

**Statement of Doctrinal Belief  
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## Testimony and Preparation

I grew up in a home that was moral but spiritually lost. My mom and dad were divorced by the time my first birthday came, and my mom had started dating a Catholic man. By the time that I was four they had married, and my only recollection of even being in any kind of church at that time was when we would attend the midnight mass on Christmas Eve and the sunrise service on Easter morning. For me, these were opportunities to catch up on sleep, and I really was not interested in anything that they were saying. When I was around eight or nine years old I had the opportunity to attend a ranch with my Cub Scout group. The ranch (Faith Ranch) was an outreach ministry that used horses and ranch life to share the Gospel. On Sunday morning we were all required to attend the church service that they held. I heard the Gospel for the first time that I can remember on that morning, but I was far more interested in getting back to the fun activities of the ranch than I was in hearing about Jesus coming into my heart. While the Gospel seed was planted at this time, I did not think any more about it until years later.

When I was sixteen years old I was working at local office supply store when a man came in and started talking about world events. It was close to closing time, and I talked with him more out of courtesy than desire, hoping that he would soon realize that it was about time to leave and go on his way. The topic turned to the nation of Israel and then to the Bible. I found out he was Jewish, and we talked a little bit about the events of the world from that perspective (I had an aunt who had married a Jewish man, so the Jewish culture was something that was part of my life from an early age). Before he left for the evening he handed me a “booklet” on the life of Mickey Mantle. As a fan of baseball I willingly took it and read it when I got home. The “booklet” that he had given me was a tract on the life and salvation of a man that many call “one of the best to ever play the game.” I read that tract several times simply because of who it was about (Mantle), not realizing that it would be the instrument that God would use to bring me to Himself.

Shortly thereafter I was required to attend church with my dad where he had grown up going to church. After several months of attending, the Lord started to work on my heart and show my own sinfulness and that I needed a Savior. I placed my trust in Christ and have been resting in His sacrificial death on the cross for my salvation ever since that day.

After I was saved I spent another year in my public school. Right before my senior year, an opportunity opened up for me to attend the local Christian school, which I eagerly accepted. During that year I had the privilege of being mentored by the pastor of our church. Having gone on the missions trip to Mexico the summer before, I was already starting to think that I would like to serve Christ on the mission field if He would allow. I finished high school and packed my bags for BJU, where I studied Christian Missions. Through various circumstances I was unable to continue there after my first year and ended up at the Bible Institute of Ohio, where I received a three-year diploma in Pastoral Studies. After two internships, I then returned to BJ and received my B.A. in Humanities and then my M.A. in Theology.

## **Bibliology**

I believe that the Bible, consisting solely of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is the Word of God. These books were given by a process known as inspiration. While inspired by God, they have been subsequently preserved through the copying of manuscripts by men throughout history.

The Bible nowhere explicitly explains how the process of inspiration took place, though it does maintain that individual authors used their own stylistic peculiarities when recording Scripture (2 Pet 1:21). While each author wrote in his own particular way, the end result was still that the Scriptures are “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16), that is, they are the very words that God chose to have written. The Bible is not simply the thoughts of God. Each individual word (verbal) (Matt 5:18), as well as the whole of Scripture (plenary) (2 Tim 3:16) is inspired. The Bible, as the inspired Word of God, is necessarily completely inerrant. While errors have crept into manuscripts throughout the centuries, the Biblical texts, in their original form (the autographs), were completely inerrant. This often includes the truthful and accurate recording of events (though things said during those events may be inaccurate) and all teachings on any subject, including, but not limited to, science, history and geography.

That God has chosen to preserve His words is evident through many biblical texts. This preservation has kept God’s Word from being lost or distorted by the willful or unintentional acts of sinful men. While there is not any particular manuscript or manuscript family that is inspired in its entirety, each manuscript is inspired in so much that it accurately reflects the original manuscripts. While we may not know with complete certainty what the original manuscripts said, we can be sure that the originals do exist in the totality of the manuscripts (1 Pet 1:23).

Because God’s Word has been preserved to the present day, the question remains whether or not the Bible we have is all that is to be considered Scripture. The historical process by which men, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized as authoritative the writings of the prophets and apostles is called canonicity. This was not a process of making writings inspired, but a process by which the inspiration of a book was officially recognized and collected into the volume of books that were already recognized (2 Tim 3:16). Since it was not the author of the book, but rather the book itself, that was inspired, we can confidently say today that we have the complete and closed canon of Scripture (Rev 22:18–19).

