; 1 Tim. 1:8–10), polygamy (Eph. 5:31–33), incest (Lev. 18:6–18; 1 Cor. 5:1), bestiality (Deut. 27:21), adultery (Lk. 18:20), and fornication of any kind, including lust and pornography (Mt. 5:28; 1 Cor. 6:9–10; 1 Thes. 4:3–8). There is hope, because even the unnatural (Rom. 1:26–27), evil (Col. 3:6) affections of homosexuality can be forgiven and mortified (1 Cor. 6:9–11).

Because God is the joiner of the man and woman to be one in the marriage covenant and does so permanently (Mal. 2:15; Mt. 19:6), He hates man's divorce (Mal. 2:14–16). The OT's regulations on divorce (Deut. 24:1–4; cf. Jer. 3:1) were given only to reign in the departure of a corrupt society of hardened hearts from God's way (Mt. 19:8), and so they don't diminish Jesus' prohibitions of divorce and remarriage after divorce, which is adultery if the former spouse is still living (Mt. 5:31–32; 19:9; Mk. 10:11–12; Lk. 16:18). Yet as much as God hates divorce, He hates marital infidelity more and divorced Israel for that reason (Jer. 3:1–11); and so He gives exceptions to the divorce prohibition. First, in the case of the desertion of an unbelieving spouse, the believer is not culpable for the divorce (1 Cor. 7:10–16), yet remarriage is not allowed (v. 11). Second, in the case of "*porneia*," which is immorality (*porneia* is used 22x in Ezek. for spiritual adultery), divorce and remarriage are permitted by Jesus (Mt. 5:32, 19). The marital infidelity must be unrepentant, for a repentant spouse must be forgiven and taken back (Mk. 11:25–26), as God did (Jer. 3:12–13; Hosea; Eph. 4:32). In the case of unrepentant, persistent marital infidelity, while I could not tell the offended spouse that they are doing wrong to divorce and remarry, the need for weighty interpretation of Jesus' exception and the spectrum of positions that good believers have taken on their interpretation would lead me to not perform the remarriage wedding, so long as the former spouse is still living (Rom. 14:23). Further, divorced men cannot hold the office of elder or deacon (1 Tim. 3:2, 12).

Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

The Fall: The Entrance of Sin into Creation: The first recorded sin is Satan's refusal to abide in the truth (Jn. 8:44; 1 Jn. 3:8) and rebellion against God (Ezek. 28:11–19), and sin spread to some angels (2 Pet. 2:4). Because God's agenda is truthful self-revelation most fully by His words, it is no surprise that the Devil's vile agenda in the first temptation (and every temptation since) was to question faith in God's words and suggest alternative lies to believe (Gen. 3:1–5; Jn. 8:44–45). Sin's root is refusal to believe God's self-revelation, and sin is the refusal to align with the standard of God's glorious character (Rom. 3:23; 5:6) by breaking God's laws that reflect His character (1 Jn. 3:4), including the revelation of God's law in human conscience (Rom. 14:23). Sin is owing to a lack of love for God and fellow men (Mt. 22:37–40). Sin can be committing God's prohibitions or omitting God's prescriptions (Rom. 7:15, 19).

The Curse: The Penalty of Sin: The divine blessing often connected in the Genesis narrative to life, and especially its transmission (Gen. 1:22, 28; 2:3; 5:2), was displaced by divine cursing and resultant death (Gen. 2:17; 3:17–19; Rom 5:12; 6:23; 1 Cor 15:21). Specifically, the ground was cursed (Gen. 3:17; 5:29 cf. Rom. 8:20–22) and became the means to man's death (Gen. 3:19): Creation would now rebel against man's attempted dominion to provide food to sustain his life (vv. 17b–19a; Heb 2:8), and it would ultimately triumph over man and reclaim his body (Gen. 3:19b). Death is therefore man's ultimate failure to rule. Man is still the image of God (Gen. 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7; Jas. 3:9), yet in a severely damaged state, for the holistic image must be restored by conformity to Christ, the Image of God (Col. 1:15), both immaterially (2 Cor. 3:18–4:6, 16–18; Col. 3:10) and materially (1 Cor. 15:49; Rom. 8:29–30). The death penalty for sin includes three facets: immediate spiritual death—separation from the life and knowledge of God (Gen. 3:7–9; Jn. 17:3; Eph. 2:1–3; 4:17–19); physical death—separation of the

body and spirit (Gen. 3:19; 5; 1 Cor. 15:22; Jas. 2:26); and the “second death” in Hell forever (Mt. 25:46; Rev. 20:14–15)—separation from the presence of God (2 Thes. 1:9).

The Ongoing Imputation and Inheritance of Original Sin: As the federal representative of the human race and the one to whom all humanity is naturally united, Adam’s sin plunged the entire race into sin (Gen. 3:6–7; Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:22). In the first place, all descendants of Adam are imputed the guilt of Adam’s first sin and so even before any acts of sin are under God’s wrath (Jn. 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 5:12–19; Eph. 5:6) and the curse of death (Gen. 3:19; 5; Rom. 5:14; 6:23; 1 Cor. 15:22; Gal. 3:10; Eph. 4:18; Heb. 2:15). Second, the corruption of Adam’s sin is universal from conception among his descendants (Gen. 4; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 3:10–26), Jesus being the only exception: all are conceived with original sin—a sin nature known as the flesh (Eph. 2:3; Rom. 8:7–8)—and so commit acts of sin (Ps. 58:3; Rom. 3:10, 23). This habitual actualizing of indwelling sin is cited at the judgment (Rev. 20:12) because man’s sinful works confirm the justice of God’s condemnation.

