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Bible Church of Kelowna

Doctrinal Statement

Preface

In this doctrinal statement the elders of *Bible Church of Kelowna* have sought not only to state **what** we as a church believe the Bible to be teaching, but also to explain **why** we believe this in several places. We have done so in the hope that the reading of this doctrinal statement can help this church maintain unity in the faith. In describing the person and work of God in His salvation of His elect certain doctrines are discussed more than once. This redundancy is intentional and serves to help the reader understand how many doctrinal truths are interrelated.

In giving biblical support it was not our intention to place the Bible references in their chronological order. We thought it better to place them in the order of clarity. At times we have included a portion of Scripture and we have primarily used the *New International Version* for these quotes. This does not mean that we as a church exalt this translation over against other English versions of the Bible. Although the NIV has been criticized by some for its interpretation of the original languages in certain passages, it remains in our opinion a useful and in places an excellent translation of Scripture. It is a fact of scholarship that no English translation is without fault.

Agreement with this doctrinal statement in all its parts is required for church membership.

This doctrinal statement was originally received from *Grace Church of DuPage* in Warrenville, Illinois and has since been revised and expanded by the elders of *Bible Church of Kelowna*.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

What the Bible is:

The Bible itself claims to be God's written revelation to humankind, and thus the sixty-six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (2Timothy 3:16-17; 2Peter 1:20-21; Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation, verbally inspired in every word, absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed (1Thessalonians 2:13; 2Timothy 3:16; 2Peter 1:20-21).

Both Old and New Testaments are capable of imparting wisdom for salvation from God's righteous judgement and wisdom for daily living (2Timothy 3:15-17; John 16:12-13; 17:17; Hebrews 4:12).

¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2Timothy 3:15-17 NIV)

God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to mankind (2Peter 1:20-21; John 20:30-31).

The whole Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice for the Christian (Psalm 1; Psalm 119:11,105; Matthew 4:3-11; 7:24-29; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 4:12).

How the Bible is to be Read and Interpreted:

There is only one true meaning of any given passage of Scripture: the meaning that both God and the inspired human author intended at the time of writing.

⁸ "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. ¹⁰ As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, ¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:8-11 NIV)

In the above passage out of Isaiah 55, God compares his giving of his Word with his giving of precipitation. Just as snow and rain water the ground so that man can eat bread, God sends his Word so that man can know the thoughts of God, which are otherwise impossible to know. For his thoughts are not our thoughts. This passage from Isaiah also points out that God always gives his Word for a specific reason.

So in approaching God's Word the Christian must seek to understand what God was saying at the time of writing to the original audience. This will require some understanding of the times and customs in which the Bible was written. It also means that Christians will need to pay attention to the inspired author's overall purpose in writing and development of thought within an entire book of the Bible. The inspired author's use of grammar, literary devices and words determine the meaning of the Bible text so that no later generation has the right to "reinterpret" a text for "today". Christians are to approach Scripture with the desire to understand not only what God has said, but to whom He said it and why (2Timothy 2:15; Ezra 7:10; Nehemiah 8:8).

While it is true that Christians are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to accept God's truth, it is not true that the Holy Spirit reveals to individuals new or deeper or hidden truths, not intended by God at the time of writing. The Holy Spirit helps the Christian reader to understand the clear statements of

Scripture in their historical context so that he or she can accept and apply these truths to his or her life (1Corinthians 2:7-15; 1John 2:20).

Whoever rejects God's Word is eternally lost (Hebrews 2:1-4).

GOD

The Bible teaches that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1Corinthians 8:4), who is infinite, spirit (Psalm 115:3; John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2Corinthians 13:14; Mark 1:10-11; 1Corinthians 12:4-6). All three persons of the Triune God are each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God is all-knowing (Hebrews 4:13; Psalm 139), all-powerful (Isaiah 14:26-27; 40:28; 43:12), everywhere present (John 1:48; Psalm 139:7-12) and is the standard of all righteousness (Lukas 18:19).

God the Father

His Fatherhood and Person

The Bible teaches that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 115:3; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 11:33-36; 1Corinthians 8:6). He created all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9; Revelation 4:11) in six twenty-four hour days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:15-17). As the absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36).

In His eternal counsel God determined that everything that comes to pass should exalt and glorify Him (Ephesians 1:11-12; 1 Chronicles 29:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (Romans 11:33-36). As the Creator He is the Father of all mankind (Maleachi 2:10; Ephesians 4:6), but He is the spiritual Father of only those who believe (Romans 8:14; 2Corinthians 6:18; John 8:44). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Deuteronomy 32:4; Habakkuk 1:13; 1John 1:5), nor does He remove the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (Romans 1:18-20; 2:9; 1Peter 1:17).