The Bible, as the inspired word of God, is the final authority on all things. It cannot be overruled, nor can anything be considered its equal (Ps 119:89). It is fully sufficient for the believer in all matters, including those which pertain to faith and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Because nothing is able to be placed on par with the Bible or to rule over the authority of the Bible, no other source can be used to prove its veracity or accuracy in any matter, including, but not limited to, the existence of God, the validity of creation and the work of God/Christ in salvation (Heb 6:13).

The Bible, though it is the inspired Word of God, is by nature perspicuous, or clear. While not everything in the Bible is easy for every individual person to understand, the message of the

Bible (including the message of the Gospel) is understandable to all through normal methods of language interpretation. The significance of the Bible, however, is not understood by the natural man as the significance of the Bible is imparted by the illumination of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:14) and is thus only available to the believer. The study of Bible interpretation (biblical hermeneutics), therefore, consists of the study of human language while realizing the univocal nature of language and the need to determine the authorial intent of any passage. This is accomplished through a literal-grammatical-historical approach to the Scriptures.

### **Theology Proper**

I believe that God, as the infinite, perfect and eternal Spirit, is the source of all things that exist (Rom 11:36; Col 1:16–17). The Bible does not start by attempting to prove His existence—it is just assumed (Gen 1:1). Since no authority is greater than that of God's Word any attempts to prove His existence apart from it would be unnecessary. God has chosen to manifest Himself to all men in a general sense through His creation (Ps. 19; Acts 17; Rom 1) and through human conscience (Rom 2:14–15). Though He has revealed Himself, all men ultimately reject this revelation (Rom 1:18) and are therefore guilty before Him (Rom 1:32).

Though God is a spirit (Jn 4:24) and therefore invisible and immaterial (Col 1:15), He manifests various characteristics of personality. These characteristics include: life (1 Thess 1:9), intelligence (Rom 11:33), purpose (Is 14:26–27), action (Jn 5:17), freedom (Eph 1:11), self-consciousness (Ex 3:14), volition (Jn 6:38–39), and emotion (Jn 3:16). All of these characteristics have been, in some capacity, translated to man.

The attributes of God, or the qualities that are inherent in and manifest his divine nature, are broken up into two categories: His greatness and His goodness. God's greatness refers to those attributes which deal with non-moral qualities. These attributes are self-existence (Ex 3:14; Jn 5:26), infinity (Ps 147:5), perfection (Matt 5:48), omnipotence (Job 42:2), omniscience (1 Jn 3:20), omnipresence (Ps 139:7–10), sovereignty (Dan 4:25), and incomprehensibility (Rom 11:33). The attributes associated with God's goodness, or His moral attributes, include His holiness (1 Pet 1:15–16), righteousness (Ps 11:7, Ps 145:17), truth (1 Thess 1:9), love (1 Jn 4:8), faithfulness (Lam 3:23), mercy (Eph 2:4–8), and grace (1 Pet 5:10). The fundamental (or overarching) attribute of God's goodness is holiness (Is 5:15; Jn 17:11). It is by this attribute that all other moral attributes are controlled.

God, as a sovereign God, has a single plan for all of eternity (Eph 3:11). This plan must necessarily take place and it is by this plan that He has freely rendered certain (Is 43:13) all events of the past, present and future (Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11). This decree cannot change and does not depend on anything or anyone else. The end goal and product of God's decree is His glory (Rev 4:11; Is 48:11). In spite of the certain plan of God, man is still responsible for his own sin (Rom 1:20) as God is not the author of sin (Js 3:13). God's plan simply establishes certainly what man would freely do otherwise (Lk 22:22; Acts 2:23, 4:28).

God created all things instantaneously and without any preexisting materials (Gen 1:3, 6, 9). Everything that exists was created in six literal, twenty-four-hour days (Ex 20:11). Man, as the masterpiece of God's creation, was created on the sixth day, after which God ceased his creative act, proclaiming that everything was perfect (Gen 1:31). Though His creative act is complete, God actively upholds and sustains all things throughout all time and will continue to do so until their decreed end (Col 1:17, Heb 1:3)

I believe that God exists in three co-equal (Tit 2:13), co-eternal beings: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19). Each person exists simultaneously and indivisibly. God, though three distinct persons, is one essence. Though each of the three persons of the godhead are equal in essence, the Bible portrays an economical priority in the godhead, with the Son being subject to the Father (Jn 14:28) and the Spirit being subject to both the Father and the Son (Jn 15:26).

