

THE 3D SERIES: DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT



SEASON 3: DOCTRINE

STUDY GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

A. DESCRIPTION OF THE 3D SERIES

THE 3D SERIES: DEFENSE, DOCTRINE & DISCERNMENT is a teaching series for the study of:

- (1) **DEFENSE** - Learn to spread and defend the Christian faith. In addition to Jesus' Great Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19-20 NASB), the Bible also tells us to "always be[] ready to make a **defense** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15 NASB);
- (2) **DOCTRINE** - Learn sound **doctrine** to reinforce your own faith and teach it to others (Titus 2:1); and
- (3) **DISCERNMENT** - Use God's Word to **discern** or distinguish the difference between good and evil in our culture (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:14).

The overall goal of the 3D Series is to teach Christians to become three-dimensional mature Christians (Matthew 28:19–20; Ephesians 4:11–15; Colossians 1:28; 2 Timothy 3:16–17).

THE 3D SERIES consists of four Seasons:

Season 1: The Authority of Scripture - Consider what the Bible says about the Bible, what the circumstantial evidence says about the Bible, and how to interpret the Bible.

Season 2: Practical Evangelism & Apologetics - Consider the biblical foundations for spreading and defending the faith and learn evangelism methods and how to answer common objections.

***Season 3: Doctrine** - Study important biblical doctrines like Biblical Inerrancy, Trinity, the Deity of Jesus, the Kingdom, etc.

Season 4: Discernment - Apply Scripture and sound biblical doctrine to cultural issues of the day.

B. DESIGN PHILOSOPHY OF THE 3D SERIES

1. Easy to Participate: Read Along, Ongoing & Cyclical

This study guide is designed for read-along use in classes and groups. There is no homework and no prerequisites.

The teacher or group leader simply reads (or asks others to read) a section together, pausing for questions and discussion as they arise.

Sections may take one meeting or several, depending on the depth of discussion.

The goal is sound doctrine saturation, not pages covered per week.

Though all of the Seasons are related and build upon each other, each Season can stand alone. This allows anyone to jump in at the beginning of any particular Season and proceed through the next Seasons until they have finished the cycle.

For example, if you missed **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture** you can start with Season 2 and go all the way through Season 4, and then go to Season 1 when the cycle starts over again.

2. Practical Information

The 3D Series gives practical information to help mature your own faith and to help you spread and defend that faith.

Though many volumes have been written about the topics covered in this series, The 3D Series is not meant to be an exhaustive academic endeavor. It is meant to be practical.

3. Sources

The primary source material for The 3D Series is God's Word. Other sources include relatively recent volumes regarding evangelism and apologetics in general, as well as other theological studies like systematic theology textbooks.

The 3D Series does not reinvent the wheel, nor does it add to or subtract from Scripture. The 3D Series simply attempts to build a solid foundation like a field guide upon which you can build over time from other sources and your own experience.

4. Simplified Citations

Since this Study Guide is not intended to be an academic work, the citations to sources will be simplified, but sufficient to allow you to find them on the Internet.

I. WHY STUDY DOCTRINE?

A. INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB), Jesus tells us, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

And so, not only does Jesus want us to help lead people to "repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 NASB), he also wants us to **teach** others **all** the things he has commanded us (Matt. 28:20).

In order to **teach** something, we have to **learn** it in the first place.

The day we are baptized and embrace Jesus as our God and Savior is not the end of Christian learning. It's merely the beginning.

God said through the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (CSB):

"All Scripture is inspired by God, and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the word "teaching" refers to "**what to believe**," "reproof" refers to "**what not to believe**," "correction" refers to "**what not to do**," and "instruction" refers to "**what to do**."

In other words, Scripture is profitable for all aspects of life, namely, what to believe and not believe and what to do and not do.

That "**All Scripture**" referenced in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 includes the Old Testament **and** the New Testament can be seen in the following passages: 1 Cor. 2:13; 14:37-38; Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 3:15-16. For more on this topic, see the study guide for **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**.

When we study God's Word and "**sound doctrine**" derived from God's Word: **(1)** we can not only have a better understanding of the "**whole purpose of God**" (Acts 20:27 NASB) for ourselves, **(2)** we can also **teach** others sound doctrine (Matt. 28:20), **(3)** we can better **recognize** unsound doctrine when we hear it (Eph. 4:14), and **(4)** we can know **how to correct** unsound doctrine (Titus 1:9).