The Father's Role in Salvation

God the Father chose some of Adam's fallen race from every tribe, nation and tongue that they may be made holy and blameless through the blood of Christ (2Thessalonians 2:13; Ephesians 1:4). These chosen ones He also predestined to become His children: "in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph. 1:5-6 NIVO). To save these chosen ones from their just penalty of their sins, He sent His Son Jesus into the world to die in their place on the cross, thus making atonement

for their sins (Romans 8:32; Isaiah 53:10-12). God the Father calls all of his chosen ones from among both Jews and Gentiles to salvation through the preaching of the gospel:

¹³ But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

¹⁴ To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2Thessalonians 2:13-14 ESV)

While God the Father offers salvation to all men, He goes one step further in the lives of his chosen ones by causing them to believe the gospel and repent of their sins. This “effectual call” to faith in Christ always causes God’s chosen ones to respond to Christ in faith and repentance of sins (1Corinthians 1:22-24; Acts 13:48; 2Timothy 1:9; 1Peter 2:9). Jesus himself said that no one can come to Him unless His Heavenly Father enable them (John 6:44, 65).

God the Son

His Person

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3). He was and is and remains forever God.

The Bible teaches that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

The Bible teaches that in the fullness of time God the Father sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary (Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35).

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man in indivisible and unconfused oneness (John 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9). In the incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity took on all the essential characteristics of humanity while surrendering nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9). Jesus Christ is, therefore, God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and the purpose of the incarnation is to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God’s kingdom (John 1:14-18; Isaiah 53; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 2:14-18).

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was subject to physical infirmities and temptation as a true human but lived a perfect and sinless life (Hebrews 4:15). He preached and taught with unparalleled authority (Mark 1:27; Matthew 22:16; John 7:46). He worked miracles, which bore witness to His divine glory, authority, and identity (Matthew 8:27; John 2:11; John 5:36-40).

His Work in Salvation

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was tried (Mark 14:53-65; John 18:28-19:16), that He was crucified under Pontius Pilate (Acts 4:27-28), and that He died, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures (Isaiah 53; 1Corinthians 15:3-4).

The Bible teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

The Bible teaches that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2Corinthians 5:14-15; 1Peter 2:24; 3:18).

The Bible teaches that in the literal, physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God vindicated Jesus' life and righteousness, gave proof that He has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross, and confirmed our justification (Romans 1:4; 4:25; 1Corinthians 15:17; Philippians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee and first-fruits of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 14:19; Romans 6:5-10; 1Corinthians 15:20, 23).

The Bible teaches that for a span of forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared bodily to many (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:5-7), and then ascended bodily to the right hand of the Father (Acts 1:9-11; 2:33), where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 4:14; 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1-2).

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture and, returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

The Bible teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all humankind (John 5:22-23):

- (a) Believers (1Corinthians 3:10-15; 2Corinthians 5:10)
- (b) Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)
- (c) Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

As the only Mediator between God and mankind (1Timothy 2:5), as Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18) and as the coming King and only rightful Heir of the throne of David (Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 37:24-28; Luke 1:31-33), Jesus is the final Judge of all those who reject him as Lord and Savior (John 3:18-21; 5:24-30; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

His Person

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-27; 1Corinthians 12:4-6; 2Corinthians 13:14; Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17). He is as such equally worthy of worship.

Concerning Matthew 28:19, believers are to be baptized into the one Name (singular, not plural) of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Acts 28:25-26 Paul quotes Isaiah 6:8-10 and states that it is the Holy Spirit speaking. But in Isaiah 6:8 it is the LORD of Hosts speaking. Thus Paul equates the Holy Spirit with Yahweh (LORD) of the Old Testament. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 Yahweh is speaking and yet the writer of Hebrews quotes this passage and states that the Holy Spirit was the one speaking (Hebrews 10:15-17). Paul refers to the Holy Spirit in Romans 8:9 as the *Spirit of God* and as the *Spirit of Christ*. There are many places in Scripture where we are called to worship Yahweh. All three persons of the Trinity are Yahweh (LORD) and are equally deserving of worship.

His Work in Salvation

The Bible teaches that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all humankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2Peter 1:20-21), the work of salvation (John 3:5-7), and all of history (Exodus 31:3; Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 16:13; Mark 1:10; Acts 2:4).

The Bible teaches that a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26; Acts 1:5; 2:4) to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ, which is His church (1Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-14; Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in bringing God's elect to saving faith and repentance (John 16:7-11). Simultaneously the Holy Spirit washes and regenerates believers (Titus 3:4-7) and baptizes all believers (without exception) into the body of Christ (1Corinthians 12:13). This baptism with the Holy Spirit is a one-time event that occurs at salvation (Ephesians 4:1-6; 1Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:3-4; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers believers for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit

from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 1John 2:20, 27).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2Peter 1:19-21; John 14:26; 16:12-13).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit sovereignly administers spiritual gifts to the church (1Corinthians 12:11) for the common good of all believers (1Corinthians 12:7). Every believer has at least one spiritual gift but no believer was intended to possess all the gifts (1Peter 4:10; 1Corinthians 12). The Holy Spirit does not glorify His gifts by ostentatious displays. He glorifies Christ by implementing Christ's work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1Corinthians 12:4-11; 2Corinthians 3:18).