The Permeation and Manifestation of Sin: Scripture designates the mass of lost humanity as “the world” (Jn. 1:9–10), and sin’s corruption is ubiquitous in the human race (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:23; 1 Jn. 1:10). Further, this universally inherited corruption is total depravity, i.e., not that every man sins as much as he could or that all men sin in the same ways or to the same extent (Ezek. 8:6; Mt. 23:23), but that every part of man is depraved (Rom. 7:18). Sin is not just what we do but who we are (1 Jn. 1:8): it has corrupted man’s heart (Jer. 17:9), mind (Rom. 1:28; Eph. 4:17), will (Rom. 8:7), conscience (Tit. 1:15), affections (Jn. 3:19–20; Rom. 1:26–27), desires (Eph. 4:22; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:10), and emotions (Prov. 14:30; Eph. 4:26). Thus, man is a slave to sin (Rom. 6:6, 16–17, 20) so that apart from God’s grace he cannot please God (Is. 64:6; Rom. 8:7–8), and man is dead in sin (Eph. 2:1) so that apart from God’s intervention he cannot receive truth and choose to believe and accept Jesus’ offer of salvation (Mt. 19:26; Jn. 1:13; 6:44, 65; Eph. 4:18; 1 Cor. 2:4, 14). Men do not seek after God in worship (Rom. 3:11) but rather idolatrously reject His self-revelation (Rom. 1:21–23) because their flesh produces only desire for evil (Eph. 2:3; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:16) and rebellion against God (Rom. 8:7–8). Even our body is corrupted (Gen. 3:16, 19; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 15:42, 52–54). Though our non-physical hearts are the root of sin (Mt. 5:28; 12:35), our fallen bodies are the seat of sinful desires (Mk. 7:21–23; Rom. 6:12; Jas. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11) and the means of carrying out sin (Rom. 6:13, 19; 7:5; Col. 3:5) and therefore need sanctification (1 Thes. 5:23). Further, our bodies are mortal and need resurrection (Rom. 8): a gospel without physical resurrection is “vain” (1 Cor. 15:13–18) and falls short of “victory” (1 Cor. 15:54). Further, because God gave man the role of viceregent over the creation, the curse fell on the ground for man’s sake (Gen. 3:17) and has cosmic ramifications—death, disorder, and decay (Gen. 3:18–19, 21; Rom. 8:19–22)—and there is, therefore, also a cosmic dimension of redemption—a new creation free from the curse (Is. 65:17; Rom. 8:17–25; Col. 1:15–21; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21–22).

The Doctrine of the Father

The Father is fully God (Jn. 6:27; 20:17; 1 Pet. 1:2). His distinct works include being the initiating agent in creation (Ps. 33:6–9; Mk. 10:6; Heb. 1:2), though the Spirit and Son were also involved (Gen. 1:2; Jn. 1:1–3). The Father is also the primary architect and initiator of the plan of redemption (Eph. 1:9–10; 1 Pet. 1:2): He chose and sent the Son to be His Lamb (Jn. 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:19–20), through the Spirit prepared the sacrifice that He desired—the body of Jesus—(Heb. 10:1–18) to propitiate His wrath (Is. 53:4–6; Rom. 3:25; 1 Jn. 4:10), received that propitiatory payment for sin (Isa. 53:10; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:14), through the Spirit raised Jesus (Acts 2:24, 32; Rom. 1:4; 8:11; Gal. 1:1; 1 Thes. 1:9–10), and by His oath appointed Jesus as High Priest to forever mediate between Himself and man (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:1–10:18). The Father also sent the Spirit to draw men to salvation and apply salvation to them (Jn. 14:26; 16:7–8; Gal. 4:6).

The Father is the Father of the Son (Jn. 1:14; 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:3), was the Father of Adam before the fall (Gen. 1:26–28; 5:1–3; Lk. 3:38), was the Father of Israel corporately as a type (Ex. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Jer. 31:20; Hos. 11:1; Rom. 9:4; Gal. 4:1–3), and now is the Father individually of all true believers (Jn. 1:12; 20:17; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4–7; 1 Jn. 3:1) through His Son (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:4–5). Because of the fall, I reject liberal universalism’s posit that God is the Father of all men and therefore not their Judge.

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

The Person of the Lord Jesus Christ: From all eternity (Jn. 8:58) the second Person of the Trinity has enjoyed fellowship with the other members (Jn. 1:1; 17:5) as the Son of God (Gal. 4:4; 1 Jn. 1:2; 4:14) and fully God (Jn. 1:1; Phil. 2:6). Yet by incarnation through Mary’s virgin conception (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:18–25) Jesus added full humanity to His person (Jn. 1:14; Phil. 2:7–8; 1 Tim. 3:16): (1) Scripture states that He was and continues to be a man (1 Cor. 15:21; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:5–18; 1 Jn. 4:2; 2 Jn. 7); (2) He lived every element of a human life including birth, development, and death (Lk. 2:7, 52; Jn. 19:30–33); (3) He had human experiences and nature, including His possessing a human body (Lk. 2:7; 24:39; Col. 2:9) with normal physical human needs (Mt. 4:2; 8:24; Jn. 4:7). He experienced human emotions (Mt. 26:38; Jn. 11:35), suffered authentic temptation (Mt. 4:1–11; Heb. 2:18; 4:15), and experienced weakness and limitations (Mt. 24:36; Jn. 4:6). (4) Other humans around Him viewed Him as a normal human (Mt. 9:8; 13:54–58; Jn. 7:5).

Although in the incarnation Jesus laid aside the independent exercise of some prerogatives of deity (Jn. 5:19; 1 Cor. 6:14), He continued to be fully God and did not lay aside any divine attributes (Col. 1:19; 2:9): (1) He is called God (Is. 9:6; Jn. 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8–10; 2 Pet. 1:1); (2) He regards Himself to be God (Mt. 22:43–44; 26:64–65; Jn. 5:17–18; 8:58; Rev. 1:8; 22:13) and accepts worship (Mt. 16:16; 28:17; Lk. 24:52; Jn. 5:23; 20:28; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 5:12–14); (3) He possesses attributes that only God possesses (Mt. 28:20; Jn. 2:11, 23–25; 8:58; 10:17–18; Heb. 4:15); (4) He performs divine works (Mt. 8:27; Mk. 2:1–12; Jn. 5:22–23; 20:30–31; Col. 1:16–17; 1 Cor. 8:6; Heb. 1:2–3); and (5) He is identified as OT Yahweh (Heb. 1:8 with Ps. 45:6; Jn. 12:39–41 with Is. 6:1–10; Heb. 1:10–12 with Ps. 102:25–27).