"**Sound doctrine**" involves a true and accurate understanding of what the **entire** Bible says **topically**. In other words, "**sound doctrine**" considers what the Bible says **as a whole** about a topic such as biblical inerrancy, the Trinity, prayer, perseverance, and so on, rather than considering Biblical issues in isolation based solely on one passage.

Since the entire Bible is the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16) and is therefore consistent, **Scripture should be interpreted by other Scripture** as Jesus and the Apostles did.

Under the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, or "Scripture Alone," anything that is taught directly or indirectly by Scripture is final and true over any non-biblical source. Nothing outside Scripture, including church tradition, can override anything inside Scripture.

B. SCRIPTURE CALLING FOR DILIGENT, LIFE-LONG STUDY OF THE BIBLE

Below are passages indicating that in the life-long journey of becoming a mature Christian: (1) we should never stop learning God's Word; and (2) we should learn sound doctrine from God's Word.

(Deuteronomy 11:18 KJV) "Therefore shall ye **lay up these my words in your heart** and in your soul...."

Laying up God's words in your heart and soul is another way of saying you should store up within you God's words like gifts to be constantly treasured and used, similar to when Jesus said in Matthew 6:20-21 (KJV), "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

(Joshua 1:8 NASB) "**This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night**, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

This passage encourages us to saturate ourselves with God's Word since the more we read and study it, the more we will understand it and the more we will "do" or live the word (James 1:22; Matt. 7:24-27).

(Psalms 1:1-2 CSB) "How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, **his delight is in the LORD's instruction, and he meditates on it day and night.**"

If we constantly study and think about God's Word, we will be happy and will not be led by the wicked.

(Psalms 119:11-16 NASB) "Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You. Blessed are You, O LORD; teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have told of all the ordinances of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. **I will meditate on Your precepts and regard Your ways. I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.**"

With routine study of God's Word, we're less likely to sin.

Dwight Moody once said of the Bible, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book."

We should ask God to give us the wisdom to understand his Word (James 1:5).

We should be ready to tell others God's Word and to enjoy doing it more than earthly riches. Without constant study, we tend to forget God's Word.

In conclusion, the Bible strongly teaches that we should be diligent in reading and studying God's written Word and not just leave it for Sundays.

C. SCRIPTURE CALLING CHRISTIANS TO STUDY SOUND DOCTRINE

The following passages encourage Christians not only to study God's Word, but also to study **sound doctrine** based on God's Word.

(Romans 16:17 NASB) "Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them."

We need to know **sound** doctrine before we can recognize **unsound** doctrine.

(Ephesians 4:11-15 KJV) "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of **doctrine**, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ...."

Knowing sound doctrine and how to find it will give us a solid foundation to avoid confusing sound doctrine with unsound doctrine. There will always be people inside and outside the Church who try to mislead others with false doctrine, sometimes inadvertently for failure to adequately study doctrine and sometimes deliberately by crafty ways of deceit.

(1 Corinthians 3:1-2 CSB) "For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. **I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it.**"

Here, Paul recognizes that Christians often start their faith like infants who only understand very basic doctrine, which he equates with milk. Some Christians never

want to mature in their faith because they are too distracted by a stronger desire to be of culture or to follow their own desires or both.

This passage is meant to encourage new Christians to be willing to mature in their faith with more advanced knowledge of sound doctrine, which Paul equates with solid food.

(Hebrews 5:11-14 NASB) "Concerning him [Jesus] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time **you ought to be teachers**, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and **you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.**"

The writer of Hebrews repeats this idea that Christians should aspire to continuously grow in their faith and knowledge of sound doctrine so that they can better learn how to discern not only the difference between right and wrong, but also what to do about that knowledge.

(1 Timothy 6:3-5 CSB) "If anyone teaches false **doctrine** and does not agree with the **sound teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ** and with the teaching that promotes godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing, but has an unhealthy interest in disputes and arguments over words. From these come envy, quarreling, slander, evil suspicions, and constant disagreement among people whose minds are depraved and deprived of the truth, who imagine that godliness is a way to material gain."

