

# Doctrinal Paper

By

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### **My Story of My Spiritual Growth**

I entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at the age of seven. What led to my conversion were the previous two years of being exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ while attending Sunday School as a young child. There was a natural progression of truth and understanding that helped me have a clear understanding even at the age of seven of what it meant to be saved and have a personal relationship with the living God. So, upon the invitation of my sister, I invited Christ into my life to forgive my sin and to enter into my life as my Lord and Savior.

For several reasons, shortly after I made the decision to become a child of God, my family left the church that I had attended and eventually stopped going to church at all. My life as a pre-teen and teenager had no external indication of a life saved by Christ but clearly in my mind there was no doubt about what I believed about God, Jesus Christ and salvation. But, out of ignorance, I had not realized the responsibility and benefit of living for God so I had no inclination to do so. But, several tragic events in my life began to prepare the soil of my heart for the time that I would eventually surrender to God my life and my love. These events set me on a course to seek out the truth about life and God. My journey took me on a few excursions with cults and false religions but God in His grace brought me to the reality that Jesus Christ was the only true God who had demonstrated life after death and as a result is the only one who could provide life after death.

My oldest brother began to attend church again and invited me to go with him. After much resistance, I eventually gave in to his constant invitation to attend a youth Sunday School and the result was the beginning of my love affair with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For the first time in my life, I was given meaningful and reasonable explanations about a new life in Christ and why I should be living it. Most of all, it was given to me by a loving and committed community of people who had enough grace to be patient with my progress to maturity. My early years of my faith were spent mostly at the feet of mentors who selflessly devoted their time and energy to building my faith as I deeply hungered to see it built. In time, I learned not only the teachings of the Bible but how to independently discover truth on my own. Through the work of the Holy Spirit and disciplined reading, memorization and study of the Bible I began to master the truth about the Bible, its doctrines, stories, principles, commands and promises. Most of all, I began to understand that the most important result of my efforts needed to move my life to a deeper relationship of knowing God and Jesus Christ more personally and intimately.

My spiritual growth since then has been a journey of applying the truth of God's Word to every situation and circumstance. This process has produced spiritual maturity, wisdom and knowledge as I have continued my pursuit of mastering and being mastered by the Word of God by practicing God's Word through trials, waiting and most of all, in the daily details of each day of my life. God's Word is true in that "...solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil." (Heb. 5:14) I have also found that my understanding of my faith is greatly expanded the more I share my faith with others. "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ." (Philemon 1:6 NIV)

In summary, at the core of my spiritual growth, you will find the fiber of the Word of God along with Godly people who took careful effort to teach it clearly. Seeing it applied and shared in my daily life cemented a deeper level of maturity that allows me now to be one who leads and teaches God's Word in the way that it was taught to me at a very young age.

### **Bibliology: A Study of the Scriptures**

#### **General Revelation**

Divine revelation is the disclosure of truth from God to men (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Not all revelation is contained in the Bible. The existence of God and of spiritual matters can be discovered through natural means, such as the observation of nature (the physical universe), philosophy and reasoning, human conscience or providence or providential history (Rom. 1:18-20; 2:12-16; Ps. 19:1-4).

#### **Special Revelation**

Special revelation is the disclosure of God and of spiritual matters through supernatural means. The Scripture provides special revelation (Rom. 1:16-17). Even though general revelation can provide a knowledge that God exists as well as a knowledge of some of His attributes, Scripture is necessary for salvation (Rom. 1:16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20). The Bible is and contains the Gospel which the Bible

describes as the message that leads to salvation (Rom. 10:13-17). The Bible also points to itself as essential for sustaining a healthy spiritual life and relationship with God (Matt. 4:4; 1 Pet. 2:2-3; Ps. 1:1-3). It is as important to our spiritual life as food is to our physical life. Thirdly, Scripture is essential to our daily lives as we discern God's will in every decision (Joshua 1:8; Ps. 119:105; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The central theme of Scripture is God, man and their relationship. The central figure of Scripture is Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1, 2). The Old Testament points to Christ (Gen. 3:15; Is. 7:14; Matt. 5:17; Jn. 5:39), the Gospels tell of his birth, life, death and resurrection and the epistles are a commentary on His death and resurrection. Special revelation ceased when God had revealed everything that he has desired to reveal in the words of the Bible (at the completion of the canon) (Eph. 4:13, Heb. 1:1-2, Jn. 1:18).

### Inspiration

The whole Bible (the 66 books of the Old and New Testament) is the Word of God and that God determined the words of the Scriptures through the agency of human authors. At times, God used authors to merely dictate his words verbatim (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12) but God also allowed authors to integrate their own personalities, writing styles and personal research into producing exactly what God wanted written (Heb. 1:1; Lk. 1:1-3; Jn. 14:26). Although, these men were allowed their own personal style, the Holy Spirit directed all their words (1 Pet. 1:20-21). Thus the Bible has an Author (God) as well as authors (men) (1 Thess. 2:13). This divine authorship is called inspiration, from (2 Tim. 3:16) where the Bible is described as "God-breathed" or "breathed out by God."

### Illumination

The Bible is written in such a way that it is possible for anyone to understand its teachings (Ps. 19:7; Ps. 119:130). But, even more than intellectual ability, the proper understanding of Scripture requires the present work of the Holy Spirit. The believer because of the Holy Spirit can understand the teachings of Scripture while the one without Spirit rejects the Scriptures because they are considered foolishness (1 Cor. 2:12-14). But, even the believer can be hindered in their understanding because of worldliness (1 Cor. 3:1-3). So, the "spiritual" believer must possess a simple desire for knowledge (Prov. 2:1-6), a willingness to seek God's help (Jam. 1:5) and a willingness to obey (Jn. 14:21) to gain a proper understanding of the Scripture.

### Inerrancy and Infallibility

Since God is the Author of the Bible, the Bible reflects His character. For example, since God cannot err, the Scriptures must be without error. Several evidences point to this truth, several of which are the authority and accuracy of Scripture when speaking of itself, the witness of Jesus Christ, the unity of the book, its uncanny accuracy, the support of science and archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, its extraordinary preservation and its supernatural transforming power. Thus, inspiration (divine authorship) renders the Bible:

1. Inerrant – (Numbers 23:19) The bible is accurate and reliable in any statement that it affirms and is without error in the original texts.
2. Infallible – (1 Thess. 5:24) It will be always prove to be accurate. Its promises will never fail.
3. Authoritative – (2 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 1:3) It is the church's only rule for faith and practice. It must be obeyed.
4. Powerful – (Heb. 4:12) It is supernatural and miraculous in its effect.

The Bible we possess today is largely identical to the original manuscripts. The significance of the "Qumran" or "Dead Sea" scrolls reaffirms this fact. Before the discovery of the "Dead Sea" Scrolls, the oldest Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible were Masoretic texts dating to 9th century AD. The biblical manuscripts found among the Dead Sea Scrolls push that date back a millennium to the 2nd century BC. The "Dead Sea" scrolls were proven to be largely identical to the Bible we possess today. With rare exceptions, the original can be determined by careful, critical study. No English translation should be considered preeminent nor is there any translation that possesses the qualities of inerrancy and inspiration that the original manuscripts do. Before this discovery, the earliest extant manuscripts of the Old Testament were in Greek in manuscripts such as Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209 and Codex Sinaiticus.

### The Development of the Canon

We define the Scriptures as the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books that comprise the 66 books recognized books of the canon. There are four principles that define canonicity.

First, our Old Testament was the accepted Palestinian canon of Scripture in Christ's day, which He endorsed many times as "the law and the prophets" (Matt. 5:17-18, Lk. 24:27) and which Christians then took over as the Scriptures written for them (Rom. 5:4; 1 Cor. 10:11; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). Second, the apostles claimed and the early Christians acknowledged that apostolic teaching, both oral and written, was inspired and therefore canonical. Third, our present New Testament was delimited by the early church after long enquiry in to which books were apostolic in substance. Fourth, the New Testament books are perfectly harmonious and have all mediated God to every generation since as no other books have rendering it eccentric and presumptuous to question its canonical status at this stage. In his Easter letter of 367, Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, gave a list of exactly the same books as what would become the New Testament canon and he used the phrase "being canonized" (kanonizomena) in regards to them.

### Your Hermeneutical Method

The meaning of each passage of the Bible should be discovered through a normal interpretation of the Scriptures (historical, grammatical, literary study and text linguistics) (2 Tim. 2:15). Since the Bible was intended to reveal truth to man, it is understandable through the use of normal rules of literary interpretation. Since it was revealed to specific people separated from us by time, space and culture, historical study is also required for a proper interpretation. Since the Scriptures were written over several different periods of time, the Scriptures should be interpreted in relation to the changes that occurred over those periods of time. Since the Bible, as a whole (canon), is the Word of God, it must be interpreted as a whole. In others words, the Bible should be used to interpret the Bible.

### Inerrancy's Impact on Your Life and Ministry

The ultimate issue is the truth. If man is to know his origin, if he is to know God and be assured of eternity, his source of truth about God must be above reproach with impeccable integrity. God has spoken infallibly in an inerrant book of the Scriptures that provides certainly in all the critical issues of life. The inerrancy, infallibility and effect of Scripture reaffirms that all of the Scriptures are God's words. As a result, to disbelieve or disobey any word of the Scriptures is to disbelieve or disobey God Himself. We are encouraged to receive Scriptures not as the words of men but as the very words of God (1 Thess. 2:13). In fact, we are encouraged to receive them not merely as words but as our source of life (Deut. 32:46-47, Jn. 6:63). This was the ultimate issue of the reformation: Luther and others insisted that if the Bible were in fact trustworthy, then it ought to be scrupulously obeyed. This is the defining issue for all mankind: If the Scriptures are literally God's Word, then we have every reason to enjoy a deeply personal relationship with God and no excuse for not being as close to God as we should be (Jam. 4:8).

### **Theology Proper: A Study of God**

#### The Attributes of God

God exists and even though some may deny it (Ps. 14:1, Rom. 1:1:25), all people have an inner sense of His existence as well as an external experience of His existence in creation (Rom. 1:19). Despite the clear evidence of God's existence, the fullness of God's being is far from comprehensible because we cannot fully understand an infinite God with our finite minds (Ps. 145:3, 1 Cor. 2:10-12). But, in the Bible and through the work of His Spirit God reveals truth about Him that allows us to know Him well enough to enter into a deep and personal relationship with Him (Jeremiah 9:23,24; Jn. 17:3; 1 Cor. 2:10-12; Gal. 4:8,9).

Two characteristics of God encompass all of His attributes: infinity and perfection. God is *infinite* with respect to time (eternal) (Ps. 90:2), space (omnipresent) (Ps. 139), knowledge (omniscient) (Ps. 147:5, power (omnipotent) Jeremiah 32:17, and dominion (sovereignty) (Ps. 115:3). God is *perfectly* independent (Acts 17:24, 25), holy and righteous (1 Pet. 1:15), just (Ps. 19:9), loving and merciful (1 Jn. 4:8), true and faithful (Rom. 3:4; Deut. 7:9), and immutable (Jam. 1:17; Heb. 13:8). God is unchanging and since He is perfect, there is no need for Him to change (Ps. 102:25-27; Malachi 3:6; Heb. 13:8). God's attributes are communicable but only in with the limitation that we can share in His attributes finitely and imperfectly (Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 2:14; Heb. 13:10).

#### The Trinity

The Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are each fully God, possessing all the personality and attributes of God (Ps. 89:26; Matt. 11:25; Matt. 23:9; Col. 1:19; Jn. 10:30; Job 33:4, Acts 5:3-4). In order to describe the infinity of God to finite human minds, the Bible presents God as existing as three distinguishable persons (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19, 20). This concept is called the Trinity.

