

STATEMENT OF FAITH

[1] I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (66 books) are the verbally inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original languages and the complete, sufficient, and final authority in faith and life. I hold to a literal, historical, grammatical and contextual interpretation of Scripture (II Peter 1:20, 21; II Timothy 3:16, 17).

[2] I believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deut. 6:4; II Cor. 13:14).

[3] I believe that God created the universe without pre-existing materials, in six literal days, according to the Genesis account (Gen. 1-3; John 1:1; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 11:3).

[4] I believe that Jesus Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit; born of the Virgin Mary; lived among men; suffered, bled, and died; was buried; raised from the dead; ascended to the right hand of the Father; intercedes for us; and is true God and true man (Luke 1:35; Luke 2:6, 7, 52; Matthew 27:29, 30, 35, 50; Luke 23:50-56; Acts 2:24, 33; I John 2:1; John 10:30; I John 4:2, 3).

[5] I believe in the deity of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity (Acts 5:3, 4; John 14:16, 17; John 16:13). In His ministry of exalting Christ, He fills, empowers, and gives service gifts to every believer at salvation (Romans 12:6-8), but the sign gifts of 1 Cor. 12 were only for the apostolic period (Heb. 2:3-4; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 13:8-13).

[6] I believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred both physical and spiritual death; that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners in thought, word and deed (Genesis 1:26, 27; Romans 3:22, 23; Romans 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).

[7] I believe that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, as our representative and substitutionary sacrifice; and that all who repent and believe on Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood (I Cor. 5:3; I Peter 3:18; Romans 3:24-26; Luke 13:3-5).

[8] I believe that all who receive by faith the Lord Jesus Christ are born again of the Holy Spirit and thereby become children of God; that they are indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit; and are secure in Him until the day of redemption (John 1:12; John 3:5; Ephesians 1:13).

[9] I believe that the Church is composed of all believers; that I am baptized by the Holy Spirit into His body, thus being members of one another. I believe in the establishment of independent local churches; that the local church is God's institution commissioned with the responsibility of world evangelization (Ephesians 1:22, 23; I Cor. 12:12, 13; Acts 13 & 14).

[10] I believe that Jesus Christ instituted two ordinances for the church: The Lord's Supper to commemorate His death until He comes; and water baptism by immersion to publicly portray the believer's spiritual union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (I Cor. 11:23-26; Matthew 28:19, 20; Romans 6:3, 4).

[11] I believe in "that blessed hope," the personal, imminent, pretribulational, premillennial coming of the Lord into the air for His saints. I believe in the personal, visible, and glorious return of Christ to the earth with His saints. I believe that Christ will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Titus 2:13; I Thess. 4:13-17; Rev. 19:11-16; Rev. 11-15; Rev. 20:1-10).

[12] I believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust; the everlasting blessedness of the saved in a literal heaven and the everlasting punishment of the lost in the Lake of Fire (John 5:28, 29; John 14:1-3; Rev.

20:11-15).

Detailed Doctrinal Statement

God

- I. I believe in the existence of one God in three persons; Father, Son and Holy Spirit (1Cor 8:6, Heb. 1:8-10, Acts 5:3-4, Deut. 6:4). God is also the cause of everything else that exists (Gen. 1:21).
 - A. I believe each of the three persons of the Godhead has the same essence as God and possesses the fullness of God. Each has a distinct relationship within the Trinity.
 - 1. I believe the son is eternally begotten from the father (John 1:18).
 - 2. I believe the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 14:26).
 - B. I believe each of three persons in the Godhead possesses equal authority (1Cor 8:6, John 5:21-23, Math 12:31).
- II. I believe in God's unity. God is one being (Gen. 1:1, Deut. 6:4).
- III. I believe in the simplicity of God. There are no parts within God's being (Ex. 20:3).
- IV. I believe in God's absolute attributes.
 - A. I believe God's foundational attribute is His holiness. His holiness sets Him apart, and makes Him drastically unique from all His creation (Exodus 15:11).
 - B. I believe God's Spirituality. John 4:24 clearly points out that God is a spirit.
 - C. I believe in the self-existence of God. He is independent but causes everything to depend upon Him (Exodus 3:14).
 - D. I believe in God's Immutability. He is absolutely perfect, and cannot change at any time (Malachi 3:6).
 - E. I believe in the Truth of God. His word and His revelation are completely reliable (Num. 23:19).
 - F. I believe that God is love. John 3:16 portrays the extent of His love in that He sent His Son to die for the sins of the world.
 - G. I believe in God's goodness. Luke declares in Mark 10:18 that no one is good except God.
- V. I believe in God's relative attributes.
 - A. I believe God is eternal. Psalm 90:2 says He is from everlasting to everlasting. He has no beginning point and no ending point. He is infinite.
 - B. I believe in God's immensity. He is not limited by space. The heavens cannot contain Him (1kings 8:27).
 - C. I believe God is Omnipresent. He is everywhere at all times (Psalm 139:7-12).
 - D. I believe God is Omniscient. He knows all things including actual things, variables that have not occurred, and all future events (Psalm 147:4, Mathew 11:21, Dan 2:36-43).
 - E. I believe God is omnipotent. He is all powerful (Gen 17:1).
 - F. I believe in God's moral attributes.
 - 1. I believe God is truth (Psalm 110:5).
 - 2. I believe God is merciful (Heb. 4:6).
 - 3. I believe in God's grace. God shows His grace by providing salvation through Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24).
 - 4. I believe God's justice. He rewards the obedient and punishes evil (Psalm 99:4, Rom 1:32).
- VI. I believe in God's decree. God is sovereign and He is absolutely in control of everything in the universe (Eph. 1:11).
 - A. I believe God's is for the purpose of bringing glory to Himself. Psalms 19:1 says that the Heavens declare His glory.
 - B. I believe in God's directive will in that He actively causes events to happen for example in Daniel 4:35, He controls the universe.
 - C. I believe in God's permissive will in that He lets things that are part of His eternal plan happen by secondary causes. In Genesis 37, Joseph's brothers sold him as a slave into Egypt but it was part of God's plan to save the nation of Israel.