This passage warns that false teachers often spread false doctrine because they crave controversy and want to present themselves as having a superior or exclusive understanding of Scripture. This can lead some to admire their apparent wisdom or learning, while causing others to become divided, confused, or suspicious.

False doctrine creates friction that can keep people from hearing the truth they desperately need. False teachers often treat church leadership as a way to gain attention, influence, or glory for themselves rather than as a humble calling to serve Christ and His people.

This passage does not, however, mean that churches should avoid exposing and correcting false and unsound doctrine for the mere sake of unity.

In this regard, Adrian Rogers once said, "I would rather be divided in truth than united in error."

(2 Timothy 2:15 KJV) "**Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**"

Paul's instruction to Timothy teaches us that God's Word should be handled carefully, faithfully, and diligently. The more we study Scripture with humility and seriousness, the better prepared we will be to understand it correctly and teach it faithfully.

(2 Timothy 4:2-4 CSB) "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate **sound doctrine**, but according to their own desires, will multiply teachers for themselves because they have an itch to hear what they want to hear. They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths."

This is a key passage reminding Bible preachers and teachers to stay ready to proclaim God's Word in every season. They must not only teach what is true, but also patiently (but surely) correct error, rebuke false doctrine, and encourage faithful obedience.

When preachers and teachers fail to do this, false teaching gains more room to spread. But when they faithfully teach sound doctrine and correct unsound teaching, they help protect the church from being misled.

(Titus 1:9 NASB) "[An elder or pastor should be] holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in **sound doctrine** and to refute those who contradict."

This is another passage encouraging not only the learning and teaching of sound biblical doctrine, but also the correction of those who contradict it.

(Titus 2:1 NASB) "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for **sound doctrine**."

Here, Paul is reminding Titus once again to only teach or preach things that accord with sound doctrine based on sound interpretation of Scripture.

(Hebrews 13:9 CSB) "**Don't be led astray by various kinds of strange teachings**; for it is good for the heart to be established by grace and not by food regulations, since those who observe them have not benefited."

Here, the writer of Hebrews warns against being led astray by unsound biblical doctrines. This warning indicates that false teachings were a problem at the time the warning was written and would continue to be a problem.

(2 Peter 2:1-3 CSB) "There were indeed **false prophets** among the people, just as there will be **false teachers** among you. They will bring in **destructive heresies**, even denying the Master who bought them, and will bring swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved ways, and the way of truth will be maligned because of them. They will exploit you in their greed with made-up stories. Their condemnation, pronounced long ago, is not idle, and their destruction does not sleep."

This passage is another strong warning that not only have there been false prophets in the past, there will continue to be false teachers who will spread destructive heresies that many people will follow -- so many heresies that outsiders will malign Christians as a whole for such depraved, un-Christian ways.

The Apostle Peter also warns that many false teachers can be recognized not only by their made-up stories, but also by their greed.

Finally, Peter warns that these false teachers are already condemned.

And so, the Bible clearly encourages sound biblical doctrine not only so Christians will walk in truth, but also so Christians can recognize, rebuke, and avoid false teachings and unsound doctrine.

D. SOUND SOURCES FOR SOUND DOCTRINE

Fortunately for us, the Bible is easy to find in the United States, with some translations being more accurate to the original languages than others.

However, finding sound sources for sound doctrine is not so easy.

Commentaries and theology books abound. Unfortunately, most do not assume the inerrancy of Scripture.

Furthermore, denominational positions in Christian doctrine books vary widely, especially between denominations who truly believe biblical inerrancy and those who do not.

Even doctrine books that do assume inerrancy of Scripture vary widely in their level of difficulty. Some books assume you can read the original languages and/or that you have been trained in theology. Other books are meant for the average preacher or teacher.

One good source for finding general sound doctrine can be found at GotQuestions.org.

Other great sources for sound doctrine are systematic theology textbooks.

Systematic theology textbooks are those that set out biblical doctrines in a systematic, organized way. In other words, they usually present what the whole Bible says about a doctrine by topic.

It is the opinion of the author that conservative evangelical systematic theologies are the most biblically sound.

One of the best and most popular recent conservative evangelical systematic theology textbooks of the day is Wayne Grudem's Systematic Theology (Second Edition 2020).