The Bible teaches that speaking in tongues as well as the other sign gifts such as the healing of the sick or the raising of the dead, were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers, nor were these sign gifts designated to be the mark of true conversion or a heightened spirituality. We teach that the **primary** purpose of the sign gifts was always to validate God's messengers (Hebrews 2:1-4). In this way God validated the 13 Apostles of Christ (the apostle Paul is the exception as an apostle to the Gentiles) as His true messengers (2Corinthians 12:12). With the death of the 13 apostles of Christ and with the conclusion of the New Testament the need for the sign and wonder gifts has ceased.

We believe that the modern Pentecostal and Charismatic movements are fraudulent and that they represent a return to the chaos that Paul was seeking to correct in the Corinthian church. The teaching and service gifts of the Holy Spirit are normative for all ages and thus remain for the building up of the body of Christ (Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; 1Peter 4:10-11).

MAN

The Bible teaches that man, male and female, was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 1:26-30; 2:7, 15-25).

The Bible teaches that God's purpose in the creation of man was that they should glorify God, by enjoying God's fellowship, by living in the will of God, by multiplying and filling the world with faith-filled image bearers, and by reflecting God's benevolent kingship (Genesis 1:26-28; Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11). Mankind can only be truly happy when living in harmony with this God given purpose for his life (Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 5:18-6:2).

The Bible teaches that through Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, not only Adam, but all of mankind lost their innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, and became subject to the wrath of God. Adam's corrupted nature has been transmitted to every individual in every age, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All are thus sinners by nature, by choice,

and by divine declaration (Psalm 130:3; 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9-23; 5:12-21). Man's will is now enslaved to the evil desires of his flesh (e.g. sin nature) and he is blinded by Satan (Ephesians 2:1-4; 4:17-19; 2Corinthians 4:4). He loves darkness and because of this never truly seeks after God (John 3:19; Romans 3:9-12).

Although man is responsible before God to believe God and to repent of his sins, the Bible teaches that man is incapable of this (John 6:44, 65; Deuteronomy 29:1-5). Man is thus utterly lost in his fallen spiritual condition (Ephesians 2:1-4; Titus 3:3-7). All mankind is incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Man is thus saved wholly by God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1Timothy 2:13-14; 1John 1:8).

SALVATION

The Bible teaches that salvation is wholly of God, through His grace, and is based solely on the merit of Jesus' righteousness and shed blood. Thus salvation is **not** on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12-13; Romans 5:18; Galatians 2:21; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Salvation is totally of God, who actively brings about saving faith and repentance in those he chose for salvation and predestined to become his children before the foundations of the world were even laid. The rest of mankind will continue to reject God's gracious offer of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ until they die in their sins (Acts 13:48; Romans 9:6-29; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:1-7; 2Timothy 1:9).

Election

The Bible teaches that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose according to his own will those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies, leaving the rest in their sin to their just condemnation (Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2Thessalonians 2:13; 2Timothy 1:9; 2:10; 1Peter 1:1-2).

The Bible teaches that sovereign election does not contradict or negate human responsibility or the need to repent (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17) and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (John 3:18-19, 36; 5:39-40; Romans 10:9-10).

The Bible teaches that God's election has nothing to do with man's initiative or his behavior. God's election is solely based upon His sovereign grace, mercy and foreknowledge of each person (Romans 9:6-18; 11:5-6; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1Peter 1:2). God's foreknowledge describes his intimate knowledge of those God decided to save and does not mean that God based his choice upon something good He saw in man (Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:9). To argue that God chose those whom He foresaw would someday choose him is erroneous for three reasons: **First**, all men are depraved and incapable of

seeking for God or choosing God (John 6:44; 2Corinthians 4:4; Romans 3:9-12). If they were capable of choosing God, then his act of choosing men is most unnecessary. **Second**, for God to base his choice upon man's choice would mean that God requires us to worship Him for something we were going to do anyway. God would be taking the credit for our work. And **third**, Scripture tells us that God does not base his choice upon anything man was going to do:

¹¹ Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-- in order that God's purpose in election might stand: ¹² not by works but by him who calls-- she was told, "The older will serve the younger." ¹³ Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated." ¹⁴ What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! ¹⁵ For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." ¹⁶ It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy. (Romans 9:11-16 NIV)

According to 1Corinthians 1:26-31, God chose *primarily* the foolish and weak people of this world for salvation that he might shame the "wise" and the "strong". God's salvation through His divine choice stands in direct opposition to any choice man might make. Why? "So that no one may boast before Him" (1Corinthians 1:28-31).

God wrote the names of his elect in the "Book of Life belonging to the Lamb that was slain" (Revelation 13:8). According to Revelation 17:8, God wrote the names of the elect in this *Book of Life* before the creation of the world.

God's sovereign election of individuals always results in their hearing and believing of the gospel. All those that God has chosen were also predestined, and all those he chose and predestined he has called. And all that he has called believe and are justified. And all that believe and are justified are kept by God's Spirit, so that they persevere in their faith and are one day glorified (Romans 8:28-30).

²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. ²⁹ For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰ And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom. 8:28-30 NIVO)

Predestination

The Bible teaches that all those that God chose for salvation were also predestined by God to be His children (Ephesians 1:5, 11). Since God is sovereign, He always brings to fulfillment His predetermined will in the life of His elect. This means that God makes certain that all of His elect not only hear the gospel, but believe it (John 6:37; Acts 13:48; Acts 8:26-40).