### **Christology**

I believe that Jesus Christ, as the second person of the Godhead, is co-equal (Jn 10:30) and co-eternal (Jn 8:58) with the Father. As the eternal God, Christ was the agent in creation (Col 1:16; Jn 1:3). At the incarnation, Jesus voluntarily submitted Himself to the will of the Father, taking on human flesh (Phil 2:7). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20) and born of a virgin (Is 7:14) in order to preserve His sinlessness (Jn 3:6) and to save mankind from sin (Matt 1:21). At the incarnation Jesus did not cease to be God, but became the God-man, meaning He was fully divine (Col 2:9) and fully human (1 Tim 2:5). He did, however, surrender His own, independent use of His deity, subjecting Himself completely to the will of the Father in order to fulfill the redemptive plan of God (Phil 2:5–8). As the God-man, Christ was not born with a sin nature (Heb 4:15) and remains incapable of sinning (Heb 13:8).

During His earthly years, Christ lived a life of sinless perfection. He kept the divine Law perfectly on behalf of Adam's race in order that all who would believe on Him could be restored to favor with God through the imputation of His righteousness (2 Cor 5:21). Christ's perfect life culminated in His predetermined death on the cross of Calvary (Acts 2:23) and resulted in the vicarious atonement for the sin of mankind (1 Jn 2:2). Christ's death fully paid the price for all sins—past, present and future (Heb 10:10). While Christ's death is the means by which God can justly extend common grace to all mankind (Matt 8:16–17), only the elect experience the true and full meaning of Christ's death (1 Tim 4:10). A true substitutionary atonement was made only for the elect as only they have their guilt expiated (Eph 5:2), redemption from bondage (Eph 1:7), propitiation from God's wrath (1 Jn 2:2), and reconciliation with God (Is 59:2).

Following His death on the cross, Christ rose again from the grave on the third day (Lk 24:39; 1 Cor 15:4), visited with many (1 Cor 15:5 ff), ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9) and sat down at the right hand of the Father (Col 3:1). His current ministry to believers is to intercede on their behalf to the Father (Heb 7:25; 9:24), which He does constantly. He will continue this ministry until He returns to take His church home with Him (Jn 14:3; 1 Thess 4:13–18).

## **Pneumatology**

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. As part of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, like the Father and Son, is co-equal and co-eternal with the other persons of deity. The Spirit proceeds from both the Father (Jn 14:26) and the Son (Jn 15:26) and is economically subordinate to both. As can be seen by the personal pronouns used in describing Him, the Spirit is not an impersonal, ghost-like being or force, but is a person (Jn 15:26; 16:7–8, 13–14). As a person, He has the attributes that are characteristic of a person, including: intellect (1 Cor. 2:11), volition (1 Cor 12:11), life (Rom 8:2), emotion (Eph 4:30), and purpose (1 Cor. 12:11). He is described as God (Acts 5:3–4) and possesses all of the same attributes of God, including, but not limited to: omniscience (1 Cor 2:10–11), omnipotence (Rom 15:19), omnipresence (Ps 139:7–10), infiniteness (Heb 9:14), holiness (Eph 4:30) and truth (1 Jn 5:7).

The Holy Spirit's ministry includes: aiding in creation (Gen 1:2), anointing Christ at His baptism (Matt 3:16–17), empowering Christ's ministry (Lk 4:14, 18), exalting Christ (Jn 16:14), and superintending the writing of the Scriptures (2 Pet 1:20–21). With regard to believers, the Holy Spirit regenerates (Jn 3:3), illumines them to understand the significance of the Scriptures (1 Cor 2:14), indwells (Jn 3:3; Num 27:18), seals (Eph 1:13–14), baptizes (1 Cor 12:13), sanctifies (2 Thess 2:13), fills (Eph 5:18), intercedes (Rom 8:26) and empowers them for service (Acts 2:2) through the bestowing of gifts (1 Cor 12:11).