Other sound systematic theology textbooks include, but are not limited to:

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (2017)

John Frame, Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief (2013)

E. CONCLUSION

Sound doctrine involves true and accurate statements about what **the Bible as a whole says about a particular topic**.

All Christians should study sound biblical doctrine not only to better mature as Christians, but also to better teach it to others and to recognize and correct unsound doctrine.

Great sources for sound doctrine include **systematic theology textbooks** and **GotQuestions.org**.

II. THE BIBLE IS THE ACTUAL WORD OF GOD

A. INTRODUCTION

As with all sound doctrine, we must begin with what the Bible itself says about a subject. Likewise, when considering the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, we should first examine what Scripture says about its own nature and authority.

The following passage in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB) cannot be overemphasized:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

And so, since “all Scripture is inspired by God,” **it is the very Word of God** and therefore without error since God’s Word is truth (John 17:17b).

For more examples of what the Bible says about itself, see **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF BIBLICAL INERRANCY

The following are the key points of the doctrine of biblical inerrancy covered in the Study Guide for **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**:

The term “**biblical inerrancy**” means that the original hand-written Bible texts (called the “autographs”) were totally without error (“**inerrant**”) and incapable of teaching error (“**infallible**”). Strictly speaking, inerrancy only applies to those original texts.

Although the original texts are not known to currently exist, scholars can reconstruct the original wording from the surviving manuscripts with an extraordinarily high degree of confidence—over 99.5 percent.

Despite this, the translated copy of the Bible in your hand and heart is the very Word of God. Any alleged “errors” among the source manuscripts are merely copy errors (typos) or minor translation mistakes, not substantive errors that clearly affect a Christian doctrine.

C. HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE

As covered in more detail in **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**, conservative evangelical scholars conclude that the Bible was written by God through around 40 human authors (2 Tim. 3:16) in 66 books beginning sometime around 1450-1500 B.C. with Moses, pausing around 435 B.C. with Malachi (so, about 1000 years to write the Old Testament), and resuming in around 40-45 A.D. with the book of James and ending in around 95 A.D. with the Book of Revelation (taking about 50 years to write the New Testament).

How you interpret the Bible depends on how you view the Bible.

There are three main views of the Bible.

1. The Bible Is Merely an Imperfect Human Invention

If you view the Bible as an imperfect hodgepodge of imperfectly preserved, copied, and translated books that was the product of mere human ingenuity (or lack thereof), then you're going to not believe or obey the Bible as the Word of God.

If the Bible is not the very Word of God, then you can make it say whatever you want it to say. Verily, you can reinterpret the Word of God as your word. You can conform the Bible to cultural whims rather than the other way around. We can see what this practice has wrought over the last century or so on the church and society as a whole.

2. The Bible Contains the Word of God But Is Not The Word of God Completely

Some allege that the veracity of the Bible as God's Word is in some middle-ground No-Man's-Land by saying that the Bible "contains the Word of God" rather than being the Word of God as a whole.

Regarding this, Adrian Rogers once quipped: "Some believe the Bible is inspired in spots and that they're the only ones who are inspired to spot the spots."

If we are the judges of what is and is not the Word of God in the Bible, then we are gods (see Genesis 3:5).

3. The Bible is the Very Word of God and is Therefore Without Substantive Error

If you view the Bible the way it speaks of itself, and, most importantly, how it was treated by Jesus and his Apostles, then it is the very Word of God.

Accordingly, if the Bible is the Word of God, it is true (John 17:17) and without substantive error.

So how do you know if your preacher or teacher believes in biblical inerrancy? Ask them.

The 3D Series assumes at all times that the Bible is the very Word of God and therefore without substantive error.

That view makes crucial differences in how you interpret the Bible.

First, it reminds you to submit to the Bible with humility rather than trying to submit it to your own flawed human judgment.

Second, it should lead you to consider that God anticipated that millions upon millions of people would read the Bible and that it would be copied over many centuries in many different languages. Since God wants us to know his Word, he would surely attend to the process over time to avoid corruption.

Third, when you consider a passage, you should consider what it meant then, what it means now, and what it means to you.

Fourth, since Jesus is the main hero of the Bible as a whole, you should consider how each and every verse, whether in the Old or New Testament, points to or otherwise prepares the way for the redemptive work of Jesus as God the Son and Savior.