However, Scripture nowhere teaches "double predestination". *Double predestination* is a logical assumption made by some theologians. They reason that since no one can choose Christ apart from God enabling them, that God automatically predestined the rest of mankind for damnation, simply by not

choosing them. But God does not need to decree the damnation of the non-elect, because they are already damned in Adam (John 3:18, 36).

Also, in Romans 9 Paul only uses the prefix “pre” in relation to salvation, not in reference to damnation.

²² What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- ²⁴ even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? (Rom. 9:22-24 ESV)

In the verses above one can clearly see that the “vessels of wrath” were not prepared “in advance” or “beforehand” for destruction. In contrast, the vessels of mercy are prepared “beforehand” for glory. When we compare Matthew 25:34 with 25:41, we see this same contrast. Believers enter into the kingdom prepared for them “before the foundation of the world”. But the unbelievers go into the lake of fire prepared not for them, but “for the devil and his fallen angels”.

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you **from the foundation of the world**. (Matt. 25:34 ESV)

⁴¹ "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25:41 ESV)

In addition to this, Peter states that those not chosen by God for salvation are “destined” to destruction (1Peter 2:8). He does not say that they were **pre**-destined to destruction. If “double predestination” were true, Peter would have most certainly added the prefix “pre” to the term “destined”. In all of Scripture there is not one single passage where the term “predestined” is used of those not chosen for salvation. This term is, however, used six times in Scripture referring always either to God’s eternal plan of salvation or to those individuals chosen by God for salvation (e.g. Ephesians 1:5, 11).

Calling

Whereas God’s electing and predestinating of individuals to become His children took place before the beginning of time, God’s calling of them takes place in time. God calls His elect to salvation through the preaching of the gospel (2Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2Timothy 1:9). This calling of His elect always results in them believing the gospel and repenting of their sins (Romans 8:28-30), because God grants them eyes to see, ears to hear and opens their minds to believe (Deuteronomy 29:1-4; Mark 4:9, 23; Acts 16:14). Although the “message of the cross” is foolishness to the Gentiles and a “stumbling block” to the Jews, God’s calling enables His elect to overcome their spiritual blindness and hostility towards the gospel:

²² Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. ²⁶ Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God **chose** the foolish

things of the world to shame the wise; God **chose** the weak things of the world to shame the strong.²⁸ He **chose** the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are,²⁹ so that no one may boast before him.³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-- that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.³¹ Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." (1Corinthians 1:22-31 NIVO)

It is this effectual calling of His elect that enables them to stop seeing the message of the cross as either foolishness or a stumbling stone and to start seeing it as the power of God and the wisdom of God. God's calling of those whom He has chosen for salvation cannot be resisted by His elect.

Although Jesus contrasts God's *general* call to salvation of all men with God's choice of a remnant for salvation (Matthew 22:14), the apostles Paul and Peter always refer to God's *effectual* calling out of His elect, which causes them to believe the gospel message (e.g. 2Thessalonians 2:13-14; 1Peter 1:2; 2:9).

Regeneration

Regeneration is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which He takes spiritually dead individuals, who have placed their faith in Christ, and makes them alive (Titus 3:5).

Regeneration does not enable saving faith, it is the result of faith and repentance. For Scripture clearly teaches that new birth takes place through faith in God's Word and repentance is "unto life", not the result of life (2Peter 1:23; James 1:18; John 5:24; Acts 11:18).

Scripture refers to this regenerating work as the "new birth" (1Peter 1:3, 23), being "born from above" (John 3:3, 7) and as the "circumcision of the heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 9:25; Romans 2:25-29; **Colossians 2:11-14**). In Colossians 2:11-14 Paul brings the three concepts "make alive", "spirit baptism" and "circumcision of the heart" together as one work of the Holy Spirit:

¹¹ In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the **circumcision done by Christ**,¹² having been buried with him in **baptism** and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.¹³ When **you were dead** in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God **made you alive** with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:11-14 NIVO).

Although Colossians 2:11 states that the circumcision is done by Christ, we read in Romans 2:29 that this is also a work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sometimes called the "Spirit of Christ" (e.g. Romans 8:9).

This recreating of a person dead in their trespasses and sins always results in a new creation (2Corinthians 5:17) and is evidenced by a turning away from sin and obedience to God (1Thessalonians 1:8-10; Acts 19:18-19). Obedience to God is thus the only proof of new birth (Romans 8:13-14) and believers are called to demonstrate God's election and calling of them by growing in their obedience to God (2Peter

1:4-10; 1Thessalonians 1:3-5). Jesus boldly states that true believers will be known by their perseverance in the faith and by their deeds (Matthew 7:15-27).