Thus, since His conception in Mary’s womb, Jesus has existed with two natures in one person (i.e., the hypostatic union). The natures remain unmixed so that neither is destroyed or altered by this union, and in passages where both natures are on display, Scripture simply speaks of one person (Is. 9:6; Mk. 4:35–41; Rom. 9:5), never of two persons with a nature each.

The Work of the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Anointed One.

Through Mediatorial Offices: Three OT offices were anointed—prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Ex. 28:41), and kings (2 Sam. 12:7). Jesus was anointed with the Spirit as was promised (Is. 42:1–4; Mt. 12:18–21), and so is the Prophet and Word of God Who reveals the Father and the Father’s will (Jn. 1:1, 18; 15:15; Acts 3:22–26; Heb. 1:1–2), is the Priest Who represents us before God as our propitiatory sacrifice and as our intercessor (Heb. 2:17; 7:24–27; 10:12–14), and is the King Who rules over the realm of God’s kingdom (Lk. 11:20; Col. 1:13; Rev. 11:15).

Through Incarnate Atonement: Not only was it necessary that Jesus take on flesh for salvation (1 Cor. 15:21; Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:5–18) but it was also necessary that it happen by the Spirit’s working conception in a virgin (Is. 7:14; 9:6 Mt. 1:18; Lk. 1:35) so that He would be free from sin (Lk. 1:35) and would be Emmanuel, both God and man (Is. 7:14; 8:8, 10; 9:6; Mt. 1:18–23). Jesus was conceived with a sinless nature and lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; Heb. 7:26; 1 Jn. 3:5) of active obedience under God’s law (Mt. 3:13–15; Jn. 8:29; Rom. 8:3–4; Gal. 4:4–5; Heb. 10:5–7; 1 Pet. 1:19; 3:18) as our substitute as the basis of God’s imputing righteousness to us by justification (2 Cor. 5:21). Although Jesus as fully God was impeccable (i.e., no possibility that He could sin; Jn. 14:30; 2 Tim. 2:13;

Jas. 1:13), as fully man He experienced temptation as authentic and genuine as ours (Heb. 2:18; 4:15). In passive obedience (Lk. 22:42; Heb. 5:7–8) as a voluntary act (Ps. 40:8; Jn. 10:18), Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 7:27; 9:14, 24–28; 10:10, 12). The central concept of a biblical theory of the atonement is penal substitution (Is. 53:4–6; Mt. 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:14, 21; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18): Jesus was made sin and bore the penalty of separation from the Father (Mt. 27:46) under the law’s curse (Gal. 3:10, 13) and was made our propitiation under the Father’s wrath (Rom. 3:24–25; 1 Jn. 4:10). Between His death and resurrection, Jesus did not descend into Hell to suffer for sin (Jn. 19:30) but fellowshiped with the Father (Lk. 23:43, 46; Acts 2:25–32). Jesus’ burial confirmed His death (1 Cor. 15:3), yet without decay (Acts 13:37). After three days and three nights in the tomb, the Father testified that He accepted Jesus’ work of atonement by raising Jesus bodily from the dead (Is. 53:10–11; Lk. 24:5–7; Acts 2:31–32; 17:31; Rom. 4:24–25) in victory over death (Rom. 6:9; 14:9). That victory is yet incomplete, however, so long as His followers continue to die (1 Cor. 15:54). Yet as the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) and firstborn from the dead (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5), Jesus’ resurrection guarantees ours for He became a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; cf. 1 Cor. 15:12–20; 2 Cor. 4:14) and His resurrection body is the prototype of ours (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:29–30). When Jesus’ work on earth was complete (Jn. 17:4; 19:30; Heb. 1:3; 10:12–14), having received all authority and power (Mt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; Eph. 1:20–22; Phil. 2:9–11), He ascended to the presence of the Father (Lk. 24:51; Eph. 4:10) and sat down at the Father’s right hand (Acts 2:33; Mk. 16:19; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 10:12; 12:2), where as head of His church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19) He ever lives to make intercession for us as our High Priest (Is. 53:12; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14; 7:24–27; 9:24; 1 Jn. 2:1). Jesus is waiting for an unknown future time when He will return bodily (see Eschatology below; Ps. 110:1; Acts 17:31).

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

The Person of the Holy Spirit: The third Person of the Trinity is fully God: (1) He is called God (Acts 5:3–4) and the Spirit of God (Is. 61:1; Rom. 8:14); (2) He is equal with the Father and the Son (Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2); (3) He possesses God’s attributes such as eternality (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), sovereignty (1 Cor. 12:11), and omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10–11); and (4) He performs divine actions such as creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4), sustaining life (Ps. 104:30), inspiration of God’s self-revelation in Scripture (Acts 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:21), overshadowing Mary to produce a child called “the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35) and regenerating with God’s life (Jn. 3:5–8; Tit. 3:5). Despite ontological equality with the Father and Son, the Spirit voluntarily submits to both in some of His works in history for which He was sent (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; Acts 2:33). The Holy Spirit is not merely a metaphor for God’s power, a mode/expression of God, nor a force, but is rather a person distinct from the Father (Rom. 8:26; Gal. 4:6) and the Son (Lk. 4:1, 14; Jn. 14:16): (1) He is distinct from His own power and the power of God (Lk. 4:14; Acts 10:38; Rom. 15:13, 19); (2) He has fundamental attributes of personhood, including a mind (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10–11), will (1 Cor. 12:11), and emotions (Is. 63:10; Eph. 4:30); (3) He does personal actions (2 Sam. 23:2; Acts 8:39; Rev. 2:7); and (4) He interacts with other persons as a person (Jn. 16:13; Acts 5:9; 7:51; 15:28; Rom. 8:26).