This does not mean that God actually exists as three separate entities. Rather, God is one, a unity (Deut. 6:4; Jn. 10:30; 14:9, 10). Neither does this mean that there are three parts of God. Rather, each “member of the trinity” is fully God. All of God is present in each manifestation of the Trinity whether it is God the Father who ordains salvation, Jesus Christ who procures it or the Holy Spirit who applies it. The importance of the Trinity is that it affirms the deity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. The Father, the Son and the Spirit are each fully God; neither is a part of God nor apart from God (Matt. 28:18, 1 Cor. 12:4-6, 2 Corinthians 13:14, Eph. 4:4-7, 1 Pet. 1:2, Jude 20-21).

There is, apparently, subordination within the Trinity in regard to order but not substance or essence. We can see that the Father is first, the Son is second, and the Holy Spirit is third. The Father can be thought of as the Source in the trinity. (Jn. 3:16) He is the bond of unity between the three. The other two manifestations are each defined in terms of their relationship to the Father: the Son is “begotten” of the Father from all eternity (Jn. 1:18) and the Spirit “proceeds” from the Father (Jn. 15:26). The Father sent the Son (1 Jn. 4:10). The Son and the Father send the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 14:26; 15:26) The Father creates (Is. 44:24), the Son redeems (Gal. 3:13), and the Holy Spirit sanctifies (Rom. 15:16). Yet, there exists an eternal communion of glory and love between all three manifestations of the trinity (Jn. 17).

### Modalism

In addition, the fact that there is only one God and three distinguishable persons also does not imply that God is in actuality only one person who appears to people in different “modes” at different times. Rather, Scripture demonstrates that the persons of the Trinity are clearly distinguishable persons in that they are often found together and interacting simultaneously. Some references that indicate this truth are found at the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16-17), with Jesus praying to the Father (Matt. 26:39) and in the intercession of Jesus and the Holy Spirit before God the Father (Rom. 8:26-27, 34). Most of all, this “modalism” rejects the heart of the doctrine of atonement in that God sent His Son as a substitutionary sacrifice, that the Son bore the wrath of God in our place and that the Father accepted the suffering of Christ as a satisfactory payment for our sins (Is. 53:11).

### Creation

There is one and only one God (Is. 44:6; 1 Tim. 1:17), personal and living, the Creator of all things (Rom. 1:20), who is still active in all history (Col. 1:17; Rom. 8:28). Gen. 1 is an accurate narrative account of the creation of the world. That is, a literal six-day creation of the world and everything in it. This is supported by the fact that the Gen. account of creation describes God having created already “aged” vegetation bearing fruit (Gen. 1:11-12), sea creatures and birds with the adult capacity to reproduce and fully adapted to surviving in waters and flying above the earth (Gen. 1:20-22) and living creatures also with the same adult capacity to reproduce and move throughout the earth (Gen. 1:24-25). In addition, Adam and Eve were also created with the adult capacity to reproduce (Gen. 1:27-28) and with the adult intellect to receive instruction and make decisions of the adult will concerning advanced concepts of responsibility and accountability (Gen. 1:28-30, 2:16-18). God created the world out of nothing, bringing it into existence through His spoken word alone (Gen. 1:2; Heb. 11:3; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17).

God has always been and will continually be involved with His creation to fulfill His plan and purpose for the creation of all things, especially the creation of man. God has always been actively maintaining and, as a result, preserving the existence of all creation. All created things are held together and sustained by God (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). The existence and the lifetimes of every person that has ever created can be attributed to the exercise of God’s intervention and will (Acts 17:26-28). As a result, we can also conclude that God is actively involved with every outcome of every action and circumstance as well as the actions and the circumstances themselves. God is actively involved with every action of nature (Job 37:6-13; Matt. 5:45), animals (Ps. 104:27-29; Matt. 10:29), the affairs of nations (Job 12:23; Ps. 22:28) and every detail of our lives (Ps. 139:16; Prov. 16:9, 20:24). There is no such thing as a “random” or “chance” event. “Oops” is not in God’s vocabulary. Even the smallest detail of every event in all of history is from God (Prov. 16:33). God’s providence is equally evident in the future as it has been in the past. God has clearly demonstrated in Scripture that God plans the future and fulfills His plans for the future (Ps. 139:4, 16; Jeremiah 1:5; Acts 17:26). In addition, fulfilled prophesy, the guarantee of salvation and the promised return of Christ point us to believe that the future will be the result of a God’s providence, plan and intervention rather than a consequence of a sequence of random events.

### The Problem of Evil

This does not imply that God causes the evil in the world nor is he responsible for the sinful choices of man. Evil and sin have obviously existed throughout history and God has clearly been present through it all (Gen. 50:20; Exodus 7:3, 14:4) but God never does evil and should never be blamed for evil. Though God ordained evil, evil has always been the product of man and other created beings (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28). In other words, God has never done evil (Jam. 1:13-14) but has certainly allowed evil and even uses evil to glory Himself and for our own good (Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20). Rightfully, blame and judgment for evil falls on the creatures that do them (Ecc. 12:14). But, even though evil is the product of the sinful choices of man and other created beings, it does not imply that there has existed in any creation of God the ability to make “free” choices independent of the will of God. God is still providentially in control of every detail of every action and circumstance of everything that has and ever will be created, including the choices of every created being (Ps. 135:6; Eph. 1:11). Needless to say, despite the clear truth that teaches all these things, our finite knowledge and thinking will never allow us to understand how this doctrine fully work. We will only know that this doctrine truly is what it is. But, believing this doctrine preserves and stays consistent with the infinite and perfect attributes of God’s being.

### Open Theism

Open Theism rejects the idea of God being providentially in control of all things past, present and future. Open Theism believes that God knows the future but does not fully determine it. For the Open Theist, the future simply hasn't happened yet, not for anyone including God, and thus is unknowable in the common sense. Most of all, Open Theism rejects God’s immutability, impassibility, omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. Scripture does not support this teaching but rather supports the idea that God is unhindered in accomplishing anything He wants (Ps. 135:6; Eph. 1:11) and as a result, is neither in need of man’s involvement (Acts 17:25) nor does He change because of it (Malachi 3:6; Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Is. 46:10). Rather, God is actively involved with all details concerning the future to fulfill His purpose for men to “...seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him...” (Acts 17:24-28)

### **Christology: A Study of Christ**

#### His Attribute, Hypostatic Union, Kenosis and the Virgin Birth

Jesus Christ is the god-man because he is fully human, yet fully divine (hypostatic union) (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus existed as God from eternity, (Col. 1:15-19, Micah 5:2) and at times appeared to men before the incarnation (Gen. 18:2, 22; 32:24-30; Joshua 5:13-15). God took on human form while remaining God in every sense (incarnation). He had both human and divine nature (Jn. 1:1-4, 14; 10:33; 1 Jn. 4:1-3). Jesus did not empty himself of any divinity or divine attributes in becoming man. Rather, in becoming a man He demonstrated his deity by emptying Himself rather than grasping; He demonstrated that Godhood meant giving not taking, even though, from a human perspective, being found in the form of God meant He had the power to grasp anything He wanted (Phil. 2:6,7). The practical implications of this truth direct us to believe that Jesus lived on this earth completely as a man—in other words, He lived without accessing or enabling the benefits of being God in every sense. As a result, believers are commanded to “walk just as He walked” (1 Jn. 2:6) which directs us to believe that we should live in the same power and authority that Jesus demonstrated in His life, producing similar, if not more impressive miracles and supernatural demonstrations (Jn. 14:12).

Through the Holy Spirit, Mary supernaturally conceived Jesus before she had sexual intercourse with any man (Lk. 1:31, 34-35; Matt. 1:18-25). Jesus did not come into existence at His birth—He always was and always will be (Micah 5:2). He simply “became flesh” to display the character of God in a more tangible and practical way for mankind. As a result, a relationship with God is a more accessible and personal concept for mankind to grasp (Jn. 1:14). The virgin birth substantiates the divine nature of Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus lived a perfect life—He never sinned (Heb. 4:15).

#### Significance of His Life

As man, Jesus had a human body subject to the limitations and weaknesses that all humans possess (Lk. 2:7, 40; Jn. 4:6; Jn. 19:28; Matt. 4:2). Jesus’ full humanity was necessary so that He could be our representative for us where Adam had disobeyed and failed (Rom. 5:18-19). In addition, Jesus had to be like us in every way so that he might become the “propitiation” or acceptable substitute sacrifice for us to pay the

penalty for our sins (Heb. 2:16-17). Practically, Jesus' humanity and life provides an example and pattern for our lives (1 Jn. 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:21).

### Burial

The burial of Jesus not only fulfilled two very specific prophecies concerning Christ (Is. 53:9; Matt. 12:40) but also played a significant in that it reaffirms the authenticity and miracle of the resurrection of Christ validating His claim to be the Son of God (Matt. 20:1-8).

### High Priestly Role

Jesus is superior to all other high priest that ever existed because He provides things that no other priest could provide: the perfect work of a perfect priesthood (Heb. 7:25-26; 10:11-12), a perfect and sinless priest (Heb. 4:15) and a perfect provision of atonement (Heb. 4:16). A perfect high priest would know both God and men perfectly. Because Jesus is the God-Man, He is the perfect High Priest who has brought God and man together (Heb. 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:15).

### Nature/Necessity Of His Death; What Accomplished And For Whom?

The death of Jesus was judicially proclaimed to satisfy the requirement for our own death as a penalty for our sin (Rom. 5:8-10). He died in our place as a substitute for us. The value of His death is not that of moral example, but of a legal payment on our behalf (Heb. 10:10). Further, His death provides this payment for every human being (1 Jn. 2:2; Rom. 5:18-19).

As a result, four needs are met by Christ's death: sacrifice, propitiation, reconciliation and redemption. We deserved to die as the penalty for sin but Christ died to that penalty of death for us (Heb. 9:26). We deserved to bear God's wrath against sin but Christ died as a propitiation or substitute that would bear that wrath for us (1 Jn. 4:10). Our sins separated us from God but Christ's death restored peace and fellowship with God (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Lastly, we were in bondage to sin and its consequences but Christ's death paid the price to redeem us or buy us back to freedom from the guilt and bondage of sin (Col. 1:13).

### Resurrection, Ascension and Session

Three days after His death, Jesus bodily rose from the dead (Matt. 28:6, 7). Forty days after His resurrection, He ascended into heaven where He is now alive, and currently is our advocate before the Father, testifying of the righteousness that we obtained through His death (Heb. 7:24, 25, 1 Jn. 2:1).

In the New Testament, heaven is still thought of as a symbol of transcendence. Yet, for Paul it no longer is to be regarded as just the place where God dwells, but rather as the place where Christ, the Risen One, has ascended and now sits at the right hand of the Father (Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 3:1). The resurrection and ascension of Christ has greatly influenced the New Testament thought of heaven and the kingdom. Christ is the first-fruits of the dead (1 Cor. 15:15-10; Col. 1:18). He has passed from a physical mode of existence to a pneumatic one, one which the resurrection of Christ forms the turning point (1 Cor. 15:42-59). He has brought in and by His body the beginning of the new age. Thus, with Christ's ascension, heaven is the sphere of the new age, Christ the hope of glory (Col. 1:5, 27; 3:1-4).

### Duty

Ultimately, Jesus came to do the will of His Father (Jn. 6:38). Jesus demonstrated this in many ways. Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17), to preach the kingdom of God (Mk. 1:38), to serve and give his life as a ransom (Mk. 10:44-45), and to give the world spiritual light (Jn. 12:46). Most of all, Jesus came to seek and save all who are lost (Lk. 19:10). In summary, Jesus came to bring full and abundant life to all who come to Him (Jn. 10:10).

## **Pneumatology: A Study of the Holy Spirit**

### Nature

The Holy Spirit is spirit in that He is not made of nor dwells on any physical properties of earth. (Gen. 1:2) Yet, the Holy Spirit is portrayed in Scripture with the capabilities of a distinct person. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the very person-like ability to teach (Nehemiah 9:20), lead (Ps. 104:30), counsel (Jn. 14:26), speak (Jn. 16:13) and listen (Acts 5:3). The Holy Spirit also demonstrates the emotional capabilities of a person. The Holy Spirit shows grief (Is. 63:10; Eph. 4:30), demonstrates love (Rom. 15:30), gives joy (1 Thess. 1:6). The nature of the Holy Spirit is compared to fire (1 Thess. 5:19).