Justification

The Bible teaches that justification is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares those individuals righteous, who have placed their faith in Christ Jesus, confessing their guilt before God (Romans 4:1-8; 5:1; Galatians 2:14-16; 3:11; Acts 2:38; 26:19-20) and acknowledging Christ as their Lord (Romans 10:9-10). Justification is not based upon man's good deeds but solely upon faith in the person and work of Christ (Galatians 2:21; Romans 4:23-25). The basis of justification is Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, where He paid the debt of sin completely (Colossian 2:14; 1Peter 2:24). His own sinless life is imputed to the believer (1Corinthians 1:30; 2Corinthians 5:21). Christ's death on the cross enables God to punish sin and at the same time justify sinners who have placed their faith in Christ (Romans 3:26).

The result of justification is peace between God and man (Romans 5:1-11). Justification thus empties the Law of its power to condemn, because the righteous requirement (singular!) of the Law has been fulfilled in the life of the believer (Romans 6:15; 8:1-4).

The righteous requirement of the Law (Romans 8:4) is: "If you sin you die" (Romans 6:23). According to Romans 6:1-10, all those who have been justified by faith in Christ have been crucified with Christ and raised with him. This means that they have died with Christ and thus have fulfilled the righteous requirement of the Law: "Those who sin must die!" Thus the Law can no longer condemn them, since in dying with Christ the requirement of death was fulfilled.

Since Christ died to sin once for all (Romans 6:10), those who have died with him have also died to sin once for all. This means that the Law has lost its power forever to condemn the justified sinner, because the requirement of the Law (i.e. death) has been eternally fulfilled. This is why Paul asks the question:

¹⁵ What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! (Rom. 6:15 NIVO)

This is also why Paul states that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). It is thus impossible for a believer to "lose" their salvation since they have died with Christ once for all to sin and the Law no longer has the power to condemn him or her.

Sanctification

The Bible teaches that there is a *positional* sanctification in which every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and identified as a saint. This positional sanctification is instantaneous and should not be confused with *progressive* sanctification. Positional sanctification has to do with the believer's standing in Christ, not his present walk or spiritual condition (Acts 20:32; 1Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1Peter 1:2).

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit causes a *progressive* sanctification in which every believer grows in personal holiness, so that their moral condition is made gradually to conform to the positional (legal) standing they enjoy through justification. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, by means of the Word, prayer, and fellowship, believers grow in holiness and become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17-19; Romans 6:1-22; 2Corinthians 3:18; 1Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). This means that every believer should be growing in their obedience to the revealed will of God.

The Bible teaches that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict with indwelling sin (Romans 7:14-25; 1Peter 2:11-12). The newly recreated inner man now wants to please God, but the fleshly appetites of the sin nature still crave a life of sin. But in providing believers with a new heart (Hebrews 10:16) and with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11-14), God has made adequate provision for victory over sin. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Although sinless perfection in this life is not obtainable, victory over sin must characterize the life of every true believer, because the indwelling Holy Spirit *actively* fights against the evil desires of the believers sinful flesh (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

The Bible also teaches that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Bible as an aspect of sanctification (Romans 12:1-2; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17), and we affirm that the Christian life is a life of faith-filled obedience characterized by happy blessedness (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 3:1-10). Salvation involves not merely being saved from sin's penalty, but also being saved from sin's power over us, as well as being saved for joyful submission to Christ. Therefore, separation from sin is a vital part of our salvation.

According to Jesus, all true believers will be characterized by a persevering in the faith and by obedience to the Father's will: "You will know them by their fruit" (Matthew 7:15-23).

Security of the Believer

The Bible teaches that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. Therefore, it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of the Holy Spirit and God's Word (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 12-17, 31-39; 1Corinthians 1:4-8; Hebrews 7:25; 1Peter 1:3-5; Jude 24). What God has begun in the lives of His chosen ones He will bring to completion (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 12:2). This is illustrated in the Life of Peter (Luke 22:31-32).

The Bible teaches that it is the privilege of every believer to know that they have been saved from God's wrath based upon their faith in the completed work of Christ on the cross (1John 5:13). When a child of God walks according to the Word of God the Holy Spirit testifies with his spirit that he is truly a child of

God (Romans 8:14-17; 1John 4:13). Anyone who claims to know Christ and yet chooses to live a life of sin must question their salvation (1John 2:3-6; 3:9-10; 2Corinthians 13:5).

Separation from the World

In both the Old and New Testaments God has clearly commanded all His children to separate themselves from sin and worldly thinking (2Corinthians 6:14-7:1). The Bible teaches that godlessness in the last days before the return of Christ will go from bad to worse (2Timothy 3:1-5). The children of God are to resist this godlessness and expose it through holy living (Ephesians 5:1-18). Separation from the sinfulness of this increasingly godless world and complete obedience to God is only reasonable in light of all that God has done for those He has graciously saved. God thus demands all His children to resist worldly temptation and to live lives worthy of the grace of God (Romans 12:1-3; 1Corinthians 5:9-13; 2Corinthians 6:16-7:1; 1John 2:15-17; 2John 9-11).

Believers have been called out of darkness into light so that they should honor Christ in thought, word and deed as they eagerly await his return (1Peter 2:9; 1Thessalonians 1:9-10). All true Christians, who have the hope of Christ's return, will purify their lives from the thinking and deeds of this dark world and strive to walk in Jesus' footsteps (1John 3:1-3).