The Work of the Holy Spirit: The Spirit is the giver of life (Job 33:4; Jn. 3:5–8; 6:63; Rom. 1:4; 8:10–11; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 6:8; 1 Tim. 3:16; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:18). He took part in creation of the world (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30) and is often the Agent of the Father’s or the Son’s work in the world, such as the Agent of God’s common grace restraining depravity from its full expression (Gen. 6:3; 2 Thes. 2:6–7). The Spirit was the primary Agent in the process of inspiration of Scripture (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17) and illuminates our understanding of the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:11–16; 2 Cor. 3:16–18; Eph. 3:14–19; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27). God’s Spirit convicts sinners (Jn. 16:8–11; 1 Thes. 1:5) and grants them understanding

of the gospel (1 Cor. 2:9–14; 2 Cor. 3:14–17) and faith and repentance (1 Cor. 12:3). He then applies to the believer salvation by regeneration/the new birth (Jn. 3:5–8; Tit. 3:5), by justification and washing from sin (1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 8:1–2), by positional sanctification (1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), by ongoing sanctification (Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 3:18), and by resurrection (Rom. 8:11, 23).

The Spirit is given to indwell and enable NT believers (Acts 1:8; 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 5:18). In the OT God's indwelling of His people was national/corporate in the tabernacle/temple (Ex. 25:8). Any individual ministry of the Spirit was limited: coming upon a limited number of people for a limited time for limited empowerment for special tasks (Ex. 31:1–6; Num. 11:17; Judg. 6:34; 14:6; 1 Sam. 11:6; 16:14). In contrast, Jesus not only was anointed with the Spirit to enable His ministry (Is. 11:2; 42:1; 48:16; 61:1–2a; Mic. 3:8; Mt. 12:18; Lk. 4:1, 14, 18; 10:21; Jn. 1:32; 3:34; Rom. 1:4; 8:11; Heb. 9:14) but also as a provision of the New Covenant (Is. 32:15–18; 44:3–4; 59:21; Ezek. 36:26–27; 2 Cor. 3:6) poured out the Spirit “without measure” (Jn. 3:34) on all of His followers (1 Cor. 12:7, 11) for personal, permanent indwelling (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 1:5; 2:33; Gal. 3:14; Jn. 7:38–39; 14:17; 16:13; 1 Jn. 4:13). Now the individual believer is the temple of God (1 Cor. 6:19) and so the church is corporately (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:22).

Spirit Baptism is Christ's work through His gift of the Spirit to baptize the believer into His body (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13); it happened inaugurally at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:1–14, 33) and subsequently happens at the time of regeneration (Acts 2:38; 11:14–18; 1 Cor. 12:13). It is not a so-called “second blessing” to be sought subsequent to conversion, and it is not accompanied today by sign gifts. The result of Spirit baptism is union with Christ the head of the body (Eph. 4:15–16) and personal, permanent indwelling. The Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19) and His fruit (Gal. 5:22–23) are the evidence of salvation (1 Jn. 4:13). The Spirit teaches (1 Jn. 2:20, 27), gives assurance to (Rom. 8:14–16; Gal. 4:6), intercedes for (Rom. 8:26–27), empowers (1 Cor. 12:4, 7–9, 11; Acts 1:8), and sanctifies (2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22–24) the believer. He is the believer's seal and earnest (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30), the firstfruits that guarantee our resurrection (Rom. 8:9–11, 23). God's Spirit gives gifts to the body's members for the building up of the rest of the body (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7; 1 Pet. 4:10; see the lists in Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:8–10, 28–30; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10–11).

Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

Though the provision of the atonement was intentionally sufficient for all mankind (Jn. 1:29; 3:16–17; 6:51; 12:46–48; Rom. 3:25; 2 Cor. 5:14, 19; 1 Tim. 2:6; 4:10; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 2:2) for God desires that all men be saved (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9); the application of the atonement is limited/particular to those with faith (Acts 16:31; Rom. 1:17; 10:9–10; 1 Tim. 4:10). Even in OT times, the way of salvation has always been the way of faith in the revelation that God had given at that time and has never been by works (Gen. 3:15; Ps. 2:12; Rom. 4:1–8; Gal. 3:8). Faith is believing and entrusting myself to God's words of self-revelation (Heb. 11:1–3, 6), specifically the gospel of Jesus as the only way of salvation (Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:13–17). Genuine faith is repentant faith (Acts 20:21; Heb. 6:1), a change of the entire disposition regarding sin and Christ (mind: Ps. 51:3; affections: 2 Cor. 7:9–10; and will: Is. 55:6–7; Acts 3:19). Thus, genuine faith is obedience (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) to the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17) and to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22), and it is conversion (a turning from darkness to light; Acts 26:18, 20; 1 Thes. 1:9). Genuine saving faith, therefore, goes beyond mere intellectual acknowledgement of the truthfulness of God's revelation (as even the demons do: Jas. 2:19), and it necessarily includes an embracing of Christ as Savior and Lord (Rom. 10:9–10); it is the unconditional surrender of one no longer rejecting God's words nor fighting against Him. Repentance is distinct from the works it produces (Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20); and both faith (Acts 18:27; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8–9) and repentance (Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25) are the gift of God and so are not works. However, because saving faith is a repentant, obedient surrender to God, it does produce a subsequent Christian life of good works (Mt. 3:8; Acts 26:20; Eph. 2:8–10; 2 Tim. 1:9; Jas. 2:14–26) for the Spirit works His fruit (Gal. 5:16–25).

Authored by the Father: Because this special work of faith in the hearts of some is entirely the gift of God, it is by the choice of God. Election: because God knew that man would fall into sin, in love He chose us to be made His children and holy (Eph. 1:4–5) and heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 2:5). This election is individual, not corporate (Rom. 9:6–13; 16:13; 2 Jn. 1, 13). It was unconditional out of nothing but God’s love (Deut. 7:6–8; Deut. 10:15; Rom. 8:29–39; 9:10–13; Eph. 1:4–5; 1 Thes. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13), grace (Rom. 11:5), mercy (Rom. 9:16), and good pleasure (Eph. 1:4–5): God does omnisciently know beforehand what we will do, but that is not the basis of election (Jn. 15:16; Rom. 9:11, 16; 1 Cor. 1:27–29; 2 Tim. 1:9). The term “foreknowledge” according to which God made His elective choice (1 Pet. 1:2) speaks not of mere prior knowledge but of God’s determinative foreordination (note this meaning of the word when applied to Christ in Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:20; cf. Is. 42:1) that He might have a relationship with us (note how the term “know” speaks of relationship throughout the OT and NT). God’s purpose to send His Spirit to work saving faith in the hearts of some while passing over others is completely just (Rom. 9:14) because every man is justly under condemnation for sin, and God’s salvation is undeserved mercy (Rom. 9:23; Eph. 2:4). Scripture, however, is silent on the matter of reprobation/double predestination (election to damnation) and speaks only of man’s sin as the basis for his damnation. Thus, the basis for damnation (man’s sin) and the basis for salvation (God’s loving election) are asymmetrical. Those whom God chose and foreknew He predestined to sonship (Eph. 1:5) and on that basis to a future inheritance (Eph. 1:11) of filial glory by conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:23, 29–30; 1 Cor. 2:7–9). The Father’s loving choice of us also moved Him to choose and foreordain Jesus as the lamb of God (1 Pet. 1:18–20) and then to send Christ on that mission (Jn. 3:16–17).