### Personhood

The Holy Spirit is fully God. (Job 33:4, Acts 5:3-4) and is a distinct person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the attributes of God. The Holy Spirit is omni-present (Ps. 139:7), has the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:10), gives life (Job 33:4; Jn. 6:36) and is even given credit for producing salvation (Jn. 3:5-7). He is not merely a power of God but a very distinct person of the Trinity. The “Trinitarian” passages of Scripture demonstrate this by referring to the Holy Spirit as both in equal standing with the Father and the Son and yet distinct. (Matt. 28:19; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 12:4-6) The fact that Jesus Christ is God also points to the deity of the Holy Spirit. Jesus was born of God because He was born of the Holy Spirit leading to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is God. Conversely, any evidence that proves the deity of Jesus Christ also proves deity of the Holy Spirit. (Lk. 1:35)

#### Role/Work

The Holy Spirit exhibits a unique and marvelous characteristic as God within the internal relationships of the Trinity—His humility. The Holy Spirit never draws attention to Himself. Rather, the primary role of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to Jesus Christ by making known the truth about Him and from Him. (Jn. 16:13-14) The Holy Spirit accomplishes this purpose by regenerating men (Tit. 3:5), testifying about Christ (Jn. 15:26) and interceding on behalf of the believer when human frailty leaves us incapable of knowing what we should pray (Rom. 8:26-37). The Holy Spirit is active in the lives of people by convicting all those in the world of sin, of righteousness, and of the coming judgment (Jn. 16:8-11), distributing spiritual gifts to believers (1 Cor. 12:11) and teaching (Nehemiah 9:20, Jn. 14:26). The Holy Spirit speaks (Jn. 16:13) in spiritual words (1 Cor. 2:13; Rom. 8:16) and in audible words (Mk. 13:11; 1 Cor. 2:13) to counsel (Jn. 14:26; Acts 15:28) as well as to lead and guide the believer through scripture, circumstances, the advice of others, and feelings even though our perception of His leading is sometimes flawed and errant because of our own inadequacies and limitations. (Rom. 8:13-14; Acts 8:29) Ultimately, the Holy Spirit helps us understand the things of God (1 Cor. 2:13-14)

In regards to salvation, the Holy Spirit does the work of sanctification in the life of a believer. (1 Pet. 1:2) The Holy Spirit testifies to the spirit of the believer the assurance of salvation and presence of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 8:16) The Spirit presently forms the bridge between heaven, Christ’s resurrection body, the first fruits of the new age and the church, the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:13) The Spirit is the spatial mediator that bridges heaven (that present sphere of the new age) and earth. The Spirit prepares man for the kingdom. If he is to inherit the kingdom in the future he must experience the work of the Spirit in the present. (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:16-23)

The Spirit is the full “down payment” or “deposit” of our future inheritance. (Eph. 1:14) We are experiencing now in the present not just a “guarantee” but part of the actual “inheritance.” (Col. 1:12-14) Thus the Spirit is the key to understanding the tension of the ‘now’ and ‘not yet’. But our experiencing the Spirit is only the “deposit” of the kingdom (Rom. 14:17; 1 Cor. 4:20; 1 Thess. 2:12-13; 4:7-8) and is not its consummation.

We are part of Christ’s body and the “spiritual gifts” that we possess are in lieu of the Spirit mediating power to the believer from Christ’s resurrection body, the first fruits of the new age. (1 Cor. 12:11-13, 18, 27; 15:20, 23) Yet the “spiritual” (spiritual gifts) that we possess in the present is only the “down payment” of the “spiritual” (spiritual body) we will experience at the consummation. “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes the partial will be done away.” (1 Cor. 13:9-10) The partial is contrasted here to the perfect. Yet an absolute dichotomy should not be made between the terms, though Paul’s use of “cease” and “done away” implies such. For just as a child is organically related to a man (1 Cor. 13:11), and the seed planted, to a tree sprouted (1 Cor. 15:36-37), so is the partial related to the perfect. (1 Cor. 13:12) The perfect is not Christ, yet the return of Christ is the time of the perfect’s coming. Now we possess the “deposit” (the part) but when the perfect comes we will be changed into the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:46-49); we will have our resurrection or pneumatic and perfected corporal bodies. At this time the partial will be swallowed by the complete.

#### Attributes

The Holy Spirit is the agent of revelation (1 Pet. 1:20, 21). The Holy Spirit is able to do this because He searches the deep things of God and knows the thoughts of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11). The Holy Spirit is powerful (Acts 1:8) with the ability to raise Jesus from the dead and give life to our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11) as well as strengthen the believer (Eph. 3:16) with the potential to produce signs and miracles (Rom.

15:19) and be a bold (1 Tim. 3:13) participant of God's strategy to send witnesses even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Jesus carried out His earthly ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:14; Acts 10:38)

### Baptism of the Holy Spirit

John, baptized with water and prophesied that Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. (Matt. 3:11) In other words, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is only possible through Jesus Christ and is spiritual and not physical in nature. John's baptism was identified with repentance as a preparation for salvation while the presence or baptism of the Holy Spirit is identified with the evidence of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:13) Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, each Christian is identified as a member of the church, the body of Christ. (Rom. 8:9, 1 Cor. 12:13) The baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs once in the life of each believer, at the point of his conversion. (Rom. 8:11)

### Regeneration

Jesus describes those who enter the Kingdom of God as those who have been "born again". This is a spiritual rebirth that is produced by the Holy Spirit. (Jn. 3:3-5) We also refer to this spiritual rebirth as a washing of regeneration and renewal produced by the Holy Spirit. (Tit. 3:4-7) This regeneration by the Holy Spirit produces in the believer a new beginning (2 Corinthians 5:17) with a new moral and spiritual nature in addition to a spiritual change from spiritual death and defeat to a renewed condition of holiness and life. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit regenerates men to a restored relationship with God and ultimately an inner and personal resurrection from sin to a new life in Jesus Christ

### Indwelling

The baptism of the Spirit also results in the "indwelling" of the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), which means that each Christian is placed into a permanent relationship with God. (Jn. 14:16-17) Before the period of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit selectively lived "with" those who believed (Ps. 51:11) but now in Christ the Holy Spirit lives both "with" and "in" those who believe. (Jn. 14:16-17) With the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, our bodies become literally, the Temple of God. We are now separated, from this world, because God has taken residence with us. We are the purchased possession of Christ, whose blood paid for our sins. (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

### Filling

The Bible used the word "fill" to describe the control of God's Spirit in the life of a Christian. Though each Christian is indwelt by the Spirit (permanently related to God), not every Christian is filled with the Spirit (controlled by God). To be filled (or controlled) by the Spirit, the Christian must yield and continually re-yield his own will to the will of God as proclaimed in the Scriptures. (Eph. 5:18) The Holy Spirit provides the believer with the power to live as he should. (Gal. 5:16) The control of the Spirit by the power of the Spirit results in specific changes in character known as the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22-23)

### Sealing

All believers are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30) The word "seal" literally means "to stamp (with a signet or private Mk.) for security or preservation". The Mk. or "seal" of the believer for salvation is the presence of the Holy Spirit. The seal of the Holy Spirit is guarantees that a believer will be redeemed as God's purchased possession at the day of redemption. (Eph. 1:13; 4:30)

### Spiritual/Charismatic/Sign Gifts

We are commanded to know about spiritual gifts. (1 Cor. 12:1) There are different kinds of gifts but they all originate from the same source: Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:4) The degree of strength of each gift allocated by the Holy Spirit is proportional to the amount of faith of the one gifted by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:6) as determined by the Lord. (1 Cor. 12:11) But, the critical issue is not the degree of strength of each gift but the fact that the source of the ability originated with the Holy Spirit. Some of these gifts are supernatural in nature while others are more related to natural abilities. (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 7:7; 12:8-10, 28). The word "gift" is the Greek word "charisma" which means "that which is given graciously" and comes from the Greek word "charis" which means "grace". In other words, a spiritual gift is a unique in that it is an ability that cannot be acquired through human effort. It can only be acquired through the gracious work of God. It must be understood, though, that the natural gifts can be acquired through discipline and diligence but to some that ability is given supernaturally through the Holy Spirit. The difference between a talent and a spiritual gift is that a talent can be acquired through the discipline and diligence of human effort while a spiritual gift cannot.

We must learn how to use our spiritual gifts. There are different kinds of ministries to implement each spiritual gift and all those ministries serve the same Lord. (1 Cor. 12:5) We must discern God's ministry for our spiritual gift. There are different kinds of results that are produced from our spiritual gifts and every single result comes from God (1 Cor. 12:6). We must discern the most effect ministry that best utilizes the results of our spiritual gifts.

Lastly, we must commit to God's purpose of our spiritual gifts: the common good of the church. (1 Cor. 12:7) The church functions like the human body. (1 Cor. 12:12) Each part of the body contributes to the overall welfare of the body. In the same way that the individual parts of the human body cannot function independently, the individual parts of the body of Christ cannot function independently. (1 Cor. 12:14-17) Conversely, in the same way that the individual parts of the human function best dependently, the body of Christ functions best dependently as well. (1 Cor. 12:19-21) The individual parts of the body of Christ, like the human body, must be united and equally appreciated and valued in order to function properly and effectively. In other words, each gift is for the purpose of building up the church—the whole body of Christ. (1 Cor. 14:12)

We are part of Christ's body and the "spiritual gifts" that we possess are in lieu of the Spirit mediating power to the believer from Christ's resurrection body, the first fruits of the new age. (1 Cor. 12:11-13, 18, 27; 15:20, 23) Yet the "spiritual" (spiritual gifts) that we possess in the present is only the "down payment" of the "spiritual" (spiritual body) we will experience at the consummation. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes the partial will be done away." (1 Cor. 13:9-10) The partial is contrasted here to the perfect. Yet an absolute dichotomy should not be made between the terms, though Paul's use of "cease" and "done away" implies such. For just as a child is organically related to a man (1 Cor. 13:11), and the seed planted, to a tree sprouted (1 Cor. 15:36-37), so is the partial related to the perfect. (1 Cor. 13:12) The perfect is not Christ, yet the return of Christ is the time of the perfect's coming. Now we possess the "deposit" (the part) but when the perfect comes we will be changed into the image of the heavenly (1 Cor. 15:46-49); we will have our resurrection or pneumatic bodies. At this time the partial will be swallowed by the complete.

### **Soteriology: The Study of Salvation**

#### **The Gospel**

The purpose of salvation is to lift man out of his state of condemnation and to restore him and the creation to a relationship with God in which we are sustained by His grace (Jn. 17:3). The basis of salvation is the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ in the place of all men in order to pay the penalty that each man owed as a result of his sin (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1-19; Heb. 10:1-18). This is the message of the Gospel. In summary it is imply this: all people have sinned (Rom. 3:23), the penalty for our sin is death (Rom. 6:23) and Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8).

In salvation, man needs to move from death to life (Eph. 2:1-5); from enmity to reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-10); from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His Son (Col. 1:13); from slavery in the world to freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:3, 5:1); from guilt and condemnation to forgiveness (Rom. 8:1) and from sin to righteousness (Rom. 5:17-18). In salvation there are two principle characters: God and man and two principle concepts: grace and faith. We are saved by grace by means of faith (Eph. 2:8-9).

#### **Redemption**

Man's sin resulted in his slavery to sin. The death of Christ was the purchase price that bought man from sin. This purchase is redemption. As a result, man was released from his old master (sin) and placed under the authority of a new master (Christ) (Rom. 6:17-23; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Tim. 2:5-6).