THE CHURCH

The Universal Church of Christ Defined

The Bible teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

The Bible teaches that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:1-21, 38-47). The Bible teaches that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6), and consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6).

The Church and Israel

The Bible teaches, however, that the church will never replace Israel as the people of God. Concerning Israel, Paul teaches in Romans 9-11 that God has always saved a remnant, chosen by grace, in the past. Paul appeals to the fact that he himself is a Jew in order to prove that God is currently saving a remnant of Jews (Romans 11:1-7). And then Paul warns Gentile Christians not to become arrogant towards unbelieving Israel since God will save a remnant of Jews in the future (Romans 11:11-32).

In all of Romans 9-11 the apostle Paul is defending God from the charge of having negated his promises to Israel as a nation in the Old Testament (see 3:3; 9:1-6; 11:1). This question of God's faithfulness to Israel arose from God's partial hardening of the Jews and His saving of great numbers of Gentiles, who are not even seeking God. In using the illustration of a single tree to demonstrate God's saving of an elect people from the Gentile Nations and from Israel, Paul demonstrates the unity of this one people of God.

However, in stating that the Gentile believers have been grafted into Israel's remnant, Paul in no way is saying that they have replaced Israel. In fact, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 32 to explain **what** God is doing in the present age: He is making the unbelieving nation of Israel jealous through His salvation of a "not my people". Thus the salvation of God's elect from amongst the Nations is intended by God to result in the salvation his elect amongst the Jews.

We thus reject the classic *Dispensational* teaching that there are **two** "Peoples of God" based upon Paul's illustration of the "single tree with two types of branches". We also reject the claim of *Covenant Theology* that the Church is the true Israel. The unbelieving nation of Israel continues to be the people of God (Romans 11:25-29), even though only the remnant of Jews chosen by grace are truly Israel (Romans 9:1-16). The Gentile Christians have been grafted into the holy remnant of Jews without in any way replacing Israel as the people of God.

Gentile Christians do not become Jews through the circumcision of heart (Paul is clearly speaking to Jews in Romans 2:28, for they are Jews *outwardly* as well as *inwardly*) Gentile Christians do not become Jews through being grafted into the remnant of Israel (11:18). Gentile Christians are children of Abraham only because God promised to make Abraham a father of **many** nations (Romans 4:16-18), not just of one nation. God's hardening of Israel is only partial (Romans 11:25) and His saving of the Gentiles is intended by God to move unbelieving Israel to jealousy (Romans 10:19; 11:11).

This means that all the promises God made to Israel as a nation in the Old Testament will be fulfilled literally, for God's calling and promises to Israel are "irrevocable" (Romans 11:26-29). These promises include the physical reign of the Messiah on the throne of David for a literal 1,000 years (Psalm 2; Isaiah 11:1-16; Zechariah 14:1-19; Revelation 20:1-10). The Church in no way negates even one of all the promises God made to the nation of Israel. Gentile Christians have become co-heirs with Israel of God's gracious promises to Israel without in any way replacing Israel (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:6; Galatians 3:6-9).

The Local Church

Although all born again believers are members of the *universal* church (1Corinthians 12:12-13), the establishment and continuity of *local* churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1Thessalonians 1:1; 2Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (Hebrews 10:25).

The Purpose and Ministry of the Church

The Bible teaches that the purpose of the Church is the glorifying of God (Ephesians 3:21; Matthew 5:16; 1Peter 2:9-12). Believers are to assemble together in local congregations in order to worship God, to pray and to be strengthened through the fellowship with the saints and through the preaching and teaching of God's holy word. They are also to assemble to remember Christ through participating in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42-47; 1Corinthians 11:17-34; Hebrews 10:25).

According to Ephesians 4:11-13, God has given the Church gifted teachers for the following reasons:

1. That the saints might reach unity in the faith and maturity in Christ.
2. That the saints might be thoroughly equipped for every good deed.
3. That the saints might no longer be vulnerable to false teaching.

Thus Christians come together in order to worship God and in order to be strengthened and equipped through the teaching and preaching ministry.

As Christians become increasingly more like Christ, they become salt and light to a lost world (Matthew 5:13-16). Christians are called to evangelize the lost by living godly lives (1Peter 2:11-12) and by boldly sharing the gospel (1Peter 3:15).

The local church has also been called by God to recognize and train faithful men (2Timothy 2:2) and to send out missionaries to proclaim Christ and establish other local churches (Acts 13:1-3; 14:21-28).

The Leadership of the Local Church

The Bible teaches that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The Biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders, also called overseers, pastors, and pastor-teachers (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11); and deacons, both of whom must meet Biblical qualifications (1Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1Peter 5:1-5).

The Bible teaches that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:17).

The Bible teaches that only **men** are called by God to lead his church as elders or deacons (1Timothy 2:11-13; 1Corinthians 14:33-35). The deacons, whose primary job is to free up the elders of the church for the ministries of prayer and preaching and teaching, serve the local church in more practical ways under the authority and direction of the elders (e.g. Acts 6:1-7). The terms "elder", "overseer" and "shepherd" communicate the idea of oversight and leadership. The term "deacon" describes one who serves in practical ways.