Fifth, you should avoid the dangers of under- and over-contextualizing passages.

God had and has a purpose for each and every Word in the Bible. He knew there would be an original audience and an original context, but he also knew that though the audience and historical context of that audience would change over time, there would be timeless lessons from all of Scripture for all audiences and all contexts.

For a quick reference guide on how to interpret the Bible, see **Appendix B: Principles for Interpreting the Bible** and **Appendix C: The Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method** at the end of this Study Guide.

III. THE ETERNAL TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity may be defined as follows:

God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God.

Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: Second Edition (2020), 269.

Another way of defining the doctrine of the Trinity is:

The doctrine of the Trinity, simply put, is that God is absolutely and eternally one essence subsisting in three distinct and ordered persons without division and without replication of the essence.

John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth (2017), 189.

And so, the Trinity has three main elements which we will consider in the following order:

- (1) There is one God;
- (2) God exists as Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; and
- (3) The Trinity is Eternal.

Though the concept of the Trinity is mysterious in some respects, we must believe it because it is clearly taught throughout Scripture. That there remain mysteries in the Bible is attested by the following two passages:

(Deut. 29:29 NASB) "**The secret things belong to the LORD our God**, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

(Isa. 55:8-9 CSB) "'For **my thoughts are not your thoughts**, and your ways are not my ways.' This is the LORD's declaration. 'For as heaven is higher than earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'"

The belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is a core requirement of the Christian faith.

It bears repeating that the Trinity is **eternal**, meaning there never was a time when God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit did not exist, nor will there ever be a time when the Trinity will cease to exist. Therefore, Jesus did not begin to exist on that first Christmas Day, some two-thousand years ago. Jesus has always existed and was not created (John 1:1-3, 14).

A. THERE IS ONE GOD

Passages that teach there is only one God include the following.

(Exod. 20:2-3 CSB) "I am the LORD your God ... Do not have other gods besides me."

(Deut. 6:4 NASB) "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, **the LORD is one.**"

(1 Kings 8:60 CSB) "May all the peoples of the earth know that **the LORD is God. There is no other!**"

(Isa. 45:5-6 NASB) "**I am the LORD, and there is no other**; besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that **there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other.**"

(Isa. 45:21b-22 NASB) "And **there is no other God besides Me**, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for **I am God, and there is no other.**"

(Rom. 3:30 CSB) "[T]**here is one God** who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised by faith."

(1 Cor. 8:4 NASB) "Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that **there is no God but one.**"

(Gal. 3:20b CSB) "**God is one.**"

(James 2:19 KJV) "Thou believest that **there is one God**; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble."

Thus, the Old and New Testaments clearly testify that God is One even though the Bible also teaches that God exists in Three Persons as we will see.

B. GOD IS IN THREE PERSONS

There are many passages throughout the Bible that teach the Trinity either implicitly or explicitly. Though the Trinity was not fully revealed in the Old Testament, there are hints and allusions.

1. Old Testament Plurals "Elohim," "Us" and "Our"

The Trinity is indicated several times in the Old Testament with the use of plural pronouns.

(Gen. 1:1 KJV) "In the beginning **God** created the heaven and the earth."

In this very first sentence of the Bible, the Hebrew word for God is *Elohim*, which is in the plural form.

Though the word for God is in the plural form, the Hebrew verb form of the word "created" is in the singular form rather than in the usual plural form.

Thus, in the original Hebrew, the term "God created" is equivalent to "God" consisting of more than one Person "created" while still being one God.

(Gen. 1:26a KJV) "And **God** said, Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...."

(Gen. 3:22 CSB) "The **LORD God** said, 'Since the man has become like **one of us**, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.'"

(Gen. 11:7 NASB) [At the Tower of Babel] "Come, let **Us** go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech."

(Isa. 6:8 NASB) "Then I heard **the voice of the Lord**, saying, 'Whom shall **I** send, and who will go for **Us**?' Then I said, 'Here I am. Send me!'"

When read together with the rest of Scripture, especially the New Testament, the plural pronouns in these OT passages help establish that God exists as three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. Old Testament "LORD" versus "Lord"

In a few instances, the Trinity is implicated by the use of the word "Lord" versus "LORD" in the OT where "LORD" refers to God the Father (YAHWEH) and "Lord" we will come to know in the NT to mean God the Son Jesus.