#### **Regeneration**

God imparts new spiritual life to all who He saves (Jn. 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Jn. 5:1). This is called, "Regeneration". Regeneration is exclusively the total work of God—we play no active role in producing it (Jn. 1:13). In the same way we did not choose to be physically born, we did not choose to be spiritually born—we are simply "born again" by God to a new spiritual life (Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3). In addition, the idea of being "born of the Spirit" indicates that it is the person of the Holy Spirit that produces regeneration (Tit. 3:5). In the order of salvation, regeneration comes before saving faith in that our ability to respond to God's invitation to salvation comes only after God give us new life within (Jn. 3:5; Jn. 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14). As a result, being "born of the Spirit" produces evidence in everyday life. There will be a

noticeable change towards less sinful behavior (1 Jn. 3:9), replaced by a genuine Christ-like love (1 Jn. 4:7) and a sense of protection from spiritual attack (1 Jn. 5:18).

### Atonement

Because of sin, man is faced with four needs: we deserve to die as the penalty for sin, we deserve to bear God's wrath against sin, we are separated from God by our sins, and we are in bondage to sin and to the kingdom of Satan. The Old Testament sacrifices provided temporary atonement or "covering". Christ's death atoned for these needs when He died as a sacrifice for us (1 Jn. 4:10). He also died as a "propitiation" for our sins turning the wrath of God away from us who believe (1 Jn. 2:1-2). Next, he reconciled us to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). Now all believers have been redeemed from bondage to sin (Rom. 6:11-14).

### Propitiation

Scripture describes this incredible work of salvation with several different concepts. One concept that describes salvation is "propitiation". Man's sin resulted in God's wrath. The death of Christ was the sacrifice that calmed God's wrath against man. This calming is propitiation (Heb. 9:22; 10:10; 1 Jn. 2:1-2; 4:10).

### Justification

Man's sin resulted in his condemnation (he was declared guilty) before the judge of the universe (God). When Adam sinned, his guilt was imputed, or thought of as belonging, to us (Rom. 5:17). The death of Christ (the advocate or defense attorney) paid the penalty for the sin of his "client". As a result, our sin was imputed to Christ (1 Jn. 2:1-2). Lastly, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us (1 Cor. 1:30). As a result, when God justifies sinners, He is not declaring bad people to be good or saying that they are not sinners after all. He is pronouncing them legally righteous, free from any liability to the broken law, because He Himself in His Son has borne the penalty of their law breaking (Rom. 8:30; Rom. 5:1; Gal. 2:16). This declaration of righteousness is justification (Rom. 3:22-26; Tit. 3:5-7; Jam. 2:21-26; Rom. 4:1-5, 22-25).

Man's sin resulted in man becoming God's enemy instead of God's child and friend. The death of Christ (the mediator between God and man) brought them together again. This reuniting of God and man is reconciliation. As a result, men experience peace with God instead of enmity and adoption into the family of God (Rom. 5:1-2, 10-11; 8:15-17; Eph. 1:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Tim. 2:5).

### Election

From God's perspective, we see that God chooses to appoint salvation to some out of His sovereign good pleasure (Eph. 1:4-6). This is called the doctrine of election. This doctrine that God ordained beforehand those who would be saved is clearly affirmed throughout Scripture (Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; Rom. 9:11-13; Rom. 11:7; Eph. 1:12; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2:9) to provide a means of comfort in our circumstances (2 Corinthians 4:16-18), to give us reason to humble ourselves and praise God (Eph. 1:5-6, 12; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13) and to encourage us to evangelism in that God's election gives us reason to expect people to be saved (2 Tim. 2:10).

Still, God sovereignly works through our desires to guarantee that our choices come about as He ordains. Additionally, it must be understood that God did not choose those who would be saved based on a foreknowledge of who would choose to be saved (Rom. 8:28 with 1 Cor. 8:3). There is absolutely no human merit in the process of election. Any human merit in the election process would suggest salvation by works which Scripture negates (Eph. 2:8-9). God's highest value in salvation is not the free will of man. It is His glory. Election is the exclusive work of God's sovereign good pleasure that bring Him the glory He deserves (Rom. 11:5-6). This does not make God responsible for those who choose to reject God. Man is personally responsible for his choices and those who reject God are without excuse for God has revealed Himself and given man an opportunity to choose Him (Rom. 1:20).

From a human perspective, it is still difficult to fathom that God would sovereignly reveal His justice by passing over some persons, choosing not to save them, but rather punish them for their sins. But, any finite, mortal and unrighteous man has no place to question the infinite, immortal and perfectly just God for the choices He makes (Rom. 9:19-20). The reality is that God never had to save anyone. The very fact that God saves anyone is a reflection of His grace and mercy, not of being unjust or unfair (1 Pet. 2:4; 1 Tim. 2:4).

### Faith

Man sees salvation from a viewpoint of faith. Faith is man's response to the grace of God. Faith involves several aspects: trust in a person (God/Jesus Christ); belief in a content (the gospel); conviction, a change of mind and direction (repentance); and a receiving of the gifts of grace (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8, 9).

Faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). But, faith is not merely having knowledge of the truth for we know that even demons have knowledge of the truth but are not saved. (Jam. 2:19). Even agreeing with or liking the truth does not save (Jn. 3:2). Saving faith is moving from being merely an observer of the Gospel to becoming a believer of Jesus Christ Himself and the Gospel message about Him. It does not mean that we merely believe what Jesus says. More significantly, it means that we believe "in" Jesus (Jn. 3:16) and who He is—the Son of God sent from God to save those who believe from their sins. It In other words, saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. We are saved by grace (agency) through this kind of faith (means) bringing up four issues in the human response in salvation: conviction, change, trust and control. All four relate to an aspect of faith.

### Repentance

The Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Gospel to convict sinners of their sin (Jn. 16:9). The preaching of the Gospel is a necessary first step (Rom. 10:14-17; Acts 16:14, 2 Corinthians 7:10). Jesus came into the world like a shining light exposing the deeds of darkness (Jn. 3:19-21). When the Gospel is preached, sin is exposed. Those who reject the exposing light (Christ) refuse to be humbled by their sin and like Adam hide in the darkness and use contempt when exposed. Those who embrace the light come to their senses (Lk. 15:17). They realize that sin is a distortion of truth and by embracing the truth they are set free (Jn. 8:31-32; Jam. 4:6). This humbling leads to Godly sorrow, sorrow over sin (2 Corinthians 7:10). Based on the truth, we have a change of mind of direction and ultimately of behavior. We turn from idols and turn to God and we demand nothing (1 Thess. 1:9). In other words, repentance occurs alongside the arrival of saving faith in a person's life.

### Grace

Grace, in a Biblical sense, is God's goodness towards those who deserve only punishment (Rom. 3:23-24). God's grace manifests itself in the world in two different ways. "Common" grace is the grace that God gives to both believers and unbelievers (Ps. 145:9). Common grace is evident physically (Matt. 5:44-45), intellectually (Rom. 1:21), morally (Lk. 6:33), creatively (Ecclesiastes 3:11), in society (Rom. 13:1-4), religiously (Ps. 111:10) and in countless others ways that can be seen in everyday life. Common grace extends to even non-believers to redeem those non-believers who will be eventually saved (1 Pet. 3:9). In addition, common grace demonstrates God's goodness (Ps. 145:9), justice (Rom. 2:5) and glory (Jn. 1:14).

"Saving" grace is evidenced only by those who believe because it is the grace that produces salvation (Tit. 2:11). Common grace is different from saving grace in its results (common grace does not produce salvation), its recipients (common grace is available to all; saving grace is only for those who believe) and in its source (saving grace comes from Christ's atoning work and is not accessible to non-believers).

Grace is an attribute of God, one of the divine perfections. Grace is also God's provision designated in Christ for the salvation of man. Christ as the mediator is the living embodiment of the grace of God. (Jn. 1:14) Finally, grace is used to designate the favor of God as it is manifested in the application of the work of redemption by the Holy Spirit (regeneration, etc.) (Tit. 3:5; Rom. 3:24) as well as His continued work in the believer (sanctification) (Rom. 5:17; Eph. 4:7).

### Sanctification

Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives (1 Cor. 6:11). Sanctification is a life-long process (Rom. 6:19; Phil. 1:6; 3:13-14) that begins at regeneration (Tit. 3:5; 1 Jn. 3:9), increases throughout life but (2 Corinthians 3:18) but will never be completed in this life (1 Jn. 1:8, 10). Sanctification is primarily a work of God but we are called to do everything in our own power live sanctified lives (Col. 1:29). On the one hand we play a passive role as we depend on God to sanctify us but we also play an active role in doing what we possibly can to increase our sanctification.

### Glorification

Death is not a punishment for Christians (Rom. 8:1). It is the right of passage for every man to live their eternal destinies (Heb. 9:27). After death, the visible and physical part of a believer remains on earth but the invisible part of a believer go immediately into God's presence (2 Corinthians 5:8). When Jesus

returns, the physical body of a believer will rise from the dead and be reunited with their souls and/or invisible parts and both parts will become perfected resurrected bodies (1 Thess. 4:14-18; 1 Cor. 15:12-58). We will be like Jesus (1 Jn. 3:2).

### Righteousness

There is no one who is righteous (Rom. 3:10). Everyone has sinned (Rom. 3:23). Because of our sin and unrighteousness, we all have earned eternal separation from God (Rom. 6:23). But, righteousness has come from God through faith (Rom. 3:22). God credits our faith as righteousness (Jam. 2:23).

### Perseverance

Salvation is irreversible. Once someone truly trusts Christ for salvation, he is saved and can never become lost. There are those who may claim and appear to be saved and later demonstrate their true unregenerate nature, but these were never saved to begin with and so salvation was never theirs to lose. The Holy Spirit is the deposit of the believer's salvation, which God has assured will never be taken away once it is given (Eph. 1:13-14; 4:30; Jn. 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Jn. 2:1-2,19).

### Eternal Destiny of the Unevangelized

God will sovereignly reveal His justice by passing over some persons, choosing not to save them, but rather punish them for their sins. Those who have been unevangelized will live in shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2)

## **Anthropology: A Study of Man**

### Man's Purpose

Even though God does not need man for anything (Acts 17:25), man is still important to God because the purpose of man's creation was to bring glory to God (Is. 43:7; Eph. 1:11-12). As a result, man's purpose is to fulfill his reason for being created: to glorify God. In order to fulfill this purpose God gave man the purpose to obey and fear Him (Ecclesiastes 12:13). In addition to man's purpose for God, God also gave man purpose in his relationship to all creation. God placed man in authority over His creation as a steward of the world, and that he is therefore responsible for the development and conservation of the creation (Gen. 1:28-30; 9:1-7; Ps. 8:3-8).

### Man's Nature

A material and an immaterial part of man can be identified, but man's existence can be simplified as a unity of three very distinct parts: body, soul and spirit (1 Thess. 5:23, Heb. 4:12). Several words are used in the Bible to describe the three different "parts" of a man (body, mind, heart, soul, spirit, will, conscience) but such words do not imply that any of the parts exist independently of each other. Jesus was both troubled in His spirit and in His soul (Jn. 12:27, 13:21). People who have died and gone to heaven or hell are both called spirits and souls (Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:9) as well as bodies (1 Cor. 15:42-49). Man is referred to as both "body and soul" and as "body and spirit" (Matt. 10:28; 1 Cor. 5:5). The body, soul and spirit are referred to as vessels of adoration to God (Deut. 6:5; Jn. 4:24; Ps. 103:1; Rom. 12:1) of God. The fact that all three parts of man are present in the events of a man's life does not imply that some or all are the same. It simply teaches us that in the events of a man's life all three parts participate and are actively involved, engaged and influenced. All three are distinct but are unified around the purpose that all aspects of man were created for the purpose of bringing adoration to God in the fullness of each and all of their essences (Matt. 22:37; Rom. 12:1).

God made man with needs so that man would depend on God to meet his needs by grace and in receiving God's grace be driven to worship. Our deepest need is the eternal, God himself, the giver of life (Ecclesiastes 3:11). All other needs (the enjoyment of life) derive from that. These needs are never totally satisfied, but only temporarily met, so that our eyes will remain on God the giver, not the gift (Deut. 8:3, 11-14). Man's longings and needs form the dignity of man and any attempt to rid ourselves of these longings and needs forces us to deny our humanity.