Church Discipline

The Bible teaches the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Galatians 6:1-5; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:13-20), and the need to practice church discipline when those professing faith in Christ refuse to repent of sin in their lives (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1Corinthians 5:1-13; 2Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1Timothy 1:19-20).

All four steps in Matthew 18:15-22 will be exercised on anyone attending *Grace Bible Church*, who, while professing Christ as their savior, refuses to acknowledge their sin and turn away from it. This applies to non-members as well.

The Church and Governing Rulers

The Bible teaches the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Acts 5:29; 14:23; Matthew 28:18-20; Titus 1:5). This does not exclude biblically sound local churches from cooperating with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of this cooperation (Matthew 18:15-17; Acts 15:19-31; 1Corinthians 5:4-7, 13).

All Christians are called to honor, obey and to pray for governmental authorities (Titus 3:1-5; Romans 13:1-7; 1Timothy 2:1-2; 1Peter 2:13-17). Disobedience to governmental authorities is only justified when they overstep their God set boundaries and command disobedience to God (see Acts 5:29).

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Bible teaches the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world (1Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12). To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. He gives men gifted with the ability to preach and teach to the church for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12). God also gives gifts of service so that the saints can help and encourage one another. God gives spiritual gifts of teaching or service to each member of the body of Christ and requires all Christians to be good stewards of these gifts (Romans 12:5-8; 1Corinthians 12:4-31; 1Peter 4:10-11).

The Bible teaches that with the completion of the canon of Scripture, the more manifestly miraculous spiritual gifts (futuristic prophecy, speaking in languages, healings) are no longer necessary as testimonies to the truth and power of the apostolic word and ministry (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-4; 2Corinthians 12:12). Because of this, we do not believe that anyone possesses the signs and wonder spiritual gifts today.

While we teach that no one possesses the spiritual gifts of speaking in languages or healing today, we believe strongly that God still heals (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15) and performs providential miracles today in answer to prayer. There is need for discernment since Satan can counterfeit miracles (Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 13:13-14).

The Bible teaches that our God is a sovereign and supernatural God who does as He pleases (Psalm 115:3). We should pray for and expect God to continue to work in powerful and miraculous ways for the good of His creatures and the glory of Christ.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We teach that the church is to observe two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42).

Baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is:

- a proclamation of what God has done in Christ,
- a testimony of a believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior,
- a symbol of union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life (Romans 6:1-11),
- and a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

The Lord's Supper is a commemoration and proclamation of the Lord's death until He comes, and should be always preceded by self-examination (1Corinthians 11:28-32). The elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper is, however, an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1Corinthians 10:16). The Lord's Supper is also a symbol of the unity of the body of Christ (1Corinthians 10:17).

ANGELS

Holy Angels

The Bible teaches that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. In God's inscrutable wisdom, they are created to serve humankind and to serve and worship God (Psalm 103:20-21; Colossians 1:15-16; Hebrews 1:5-14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

Fallen Angels

The Bible teaches that Satan is a created angel and the originator of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-15). These fallen angels are now known as "demons" and they serve Satan by seeking to lead men away from God's will.

The Bible teaches that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10), the prince of this world (2Corinthians 4:4) who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:13-15). Satan, also called the “devil”, shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire together with the fallen angles (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Satan is not everywhere present. He roams about the earth seeking those whom he can destroy their lives (1Peter 5:8). While Satan has been given the power by God to test the saints, he has no real power over them. Christians are fully able to resist Satan and overcome his schemes (1Peter 5:9). Christians are not to fear Satan or man, but God (Matthew 10:28).

LAST THINGS

Death

The Bible teaches that at physical death there is a separation of one’s soul from one’s body (Philippians 1:21-24), that death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; 2Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23) and that, for the redeemed, such separation of body and soul will continue until the bodily resurrection of the dead in Christ.

The Bible teaches that the bodily resurrection of the dead in Christ will occur immediately prior to the Rapture of the living church (1Thessalonians 4:13-17)—which is a *part* of the first resurrection unto spiritual life (Revelation 20:4-6)—when the soul of the believer and his resurrection body will be united, to be glorified forever with our Lord (1Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54; Philippians 3:21). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2Corinthians 5:6-9).

The Bible teaches the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:46; John 5:29; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:13-15).

The Bible teaches that the souls of the unsaved, at death, are kept under punishment until the second resurrection unto spiritual death (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:6, 13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Second Coming of Christ

The Bible teaches that the single most important event in human history was the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, whereby Christ conquered sin, death, and Satan. While one sees evidences of that victory in history and in the world around us, the final consummation of that victory has not yet taken place but will occur at the second coming of Christ. Thus, we teach the literal, personal, visible, and glorious second-coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, at which time He shall return for His bride, the church, and establish His millennial reign (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 9:28).