Beginning with Pentecost and the birth of the Church, the Holy Spirit has bestowed on each believer one or more spiritual gifts to be used in the edification of the church (Rom 12:6–8; 1 Pet 4:10). These gifts can be classified as sign (or miraculous) gifts (tongues, prophecy, miracles, healings, wisdom and knowledge) and non-sign gifts (teaching, giving, mercy, exhortation, etc). Those gifts which require revelation from God (e.g., sign gifts) were specifically given for the period during which revelation was being given to the church (Heb 2:2–4) but have since ceased. They ended sometime after the canon was complete and are not part of the church today (1 Cor 13:8–10).

## **Angelology**

I believe that angels were created on the first day of creation, prior to the creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1; Job 38:6–7). As beings created by God (Ps 148:2; Col 1:16), the angels are finite (Matt 24:6). They exist to carry out the plans of God (Ps 103:20), worship God (Heb 1:6), glorify God (Isa 6:1–3) and minister to the saints (Heb 1:14). As spirit beings (Heb 1:14) they possess characteristics of personality (Lk 15:10; 1 Pet 1:12). Though they are spirit, angels have the ability to take on the form of humans in order to perform God's tasks (Gen 18:2–3; Mk 16:5).

I believe that all angels were originally created in unconfirmed holiness, much like the first man, Adam. Those angels who chose to obey, serve and glorify God constitute the group most commonly referred to by the word angel in the Bible and were confirmed in holiness for all of

eternity (Mk 8:38; 1 Tim 5:21). These angels act as messengers for God (Dan 10:12–13; Matt 1:20–23), worship God (Rev 4:9) and will ultimately execute God’s judgments on unbelievers (Rev 14:15–20). There also seems to be an ongoing battle between good and evil angels that is beyond the ability of man to perceive (Eph 6:12; Heb 13:2).

Those angels who chose to disobey God and rebel constitute the group commonly referred to as demons. They, along with their leader (Satan, Matt 12:24–26), are actively at work in this world seeking to frustrate the plans of God (Dan 10:13) and oppose (Eph 6:12) and afflict (2 Cor 12:7) the people of God. I believe that Satan, as the leader of the demonic army, was once the most glorious and powerful of the angels (Eze 28:12–19). Due to pride, he attempted to place himself above God (Is 14:12–14; 1 Tim 3:6–7) and was cast out of heaven along with the rest of the angels that rebelled sometime after the end of the creation week but before the fall of man. He currently has dominion over the earth (2 Cor 4:3–4; Isa 14:12; Eph 2:2). Here he attempts to thwart God’s plans (Gen 3:4–5), brings accusations against the saints to God (Rev 12:10) and seeks to deceive unbelievers by counterfeiting the work of God (Matt 13:37–39).

I believe that Christ defeated Satan once and for all at the cross (Jn 12:31; Heb 2:14–15) and that he will eventually be finally defeated at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev 20:10).

### **Anthropology**

I believe that Adam, the first man, was created by God (without any other intervention) on the sixth day of Creation and that he was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). As a being made in the image of God, man has a distinct position above the rest of the creation. God’s image in man causes mankind to have a spirituality (Eph 4:24), personality (Col 3:9–10) and morality (Gen 9:6) that finitely represent the same qualities found in God. While the fall severely marred the image by sin, the image has not been completely lost (Gen 9:6). Man has and actively engages his will by which he voluntarily, spontaneously, and rationally makes moral decisions (Col 3:25). Man’s will is controlled by his nature (Rom 8:7–8), and all decisions must be in line with his limitations (Job 38:12–24), God’s decrees (Acts 4:27–28) and the power and effects of sin on man (Rom 3:10–11).

I believe that man has both a material and immaterial aspect. The material part of man consists of his body, while the immaterial part consists of his soul and spirit (Matt 10:28). Though there are many references that seem to split the immaterial part (Heb 4:12), there are just as many references that use the words interchangeably. Thus the two should be looked upon as one entity. While the first man was created directly by God with both material and immaterial parts, every subsequent person has received both by means of birth (Traducianism) (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:12). Physical death occurs when the material and immaterial parts of man are separated from one another (Jas 2:26).

I believe that Adam was created in unconfirmed creature holiness, meaning that he was able to not sin (Gen 1:31). Had he obeyed God, mankind would have enjoyed eternal life and fellowship

with his creator. However, since Adam chose to disobey God, he brought upon himself and all mankind both physical and spiritual death (Rom 5:12–19).