### Image of God

God created man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27), and that man's possession of this divine image gives value to his life, and demands that all men be treated with dignity and respect (Gen. 9:6; Jam. 3:9-10). The Hebrew words for "image" (tselem) and "likeness" (demût) indicate that man was created in a similar rather than an identical likeness to God. God is not physical, but spiritual, though it is unclear exactly what that similarity of image includes, whether personality, certain shared attributes, or delegated authority. It is

possible that the concept of man's image of God relates to the concept of sonship (cp. Gen. 1:26 with Gen. 5:3). But, most certainly there are many moral, spiritual, mental and relational aspects of man that demonstrate man's likeness to God.

Despite the fall, man is still like God and still represents God but that image of God is a distorted image that is less fully like God than before the entrance of sin. But, through the redemptive work of Christ, man is progressively renewed to reflect the likeness of God through the work of the Holy Spirit (Col. 3:10; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Rom. 8:29) until the return of Christ, when all Christians will become like Christ (1 Jn. 3:2) in that Christ is the full and perfect human likeness of the invisible God (Col. 1:15).

The creation of man as male and female even further demonstrates the image of God. In marriage, male and female demonstrate how two distinct persons become as one (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:6) much like the Trinity exists as one yet three very distinct persons. As one in marriage, male and female can communicate love and fellowship much like the persons of the Trinity share love, fellowship and glory in their interpersonal relationships (Jn. 17:5,24). The equality in person and importance of both man and woman (1 Cor. 11:11-12; Gal. 3:27-28) demonstrate how the persons of the Trinity, though very distinct, share that same attribute of equal personhood and importance in the Godhead. Yet, there is a difference in role and authority between man and woman (1 Cor. 11:3) much like there is a difference in role and authority between the persons of the Godhead (1 Pet. 1:2; Jn. 12:49-50; Jn. 16:13-14).

#### The Fall / Its Effects

God not only created man with needs, but wanted man to always depend on him to meet those needs like a father would his son. This is why God said to Adam, "You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen. 2:17)." As long as Adam trusted God, God determined what was good for Adam, and met Adam's needs in his timing and by his grace (Gen. 2:18-22). And the dignity of man was preserved. However, the Serpent tempted Eve, and the goodness of God was called into question (truth distortion) (Gen. 3:1-6). If they took the fruit of this tree they would reject the wisdom of God (the fear of the Lord) (Job 28:28; Prov. 1:7; 2:5-6; 8:13; 9:10; 19:23) and replace it with a wisdom of their own. And she ate the fruit, being deceived (1 Tim. 2:14, Gen. 3:13). Adam also ate, but he ate intentionally, undeceived. He had a choice between Eve, the gift, who met his immediate need, (Gen. 2:18) and God, the giver, who provides for his needs. Adam took control (pride) and acted independently (arrogance). So he chose to eat the fruit and remain with Eve rather than refuse the fruit and limp back to God, once again in need waiting to receive God's grace.

Once Adam and Eve sinned by eating the fruit, "their eyes were opened," just as Satan said, but rather than feeling like God, they felt exposed, ashamed. Yet rather than moving back to God, they attempted to shield their exposure from each other by fig leaves and from God by hiding in the bushes. When Adam chose independence from God (sin) he cut himself off from the source of life and thus died (spiritually and eventually physically). God's expelling of Adam and Eve from the garden symbolized their death, their already existing separation from God (Gen. 3:22-24). In Gen. 3-11 we see the beginning of man's continued movement from God. In man's heart is a mindset toward independence from God, a propensity for evil (Rom. 8:6-8) and a hostility to being exposed to the truth and outwardly man lives in a world system that reinforces that direction (1 Jn. 2:15-17).

#### Sin

Sin is defined in Scripture as lawlessness (1 Jn. 3:4) or a lack of conformity to the moral law of God. Even though God ordained sin (Eph. 1:11) according to His perfect plan, sin did not originate with God because God is without sin (Deut. 32:4) and does not have the ability to commit sin (Job 34:10) nor is He able to instigate sin (Jam. 1:13). It was Adam who originated sin by willful and voluntary choice (Gen. 3:1-19). As a result, all mankind, being Adam's descendants, have been born spiritually condemned to death [*Inherited Guilt*] (Eph. 2:1; Rom. 5:17-19) with a sinful propensity of their own [*Inherited Corruption*] (Rom. 5:12-21; 7:7-25). This sinful propensity is slavery to sin, a natural tendency to distrust and thus disobey God and a refusal to be exposed by the truth (Jn. 3:19-21). All men have followed their sinful bent, exercising their own wills to disobey God by their personal sins (Rom. 3:19-20, 23). They are also born in bondage to the world system (Gal. 4:3; Eph. 2:2).

#### Depravity: Definition and Extent

Because of inherited sin, man is affected by sin in every part of his being (Rom. 7:18) and totally lacks spiritual good before God. Man totally lacks the ability to come to God and do anything that pleases Him (Rom. 3:9-20; Rom. 8:8). In other words, man is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1). This total lack of spiritual good and total lack of ability to please God or even come to Him is called, "total depravity". As a result, it is impossible for those outside of Christ make a voluntary choice to pursue God in any capacity. Any man who comes to God only does so because God draws him first (Jn. 6:44).

Salvation in Christ is the only hope for any man to be set free from His depravity (Rom. 6:17-23). In order to move from death to life (Eph. 2:1-5); from enmity to reconciliation (Rom. 5:1-10); from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom His Son (Col. 1:13); from slavery in the world to freedom in Christ (Gal. 4:3; 5:1); from guilt and condemnation to forgiveness (Rom. 8:1) and from sin to righteousness (Rom. 5:17-18), man must be saved by grace by means of faith. This is salvation and the purpose of salvation is to lift man out of his state of depravity and condemnation and to restore him to a relationship with God in which we are sustained by His grace (Jn. 17:3).

### **A Study of Baptism and Communion**

#### **Definition of Ordinance**

Water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances in that in an ecclesiastical context they were "ordained" by Christ to be established rites and ceremonies in the life of a believer in Christ (Matt. 28:19; Lk. 22:19-20). Technically, the ordinances of water baptism and the Lord's Supper were given to the believer by Christ as outward representations of spiritual realities. Both are merely symbolic reenactments of Christ's death and they do not in any way contribute to the salvation of those who participate (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). The term "sacrament" is also commonly used to describe these two events but whether the term "sacrament" or "ordinance" is used, neither term is assigned with any implication that they dispense grace or salvation to the participants.

#### **Role of ordinances in the life of the church**

Since neither water Baptism nor the Lord's Supper dispense grace or salvation, the purpose of both ordinances is symbolic in that both serve as reminders for the church to the work of God accomplished in the life of a believer through Christ's death and resurrection. In addition, the Lord gave us these ordinances to strengthen and encourage our faith as there is spiritual benefit to being or observing acts of obedience to Christ. Lastly, these ordinances provide reassurance to the believer of the promises possessed in the cross of Christ.

#### **Baptism**

The origin of baptism is not clearly understood but we do know that John the Baptist was divinely commissioned to baptize (Jn. 1:33; 3:28). The Old Testament points to many different types of ceremonial cleansings (Leviticus 10-15) but there is never any indication of any kind of ceremony or ritual that practiced one person ceremonially washing another. John was the first and thus was appropriately recognized throughout history as John "the Baptist" or technically, John "the Baptizer" or John "the Washer". Jesus with the aid of His disciples practiced baptism (Jn. 4:1-3). Before Christ's death and resurrection, baptism was accepted as a public act to declare a personal commitment to spiritual cleansing and a deeper commitment to God. Because of Christ, baptism is given a deeper meaning pointing to the work of God accomplished in the life of a believer through Christ's death and resurrection. Baptism is now a picture of Christ's death and resurrection, publicly demonstrating the believer's participation in that death and resurrection by immersion.

Immersion is the biblical model of baptism, especially because baptism is meant to symbolize the cleansing associated with the burial and resurrection of the believer with Christ (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12). In addition, baptism also symbolizes purification and cleansing from sins in that water is an evident symbol of washing and cleansing (Tit. 3:5; Acts 22:16). Thirdly, it can be concluded that immersion is the Biblical model of baptism because the Greek word "baptize" means "to plunge, dip, immerse" something in water. Lastly, Jesus modeled immersion in that when He was baptized by John, He was clearly immersed in that "he came up out of the water" (Mk. 1:10). However, immersion is not absolutely necessary as the mode of baptism. If immersion were impossible or undesirable for a non-theological reason, another mode of baptism would be appropriate.

Baptism, though commanded in Scripture (Acts 2:38) and demonstrated through the practice of early believers (Acts 2:41), is not a means of salvation but is merely symbolic of the work of God accomplished in the life of a believer (Eph. 2:8, 9; 1 Pet. 3:21). It is simply an act of obedience of Christ and follows the salvation of the believer (Acts 2:38, 41). Baptism, like salvation, is reserved for those who are of the age to “confess” a faith in God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:9-10). Therefore, baptism of infants and any persons who are not of the age to make a confession to God through Jesus Christ is not effective. Also, it must be pointed out that Jesus was baptized not as an infant but as an adult and so those who follow Him should do likewise.

### The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper originated from the meal served in celebration of the Passover (Lk. 22:8). The Passover Feast was a monument to the nation of Israel’s deliverance from the hand of Egypt. In the Passover meal before His death, Jesus used the elements of this meal to leave a standing monument to the expiatory work of Jesus as the cause of a believer’s salvation (Lk. 22:19-20). The Lord’s Supper, like Baptism, is a picture, which identifies the believer wholly with Christ’s death by symbolically eating His flesh and drinking His blood (Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). The importance of observing this sacrament is found in the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ himself instituted it and commanded His professed followers to observe it—“This do, in remembrance of me.”

There are many meanings to the Lord’s Supper. First and foremost, the Lord’s Supper symbolizes the death of Christ. The bread points to the physical suffering that Christ endured in His death in order to demonstrate the full extent of His love (Jn. 13:1; 15:13). The cup points to the redemptive work of the blood of Jesus that sets men free from their sins (Rev. 1:5). Accepting Christ’s invitation to “take”, “eat” and “drink” symbolizes our participation in the benefits of Christ’s suffering and the blood He shed. Similarly, our participation in these benefits reflect the spiritual nourishment that results from accepting Christ’s invitation to “take”, “eat” and “drink” (Jn. 6:53-57). The Lord’s Supper is a unifying point for believers who participate in it together (1 Cor. 10:17) as it affirms Christ’s love for His church, the blessings of salvation and the common faith that all believers share in Christ.

The Lord’s Supper must not be practiced in an “unworthy” manner (1 Cor. 11:27). This means that the participant must not eat of the Lord’s Supper with any selfish intent but must be fully engrossed in contemplating the symbolism that comes with identifying with Christ’s death through this sacrament (Jn. 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:27-34). This may require personal reflection leading to the examination of a believer’s faith to ensure that the believer stands right with God and others previous to participating in the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 5:23-24). It is proper to celebrate the Passover Feast only once a year but Jesus commands us to practice the Lord’s Supper as often as it is meaningful. When done properly, the Lord’s Supper is an effective tool that Jesus has given believers to both reflect on and look forward to the work of God in the believer’s life (1 Cor. 11:26).

## **Ecclesiology: The Study of the Church**

### Definition

The Old Testament use of the word “church” was not applied in a religious context. Its Hebrew equivalent, “Kahal”, was used to describe a congregation, assembly, multitude or company of any kind. The Latin term for church, “ecclesia” is derived from two Greek words meaning “out” (ek) and “to call” (kalein). The root idea of “church” can be understood as a “body of called out ones.” Jesus was the first to define the word as a Christian society when He declared, “on this rock I will build my church (Matt. 16:18).” The “rock” that Jesus was referring to was Peter’s profession that “Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16).” These statements point to the fact that Jesus was defining His church as those who demonstrate saving faith by acknowledging that He is the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Many metaphors are used in Scripture to describe the church (1 Tim. 5:1-2; Jn. 15:5; 1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 3:6). But, two specific pictures provide the most comprehensive description of the church: the body of Christ and the bride of Christ. In both pictures, Christ is the head of the church. The body picture describes how completely dependent the church is to her head, Christ, as the primary source for life and function (Eph. 1:22-23; 4:15-16; Col. 1:18). It is also a picture that presents the church as an extremely diverse organism composed of many parts that serve many different functions. Yet, each member is equal in value and

position and is unified to one head, Christ, by outward ties of fellowship, a common belief and the observance of certain ordinances forming one organic whole towards one divine purpose (1 Cor. 11-14).