The Day of the Lord

Although God has demonstrated the outpouring of His wrath through the universal flood at the time of Noah and through his destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of Abraham, scripture clearly prophesies a yet future event known as “The Day of the Lord” (Joel 2:1-10; 1Thessalonians 5:9; 2Peter 3:3-11; Revelation 6:12-17). This day of wrath will be against all nations, including unbelieving Israel. The sign signaling the coming of this dreadful day of wrath is the darkening of the sun and the moon appearing to be red like blood (Joel 2:10; Acts 2:20; Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12). According to Acts 2:20, the “Day of the Lord” cannot begin until this sign has appeared. This fact is very important in considering the timing of the rapture (see below).

According to Matthew 24 and Revelation 6, the “Day of the Lord” follows the rapture of the church immediately prior to and in connection with Christ’s second coming.

The Timing of the Rapture of the Church

There are several theological positions concerning the timing of the Rapture of the church. While the theological positions “Pre-Tribulation” and “Post-Tribulation” have good biblical support, we as a church believe that the theological position called “Pre-Wrath” best fits those passages of Scripture, in which a clear chronology of end time events is given.

God has indeed promised the church that they will not suffer his wrath at the coming of the “Day of the Lord” (1Thessalonians 5:9). We believe that God will protect the church by removing them from the earth through the rapture. The theological positions “Pre-tribulation” and “Pre-wrath” teach this.

We believe that Matthew 24 was written for the Church and not only for the people of Israel. Jesus clearly states in this chapter that those being persecuted are believers in Jesus (“for my name’s sake” 24:9). The preposition “you” throughout this chapter is thus referring to the apostles of Jesus, who in turn are representing all believers. We thus believe that the elect, who are being raptured in this passage, refers to the church. Another reason for this is that all those Jews surviving the Day of the Lord will be saved at the time of Christ’s return according to Zechariah 12:10-14. There will not be a taking of one Jew and the leaving of another.

According to the chronology presented in Matthew 24, the “Day of the Lord” does not come upon the earth until after the “abomination of desolation” committed by the anti-christ has taken place. This “abomination” takes place at the middle of Daniel’s 70th and final seven year period (see Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15). According to Jesus, there is an immediate outbreak of severe persecution of believers on earth following this “abomination of desolation”. This severe persecution takes place during the second half of the seven year period since the abomination of desolation occurs exactly at the three and a half year mark. Jesus then states in Matthew 24:29 that it is *immediately after* the distress of this great tribulation for believers that the sign of his coming and the beginning of the “Day of the Lord” will appear.

The sign of Christ’s coming and of the beginning of the “Day of the Lord” is the darkening of the sun and the changing of the moon’s color (see “Day of the Lord” above). Shortly after this sign appears the trumpet will sound and the elect of God will be gathered from all over the earth (Matthew 24:30-31).

And according to the passage from Joel, also quoted in Acts 2:17-21, this sign concerning the moon and the sun appears in the sky **before** the coming of the “Day of the Lord”. This means that not all seven years of the final “week” of Daniel can be viewed as “the wrath of God” from which Christians have been promised deliverance. For 1Thessalonians 5:9 clearly promises deliverance from the “Day of the Lord”. And this day of wrath does not occur until well into the second half of the 70th set of seven years prophesied by Daniel.

This would allow for Christians to suffer with Israel up until the coming of the “Day of the Lord” well into the second half of Daniel’s final seven years. We see in Revelation 6 that the coming of God’s wrath is not until the opening of the 6th seal, placing the Day of the Lord also well into this final set of seven years. The passage quoted below concerning the rapture of the church also seems to indicate that the abomination of the anti-christ must occur before the rapture of the church. This would coincide with the chronology in Matthew 24 and Revelation 6.

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, ² not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. ³ Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for *that day will not come* until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴ He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God. ⁵ Don’t you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. ⁷ For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. (2Thessalonians 2:1-8 NIVO)

While we as a church are not dogmatic concerning this interpretation, we are dogmatic concerning a literal one thousand year reign of Christ here on earth.

The Millennial Kingdom of Christ

The Bible teaches that after God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, Christ will rule over the kingdom of God on earth, establishing His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over all the nations of the earth (Daniel 7:27; Revelation 2:26; 3:21). His reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Revelation 19:19-20; 20:1-3).

The Bible teaches that the Millennial Kingdom will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Ezekiel 37:21-28) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). As a result of the nation's disobedience, God judged Israel (Matthew 21:42-44; Romans 11:1-24), but they will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

The Bible teaches that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11:1-9).

Final Judgment and Eternity

The Bible teaches that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

The Bible teaches a physical resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment. After receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:11-15).

The Bible teaches that after the closing of the millennium, after the temporary release and ultimate defeat of Satan, and after the judgment of unbelievers (Revelation 20:7-15), all believers will enter the new heavens and the new earth with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the Triune God may reign forever and ever (1Corinthians 15:28).

In light of Christ's return to earth, it is imperative that all people evaluate if they are ready to face Christ (Matthew 25:1-13). True believers will be characterized by fervent hope, anticipation, and readiness for our Lord's return. This hope motivates believers to pursue holiness now (1John 3:2-3).

¹¹ Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives ¹² as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

¹³ But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. ¹⁴ So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. (2Petrus 3:11-14 NIVO)

Grace Bible Church seeks to live in the expectation of His coming (Philippians 3:20-21; 2Timothy 4:8).
“Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Revelation 22:20).