For example, God wrote through King David as follows:

(Ps. 110:1 NASB) "The **LORD** says to my **Lord**: 'Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'"

Hundreds of years later, Jesus referenced Psalm 110:1 to the Pharisees:

(Matt. 22:41-46 NASB) "Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question: 'What do you think about the Christ, whose son is He?' They said to Him, 'The son of David.' He said to them, 'Then how does David in the Spirit call him "Lord," saying "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet'""? If David then calls Him "Lord," How is He his son?"

Therefore, when viewed together, Psalm 110:1 and Matthew 22:41-46 mean that Psalm 110:1 might be paraphrased as "God the Father says to God the Son to sit at my right hand."

Note also that Matthew 22:43 references God the Holy Spirit as well. And so, Psalm 110:1 read together with Matthew 22:41-46 evidence all three Persons of the Trinity.

Another example in the OT where both terms "Lord" and "LORD" are used to distinguish the two can be found in the Book of Malachi, written around 435 years before the earthly birth of Jesus.

(Mal. 3:1-2 NASB) "'Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you will seek, will suddenly come to His temple and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,' says the LORD of hosts. 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.'"

Here, a distinction is made between "the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple" and "the LORD of hosts."

3. When "The Angel of the LORD" May Refer to God the Son

There are passages in the Old Testament where "the angel of the LORD" is not presented as a mere created angel, but as one who speaks as God, bears the authority of God, and is even identified with God.

Many conservative Christians understand at least some of these appearances as **Christophanies** — that is, pre-incarnate appearances of God the Son before He took on human flesh in the womb of Mary.

These passages provide further evidence that the one true God is more than one Person. In particular, they point forward to the clearer New Testament revelation that God the Son is distinct from God the Father and yet fully God.

For example, in Genesis 16 we're told in verse 7 (NASB) that "**the angel of the LORD** found her [Hagar] by a spring of water in the wilderness" and began speaking to Hagar being with child [Ishmael]. Then we are told:

(Gen. 16:13 NASB) "Then **she called the name of the LORD** who spoke to her"

Therefore, in Genesis 16, the use of the term "the angel of the LORD" cannot mean a mere angel because the Bible then refers to "the angel of the LORD" as having "the name of the LORD."

In the following passage from Exodus, the one who appeared to Moses in a flaming bush was initially called "the angel of the Lord" who is then referred to "the Lord" and then "God."

(Exod. 3:2-6 CSB) "Then **the angel of the LORD** appeared to him in a flame of fire within a bush. As Moses looked, he saw that the bush was on fire but was not consumed. So Moses thought, 'I must go over and look at this remarkable sight. Why isn't the bush burning up?' When the **LORD** saw that he had gone over to look, **God called out for him from the bush**, 'Moses, Moses!' 'Here I am,' he answered. 'Do not come closer,' he said. 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.' Then he continued, '**I am the God** of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Moses hid his face because he was afraid to look at **God**."

Other examples, such as Numbers 22:35-38 and Judges 2:1-2, may also reflect this pattern, where "the angel of the LORD" speaks with divine authority and is closely identified with God Himself.

(Num. 22:35-38 NASB) "But **the angel of the LORD** said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but you shall **speak only the word which I tell you**.' So Balaam went along with the leaders of Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the city of Moab, which is on the Arnon border, at the extreme end of the border. Then Balak said to Balaam, 'Did I not urgently send to you to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really unable to honor you?' So Balaam said to Balak, 'Behold, I have come now to you! Am I able to speak anything at all? **The word that God puts in my mouth, that shall I speak**.'"

(Judges 2:1-2 CSB) "**The angel of the LORD** went up from Gilgal to Bochim and said, '**I brought you out of Egypt** and led you into the land I had promised to your ancestors. I also said: I will never break my covenant with you. You are not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of this land. You are to tear down their altars. But you have not obeyed me. What have you done?'"

Taken together, these passages are consistent with - and help prepare the way for - the New Testament teaching that God the Son is fully God, distinct from the Father, and active in God's work throughout redemptive history.