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- D. I believe the decree of God is comprehensive in that it encompasses all things (Eph. 1:11). It covers things from eternity past to the future for example salvation of a believer being predetermined before the beginning of the world (2Tim 1:9).
- E. I believe God's plan is sovereign and wise. His plan does not depend on anything or anyone (Dan 4:35). His plan is the best plan for His glory and for our own good (Psalm 104:24)

VII. I believe God is the creator of all things (Gen 1).

VIII. I reject the following false theories:

- a. Process theology: The idea that reality is processive and God is interdependent with his creation
- b. Impassivity: the idea that God does not feel passion
- c. Open theism: rejects immutability, timeliness and foreknowledge

Inspiration

- I. I believe that inspiration is the preservation of God's special revelation
 - A. God has revealed Himself

It is true that God has revealed himself. Our extent of the knowledge of who God is, therefore, is limited by how much God has chosen to reveal himself. God's general revelation, that is, through creation (Ps. 19:1-6, Rom. 1:20), history (Acts 17:26, Job 12:23), and conscience (Rom. 2:11-16), though very useful, is heavily mired by the effects of sin (Gen. 3:16-19, Rom. 1:21). For that reason, Special revelation is necessary, especially for the salvation of mankind. Special revelation involves both Christ and the Bible, however, the person, the words, and the works of Jesus can only be known, surely, through the Bible. I believe that special revelation is both personal and propositional.

Since God is a personal being, his self-disclosure to humans is therefore personal. The scriptures record numerous accounts that attest to this personal nature of God's revelation. For example God reveals his personal name to Moses (Ex. 3:14), God makes a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15). Regarding the propositional nature of God's revelation, we see Moses recording specific words from the mouth of God (Ex. 20:1, Deut. 31: 24). Jeremiah 36:27-28 and Gal. 1:11-12, among others, too, illustrate this principle. As can be seen, God's special revelation is only available to us because God has preserved it.
 - B. God has preserved His revelation

Inspiration is the instrument through which God chose to preserve his divine revelation for all generations. In Isaiah 40:8, the prophet affirms the permanent nature of God's word in these words: "*The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.*" Similar statements appear in Matthew 5:18, and Luke 16:17. And although inspiration only applies to the original autographs, the thousands of extant manuscripts make it very possible to ascertain the original message. We can, therefore, know God today through the Bible – the work of God through human authors, resulting into an inerrant record of God's person and work, and His relationship to mankind.
- II. I believe that inspiration is a doctrine of the Bible

The fact that the Bible claims its own inspiration is inescapable. About 3800x the Bible clearly reports messages from God, introduced by phrases such as "Thus says the Lord" (Ex. 14:1, Lev. 4:1, Deut. 32:48, Isaiah. 1:10). Numerous New Testament writers also claimed the divine origin of their teachings (1 Jn. 4:6).

A. Jesus viewed the scriptures as inspired

It's important to note that one of the chief reasons for belief in the inspiration of the scripture is the fact that Jesus, our Lord and savior, also held the same view. Millard Erickson, in his *Christian Theology*, points out the fact that an inference about Jesus's view of Old Testament scriptures can be made from his interactions with the opposing Pharisees. Jesus always rebuked the Pharisee's wrong interpretation of scripture but assumed the authority and permanence of the scriptures themselves. In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus is responding to a misconception about the relationship of his role to the law. His answer is not an addition to or subtraction from the law, but an exposition highlighting the significance of the law and the prophets – which is a reference to the entire Old Testament. He illustrates the inspiration and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures by comparing them to the heavens and the earth. In John 10:35, Jesus affirms the inerrancy and the reliability of the scriptures as the backbone to an argument concerning his deity. Christ further affirmed the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament by quoting from it to make several arguments (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; Matt. 12:18-21).

B. The Apostles viewed the scriptures as inspired

In 1 Tim. 5:18, Paul makes a case for the honoring of Church elders while hinging his argument on the authority of the scriptures. He affirms the inspiration of both the New and Old Testaments by quoting from Deut. 25:4, and Luke 10:7. The classic passage regarding the inspiration of the scriptures occurs in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 where Paul contrasts the sound doctrine found in scripture, that Timothy is to hold on to, with the heresy of the false teachers. Here, Paul stresses that scriptures are of divine origin (God-breathed) and therefore very profitable. Peter's view on the scriptures is not any different from that espoused by Paul. In 2 Pet. 1:21, he emphasizes the dependability of the scriptures because of its divine origin. Ultimately, a product of the Holy Spirit. Peter, in 2 Pet. 3:16, also recognizes Paul's writings as inspired, and at the same level with the rest of the scriptures. Although the office of Apostle itself was not inspired, the testimony of these men indicates that some of their writings were indeed inspired by God.