### **Hamartiology**

I believe that sin is any action (Rom 7:19; Ps 19:2), thought (Acts 8:22), or disposition (Jer 17:9) that fails to conform to the moral standard or holy character of God. Sins can be committed knowingly or unknowingly and can be acts of commission or acts of omission (Jas 4:17). The root cause of all sin is pride as it is the selfish desires of man that are the goal of all sinful acts/thoughts. This pride seeks to place man as the self-autonomous ruler of his own life, tearing down the Creator-creature distinction (Gen 3:5; Rom 1:21–23).

Sin entered the created realm through the fall of Satan (1 Jn 3:8) and the human race through the fall of Adam (Rom 5:12). Adam, as the federal representative of all of mankind, passed down to all his descendants a sin nature, which predisposes all men toward sin from conception (Rom 5:12–19; Ps 51:5). As sinners by nature, all men stand guilty before God before they ever make the choice to sin.

The extent of the sinfulness of man is total, meaning it extends to the whole person (totally depraved). No part of man has somehow escaped this depravity, including the mind (Rom 8:6–7), will (Jn 8:34), body (Rom 8:10) and emotions (Eph 4:17–19). Thus no one is able to do anything to remedy his standing before the holy, almighty God (Jn 6:44–45; Eph 2:8–9; Tit 3:5), nor will he ever desire to (Rom 3:11).

The result of sin is death (Rom 6:23). This includes physical death, spiritual death (Rom 5:12) and ultimately the second death, which is the final damnation of all unbelievers in the lake of fire for all eternity (Rev 20:14–15).

### **Soteriology**

I believe that since the extent of man's depravity reaches to every part of his being, God in His mercy provided a means of salvation for mankind through the perfect sacrifice of His Son (Rom 5:8–10). This mercy was planned from eternity past (2 Tim 1:9) and is the work of God from beginning to end (2 Thess 2:13; Phi 1:6). Because this mercy is completely the work of God, it is a gift that is extended by Him (Rom 6:23) and is neither deserved nor earned (Eph 2:8–9).

When, through the hearing of the Gospel (Rom 10:14–15; 1 Cor 1:21), a person repents and places his trust in Christ, God immediately and fully imputes the righteousness of Christ (2 Cor 5:21) and the atoning work of Christ to that believer, causing him to be forgiven and justified before God (Rom 5:9). While this event occurs simultaneously from the human perspective, the Bible distinguishes several events that are encompassed in the one event of salvation.

- *Foreknowledge* is the choice of God in eternity past to “know” those whom he would elect. It was a choice based solely in His good pleasure and based on no outside influence (not based on knowledge of future events) (Rom 8:29)
- *Election* is the act of God in eternity past whereby He freely chose those He foreknew to salvation in Christ (Eph 1:4–5). These were not chosen on the basis of who would accept Christ nor on the basis of any deservedness of the individual sinner.
- *Redemption* is the act of God whereby He, through the person of Jesus Christ, paid the ransom that He required for sin. This payment was shown to be efficacious by the resurrection of Christ from the tomb.
- *Effective Calling* is the act whereby God draws those sinners whom He has elected, causing them to respond to the message of the Gospel (Jn 6:44–45, 65; Rom 8:30).
- *Regeneration* is the instantaneous act of God whereby He imparts spiritual life to the previously dead unbeliever (Jn 1:13; 1 Jn 5:1).
- *Repentance* is a change of mind (about God, Christ, self and sin) that results in a change of action. This change of mind is the immediate result of God regenerating the unbeliever and results in that unbeliever acting upon the message of the Gospel (Heb 6:1; Acts 26:20; 1 Thess 1:9)
- *Faith* is the response of the regenerated heart toward the truth of the Gospel (Acts 13:48). It is a gift from God (Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:29; Rom 12:3) and results in the newly reborn sinner placing his complete trust in the work of Christ as God has revealed it in His Word (Acts 16:31).
- *Justification* is the judicial act whereby God declares a sinner righteous and henceforth deals with him based on the imputed righteousness of Christ’s obedience (Rom 5:1, 9).
- *Adoption* is the gracious act of God whereby He places the believer into His family and treats him as a son with all of a son’s privileges (Gal 3:26).
- *Sanctification* is the continual, life-long act of the believer being set apart from sin to God (1 Cor 6:11). It is a process that involves both the efforts of man as he seeks to obey the Scriptures and the enabling of God to cause the believer to become like Christ (Phil 2:12–13; Rom 8:29).
- *Perseverance* is the work of God whereby He renders certain that the believer will never totally or finally fall away from the state of grace, but that he will certainly continue to the end (Phil 1:6; 1 Cor 1:8–9), thus making him eternally secure (Jn 6:39; Rom 8:38–39).