Provided by the Son: Jesus is the only way to God (Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). Because the Father cannot righteously clear the guilty without the penalty of death (Ex. 34:7), He through the Spirit prepared a body for His Lamb (Heb. 10:5–7) which could die under the Father’s wrath as our penal (Rom. 4:25) vicarious substitute (Is. 53:5; Jn. 6:51; Rom. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 Pet. 3:18). Jesus thereby became our atoning sacrifice (a covering that appeases an angry God; Gen. 32:20; Ex. 29:33; Dan. 9:24–26) and propitiation (satisfaction of God’s wrath; Rom. 3:24–25; Heb. 2:17; 1 Jn. 4:10) and made provision to expiate (take away) and forgive (dismiss) the sins of the world (Mt. 26:28; Jn. 1:29; 12:46–47; Col. 1:14; Heb. 10:22) that men might be reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1, 9–10; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:20). Jesus made the once-for-all-time (Heb. 7:27; 10:10) payment in the shedding of His blood in death on the cross (Mt. 26:28; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 9:22) as the ransom for sin (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; 1 Tim. 2:6).

Applied by the Spirit: To those whom the Father chooses and predestines, He will send the Spirit to convict (Jn. 16:8), illuminate (1 Cor. 2:14), and ultimately call/draw to faith (Jn. 6:44; Rom. 8:30; Eph. 2:8–9). First, this call/drawing is effectual: all who are called come (Rom. 8:30). The Spirit does not, however, drag us against our will (as implied by the term “irresistible grace”) but rather mysteriously persuades us to make the authentic choice to submit willingly to the gospel. Effectual calling, therefore, must be held in tension with man’s responsibility to obey the gospel (Rom. 10:16; 2 Thes. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17), and God is just in condemning those who refuse (Rom. 9:14). Second this call/drawing is necessary: those who are not called do not come (Jn. 6:44). Apart from this work, we cannot accept salvation because we are dead in our sins (Is. 53:6; Rom. 3:11; Eph. 2:1–3). Note that belief is not enabled by regeneration, but rather it is those who believe who are given life (Jn. 3:15, 36; 6:47) because it is believers who are given the Spirit (Jn. 7:37–39; Eph. 1:13) Who regenerates (Ezek. 37:14; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 3:6; Tit. 3:5). Third, although there is a genuine universal call/drawing/offer of the gospel (Is. 45:22; Mt. 22:14a; Jn. 12:32), the Spirit effectually calls/draws only those who are chosen (Mt. 22:14b; Mk. 2:17). Preserving this tension is necessary to see our responsibility to preach the

universal offer of the gospel to all men (Mk. 16:15; Acts 2:38; 10:43; 13:39) and to be motivated to do so (Acts 18:9–11; 2 Tim. 2:10).

For those who place faith in Christ, the Spirit regenerates with life by birthing them into God's family (Jn. 1:12; Jn. 3:5–8; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3). We who could not justify ourselves (Rom. 3:20) are justified (legally declared righteous, not made righteous; 1 Cor. 6:11; Tit. 3:7). Justification is not a legal fiction but is a righteous act of God (Rom. 1:17; 3:25) on the basis of imputation, both of my sin to Christ (Rom. 4:8; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21) and of His alien righteousness (Phil. 3:9; Tit. 3:5) to me (Mt. 3:15; Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21). God makes these exchanging imputations on the basis of my union with Christ (being "in Him" in 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). The justified are reconciled to and have peace with God (Rom. 5:1, 10; 2 Cor. 5:18–20), and God can wash us from (1 Cor. 6:11) and forgive our sin (send it away; Mt. 9:6; Eph. 1:7). We are thereby positionally sanctified (made holy; Acts 26:18; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 10:10; 1 Pet. 1:2) and redeemed (bought back; 1 Pet. 1:18–19) by the precious blood of Jesus from sin (Eph. 1:7), death (Heb. 2:15), and bondage to the Law (Gal. 3:13; 4:5).

As a provision of the New Covenant (Is. 59:21; Ezek. 11:19; Ezek. 36:26–27) the Spirit comes to indwell the believer with an agenda of ongoing, progressive sanctification (Rom. 15:16; 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:16): producing holiness from sin and good works (2 Cor. 5:14–15; Eph. 2:8–10) and restoring us back into God's image (Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24) by conforming us to Christ, the Image of God, as we see Him in Scripture (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6). Progressive sanctification is never attributed to a so-called second work of grace in addition to the Spirit's indwelling at regeneration. Though we are dead to sin (Rom. 6), the believer still has a fallen nature, the flesh (Rom. 7:18–19; Gal. 5:16–17; 1 Pet. 2:11), which cannot be eradicated in this life (i.e., perfectionism; Rom. 7:18; Phil. 3:12–16; 1 Jn. 1:8). Rather the believer is commanded not to grieve (Eph. 4:30) or quench (1 Thes. 5:19) the Spirit but instead to be filled with (Eph. 5:18) and walk in the Spirit in order to mortify sin and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Rom. 8:1–16; Gal. 5:16–25). These commands are obeyed, not by obtaining more of the Spirit but by filling ourselves with God's Word (note the parallel of Col. 3:16–4:1 with Eph. 5:18–6:9), the Spirit's instrument of sanctification (Jn. 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18), and submitting to the Spirit's work of sanctification (Gal. 5:16, 25). Thereby the believer bears the Spirit's fruit rather than works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19–23). To try to sanctify ourselves by our own effort apart from the Spirit is "foolishness" (Gal. 3:3). Yet the promise of the Spirit's necessary power is our motivation (Rom. 8:13–14; 1 Cor. 15:10; Col. 1:29) to obey the command to join in the battle striving against our flesh (Rom. 6:19; 8:13; 12:2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Phil. 2:12; Col. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:3).