III. I believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible.

A. Inspiration extends to the whole Bible.

A sound exegesis of 2 Tim. 3:16 reveals the scope of inspiration first of all to include the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures. However, inspiration is not limited to the Old Testament. Other passages such as 2 Pet. 1:19-21, and John 10:34-35 also support the same conclusion. Peter and John give credence to the New Testament writings by recognizing their divine nature. Besides the example in 2 Pet. 3:16, 1 John 4:6 records John, the apostle, describing his own words to be from God, and making them the dividing line between truth and error. In 1 Thess. 1:5 and 2:3, Paul affirms that the New Testament gospel is from the Holy Spirit, and is indeed the word of God.

B. Inspiration extends to the particular words of the Bible.

The way in which the apostles and Jesus use the Old Testament writings demonstrates the fact that inspiration extends to the very words penned by the sacred authors. Jesus's argument in John 10:35-36 is built on the plural of the word "gods" quoted from Psalm 82:6. In Matt. 22:32 he uses the tense of Exodus 3:6 to make his point. Paul, in Galatians 3:16, builds a case based on the singular form of the Hebrew word for offspring used in Gen. 12:7. From these examples,

we can conclude that since Jesus and the apostles considered these seemingly minute details in the scripture to be significant, they must have believed that the inspiration of the scriptures extended to every word used in the original autographs.

Man and Sin

- I. I believe man was created by God in the image of God (Gen. 1:27).
 - A. I believe God created both the male and female genders (Gen. 1:27).
- II. I believe in both the material and non-material part of man (2 Cor. 5:1; 1 Thess. 5:23).
 - A. I believe the body is the temple of God created for the purpose of glorifying God as opposed to self-indulgence (1 Cor. 6:19).
 - B. I believe the body should submit to God (Rom. 12:1).
 - C. I believe God created the non-material part of man in his image since God is Spirit (John 4:24; Gen. 1:26-27).
 - 1. I believe God created man with a personality therefore man possesses intellect, will and emotions.
 - 2. I believe God created man as a spiritual being with conscience, reason and will.
 - 3. I believe God originally created man righteous before man disobeyed God, and through Christ, man is being renewed to the image of his creator (Col. 3:10).
- III. I believe in the dichotomous view of man's composition (Gen. 2:7). I believe the words soul and spirit are interchangeable (Gen. 41:8; Psalm 42:6).
 - A. I believe the body and soul/spirit make up the whole person (Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 5:3).
- IV. I believe in the total depravity of mankind as result of Adam's disobedience in Gen. 3.
 - A. I believe sin dwells in every single individual from birth. Sin is imputed to each man because of Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12).
 - B. I believe the Christians conflict with sin arises from the world, the flesh, and the devil (1 John 2:16).
- V. I believe the result of sin is Judgment, and the punishment of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
- VI. I believe Christ is the only propitiation for sin (Rom. 3:19-26).
- VII. I believe God has provided Christians a way to keep away from sin.
 - A. I believe God has provided the word of God to equip man against sin (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
 - B. I believe Christ is intercedes for a Christian who has committed sin (Heb. 7:25, 1 John 2:1).
 - C. I believe the Holy Spirit dwelling in a Christian helps him to fight against sin (Gal. 5:16).

Christ

- I. I believe in the deity and pre-existence of Christ (John 1:1).
 - A. I believe Christ is Eternal. According to the gospel of John, Christ existed before His birth. Christ emphasizes His eternality in John 8:58 when He identifies himself as "I AM WHO I AM." He claimed to have always existed and continually existing even before Abraham. In Colossians 1:17 the apostle Paul points out that "[Christ] is before all things." Furthermore, Isaiah the prophet calls Him the "Eternal Father"
 - B. I believe Christ possesses all the divine attributes (Colossians 2:9). In Mathew 28:20, Christ confirms His omnipresence promising that He would be with the disciples at all times. Christ shows His omnipotence in the book of John by predicting His own death several times (John 16:21; 17:22). According to Mathew 28:18, Christ is omnipotent. All authority of heaven and earth have been given to Him. The writer of Hebrews states that "Jesus Christ [is] the same

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“yesterday, and today, and forever” that is to say He is immutable.

C. I believe Christ’s divine titles, works, and worship also demonstrate His deity. Titus 1:18 refers to Him as “[the] great God and Savior.” In John 1:3, He made all things. Hebrews 1:3, the sustainer of all things. The angels worship Him too in Hebrews 1:6.

II. I believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

- I believe in the virgin birth of Christ (Mathew 1:23). His virgin birth as predicted in Isaiah 7:14, guaranteed Christ sinless. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35).
- I believe in the two distinct natures of Christ: humanity (1 John 4:2) and deity (John 1:18). In Christ (one person) dwells two distinct natures. He is fully man and fully God.