- *Glorification* is the final end of salvation whereby the believer is completely freed from the presence of sin (1 Thess 3:13; Jude 24). This act does not occur until the believer is reunited with Christ (through death or the rapture).

## **Ecclesiology**

I believe that the church, also called the body of Christ (Col 1:18, 24), is made of all believers from the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5, 11:15) to the rapture (1 Thess 4:13–18) and is thus distinct from the nation of Israel (1 Cor 10:32). Each member is placed into the body by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). The Church is the means by which God carries out His purposes in the present dispensation (Eph 3:8–10).

I believe that, though the church is often used to symbolize the universal body of Christ in the present age (Eph 1:22–23), it is the local church that is the visible representation of the work of God. The local church consists of true believers in Christ (Acts 2:47) who have publicly attested to their faith in Christ through baptism (Acts 2:41) and share a common body of doctrine (Acts 2:42).

Each local assembly of believers is an autonomous group that is solely responsible to the Word of God. Assemblies are led by biblically defined leaders that include elders (1 Tim 3; Tit 1), who oversee and shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet 5:1–2), and deacons (Acts 6; 1 Tim 3), who minister to the physical needs of the congregation. The local church is to meet regularly (Heb 10:25) in order that they might worship, fellowship, unite in prayer and be instructed and edified (Eph 4:11–16). The two ordinances given by Christ (baptism and communion) are to be carried out in the Church along with the administration of church discipline (Matt 18; 1 Cor 5:1). Baptism is the public affiliation of a believer with Christ and is to be carried out, in as much as it is possible, by immersion (Acts 8:38). Communion is a public remembrance of the work of Christ and is to be regularly observed corporately (1 Cor 11:17–34). Church discipline is the act of confronting a brother with the hope of causing him to repent of his sinful actions and return to Christ. It is carried out in four steps (Matt 18:15–20): 1. Individuals confronting individuals; 2. Small groups confronting an individual; 3. Church leadership confronting an individual; 4. Treating the individual as an unbeliever.

The Church as a whole, the local church in particular, is also given the task of taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18–20). It is through the local church that people minister and are sent (Acts 13:1–4), funds are raised (2 Cor 8) and prayer is offered for those who go (Col 4:3).

## **Eschatology**

I believe that, based on a literal hermeneutical approach to understanding the Bible, the next event on God's prophetic timetable is the imminent rapture of the Body of Christ (1 Thess 4:13–18). This literal return of Christ in the clouds (Acts 1:11) marks the end of the church age and will usher in the Tribulation Period (1 Thess 1:10; Rev 3:10), which is marked by God's

punishment of Israel for her disobedience (Isa 28:15). All those who are part of the church and are alive at this point will be raptured, along with any who died in Christ (1 Thess 4:16–17). At this point the believers, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, will receive their rewards for their post-conversion lives (1 Cor 3:8, 14; 2 Cor 5:10). Immediately following will be the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:7–9)

With the church removed from the earth, the Holy Spirit will cease to restrain the evil that is on earth (2 Thess 2:7). This will result in the rise of the Antichrist and culminate in the signing of a treaty between the Antichrist and Israel (Dan 9:27). The Tribulation will last for a period of seven years. Halfway through the seven years the Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel. The last half of the Tribulation will be a time of God's wrath being intensified (Zeph 1:15–17; Rev 12:7–12). In the end, Israel will once again turn to her God with 144,000 Jews being saved along with a large number of Gentiles (Rev 7:1–17).

At the end of the seven years of Tribulation, Christ will return to the earth with all His saints to set up His kingdom (Rev 19:11–21; 20:4). Upon His return, Satan will be cast into the abyss for one thousand years (Rev 20:1–3). The subsequent millennial reign over the earth will be characterized by perfect rule. Those who were raptured at Christ's return in the clouds will reign with Him during this time (2 Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21).