Because not only initial faith but also subsequent perseverance in faith are ultimately the gift of God and not the work of men (1 Cor. 1:4–8; Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:5), none that the Father gives to the Son can be lost (Jn. 6:37–39a), meaning that all will be still be Christ's and raised by the Son unto eternal life on the last day (vv. 39b–40). No one can take them out of the Son's hand nor the Father's hand so that they will perish and lose eternal life (Jn. 10:27–30). Because condemnation for those in Christ Jesus no longer exists (Rom. 8:1), and because Christ's atonement and intercession are without end (2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 7:25), God's saving work will not be thwarted or fail (Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:28–30). Because perseverance is ultimately God's work, it is so sure that Hebrews gives endurance as the mark of genuine faith (Heb. 3:14; 11; cf. Jn. 8:31–32; 1 Cor. 15:1–2; Col. 1:22–23; 1 Jn. 2:19). Ongoing faith is the Spirit's work, and so He guarantees our future as a seal and earnest (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30) and firstfruits (Rom. 8:9–11, 23). Those who fall away from the faith did not lose their salvation but rather never were truly saved (1 Jn. 2:19).

Scripture uses glorification terminology (the *δοξ-* word family) of three events in the believer's future. First, the Spirit's restoration of the immaterial part of man into the glory and image of God by progressive sanctification will culminate at a future day when we see and are conformed to Christ (1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 4:16–18; Eph. 1:4; Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:22; 1 Thes. 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thes. 2:13–14; Heb. 12:23; 1 Jn. 3:2; Jude 24). Second, because the original created glory of Adam included his being

holistically the image of God (i.e., including the body), the majority of the future glory terminology speaks of the restoration of the body to the image of God in resurrection by conformity to the glorious body of Christ (Rom. 8:17–23; 1 Cor. 15:43, 49; Phil. 3:20–21), the Image of God (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:45; Col. 1:15; 3:4, 10). Lastly, because Adam’s original glory included dominion over creation (Ps. 8), we will be restored to glorious dominion by sharing in Christ’s reign (2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:6–11).

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

The Inauguration and Identity of the Church: Christ’s church began with the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost (Mt. 16:18; Acts 2; 11:15; 1 Cor. 12:13). As a new organism comprising both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:18; 15:14; Gal. 3:27–29; Eph. 2:11–22), it is distinct from yet does not replace Israel (Rom. 11:28–29). The OT anticipated including Gentiles in the people of God (Ps. 67:7; Is. 49:6; Zech. 2:11), but God’s plan to do so in the church was a mystery until Paul revealed it (Eph. 2:14–16; 3:4–6). God is building this unified, redeemed church to showcase His wisdom to the heavenly beings (Lk. 15:10; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:12). The church universal is composed of all the redeemed since Pentecost (Mt. 16:18; Acts 8:1–3; Eph. 1:22–23; Heb. 12:23). Among other analogies, the church is the spiritual, organic body of Christ, Who is its head (1 Cor. 12:12–14; Eph. 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18)—its life source and leadership (Jn. 15:5; Col. 1:18; 3:4); it is the household and temple of God, built on the foundation of the apostles’ doctrine with Christ as the cornerstone (Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Cor. 3:16–17); and it is God’s building, built on Jesus the foundation (1 Cor. 3:9–11). Jesus’ church is manifest in local churches of baptized believers who have organized themselves by covenant under leadership as taught in the NT (1 Cor. 1:2; 11:16; Acts 14:27; Philem. 2; 1 Cor. 4:17; Col. 4:15; 1 Thes. 1:1).

The Life and Worship of the Church: The church’s mission in Christ’s absence is to make disciples of all nations by evangelizing them, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all that Christ taught (Mt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). This making of disciples happens as individual stones (Eph. 2:21–22; 1 Pet. 2:5) and parts of the body (Eph. 4:16) are built up and edified into mature Christlikeness by pastoral teaching that equips each member for mutual edifying ministry of the Spirit’s gifts (1 Cor. 14:4–5, 12, 26; Eph. 4:13–16; Heb. 10:25; 1 Pet. 4:10). To that end, members need one another (1 Cor. 12:21) and should not neglect to gather regularly for exhortation (Heb. 10:25), for apostolic instruction (1 Tim. 4:11, 13) by Scripture reading (1 Tim. 4:13; Col. 4:16) and preaching (2 Tim. 4:2), for prayer (1 Tim. 2:1, 8; Col. 4:2), for fellowship (Acts 2:42), for evangelism (Mt. 28:19–20), for singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), and for giving (1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 9:7; 1 Tim. 6:17–19). Each of these activities is worship, which is the ultimate goal of the church gathering (Jn. 4:21–24; Rom. 15:9)—“our offering up to God the united spiritual responses of which He alone is worthy” (Pastor Mark Minnick). The NT pattern is to gather on the first day of the week, the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), in celebration of Jesus’ resurrection (Mt. 28:1, 6).

Beyond these acts of worship, Jesus has commanded two specific ordinances for the church to observe, and they are not sacramental but symbolical. Baptism is to be by immersion as a picture of the believer’s union with Christ in death, burial, and resurrection unto the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36–39; Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:11–12; also, the verb βαπτίζω means to immerse). Though baptism is not a requirement for salvation in situations where it cannot be performed (Lk. 23:43) and therefore does not regenerate or have any part in saving a sinner, it is the mechanism Jesus ordained for believers to publically declare their faith in and allegiance to Him (Mt. 28:18–19; Acts 2:38; 8:35–36; 16:31–34). This public declaration is Jesus’ first command to His followers, and so refusal to obey calls into question the genuineness of one’s faith as repentant (see discussion of saving faith above). Though baptism is the sign of the NT covenant community parallel with circumcision in the OT era (Gen. 17:11; Col. 2:11–12), it is not also for infants because babies entered the OT covenant community by birth while we enter the NT covenant community by faith (Heb. 8:11).