The bride picture describes the commitment and love relationship Christ has for the church. It reveals Christ's humility with His church and His desire for a glorious church that is holy and without blemish as a result of being sanctified and cleansed through His Word. It also brings attention to the submission and obedience that the church owes to Christ (Eph. 5:22-23), her Husband.

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph. 3:20-21) on earth through righteous living (1 Tim. 3:15) and proclamation of the gospel to the world (Acts 1:8; Eph. 3:8-10). On a local level, the church is to be the vehicle for corporate worship (Eph. 1:12), the haven of fellowship (Heb. 3:13; 10:24-25), the officiating group for outreach and ministry, and the mechanism for spiritual education and growth (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Eph. 4:4-6, 11-13; Col. 2:12). In relationship to Christ, the church should worship and obey (Jn. 4:22-23, 1 Jn. 4:16; 5:3-4). In relationship to the world, the church should testify of the gospel and restrain the influence of evil (Matt. 5:13-16).

### Universal Church

All believers throughout the world as a whole are referred to as the church. The "bride of Christ" and the "body of Christ" metaphors used to describe the church address all believers throughout the world and not just merely a local gathering of believers (Eph. 5:25; 1 Cor. 12:27-28). These truths point to the fact that the church is synonymous with the universal (or catholic) church (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18).

Because of faith in Christ, the church are "sons of Abraham" and are "blessed with believing Abraham" (Gal. 3:7, 9, 14). Even though this blessing was a promise to the nation of Israel through Abraham, being "sons of Abraham" does not also imply that the church is either obligated to fulfill all the prophecies or inherit all the promises specifically applied to the nation of Israel (Gen. 12:2, 3). There are two types of Israel referred to in Scripture: a national Israel and "spiritual" Israel. The blessing was two-fold: a physical blessing to be demonstrated through a national Israel and the spiritual blessing of a relationship with God to a "spiritual" Israel who by faith are justified just as Abraham was justified by faith (Rom. 4; Gal. 3:6-9, 14). Since the church is justified in the same way, the church is identified with and included in the "spiritual" Israel (Gal. 3:6-9). There are promises and prophecies that apply to and are only fulfilled through a national Israel but even the national Israel must be regenerated through a saving faith in Jesus Christ to be included in the blessings of the "spiritual" Israel (Rom. 11:23).

### Local Church

However, most Scriptural references to the church refer to the church as a local assembly of believers who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit because of saving faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Eph. 2:18-19; 3:6). From this, we can conclude that the church began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). We can also conclude that Scripture often describes the church as a local group that is as small as a home group (Rom. 16:5) but also as large as group of believers in a city (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1) or even in a region (Acts 9:31).

### Leadership

Scripture mentions three offices that are to be exercised in a local assembly or church: elders (1 Tim. 3:2-5, 5:17; Acts 20:17-28), bishops (Tit. 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 5:12) and deacons (Acts 6:2). The term "elder" comes from "presbyteros", an aged person, and implies that this office be elderly and experienced. The term "bishop" comes from "episcopos" meaning superintendent and is equivalent to the word "overseer". The office of deacon was created in order to allow the apostles to discharge their secular or inferior duties so that they might have more freedom to exercise their more pastoral and evangelical duties of ministry and is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

### Church Government

How these offices interact with each other and its congregation is expressed in four different forms of church government (polity) systems: hierarchical, federal, congregational and non-governmental. Hierarchical church government was a product of the early church councils that eventually settled their meetings in Rome and Constantinople. Delegates assigned to attend these councils were eventually assigned the office of bishop with the duty to oversee the city that sent them. From these bishops was chosen one person to oversee the church as a whole. The church in Rome, which would become the Roman Catholic

Church, elected a Pope. The church in Constantinople, which would become the Orthodox Church, elected a Patriarch. There is no real clear Scriptural support for this form of church government.

The concept of a non-governmental church stems from the concept that the church is an organism, not an organization, that should be solely devoted to meeting together, observing the Lord's supper and Christian service and not distracted by trying to maintain a certain structure or form of government. As noble as this might seem, Scripture still points to the fact that there was at least a simple form of government based on the fact that the early church had officers (Acts 13:1; 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5), stated times of meeting (1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 20:7), regulated church decorum (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:13, 14:34), and raised money for ministry (1 Cor. 16:1,2; Rom. 15:25-28).

### Congregationalism

The Scriptural model for church government can be best described as a combination of the federal and congregational governments. The following facts seem to point in this direction: 1) Each church elected its own officers and delegates (Acts 1:23, 26; 6:1-6; 15:2,3) 2) Each church carried out its own discipline through its leaders (Matt. 18:17,18; 1 Cor. 5:13; 2 Thess. 3:6,14,15) 3) The church together with its officers rendered decisions (Acts 15:22), received delegates (Acts 15:4), and called people out to do ministry (2 Corinthians 8:19; Acts 13:2,3).

### Discipline

God demands that His church be holy and blameless (Eph. 5:26-27). The church must first deal internally with any sin that is present before addressing the sin that is present outside of it (1 Pet. 4:17). As a result, the church must appropriately admonish, encourage and help those who have strayed from God's standard of holiness (1 Pet. 1:16; 1 Thess. 5:14). On the other hand, the church must discourage fellowship with those who professes faith in Christ but practices an unrepentant lifestyle that disregards Biblical principle (1 Cor. 5:11-13). The church must also guard itself from false teachers (Acts 20:28-31). All church discipline must respect Christ's standard of privacy in such matters except in the case of unrepentant believers (Matt. 18:15-18) and to bear the responsibility of restoring believers in sin to right fellowship with God and ultimately with the local church (Gal. 6:1-2).

### **Ecclesiology: Membership**

#### Who are members?

The church is composed of all such persons who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit because of a saving faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:47; 20:28; Eph. 2:18-19; 3:6). However, most Scriptural references to the church refer to the church as a local assembly of believers that can be as small as a home group (Rom. 16:5) but also as large as group of believers in a city (1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1) or even in a region (Acts 9:31). Scripture teaches that all believers of the local church are "members" of one another and "members" of one body (Rom. 12:4, 5).

The word "member" in the original Greek (melos) literally means "limb" or "part of the body". Every part of the human body must be functionally interdependent in order for the human body as a whole to function properly. In the same way, the body of Christ must demonstrate the same kind of connectedness, structure, organization, function and accountability in order for the local church as a whole to function as God designed it to function. Thus, even though "membership" is not a termed used in Scripture, it is an appropriate word that describes the persons who are committed to fulfilling the function of the local church as a whole by committing to being functionally interdependent as an individual part or, in this case, member of that body.

Every believer should, in principle, be members of a local church (Rom. 12:4, 5). But, the concept of "membership" is not the right of every believer. "Membership" is more so a privilege extended to every believer of a localized area or region because it is the responsibility of each local church to separate themselves from anyone, whether believer or unbeliever, who undermines the function of the local church as a whole because of pride, sin and deceit (Rom. 20:28-31; 1 Cor. 5; 1 Jn. 4:1-3). In other words, membership is to be extended to persons whose lives support the Biblical function of the local church as a whole (Eph. 5:25-27).

#### How should the church implement membership?

The question has never been "if" a believer should be a member of a local church. The real question is how does the local church maintain a membership of only qualified persons into its local body? The

church is marked by three distinct character qualities. First, but not foremost, the church is called to be unified in the morals, values and purposes established in the Word of God with the purpose of being separate and distinct from the rest of the world (Jn. 17:14-23). Secondly, the church must live and behave beyond the ordinary standards of a religious profession and the ordinary ways and habits of the world (Tit. 2:11-12). Thirdly, the church must be identified as belonging to God. (1 Pet. 2:9). It is the personal and individual application of these distinctions that will maintain these distinctions in the local church as a whole. As a result, the means and method of membership should protect and provide for these three distinctions in the individual member so as to maintain and promote these distinctions in the church as a whole.

There is no purely objective method to evaluate these standards as no one can truly know the heart of man except God alone (Jeremiah 17:9; Ps. 139). Thus, membership can only be maintained subjectively through careful examination of a person's confession and action (2 Tim. 2:19) measured against Biblical teaching (1 Tim. 3:14-15) with the discerning help of the Holy Spirit (Is. 11:2; Jn. 14:26; Jam. 1:5).

#### Why do we need membership?

The intention of membership is to guard the testimony of the church. The church must present itself holy and blameless by separating itself from all that is contrary to holiness and Godliness (Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 2 Tim. 2:22). In addition, the intention of membership is to look after the teaching of the church (Eph. 3:10; Acts 20:28-31; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 1 Pet. 2:1-3). Third, membership is intended to promote the unity of the church (Amos 3:3; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3). Fourth, the intention of membership is to protect the mission of the church (Lk. 14:31). Lastly, membership is intended to help the organization of the church (1 Cor. 12).

### **Eschatology: A Study of the End, Part 1**

#### Personal return of Christ

Christ will visit the earth again in personal presence (Acts 1:11), at the end of the age (Matt. 24:3), in power and glory (Matt. 24:27), to raise the dead in Christ (1 Cor. 15:23), to gather people to Himself (2 Thess. 2:1) and to destroy evil (2 Thess. 2:8). The return of Christ will be preceded by signs that will signal His return. These signs include the preaching of the Gospel to all nations (Mk. 13:10; Matt. 24:14), the great tribulation (Mk. 13:22; Matt. 24:23-24), false prophets working signs and wonders (Mk. 13:22; Matt. 24:23-24), signs in the heavens (Mk. 13:24-26; Matt. 24:29-30), the coming of the man of sin and the rebellion (1 Jn. 2:18) and the salvation of Israel.

#### Premillennialism/contrast with other views

Millennium means 1,000 years and refers to the kingdom of Christ on earth. This era, foretold by all the prophets, will be a time of peace among people and nations. But, this peace will not come through military might or treaties. Christ will come bringing peace. When the governments of earth have finally fallen, the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of men, will set up His kingdom (Daniel 2:44). Satan will be bound for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3). There will be persons with mortal bodies and persons with glorified bodies on earth during this time. Those who survive the "Tribulation" and who have not been condemned in the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46) are allowed to enter the Millennium in their mortal bodies and will have prolonged lives. They will live for the entire 1,000 years of Christ's reign and will live on eternally. Their immortal lives will not be spent in glorified bodies but in human bodies eternally preserved through partaking of the tree of life. They will retain perfect health and not experience aging because of the leaves of the trees that grow for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2).

The Millennium will bring peace in the world of nature. (Rom. 8:20-23, Gen. 3:17, 18, Zechariah 8:12, Is. 11:6-8). All economic conflict will be swept away. Oppression and strikes will be unknown with food and housing for all (Is. 65:21-23). There will be religious peace with Jews and Gentiles worshipping the Lord together (Is. 11:9, 10) and the Jews will be at peace in their own land (Ezekiel 36:24-27). All this will happen because the Kingdom Age (Millennium) will be characterized by the fullness of the Spirit (Joel 2:28, 29) more than in any previous dispensation. It is evident that all believers will be indwelt by the Holy Spirit in the Millennium even as they are in the present age (Ezekiel 36:27; Ezekiel 37:14; Is. 11:2,3; Jeremiah 31:33) and that no unsaved person will enter the Millennium (Is. 16:5 Jeremiah 18:7 Jeremiah 19:19-21,25 Jeremiah 23:18 Jeremiah 55:5,6 Jeremiah 56:6-8, Jeremiah 60:3-5, Jeremiah 61:8,9, Jeremiah 3:17, Jeremiah, 16:19-21, Amos 9:11, Obadiah 1:17-21).