4. Other Old Testament References to the Trinity

Other Old Testament references that implicate the Trinity include the following:

(Isa. 48:12-13, 16 NASB) "Listen to **Me**, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; **I am He, I am the first, I am also the last**. Surely My hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens; when I call to them, they stand together. ... Come near to Me, listen to this: From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now **the LORD GOD has sent Me, and His Spirit**."

That Jesus is speaking here is supported not only by the context, but also with the reference to "I am the first and I am the last" which parallels Jesus' statement in Revelation 22:13 (NASB), "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Furthermore, Jesus' statement in Isaiah 48:12, "Surely My hand founded the earth, and My right hand spread out the heavens" implicates John 1:1-2 (NASB) which says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

(Isa. 63:7-10 CSB) "I will make known **the LORD's** faithful love and **the LORD's** praiseworthy acts, because of all **the LORD** has done for us — even the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, which he did for them based on his compassion and the abundance of his faithful love. He said, 'They are indeed my people, children who will not be disloyal,' and **he became their Savior**. In all their suffering, he suffered, and the angel of his presence saved them. He redeemed them because of his love and compassion; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of the past. But they rebelled and grieved **his Holy Spirit**. So he became their enemy and fought against them."

This passage in Isaiah is referencing the Exodus when God brought Israel out of Egypt through Moses. The references to "LORD" in verse 7 are further references to God the Father or YAHWEH while verse 10 also references "his Holy Spirit."

5. New Testament References to the Trinity

Though the Trinity was not fully revealed in the Old Testament, it became so with the earthly birth of Jesus. What follows are the clearest references to the Trinity in the New Testament.

(Matt. 3:16-17 NASB) "After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the **Spirit of God** descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, and behold, **a voice out of the heavens said**, 'This is My beloved **Son**, in whom I am well-pleased.'"

Here, God the Son was baptized, God the Holy Spirit descended like a dove upon God the Son Jesus, and God the Father spoke from heaven.

(Matt. 28:18-20 KJV) [The Great Commission] "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the **name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

This is likely the clearest reference to the Triune nature of God in the Bible. Notice it says "in the name of ..." not "in the names of."

(2 Cor. 13:14 NASB) "The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ**, and the love of **God**, and the fellowship of **the Holy Spirit**, be with you all."

This passage might be the second clearest reference to the Trinity in the Bible.

(1 Cor. 12:4-6 CSB) "Now there are different gifts, but the same **Spirit**. There are different ministries, but the same **Lord**. And there are different activities, but the same **God** works all of them in each person."

The New Testament human authors often use the word "God" to refer to God the Father and "Lord" to refer to God the Son Jesus. And so, in this passage is a reference to God the Father ("God"), God the Son ("Lord") and God the Holy Spirit ("Spirit").

(Eph. 4:4-6 NASB) "There is one body and one **Spirit**, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism, one **God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all."

Here, "Spirit" refers to God the Holy Spirit, "Lord" refers to God the Son Jesus, and "God and Father" refers to God the Father.

(1 Pet. 1:1-2 NASB) "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of **God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the **Spirit**, to obey **Jesus Christ** and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."

Here, the Apostle Peter referenced all three Persons of the Trinity.

(Jude 20-21 CSB) "But you, dear friends, as you build yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the **Holy Spirit**, keep yourselves in the love of **God**, waiting expectantly for the mercy of our **Lord Jesus Christ** for eternal life."

Jesus' half-brother Jude recognized that Jesus was "Lord" among God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

And so, the New Testament clearly references the Trinity **at least seven times**: twice by Matthew, three times by Paul, once by Peter, and once by Jude.

C. THE TRINITY IS ETERNAL

It cannot be overemphasized that the Trinity is eternal and has always existed. God the Son Jesus was not created two-thousand years ago. He has always existed along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Consider especially:

(John 1:1-3, 14 NASB) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

In this very important passage, we see that the term "Word" is equated with God and in verse 14 it is made clear that "Word" means Jesus.

In other words, in John 1:1-3 and 14, the Word = Jesus = God.

Other verses indicating Jesus is an eternal member of the Trinity include:

(John 17:5 CSB) [Jesus] "Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory **I had with you before the world existed.**"

(John 17:24 NASB) [Jesus] "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me **before the foundation of the world.**"

Accordingly, there never was a time that Jesus did not exist as God the Son.