III. I believe Christ was rejected, ridiculed, and crucified on the cross (Luke 23).

- I believe Christ died as a substitute on behalf of sinners (1 Peter 2:4).
- I believe Christ’s death provided redemption (Romans 6:20). When Christ died, He freed sinners from both the penalty and the dominion of sin (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- I believe Christ’s death was a propitiation (Romans 3:19-26). Christ’s death fully satisfied God’s wrath against sinners.
- I believe Christ’s death resulted into forgiveness (Colossians 2:13), and justification (Romans 5:1). By Christ’s death, sinners can legally receive forgiveness from God and be declared righteous.

IV. I believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ (Jn. 2:22; Matt. 26:39; 1 Cor. 15:17; Jn. 16:7; Mk. 14:28).

V. I believe Christ ascended into heaven (Luke 16:19; John 17:5; Hebrews 6:20).

VI. I believe in the offices of Christ as prophet (Acts 3:22-23), priest (Hebrews 5:6-10), and king (Isaiah 9:6-7). Christ as a prophet, has revealed God to mankind. As a priest, He is the intercessor of mankind. And as Prophesied several times in the Old Testament, He is the King from the tribe of Judah.

VII. I believe in the present ministry of Christ in His Church.

- I believe Christ is building His church. He has formed His church by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). He is the ultimate head of the church (Colossians 1:18) that is to say He gives direction through His word (Ephesians 5:26). Christ natures and progressively sanctifies the Church (Ephesians 5:25-30). He is also responsible for giving gifts for the purpose of building up the church (Ephesians 4:8, 11-13).
- I believe Christ is praying for the believers. According to Romans 8:34, He is the mediator between God and man. He restores broken fellowship (1 John 2:1), and He is working to yield fruit in the lives of believers (John 15:1-7).

VIII. I believe Christ is preparing a heavenly home for believers (John 14:1-3), and He is coming back to take His church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). He will also return to judge all unbelievers and the devil (Revelations 19:11-21).

Salvation

- I believe God started the work of salvation from eternity (Acts 2:23; Rev. 13:8). God announced the plan of salvation at the fall (Gen. 3:15-21).
- I believe in the total depravity of all mankind (Eph. 2:1-10; Rom. 3:10-12).
- I believe in the substitutionary atonement of Christ (2Cor. 5:21). I believe Christ died on behalf of sinners so as to reconcile them back to God.

- A. Redemption: I believe Christ has purchased believers from slavery to sin, and has set them free (1Cor. 6:20). Christ has set believers free from the law and its condemnation(Gal. 3:13).
- B. Reconciliation: I believe that through Christ, God has removed the barrier of sin hence producing peace, and enabling man to be saved (Rom. 5:10).
- C. Propitiation: I believe the death of Christ has fully satisfied God's legal requirements toward sinners (Heb. 2:17).
- D. Forgiveness: I believe through Christ's death, God has removed the charges that were held against sinners (Eph. 1:7).
- E. Justification: I believe because of the death and resurrection of Christ, all who put their faith in Jesus are declared righteous (Rom. 5:9). I believe justification is a free gift from God (Rom. 3:24), and it takes place at the moment an individual repents and puts his faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 4:2).

IV. I believe in the unlimited atonement of Christ. Christ died for the sins of all mankind but only those who believe in Him are saved (cf. John 1:29; 3:16, 1John 4:14).

V. I believe salvation is a work of the Father. I believe God sovereignly acts to secure the salvation of sinners.

- A. Election: I believe God, in His sovereign pleasure has chosen some people to be the recipients of His special grace and eternal salvation (Eph. 1:4). Israel is elect (Deut. 7:6), angels are elect (1 Tim. 5:21), the Levitical priests were elect (Deut. 18:5), Jeremiah the prophet was elect (Jer. 1:5), and believers are elect (Eph. 1:4).
- B. Predestination: I believe God has secured the salvation of His people from Justification to Glorification (Eph. 1:11).
- C. Adoption: I believe every believer is released from bondage under the law and is given a new relationship as a son of God (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15).

VI. I believe salvation is a work of Christ. The work of Christ involves his death as a substitutionary atonement for sin, so as to fulfill the righteous requirement of a Holy God, and consequently secure the salvation of mankind.

- A. Personal sanctification: Because of the death of Christ, the believer has a righteous standing before God.
- B. Experiential sanctification: This relates to the daily life of a believer. A believer should be nourished daily by the word (1Peter 1:16; Ps. 119:9-16).
- C. Ultimate sanctification: The believer will be transformed into the likeness of Christ (Eph. 26-27).

VII. I believe salvation is a work of the Holy Spirit. I believe the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer to give him a spiritual life (Titus 3:5).

VIII. I believe man's responsibility in salvation is believing the gospel (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 12:44; Acts 16:31).

- A. Knowledge: Salvation involves the intellect and one must believe the basic truths (Rom. 10: 9-10).
- B. Conviction: One must be emotionally convicted of the truths about God (John 16:8-11).
- C. Trust: Knowledge and conviction about Christ lead to trust in Him (Rom. 10:9).