There are three dominant views of when the Millennium will occur in relation to the return of Christ. Amillennialism states that there is no Millennium. It rejects a literal, visible, physical kingdom. It denies Is. Chapter 11 and scores of other Old Testament texts and takes a symbolic and figurative view of texts like Is. 35. Post-millennialism states that Christ will come after the 1,000 year period is completed and is based on a belief that the world will become better and better until perfection is achieved and then Christ will come and take over. Premillennialism is the belief that the return of Jesus and the tribulation will occur before the millennium and that the Millennium is when Christ will rule for a period of one thousand years in a literal and physical Kingdom on earth (Is. 65:20).

2 Tim. 3:13 contradicts the post-millennial view that the world will become better and better and the figurative and symbolic views on Scripture of Amillennialism are better supported from a literal and physical perspective. So, based on the literal interpretation of the key prophetic passages such as those in Daniel and Revelation, Scripture best supports the imminent, premillennial return of Christ.

### Rapture

The word "rapture" comes from the Latin word "rapio" or "caught up" and is described in Scripture as the return of Jesus in the clouds with angelic activity, trumpets, heavenly signs, and a gathering of the saints (1 Thess. 4:15-17; Matt. 24:29-31). There are two major views of the rapture: pre-tribulationism and post-tribulationism. Pre-tribulationists have several core convictions. First, the pre-tribulationist view offers the most logical interpretation of second-coming scriptures when they are taken for their plain, literal meaning. They have a two-stage understanding of Christ's return. They see the return of Christ as two separate events: the first unseen and the second public. They emphasize the difference between passages they believe refer to the rapture (e.g., Matt. 24:40) and those that all agree refer to the final coming of Christ (Rev. 19). They believe that Christ will return to remove (or rapture) his church out of the world before the tribulation (1 Thess. 4:16-17; Col. 3:4). Since the tribulation period is a time when God's wrath will be poured out in judgment on the wicked, they believe the rapture must take place before this time (1 Thess. 1:10; 1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10). He will then return with his saints to judge the world after the tribulation. In the second stage, everyone will behold the Lord returning in glory (Rev. 19). Finally, pre-tribulationists highlight the fact that many texts clearly state that Christ's return could happen at any moment and that Christians are not to be caught off guard (Matt. 24:42-51; 25:1-30; 1 Cor. 1:7; Phil. 4:5; Tit. 2:13).

A post-tribulation view of the rapture does not embrace an imminent or surprising rapture since we should not expect Christ to return until after the rather obvious events of Christ's prophecy are fulfilled. In addition, a post-tribulationist view teaches that Jesus taught that the church would endure the tribulation period (Matt. 24:21-22) and that believers should expect suffering (Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3; 1 Thess. 3:3) and follow the lead of Jesus' prayer to not take his church out of the world but to protect them from the enemy in the midst of a hostile world (Jn. 17:15). In addition, a post-tribulationist view does not agree with the pre-tribulationist interpretation of key end times passages.

### Imminence

The return of Christ for His Church is a signless and always imminent event. Even the New Testament writers expected the Lord's return at any moment (Phil. 3:20; Matt. 24:42-44, 50; 1 Jn. 2:28). The fact that two-thousand years have elapsed is irrelevant to the doctrine of Christ's imminent return in that "With the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (1 Pet. 3:8). God is not bound by time as we are, and no amount of time can ever nullify His faithfulness. The real reason for the Lord's delay is not that He is negligent or careless in fulfilling his promises, but simply because He is longsuffering and kind, delaying Christ's coming and the wrath that will accompany it while he calls out people to salvation (1 Pet. 3:9). It is possible that Christ could delay his coming longer and that is why Christ taught us to be prepared, whether He comes immediately or delays longer than we think possible (Matt. 24:42-25:12).

### Tribulation

The Tribulation is a future seven-year period of time when God will finish His discipline of Israel and finalize His judgment of the unbelieving world. The church, made up of all who have trusted in the person and work of the Lord Jesus to save them from being punished for sin, will not be present during the tribulation. In the pre-tribulationist view of the rapture, the church will be removed from the earth in an event known as the rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-53). The church is saved from the wrath to come (1

Thess. 5:9). This is also demonstrated in the fact that the church is mentioned in Revelation 1-3 but not mentioned again in Revelation 4-19, passages addressing the events of the Tribulation. Throughout Scripture, the Tribulation is referred to by other names such as the Day of the Lord (Is. 2:12; 13:6-9; Joel 1:15; 2:1-31; 3:14; 1 Thess. 5:2); trouble or tribulation (Deut. 4:30; Zephaniah 1:1); the Great Tribulation, which refers to the more intense second half of the seven-year period (Matt. 24:21); time or day of trouble (Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15); time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30:7). An understanding of Daniel 9:24-27 is necessary in order to understand the purpose and time of the Tribulation. This passage speaks of 70 weeks that have been declared against "your people." Daniel's people are the Jews, the nation of Israel, and Daniel 9:24 speaks of a period of time that God has given "to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy." In addition, Revelation 11:2-3 speaks of 1260 days and 42 months, and Daniel 12:11-12 speaks of 1290 days and 1335 days. These days have a reference to the midpoint of the Tribulation. The additional days in Daniel 12 may include the time at the end for the judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46) and time for the setting up of Christ's millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6).

### **Eschatology: A Study of the End, Part 2**

#### **Resurrection**

Biblical death is the termination of one "stage" and the commencement of another; the transition from one reality to another reality. Biblical writers look upon the final destiny of man in terms of resurrection of the body and not the immortality of the soul. This does not support the thought that the soul sleeps until resurrection. Instead, believers who die before Christ's return do not experience soul sleep but go to be in the presence of the Lord (Phil. 1:21; 2 Corinthians 5:8). However, believers do not receive their resurrection bodies until Christ's second coming (1 Thess. 4:13). The same transformation will overtake both the living and the dead (1 Cor. 15:51).

2 Corinthians 5:1-10 deals with a believer's resurrection body that he will receive at the Second Advent, in which the heavenly will clothe the earthly. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, Paul reminds us that though we have our inner man renewed, our body is perishing. Paul further expresses this concept in 2 Corinthians 5:1 by stating that the believer possesses both an "earthly house" and a "building from God". The "earthly house" is our physical body, which is being "destroyed". The term "destroyed" refers to death before the advent or a process of decay, not to death as in the termination of life. The "building from God" is a heavenly body that will never decay and is preserved "eternal in the heavens". The phrase "we have" points to the certainty of a present possession of a heavenly body that will be obtained at the advent. Paul refers to obtaining this heavenly body in 2 Corinthians 5:4 as being "further clothed" with the Spirit, being the "guarantee" for this future hope (2 Corinthians 5:5). To sum it all up, the living will, as it were, put on the new resurrection body over the mortal (2 Corinthians 5:4).

#### **Judgments**

There will be a day of judgment when God will judge all men according to their works (Rom. 2:5). To the righteous He will give eternal life, to the wicked wrath and fury (Rom. 2:6-10). Furthermore, men will be judged by the light they have. All men have the light of nature by which they should recognize the existence of the true God and worship him alone (Rom. 1:18). The Jews will be judged by the Law (Rom. 2:12) and those who have not had the Law will be judged by the law of God written on their hearts—by conscience (Rom. 2:14-16). However, God in his mercy has provided a way of salvation in the redeeming work of Christ and the final basis for judgment will be the Gospel (Rom. 2:16; 2 Thess. 1:8).

The "great white throne" judgment is described in Revelation 20:11-15 and is the final judgment prior to the lost being cast into the lake of fire. This judgment will take place after the millennium and after Satan, the beast, and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7-10). The books that are opened (Rev. 20:12) contain records of everyone's deeds, whether they are good or evil and He will reward or punish each one accordingly (Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 2:23; 18:6; 22:12). Also at this time, another book is opened, called the "book of life" (Rev. 20:12). It is this book that determines whether a person will inherit eternal life with God or receive everlasting punishment in the lake of fire.

Nevertheless, judgment remains a fact, even for believers. The righteousness we hope for is acquittal at the final judgment for (Gal. 5:5) "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" which is also the judgment seat of God (2 Corinthians 5:10; Rom. 14:10). However, because of the justification in Christ, the

Day of Judgment has lost its terror for the man in Christ (Rom. 8:1, 33-34). Nevertheless, the believer will be judged for his works. Our lives will be laid bare before the divine scrutiny that each one may receive the proper reward for the things done during one's life in the body, in accordance with the things that he has done, whether that life record is good or bad. This judgment is not a declaration of doom but an assessment of worth. It is either rewards or loss on the basis of the worth or worthlessness of the Christian's life (1 Cor. 3:12-15). While salvation is altogether of grace, the Christian is left in no doubt that he is regarded by God as fully answerable for the quality of his present life in the body.

### Heaven

The goal of God's redemptive purpose is the restoration of order to a universe that has been disturbed by evil and sin. This includes the realm of human experience, the spiritual world, and even nature itself (Eph. 1:10, Rom. 8:19-23). After the final judgment, God will finally reconcile all things to Himself through Christ (Col. 1:20); a new heaven and a new earth will replace the old ones and at that time, all the former things will be forgotten (Rev. 21; Is. 65:17).

Heaven is the place where God dwells (Matt. 6:9). It is also the place where Jesus ascended to after His resurrection (1 Pet. 3:22; Acts 1:11; 1 Jn. 3:2). It is also the ultimate place where all believers will dwell with glorified physical bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-58). It is clearly a physical place and not merely a state of mind even though the location is now unknown to us. Specifically, the new heaven is described as a city filled with the brilliance of costly stones, crystal clear jasper and specific architecture such as twelve gates (Rev. 21:12) and twelve foundations (Rev. 21:14). The paradise of the Garden of Eden is restored: the river of the water of life flows freely and the tree of life is available once again, yielding fruit monthly with leaves that "heal the nations" (Rev. 22:1-2). Heaven is beyond the ability of finite man to describe (1 Cor. 2:9). Heaven is that place Jesus has prepared for all true Christians (Jn. 14:2) and is also the destination of Old Testament saints who died trusting God's promise of the Redeemer (Eph. 4:8). The new heaven will mark the end of all tears, pain and sorrow (Rev. 21:4). There will be no more separation, because death will be conquered (Rev. 20:6).

In addition to a new heaven, God will make a new earth (1 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The new earth will not be a renewed version of the old earth but a new that will replace the older version (1 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:1). In the same way that God created the original earth as "very good" (Gen. 1:31), it is very possible to find the new earth similar to the old one (Rev. 19:9; Lk. 22:18; Rev. 21:1; Rev. 22:2) and that we finite creatures will continue an eternal journey of learning about an infinite God (Ps. 145:3).

### Hell

The judgment of the wicked is not an end in itself, but only a necessary act in the establishment of God's reign in His world. God has done all things possible to bring men to Himself (1 Pet. 3:9). The divine purpose is that men may be gathered in willing subordination to the divine rule, that in the end "God may be everything to everyone" (1 Cor. 15:28). Those who reject His will must face His judgment for in the end God cannot tolerate opposition to His holy will (Daniel 12:2). The eternal destination for those who have not surrendered to God is hell.

In the Old Testament, the word translated "hell" is Sheol; in the New Testament, it's Hades (meaning "unseen") and Gehenna ("the Valley of Hinnom"). Sheol is also translated as "pit" and "grave." Both Sheol and Hades refer to a temporary abode of the dead before judgment (Ps. 9:17; Rev. 1:18; Ps. 16:10-11). Jesus establishes two places for Sheol when He acknowledges to thief on the cross that he will be in "paradise" (Ps. 16:10-11; Lk. 23:43). Gehenna refers to an eternal state of punishment for the wicked dead (Mk. 9:43). The "lake of fire" is described as the everlasting place of torment for the ungodly after judgment (Rev. 20:10-15).

### Significance of eschatology

God reveals details about end times events to encourage us in this present life (2 Thess. 4:18). As a result, in light of the knowledge of a Premillennial and imminent coming of Christ, we are called to "live holy and godly lives" "be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him", to "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation", to "be on your guard", and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:11, 14-18).