When the millennial reign of Christ comes to an end, Satan will be released and will deceive the nations, launching one final rebellion against God (Rev 20:7–9a). This rebellion will be quickly disposed of by Christ, and Satan will be eternally cast into the lake of fire with his demons (Rev 20:9b–10). The unsaved of all ages will then be resurrected and subjected to the Great White Throne Judgment. Each will be judged based on his works and will be cast into the lake of fire for an eternity of conscious torment (Rev 20:11–15). The heavens and earth will then pass away (2 Pet 3:10–11), and a new heaven and earth that are completely free from sin will be created (Rev 21:1). It is in this new earth that the believers of all ages will dwell with, enjoy and glorify their God forever (Rev 21–22).

## **Addendum on Separation**

*While the topic is an important one to cover, I believe that the topic of separation is more of an application of doctrine than it is doctrine itself. Because of this, I have decided to place an extra section that deals with separation from both an individual and ecclesiastical perspective at this point in the statement.*

The topic of separation, perhaps one of the most debated topics among true believers today, is vital for the true church. I believe that, as a reflection on the character of God, the believer is required to be separated from all forms of ungodliness that would defile his body, his mind and his spirit (1 Pet 1:16). While many disagree, I believe that there are three different categories of separation that the believer is commanded to maintain throughout his life: Separation from the World, Separation from False Teachers and Separation from Disobedient Brethren.

*Separation from the World:* Separation from the world finds its basis, like all other sub-categories of separation, in the character of God. Just as God is wholly different from the world, so the Christian ought to be. The Bible speaks clearly of the believer's responsibility to be different and apart from the world. 1 John 2:15 commands us to "love not the world." This is speaking of the philosophy and system that characterizes this world. The warning is severe: if anyone loves the world, he does not love the Father. The implications are clear: the Christian must be separated from this world. Ephesians 5:11 states the same principal: "Do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness." We have been called to a life that is peculiar to the world, and it is a responsibility that must be taken seriously.

*Separation from False Teachers:* Rom 16:17 says to be on the lookout for those "who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine" and to "avoid them." Perhaps one of the greatest dangers facing the believer today is the overwhelming influx of false doctrine that is passed off as scriptural truth. While the current popular opinion is to allow all people to think what they want and teach what they want, the Bible clearly states that those who are teaching false doctrine are to be marked (made known) and avoided. They are not simply to be ignored but are to be combated because they "deceive the hearts of the naïve" (16:18). Paul tells Titus to warn those who cause division "once and then twice" and then "have nothing to do with them" (3:10), and that we are to "rebuke those who contradict [sound doctrine]" (1:9). The Bible leaves no room for the believer to guess where he must stand on the issue. We are not to be friends and partners with those who teach false doctrine, but are to oppose them and warn others about their danger.

*Separation from Disobedient Brethren:* The application of separation that is the hardest for most is when it applies to other people who profess the name of Christ. While it is certainly not a popular stance, the Bible clearly lays out that even those who profess His name must be separated from at times. Paul, in 2 Thess 3:14, says to have nothing to do with people that don't obey his teaching, in order that they may be ashamed and return to Christ. As unpopular as it

may be, the believer who desires to obey the Scriptures must be willing to separate from any so-called believers who fail to do so themselves.

While all of the above situations deal specifically with the individual, the church, as the body of Christ, has the same responsibility when it comes to its relationships with the world and those around it. The church must be separated from the world. 2 Cor 6:15 asks, “What accord has Christ with Belial?” The obvious answer is none. The church, therefore, must say the same. It is to have nothing to do with the world system that is being propagated right outside its doors. This includes the areas of music and evangelism. The church is not to implement into its worship the styles of the culture in an attempt to woo those outside to come in. This is the work of the Spirit, and any effort that man makes by watering down the message of the Gospel (which demands a holy lifestyle) is sin. The church is also to separate itself from false teachers. Paul, when speaking to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, warns them to care for their flocks and protect them against the false teachers that would try to come in. All too often the church opens its doors to the false teachers, giving them an opportunity and a platform to disseminate heresy. The elders must guard the flock of God and protect it from these wolves who seek to destroy the flock. This can only be done by separating from those who are false teachers. Finally, with regard to the Church’s separation from disobedient brothers, Paul scolded the Corinthian believers (1 Cor 5:1–2) for failing to put out from their midst the brother who had committed immorality. The warning to the Thessalonians to mark and avoid the ones who were disobedient to his teaching was also a warning to the church at Thessalonica. Christ’s own warnings in Matthew 18 hit the very heart of the idea of separation from disobedient brethren. If the church is to remain pure, it is necessary for it to remain separated. Whether the foe is outside or inside, the church must mark those who cause division and avoid them.