IX. I believe in the sovereign grace of God.

- Common grace: God's unmerited favor towards all mankind demonstrated in His care for them (Math 5:45). God's common grace restrains sin (Rom. 13:1-4). God's common grace also convicts of sin (John 16:8-11). Common grace is preliminary to efficacious grace (Rom. 1:20).
- Efficacious grace: Also known as special grace, is the grace that allows men to believe in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:5-6). Special grace involves the drawing power of God (John 6:44).

X. I believe in the regeneration of believers through the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Regeneration is the act where by God imparts life to the one who believes. Regeneration results into a new life and a new nature (2 Peter 1:4; 1Cor. 5:17).

- Regeneration is instantaneous.
- Regeneration is not the result of Human experience.
- Regeneration is not based on Human effort (John 1:13).

XI. I believe in the eternal security of the salvation that God grants to believers.

- Believers are secure because the Father has chosen, and predestined them for salvation before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-5).
- Believers are redeemed by Christ (Eph. 1:7), the wrath of God is removed from believers by Christ (Rom. 3:25), Believers are justified by Christ (Rom 5:1). Christ forgives believers (Col. 2:13), Christ Sanctifies the believer (1 Cor. 1:2), Christ prays for believers (John 17:24), Christ is the believers advocate (1 John 2:1); Christ continues to make intercession for the believer as a High Priest (Heb. 7:25). Christ is effective in His work therefore the believer's salvation is secure.
- The Holy Spirit regenerates the believer (Titus 3:5), indwell in the believer (John 14:17), seals the believer to the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). According to 1 Cor. 12:13, the believer is baptized into union with Christ and into the body of believers. For a believer to lose his salvation, would demand reversal of the union with Christ and all the works of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Church

I. I believe the church was first predicted by Jesus Christ and founded at Pentecost.

- Jesus predicted the founding of the Church (Matt. 16: 13-20).

In Mathew 16:18, Christ declares that He will build His church and gates of hell will not prevail against it.

- The Church was founded at Pentecost (Acts 2).

The Church was formed when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and Peter was the first to preach at the event just as Christ had predicted. 1 Cor. 12:13 indicates that the Holy Spirit is responsible for baptizing believers into the body of Christ (Eph. 1:2-23).

II. I believe in the two aspects of the Church.

- The Local church.

The local church is a local assembly or congregation of believers. Some examples of the local church in the New Testament include the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:22), the church in Asia Minor (Acts 16:5), and the church in Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) among others.

- The universal Church.

The universal church refers to all people that have been and will be born of the Spirit and baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Pet. 1:3, 22-25).

III. I believe Christ's prediction of the formation of the Church in Matt. 16 refers to the universal

Church.

A. The Church is the body.

Just as a head gives direction to the physical body, Christ is the head of body (church) giving direction to it (Eph. 1:22-23, Col. 1:18). The church is united as one body in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

B. The Church is the bride.

Just like a married couple is bound by love, Christ loved the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:2, 25). The church awaits the return of her husband (Rev. 19:7-9).

C. The Church is a building.

The apostle Paul stresses that God has taken away the wall separating the Jews and the gentiles (Eph. 2:11-18). Christ is the Cornerstone of the building (church) according to Eph. 2:20.

D. The Church is a priesthood.

1 Peter 2:9 refers to believers as a “royal priesthood.” Rev. 1:6 also calls believers kings and priests.

E. The Church is the flock.

John 10:16 describes the relationship between Christ and Church as Christ being the good shepherd and Church being the flock.

F. The Church is the branches and Christ is the vine (John 15:1).

IV. I believe the church is a distinct institution.

A. The Church is distinct from Israel.

The apostle Paul maintains the distinction between Israel and the church when he warns believers not to offend others (1 Cor. 10:32). He also recognizes the distinction in Acts 3:12; 4:8, 5:21, 21:19).

B. The Church is distinct from the Kingdom.

The terms church and kingdom are never used interchangeably in scripture.

V. I believe the Church should carry out its God-ordained functions.

A. Worship: True worship must be of spiritual nature (John 4:24). It involves the presentation of the believer's entire being to God (Rom. 12:1-2).

B. Instruction: All scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17) is necessary for combating false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3). The Church in the New Testament was devoted to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42).

C. Fellowship: Because of their fellowship, Paul instructs the believers to love one another (Eph. 4:2), refrain from judging one another (Rom. 14:3), and build up one another (Rom. 14:19).

D. Ministry: This involves evangelism to unbelievers (Acts 8:4), and exercising of spiritual gifts among believers (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12)

E. Edification: Believers should become more like Christ (Eph. 4:13).

F. Discipline: Mathew 18:15-20 lays out the procedure to be followed by the church when administering church discipline.

G. Ordinances: The Church is to practice ordinances such as baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41, 1 Cor. 11:23-24).

VI. I believe the local Church should have qualified God Ordained leaders to care for the spiritual welfare of the people (Heb. 13:17).

A. Elders to shepherd the flock (Acts 14:23; 15:2, 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17).

B. Deacons serve or minister (Acts 6:1-6, 1 Tim. 3:8-13).

VII. I believe/ adhere to the congregational form of Church government (Acts 15:12, 22-25, Col. 1:18, 1 Peter 2:9). All believers are responsible for correct doctrine by testing all spirits (1 John 4:1).