The Lord's Supper is a memorial commemorating of the Lord's death until He comes, meaning that the bread and fruit of the vine are only symbols of the body and blood of Jesus (Mt. 26:26–29; 1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:17–34) because Jesus' sacrifice was once-for-all on the cross (Heb. 10:10, 18). This supper is a visible enacting of the church members' common participation in Christ and His body (1 Cor. 10:17; 11:17–34). It is a means of grace only in the restoring benefit of self-examination with confession and remembrance of Jesus' death for us (Mt. 26: 28; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:28, 31).

The Leadership and Polity of the Church: Jesus is the church's head (Col. 1:18) and chief Shepherd (Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4), and He mediates that rule in each local church through its undershepherds, also known as elders and overseers (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:1–2; 5:17; 1 Thes. 5:12–14; 1 Pet. 5:1; Heb. 13:17). If they meet the required qualifications including being male (1 Tim. 2:12; 3:1–7; Tit. 1:5–9), churches should have multiple elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5) who oversee and protect the church (Acts 20:28–30; Heb. 13:17) and among whom some labor vocationally in the ministry of the Word and doctrine (1 Tim. 5:17–18), for that ministry is central to the life of the church (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:1–4). Among these vocational elders, the local church should have a single primary pastoral leader and preacher (Acts 15:13; 2 Tim. 4:2; Rev. 1:20). The church should also have deacons who are qualified (Acts 6:3, 5; 1 Tim. 3:8–13) and serve the needs of the church and assist the elders in its administration (Acts 19:22), thereby freeing the elders to minister the Word and pray (Acts 6:1–7). The polity of the local church should be congregational: though elders lead and should be followed (Heb. 13:17), the congregation has the authority to make general decisions (Acts 13:1–3; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19) to appoint its elders and deacons (Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25), to appraise sound doctrine (Acts 15:3–4, 22–30; Gal. 1:6–9; 1 Thes. 5:21; 1 Jn. 4:1), and to exercise church discipline (Mt. 18:17–18; 1 Cor. 5:4–6; 2 Cor. 2:6–7). The members of the local church, therefore, are the accountability for their fellow members and church leadership (Gal. 6:1–3), and this joint responsibility for the church's spiritual health requires church membership, which is the NT pattern (Acts 2:41, 47; 6:5; 1 Cor. 5:12; 2 Cor. 2:6; 1 Tim. 5:9–12; Heb. 10:25). Scripture never speaks of any ecclesiastical authority above local churches, so their relationship to other local churches and ecclesiastical bodies is one of fellowship only, and they are not governed by the separate sphere (Mt. 22:21) of civil government or state religions, though they should submit to any government ordinances (Rom. 13:1–5; 1 Pet. 2:13, 17) that do not contradict God (Acts 5:29).

The Unity and Holiness of the Church: Jesus died to bring about a unified church (Jn. 10:16–18) by which God could display His wisdom and glory (Eph. 2:11–3:13), and so Jesus gave the love which produces that unity (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:14) as the mark of His followers (Jn. 13:35) and asks the Father for that unity (Jn. 17:23). Unity of fellowship or ministry partnership, however, is on the basis of sound doctrine and holiness of life (2 Jn. 9–11) because Jesus also died for the church's purity (Eph. 5:25–27), and so it must be guarded by church leadership (Acts 20:28–30; Jude 3–4). The church's holiness is founded on the holiness (i.e., separateness) of God (Ex. 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2). God's people in the OT were to imitate that holiness in practical decisions to remain undefiled (e.g., Lev. 11:44–47). Although not all specific commandments/applications of the practice of separation are carried over into the NT, the principle of imitation of God's holiness in practical decisions to avoid defilement is carried over (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; 1 Pet. 1:15–16; 2:9). Specifically, NT believers are to be separate/distinct from the corruption of the world (Rom. 12:1–2; Jas. 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Jn. 2:15–17), of unbelieving false teachers (Rom. 16:17–18; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Gal. 1:8–9; 2 Jn. 7–11), and of persistently disobedient brethren living in sin (Mt. 18:15–17; 2 Thes. 3:6–15; Tit. 3:10), including the sin of joining in Christian fellowship with those compromising doctrine (Gal. 2:11). With the goal of repentance and restoration (Gal. 6:1; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20) followed by forgiveness (2 Cor. 2:5–11), the local church must purge out these impurities through the steps of church discipline (Mt. 18:15–17).

Angelology: The Doctrine of Angels

Angels are not a race (Mt. 22:30) but rather each a unique creation of God (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:2, 5), a vast number of them (Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11). Angels are personal beings (Lk. 8:28; 15:10; Heb. 1:6; 1 Pet. 1:12) who are nonmaterial (Lk. 24:39; Heb. 1:14), typically unseen (2 Kings 6:17; Col. 1:16), everlasting (Lk. 20:36), and powerful (Mt. 28:2; Heb. 2:7; 2 Pet. 2:11), but not omnipotent nor omnipresent (Dan. 10:13) nor omniscient (1 Pet. 1:12). As moral beings, all angels were created holy before God (Jude 6), and some continue to be holy (Mk. 8:38; Rev. 14:10). They attend and worship God in Heaven (Is. 6:1–4; Rev. 5:11–12) and do God’s bidding in creation (Gen. 19:13; Ps. 103:20–21; Heb. 1:7, 14), apparently with local assignments (Dan. 10:12–14, 20–21; Mt. 18:10; Acts 12:15), such as serving as His messengers (Mt. 1:20; Heb. 2:2; Rev. 1:1), serving and protecting His people (Ps. 91:11–12; Heb. 1:14), and pouring out His eschatological wrath (Mt. 13:41–42; 2 Thes. 1:7–8; Rev. 16). Angels worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6), for He is superior to them (Heb. 1–2), but they should never be worshiped or prayed to (Col. 2:18; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rev. 19:10; 22:8–9).