## **Christian Living**

Every believer justified by God's grace will ultimately demonstrate God's sanctifying power and purpose (1 Pet. 1:3; Tit. 2:11-14). As a result, authentic faith will always manifest itself tangibly through works of faith (Jam. 2:14-18). These works of faith are best proven in the context of a believer's response to the people that surround him/her (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 5:15-16; Col. 4:5). In fact, it is impossible to separate love for God and a love for others. One cannot claim to love God while at the same time ignore opportunities to love others. By the same token, one cannot attempt to fully love others without loving God. Both must be entangled with the other and are dependent on each other in order to be authentic (Matt. 22:37-40). Authentic faith will also manifest itself in the character of the believer (Gal. 5:22-23). But, many of these character qualities are given and best proven in the context of a believer's response to the people that surround him/her. Without people, possessing some of these character qualities has no purpose or merit. For example, kindness and goodness cannot be accomplished without an object that can receive it.

This love that God commands all believers to possess must be demonstrated to all, even our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48). Still, there are special groups of people in Scripture that must be given special attention by all believers because of their destitute state and utter dependence on others (Ps. 82:3-4). God Himself expresses a compassion for the poor and demands that believers generously and compassionately provide for and defend the rights of the poor (Deut. 15:7; 26:12; Prov. 31:28; Is. 58:6; Lk. 3:11; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9). The immigrant or, as the Scripture describes them, the stranger and/or alien must not be oppressed but rather we must defend their rights and refresh them as given the opportunity (Exodus 22:21; Exodus 23:9, 12; Jeremiah 22:3). At the core of this command is the reality that we are all strangers and aliens in this world and that none of us possess any rights to any part of this earth (1 Pet. 2:11). All believers are also called to defend the rights of the widow and orphan (Is. 1:16-17; Jeremiah 22:3). In fact, God describes doing this as pure and undefiled religion (Jam. 1:27).

What must not be lost in the noble effort to love all people is ultimate act of love: that those very same people might have access through our lives into an eternal and personal relationship with God through salvation in Jesus Christ and become His true followers (Matt. 28:19, 20; 1 Cor. 9:17-23). Ultimately, love compels the believer to be an ambassador and reconciler for those who are unsaved and unregenerated to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:14-20). There is no merit to love that does not lead to salvation in Christ and a deeper relationship with Him (Mk. 8:36-37).

The pursuit of this Christian life faces the reality of a battle in the spiritual realm for power, glory and honor between God and the Devil (Is. 14:12-14; Matt. 4:1-11). As a result, the Devil and his evil spirits will attempt to hinder and even influence the believer away from God's design for the Christian life (Eph. 6:11-12, 16). But, the believer has been enlightened to the truth of God to set the believer free from the power of the Devil's lies (Jn. 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 10:5) and has been armed with the spiritual resources to resist and overcome the Devil's schemes (Eph. 6:11; Jam. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

### Divorce

Divorce was not instituted by Moses, nor was it approved as an intrinsic right of the husband. According to Deut. 24:1, divorce was allowed for some kind of shameful act or indecency other than illicit sexual intercourse. In summary, the Mosaic concession does not alter God's original plan for marriage to be a sacred, permanent covenant. It simply provides protection for the divorced wife when sinful hearts violate God's original plan for marriage.

The two major passages containing the teaching of Jesus on divorce and remarriage are found in Mk. 10:1-12 and Matt. 19:1-12. Jesus overrides the Mosaic concession and its rabbinic interpretations by pointing back to the fact that for a husband or a wife to divorce his/her spouse means to act against the original will of the Creator for marriage but that it was allowed because of the hardness of human heart (Matt. 19:8). To allow a practice is not the same as instituting it. When divorce first appears in the Bible, the practice was already in existence. God acknowledged its existence and regulated it to prevent a bad situation from becoming worse. The teaching of Jesus in the Gospels can be summarized in two points. First, divorce is forbidden because it violates God's intention that marriage be a permanent union of two persons. Second, remarriage after divorce is adultery because divorce does not dissolve the marriage union.

Paul's teachings reaffirm the permanence of the marriage union that Jesus taught. In Rom. 7, Paul asserts that a woman is bound by the marriage law to her husband as long as he lives, but when he dies, she is released from her marital bond. Paul then applies this principle figuratively to the release of the believer

from slavery to the law of sin through his death with Christ (Rom. 7:4-6). Paul's treatment of the divorce question in 1 Cor. 7:10-16 is most significant because it reveals how the teaching of Jesus on divorce was understood and applied to certain concrete marital situations in the apostolic church.

Paul's teachings on the question of divorce in 1 Cor. 7:12-16 not only closely reflects Jesus' teachings concerning the permanence of marriage, but also reveals its full depths by showing how the Christian faith causes the marriage covenant to become a sacred and lifelong relationship. There is for Paul an intimate connection between the permanence of the marriage bond and the Christian faith.

### **Ethical and Ministerial Issues**

#### **Spiritual Warfare**

In the spiritual realm, there is a battle for power, glory and honor between God and the Devil (Is. 14:12-14; Matt. 4:1-11). Every believer is the possession of God purchased through the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Rev. 5:9). As a result, any believer in Christ cannot be "possessed" or helplessly controlled by a demon or evil spirit because God every believer has the ability to exercise power and authority over evil spirits in the heavenly realm (Lk. 9:1-2; 1 Jn. 4:3-4; Eph. 1:18-21). Still, the Devil and his evil spirits can hinder and even influence the believer away from God's design for the Christian life (Eph. 6:11-12, 16). The believer has been enlightened to the truth of God to set the believer free from the power of the Devil's lies (Jn. 8:31-32; 2 Corinthians 10:5) and has been armed with the spiritual resources to resist and overcome the Devil's schemes (Eph. 6:11; Jam. 4:7; 2 Tim. 2:25-26).

#### **Homosexuality**

All sexual sin, including homosexuality is sin (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3). One of the purposes for the work Christ's death and the work of the Spirit is to wash, sanctify and justify a believer from homosexuality and other such sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Homosexuality is a reflection of having abandoned the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25-28). At the core of homosexuality and all sexual sin is the rejection of God's design for natural sexual relationships. God designed for all sexual relationships to be reserved for only a man and woman who have been united together under the covenant promise of marriage (Heb. 13:4; Eph. 6:22-33). God designed and ordained man to increase in number but homosexuality is in direct opposition to God's command (Gen. 1:28).

#### **Abortion, Infanticide, and Euthanasia**

Life begins in the womb of a woman at conception and the unborn child is described in Scripture as a human being (Ps. 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5). Abortion, infanticide and euthanasia are each sin in that each are different variations of the sin of murder (Exodus 20:13; Deut. 5:17). Abortion and infanticide rejects the sovereignty and rule of God in the plan and purpose for each unborn child and born infant by taking decision-making authority over God for the termination of a life. Euthanasia is similar except that euthanasia cannot be confused with simply allowing a person to die of "natural" causes. Euthanasia is sin when a life is terminated because it was facilitated by "unnatural" means dictated by the decision-making of another person. It can also be argued that abortion, infanticide and euthanasia are murder in that it is taking the life of the innocent and helpless (Deut. 27:25; Ps. 82:3-4; Prov. 6:16-17).

#### **Social Drinking**

Social drinking is appropriate when it submits to the same Biblical standards that apply to all substances that a believer can take into his/her own body. First, a believer must always be clear and sober minded since an altered mind and distorted thinking opens the door for the believer to live contrary to God's purpose and vulnerable to the schemes of the Devil (1 Thess. 5:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:8-9). The believer must not be mastered by any substance (1 Cor. 6:12). Simply, social drinking is appropriate until it become drunkenness. Secondly, the believer must take care of his/her body as a holy vessel of God Himself (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Ultimately, social drinking must not interfere with another believer's relationship with God (Rom. 14:21). In other words, appropriate social drinking does not hinder the peace and mutual edification of fellowship (Rom. 14:19). Rather, appropriate social drinking will facilitate righteousness, joy, peace and ultimately love in the fellowship of believers (Rom. 14:15, 17).

#### **The Role of Women in Church (worship service and ministry)**

All believers, regardless of gender, have been mandated to gather for worship (1 Tim. 2:8-10; Eph. 2:10) and have been given a gift of the spirit to exercise in ministry. Thus, there is no question that women have a role in the purpose and function of the church. Scripture makes it very clear that God never intended

that a woman continuously pastor, shepherd or minister to a local congregation however, these Scriptures do not forbid a woman to teach a man, including her husband, on an intermittent basis, as she is moved by God to do so (1 Tim. 11-15). In summary, women must worship and serve in the church but must do so in such a way that does not undermine the leadership and authority of men in the church.

### Worship Style

Worship is simply the expression of one who is living a holy, acceptable and sacrificial life (Rom. 12:1-2). In the context of a gathering of Christians, Scripture has never mandated nor demonstrated any instruction that establishes a timeless “style” for worship. Scripture values the result, purpose and motive for a worship gathering over the form of worship that is used (Col. 3:16). Jesus describes true worship as worship that is authentic in spirit and truth. Jesus does not include the form of worship as a barometer for true worship (Jn. 4:23-24).

## **Personal Lifestyle**

### Spiritual Disciplines

Godliness is described as a pursuit that requires training (1 Tim. 4:7; 1 Cor. 9:24-25). This training that leads to Godliness and spiritual intimacy with God can be described as spiritual disciplines. The exercise of spiritual disciplines neither proves nor should be confused with Godliness and intimacy with God but rather spiritual disciplines must be clearly understood as the means to those things (Matt. 6:1-7).

### Stewardship, Personal Finances, Debt

At the core of all Godly stewardship is the character quality of faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2). Money is a sample of all that God entrusts to us as stewards. There is no inherent value in the possession of money. Money is a tool; a resource to be utilized for Godly purposes. As a result, we are to live free of the love of money by being content with what God provides (Heb. 13:5; 1 Tim. 6:9-10). Rather, we are commanded to be Godly stewards of all the resources that God gives. God commands all believers to be outstanding in only one debt: to love one another (Rom. 13:8). We must current with all other debts (Rom. 13:7). This implies that having there is nothing immoral with being in debt as long as we are current with what is owed. But, debt has its hindrances in that it can restrict the freedom of the debtor (Prov. 22:7). As a result, it is best that a believer is not in debt.

### Moral Purity and Accountability

Moral purity can be defined as living a life that is consistent with God’s standard, morals and values as described throughout the Scriptures. We are commanded to avoid every opportunity that could lead to a compromise of moral purity (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Cor. 6:18). But, the pursuit of moral purity is both an internal and external effort. The internal pursuit of moral purity begins with guarding the heart (Prov. 4:23; Jam. 1:14-15; Mk. 7:21-23). Thus, moral purity begins with a cleansing of the heart initiated by the cleansing effect of the Holy Spirit through prayer and the Word of God (Matt. 16:8-10; Ps. 51:10; Ps. 119:9-11; 2 Tim. 3:16). The external pursuit of moral purity is established through the accountability and encouragement of the church (2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 3:13). The accountability of righteous men and women comes with a promise of healing, the expectation of answered prayer and the protection of wandering from the truth (Jam. 5:16-20).

### Marriage and Family Priorities

All relationships, including family relationships, cannot take priority over our personal relationship with God (Lk. 14:26-27). But, we demonstrate Godly priorities through the relationships that God gives us because the demonstration of our love for God is entangled with how we demonstrate love to those around us (Matt. 22:37-40). God’s covenant relationship with us describes the marriage covenant relationship between a husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33). The marriage covenant describes the husband as the head or the first priority of the wife and the wife as the first priority of the husband. In other words, those who are bound by the marriage covenant relationship as husband or wife must make their spouse first priority over all other relationships. Children are a gift from God entrusted to the stewardship of parents to move the faith, principle, morals, values and message of God from one generation to the next (Ps. 127:3; Ps. 71:18-19; Ps. 78:2-8). On the other hand, all people of all ages are commanded to honor their parents and children are command to both honor and obey their parents (Exodus 20:12; Eph. 6:1-3). Scripture models that families should be united in striving to serve God (Joshua 24:15).