VIII. I believe the distinctive Characteristics of a local Church are membership, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

IX. I believe the Church should separate from the world, from false teachers, and from disobedient brothers

Eschatology

I. Individual Eschatology
 A. Death

I believe that death is real and inevitable for all humans. In this present world of sin, all must pass through death before reaching God's judgment (Heb. 9:27). All of 1 Cor. 15 presupposes and expressly states that "in Adam all die" (v. 22). Only the resurrection will vanquish the sting of death (vv. 54–56). The ever-diminishing vitality and strength of the human body confirms that death is only the end point of the deterioration of our natural bodies (2 Cor. 4:11–12). I believe that those who deny the reality of death are seriously mistaken. Death is neither extinction nor mere inexistence. Scripture speaks of death in four ways: physical, spiritual, eternal, and the second death.

Physical death is the separation of life from the body. It is a complete termination of life from the physical body, a loss of life (Luke 12:4–5; Jn. 13:37–38). Death is also a separation of the body and soul/spirit (Gen. 35:18; Eccl. 12:7). God breathed life into dust to create man (Gen. 2:7). The absence of a spirit in a body is death (James 2:26). Those who die physically do not cease to exist, but are transformed into a different realm. Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16 continued to exist after death. Paul spoke of absence in the body as presence with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). For believers, Physical death is gain (Phil. 1:23).

Spiritual death is insensitivity to spiritual things (2 Cor. 12: 14). It is a state of separation from God in which all people are born (Ps. 51:5). This is because Adam's sin brought death and condemnation to the entire human race (Rom. 5:12–14). Spiritual death is, therefore, with reference to transgression and sin (Eph. 2:1–2). Jesus conquered death (both physical and spiritual), and him who has the power of death through His death and resurrection (Heb. 2:14).

Eternal death is the never-ending punishment that results from spiritual death that persists all the way till physical death. Ezekiel 18:4 states that "the soul who sins will die." The wages of sin is death, and the only remedy for that death is God's gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23). When Christ returns to judge the world, those who have not obeyed the Gospel "will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9).

The second death is eternal death. Those who die in sin (murder, immorality, idolatry, etc.) will burn in a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). Believers will not experience the second death. Because believers share in the first resurrection, the second death has no power over them (Rev. 20:6).

B. The Intermediate State

I believe that all Christians who die before the second coming of Christ immediately enter into the presence of Christ. This was true of Paul's expectation (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:22–24), and that of Stephen (Acts 7:59). Jesus's promise to the contrite thief on the cross also confirms the intermediate state of the believer. He said to the thief, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Believers in the intermediate state possess a body. Moses and Elijah appeared on the Mountain of Transfiguration in corporeal form (Matt. 17:3–4). Rev. 6:10–11 speaks of the slain witnesses crying out "with a loud voice," and wearing "white robes." It is only at the resurrection, however, that believers receive a glorified body (2 Cor. 5:1–2). Believers in the intermediate state also rest from the labor and suffering associated with life on earth (Rev. 14:13). According to Rev. 6:9–11, believers in the intermediate state are aware of the situation on earth, and long for justice (v. 10). Though in heaven, the

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intermediate state is not the final destination (Rev. 5:10, 19:11–21).

I believe that the intermediate state for all non-Christians is *hades*. The rich man in the story of Lazarus died and went to *Hades* (Luke 16:19–31). *Hades* refers to the abode of all the dead, but it might be that the wicked are tormented while in *Hades* (Luke 16: 23). There is also some indication that believers do not go to *Hades* (Matt. 16:18–19; Acts 2:31).

I reject the errant view of the intermediate state known as “soul sleep” which teaches that the dead lie in a state of unconsciousness while they await resurrection. The Seventh Day Adventists hold this view, while the Jehovah Witnesses subscribe to a similar one called “soul extinction.” This view misunderstands the sleep imagery used in the New Testament in reference to death (Acts 7:60, 13:26; 1 Cor. 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13–15; John 11:11). This view is inconsistent with the scriptural references to a conscious existence after death but before the resurrection.

I also reject the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. This view is based on Hebrews 9:27 which states that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Others cite Matt. 12:32, and 1 Cor. 3:15 as additional support. The Roman Catholics believe that this is a preliminary judgment that immediately follows death for each individual. Those who are found wicked at the time of death go to hell, while those who are found in a state of penitence go to heaven. Furthermore, those who are penitent but not spiritually perfect because of venial sins go into purgatory to be punished for a time. In addition the fact that this doctrine is based on the heresy of salvation by works, it clearly violates scriptural teaching in many ways (Gal. 3:1–14; Eph. 2:8–10).

I reject the recent view of instantaneous resurrection. This view argues that believers immediately receive a glorified body after death. This too, is not in keeping with the general teaching of scripture concerning the future resurrection, glorification, and the second coming (Phil. 3:20–21; Rom. 2:3–16; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Thess. 1:5–2:12; 2 Tim. 4:8;).