Satan is the arch-enemy of God. He is not, however, God’s counterpart as a rival deity but rather is an angel created by God to lead the angelic company (Mt. 12:24) who fell by prideful attempt to usurp God and was cast out of Heaven (Is. 14:12–17; Ezek. 28:11–19; Jn. 8:44; Rev. 12:9; cf. Job 1:6; 2:1). One-third of the angels joined Satan’s rebellion against God (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:3–4) and now are Satan’s “demons” and “unclean spirits” (Mt. 25:41; Mk. 1:23; Jas. 2:19; Rev. 12:7). Sin entered creation when Satan tempted Eve by deception and she gave the fruit to Adam (Gen. 3:1–6; 2 Cor. 11:3), and since then Satan has deceived the whole world (Jn. 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:14; Rev. 12:9) and accuses believers before God (Rev. 12:10). Though currently ruling the world and sinners (Mt. 12:26; Jn. 8:44; Eph. 2:2; 1 Jn. 5:19), Satan cannot act apart from God’s sovereign permission (Job 1:9–12; Mt. 12:28; 1 Jn. 4:4). Though Satan and His demons do possess unbelievers (Mk. 1:23; 5:2; 12:43–45) and can tempt (Lk. 22:31) and afflict Christians (2 Cor. 12:7), they cannot separate us from God’s redeeming love (Rom. 8:38–39) or possess us (1 Cor. 6:19; 1 Jn. 4:4; 5:18). They fight against God and His people (Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12), and we can and must resist (Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8–9), not physically (2 Cor. 10:4) but by circumspection (2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:8), believing God’s words (Mt. 4:4), taking up God’s armor in prayer (Eph. 6:10–20), taking captive our thoughts to obey Christ (2 Cor. 10:3–5), and humbly depending on God’s grace (Jas. 4:6). Christ has sealed Satan’s doom (Gen. 3:15; Jn. 12:31; Col. 2:15), and Satan will one day be cast into the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:7–10) with his demons (Mt. 25:41; 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). There is no plan for their redemption (Heb. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:12; 2 Pet. 2:4).

Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things

The vast array of yet-unfulfilled covenant promises made to Israel (Jer. 33:14; Rom. 11:1–2) necessitates a dispensational hermeneutic that expects God to keep His word literally. God has graciously expanded some promises to include Gentiles (particularly those of the New Covenant; 2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8–12), and the church universal is therefore the place where Jesus presently manifests His mediatorial kingdom in the church age (Acts 2:22–36; Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; Eph. 1:20–23; Col. 1:13). But the church has not replaced Israel, and the kingdom promises made to Israel must at least in part be ultimately fulfilled to Israel in a future national geopolitical kingdom (Mt. 19:28; Rev. 21:12), including a national conversion (Zech. 13:1; Rom. 11:25–27) when Israel sees Christ (Zech. 12:10). This hermeneutic fits with a futurist interpretation of Revelation.

The next event on God’s calendar is the immanent, personal, pretribulational, bodily return of Christ to rapture his people (Mt. 24:42, 44; 25:13; Lk. 12:40; Jn. 14:3; Acts 1:10–11; 1 Cor. 11:26; 1 Thes. 4:13–5:10; Heb. 10:37; Rev. 3:10; 22:20), including raising those asleep in Christ and glorifying both those alive and asleep (1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Thes. 4:16–17; 1 Jn. 3:2). They will then

stand before the judgement seat of Christ in Heaven (Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:9–10; 1 Jn. 2:28). After the saved are removed (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thes. 5:9), the next seven years will be a time of tribulation on the earth (Rev. 6–18) when God will pour out His unprecedented wrath (Mt. 24:21; 1 Thes. 5:1–3; 2 Thes. 2:12; Rev. 3:10; 6:15–17; 14:7). Jesus will then return to earth (the Second Coming) with his saints (Jude 14) and angels (Mt. 25:31) to destroy His enemies and set up His earthly millennial kingdom (Is. 2:1–5; 11; 65; Zech. 9:9–10; 14:1–5, 9; Mt. 24:29–31; Acts 1:6–7; 1 Thes. 3:13; Rev. 19:11–20:6). At the end of this millennium, Jesus will put down a great rebellion, and the Devil will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7–10). Dead unbelievers in Hades (Lk. 16:22–23) will be reunited with their bodies (Dan. 12:2; Jn. 5:25–29; Rev. 20:13) to stand in the great white throne judgment where Jesus will judge (Acts 17:31) and all those not found written in the book of life will also be cast bodily (Mt. 18:8) into the lake of fire (also called *gehenna*; Mk. 9:43–44; Rev. 14:9–12; 20:11–15). This is the “second death.” Hell is a literal lake of fire where as the just punishment for their sin against God those who die without Christ will be separated from God forever as the fundamental element of their suffering (2 Thes. 1:9) in addition to conscious physical torment (Mt. 8:12; 13:41–42, 49–50; 18:8; 25:41, 46; Mk. 9:43–48; Rom. 2:1–11; 2 Thes. 1:7–10; Jude 6–7, 13; Rev. 20:10–15; 21:8). Annihilationism, universalism, the metaphorical view of Hell, and purgatory are unbiblical teachings. Heaven is the holy abode of God (Ps. 24:3–4; 115:3; Mt. 6:9) and the location of God’s throne (Mt. 23:22). It is the true sanctuary in which Christ now serves as our High Priest (Heb. 7:28–10:18) and sits at the Father’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; Eph. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:22) where we have our citizenship and wait for the coming of Jesus (Phil. 3:20). In fulfilment of the Davidic promises (Jer. 23:5–6; 33:14–22; Rev. 21:7) as the ultimate reclamation of Adam’s lost dominion (1 Cor. 15:23–28; Heb. 2:5–17), Jesus will rule forever in a new heaven and new earth free from the curse (Is. 65:17–18; 66:22–23; Lk. 1:33; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21–22), and we will share in that rule (2 Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:5–17; Rev. 5:10; 22:5) and dwell with God forever (Rev. 22:1–4). “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).