C. Resurrection

I believe that the Scriptures teach the bodily resurrection of all people. Just as all die, all will be resurrected at the time of God’s choosing. Isaiah declares, in a song of praise to God, “But your dead will live, Lord; their bodies will rise” (26:19). Daniel makes it clear that, in the end times, “multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:2). Ezekiel 17: 12–14; Psalm 17:15, 49:15, 73:24–25; and Proverbs 23:14 are among the many Old Testament witnesses to the doctrine of the resurrection. In the New Testament, Jesus rebukes the Sadducees for not understanding the Scriptural teaching about the resurrection (Mark 12:24) before declaring that God is not a God of the dead (vv. 26–27). Jesus puts it this way: “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned” (John 5:28–29).

Believers will be resurrected and given glorified bodies. Paul addresses the doctrine of the resurrection in great detail in his letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15). Believers follow after Christ who died and rose again the third day (15:4, 12, 21). Believers receive imperishable heavenly bodies at the resurrection (38–45). At the rapture, Christ will descend with the souls of dead saints and reunite them with the resurrected bodies (1 Thess. 4:14–16). The new heaven and the new earth make up the final destination of believers (Rev. 21:1).

Non-believers also get a bodily resurrection, but they are not glorified. In fact, resurrection for non-believers means judgement (Dan. 12: 2; Jn. 5:28–29). This judgment ends in a place of eternal torment (Isa. 66:24; Rev. 20:15)

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called hell (Matt. 5:22, 10:28, 23:33; Mark 9:43). It is a place of “unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 48), eternal fire (Matt. 25:41), “a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 21:8). It is also described as a place of “outer darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). In the Old Testament, *sheol* simply refers to the grave (Job 17:13; Ps. 16:10; Isa. 38:10). The New Testament commonly uses *hades* to denote the afterlife. It can simply refer to death (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:27, 31; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14), but it is also used in reference to the place of torment for non-believers (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; 16:23). *Gehenna* appears twelve times in connection with eternal punishment (Matt. 23:15, 33; 25:41, 46). Other terms include *Tartaroo* (2 Pet. 2:4); *Abyss* (Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1, 2, 11; 20:1–3).

I reject the doctrine of universalism which claims that all people will eventually be saved. This doctrine contradicts the Bible’s teaching on hell.

I reject the errant view of annihilationism which contends that the wicked become nonexistent at death. The Bible promises eternal fire for the wicked (Matt. 25:41).

I also reject the idea that the wicked will only get spiritual punishment in terms of separation from God but not physical torment.

II. General Eschatology

A. Hermeneutical Foundations for Eschatology

I believe that dispensationalism provides the most accurate hermeneutical framework for interpreting Bible prophecy. I believe Scripture supports the categorizing of God’s work into differing dispensations. While more can be demonstrated on the basis of scripture, I believe that there are at least three strictly distinct dispensations in God’s dealing with man. These include the Old Testament, The New Testament, and the kingdom. The term dispensation is based on the Greek *oikonomia* (stewardship). It is used in both the gospels (Lk. 16:2–4), and the epistles (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2, 9; Col. 1:25). Paul’s teaching in Eph. 1:10 identifies a period of time (dispensation) when “the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.” Paul makes a distinction between the church-age and the dispensation when the Mosaic law ruled (Eph. 3:2, 9). Elsewhere Scripture declares that believers are no longer under the law but under grace (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:19–25). God has appointed man as an administrator in His household. He blesses obedience, but those who fail under testing receive judgement.

I believe in the characteristically literal approach to interpreting Scripture. This means that in dealing with any passage of scripture, we must strive for normalcy as the rule of thumb. Literal interpretation involves figures of speech, symbols, and types. Even symbols possess a literal meaning. Figures of speech are only intelligible because they are tied to literal language. Where scripture identifies a symbol as such, we must recognize it correctly. Philosophy recognizes that the purpose of human language is to put real sense-experience objects into words. If God communicates to man as a normal rational being, then scriptural language must be viewed as normal human communication. A literal hermeneutic is also warranted by Scripture because all the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled literally. These include the birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah. Not only is a literal hermeneutic the only consistent approach, without it there is no objectivity in interpretation.

I believe the Church is distinct from Israel. Scripture speaks of the Church as a unique and new institution, one that was previously an unknown mystery (Matt. 16:16–18; Acts 2; Eph. 2:19–22). God made an irrevocable covenant

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with the Jews. Israel will not cease from being a nation before God (Jer. 31:35–37). God has not rejected his people (Rom. 11:1–2). God promised to give Israel the land (Gen. 17:8; Heb. 6:18; Ps. 105:8–11; 1 Chron. 16:15–18). God has not revoked His promise to Israel (Rom. 9:3–5, 11:29). The Old Testament expectation aligns with a future restoration of ethnic Israel (Deut. 30:1–6; Jer. 30–33; Ezek. 36–39; Amos 9:11–15; Zech. 12–14; Zeph. 3:14–20; Isa. 60). Furthermore, the New Testament confirms this expectation (Matt. 19:28, Luke 21:24, 22:30; Acts 1:6–7; Rom. 11:26–27). And if God does not keep his promises to the Israelites, then what precedent shall New Testament believers have for trusting Him?

I believe God will fulfil all His promises just as he said he will. There's therefore no need to re-interpret or spiritualize what God has said. The events of Dan. 9:24–27, Matt. 24–25, Rev. 6–20, 2 Thess. 2, and 2 Peter 3 all await future fulfilment.

B. System of Eschatology

I believe Scripture teaches that there will be a literal millennial kingdom after the return of Jesus Christ but before the final judgment. This position is known as dispensational premillennialism. According to this view, the second coming of Christ will happen in two distinct phases with a seven-year gap in between. The church will be raptured before the great tribulation, and the works of believers will be judged at the rapture. Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raptured after the tribulation, at which time Jews and Gentiles will be judged. Unbelievers will be judged at the end of the millennium. Dispensational premillennialism is different from the amillennial position which rejects the literal one thousand-year reign of Christ on earth subsequent to the final judgement, and views the second coming as a single event ushering into the eternal state. It is also different from the postmillennial position which argues that the millennium starts in the present age and continues with an increasing spike in gospel success culminating in a singular return of Christ. Dispensational premillennialism is different from historic premillennialism which views the church as a spiritual Israel, and holds that the millennium is both present and future (hence: not literal). Historic Premillennialism also holds that the rapture and the second coming happen at the same time, but the church undergoes the future tribulation.

Six times in Rev. 20:2–7, John's vision specifically makes reference to a one thousand year period where those who had remained faithful to God are said to be reigning with Christ for a thousand years. This, however, is not the only basis for holding to a literal millennium. There exists in the Old Testament unilateral covenants that God intends to fulfill literally. The Abrahamic Covenant, for one, promised a land (Gen. 12:1–3, 13:14–17). The Palestinian covenant promised permanent presence in the land, in a state of divinely orchestrated prosperity (Deut. 30:1–10). The Davidic covenant made provisions for a lasting dynasty involving an ever-occupied throne with a descendant of David. Furthermore, the new covenant (Deut. 29; Jer. 31–33), envisions a land in addition to forgiveness and restoration. These expectations will be fulfilled in the millennium with Christ, the descendant of David reigning over His people (Luke 1:32–33). Following the second coming, Christ will gather the believing Israelites and restore them to His own rule at Jerusalem (Matt. 24:31; Zech. 12:10–14; Isa. 21:1; Matt. 19:28; Zech. 8:3). During that time, peace will prevail, and God's people will rejoice in His comfort (Micah 4:2–4; Isa. 32:17–18, 40:1–2, 61:7, 10). Because God will cause His people to know Him, the millennium will be characterized by truth, obedience and holiness (Jer. 31:33; Isa. 11:9, 35:8, 65:16; Hab. 2:14). Premillennialism fits better with the story of salvation history, bringing it to a climax and demonstrating victory for God and His people.

C. Chronological Structure of Future Events

I believe that the events of Revelation 6–22 are in chronological arrangement. Following the rapture of the church, the tribulation will ensue (6–19) before Christ's second coming (19:11–21) to establish the millennium (20:1–6),

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which will be followed by the great white throne (20:11–15), and the eternal state (21–22).

I believe in a pretribulational rapture. Jesus is described as one who “delivers us from the wrath to come (1Thess. 1:10), and He himself promises to keep His church from entering the hour of trial (3:10). It must also be noted that during the tribulation (Rev. 6–18), the church is never mentioned. It only reappears at the end in the context of the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 22:16). Another argument from silence is the absence of warning verses concerning a tribulation for the church. The only warnings pertain to false teaching, false prophets (Acts 20:29–30; 2 Pet. 2:1; Jud 4; Heb. 12:1), and present tribulation (1 Thess. 2:13–14; 2 Thess. 1:4). It also seems that the purpose of the rapture is to rescue believers from the tribulation. The context of 1 Thess. 4:13–18 points to a pretribulational rapture because of the pervading fear of missing it. The words of Jesus in John 14:1–3, and the encouragement of Paul in 1 Thess. 4:13–18 seem to be striking the same chord of comfort fitting for a pretribulational rapture. Significant differences between the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18), and the second coming (1 Cor. 15: 50–58) call for two different events happening at different times.

I believe that Christians will be judged at the Judgment seat of Christ prior to the second coming. The believers’ work will be examined and rewarded, or consumed with fire (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 Cor. 3:9–15; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12). Revelation 19:7 also indicates that the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place before the second coming.

Following the rapture, there will be a time of great tribulation (Matt. 24:9, 21). It will last for seven years, punctuated by the “abomination of desolation” at its midpoint (Dan. 9:27). This will be a time of divine judgment characterized by the presence of the anti-Christ, war, famine, death, martyrdom, and earthquake(Rev. 6:2–12). During this time, God will also save Israelites (Dan. 9:24) as he judges unbelievers.

I believe Christ will return to the earth at the end of the tribulation to establish His millennial kingdom (Zech. 14:4, 9–21; Matt. 25:31; Rev. 20:4). Jerusalem will be the capital where Christ rules from (Zech. 8:3), and there will be some observable terrestrial changes in Israel (Zech. 14:4, 8, 10). At the end of the one thousand years, God will resurrect all the dead non-believers from all ages and assemble them at the great white throne for the final judgment (Rev. 20:11–15). All whose names are not found in the book of life, will be thrown into the lake of fire (v. 15). God will also judge the heavens and the earth after the millennium (2 Peter 3:10). And after the first heaven and the old earth has passed away, there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21–22). This is the final destination for all believers—the eternal state.