In light of the NT, we may conclude that when Genesis 1:1 teaches that "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," Jesus is included in that term "God" or *Elohim*. When Genesis uses the terms "us" and "our," Jesus is included within that plural along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

D. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT THE TRINITY

1. The Three Persons of the Trinity Are Distinct While Being One God

Though God is One and is also in Three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are distinct Persons. Examples of where the Bible indicates distinct actions done by the distinct Persons of the Trinity include the following (see Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology: Second Edition (2020), 273-280).

Jesus advocates for us before God the Father.

(1 John 2:1 NASB) "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

Jesus intercedes for us to the Father.

(Heb. 7:25 NASB) "Therefore **He [Jesus]** is able also to save forever those who draw near to **God** through Him, since He always lives to make **intercession** for them."

The Holy Spirit taught the Apostles to remember what Jesus said.

(John 14:26 CSB) [Jesus] "But the Counselor, the **Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, will **teach you all things and remind you** of everything I have told you."

The Holy Spirit also intercedes for us with God the Father.

(Rom. 8:26-27 CSB) "In the same way **the Spirit** also helps us in our weakness, because we do not know what to pray for as we should, but **the Spirit** himself **intercedes** for us with inexpressible groanings. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of **the Spirit**, because he **intercedes** for the saints according to the will of **God**."

The Holy Spirit bears witness about Jesus.

(John 15:26-27 NASB) [Jesus] "When the **Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the **Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father**, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning."

The Holy Spirit speaks to people.

(Acts 8:29 KJV) "Then **the Spirit said** unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

(Acts 13:2 KJV) "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, **the Holy Ghost said**, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

2. All Three Persons of the Trinity Are Fully God

As we considered previously, the mystery of the Trinity is that God exists as three Persons who are distinct but individually fully God and yet all three constitute one God.

The Bible abounds with references to **God the Father** being "God" from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation.

The Bible teaches that **God the Holy Spirit** is fully God in the previous passages considered in this chapter (for example, Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20-21).

Another passage equating the Holy Spirit with God is:

(Acts 5:3-4 NASB) "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to **lie to the Holy Spirit** and to keep back some of the price of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to men but to God.**'"

As will be considered in more detail in the chapter regarding the Deity of Christ, **God the Son Jesus** is also **fully God**. Consider the following examples (there being many more):

(John 1:1-2 NASB) "**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** He was in the beginning with God."

(John 20:28 KJV) "And Thomas answered and said unto him [Jesus], My Lord and my God."

(Rom. 9:5 NASB) [Speaking of the Jews] "whose are the fathers, and from whom is the **Christ** according to the flesh, who is over all, **God** blessed forever. Amen."

(Heb. 1:3a CSB) "The **Son** is the **radiance of God's glory** and the **exact expression of his nature**, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

(Heb. 1:10 [quoting Ps. 102:25] CSB) "In the beginning, **Lord**, you established the earth and the heavens are the works of your hands...."

(Titus 2:13 KJV) "[L]ooking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great **God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.**"

(2 Pet. 1:1b NASB) "To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our **God and Savior, Jesus Christ.**"

(Isa. 9:6 KJV) "For unto us a **child** is born, unto us a **son** is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty **God**, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Thus, the Bible as a whole clearly teaches that God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit are each fully God.

3. Quotes About the Trinity

"Get a clear idea, then, of the Trinity in Unity. Do not reason about it; do not try to understand it: remember, it is not your duty to comprehend, but to apprehend such truth as these: you are to believe, rather than to reason. One God in the Trinity of his persons let us know and worship; for remember that, those who do not know this, that when the doctrine of the Trinity is given up, the other doctrines of the evangelical system are pretty sure to be cast to the winds. This doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems to be the place of standing or falling with public teachers and private believers." Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Sermon: "Knowledge Commended," January 15, 1865.

"We are selected by the Father, saved by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit." Adrian Rogers, Sermon: "Jesus Christ: The Son of God and God the Son," December 17, 2000.

"Now, how do we know about the Trinity? Let me say that the only way any of us can understand or believe the Trinity is by divine revelation. You would never learn about the Trinity by human logic, not by investigation, not by philosophy, not by mathematics, not by science. The only way any of us can know that God Almighty is a Triune God is by divine revelation, by picking up the Bible and reading it. Well, you say, 'Pastor, it sounds a little contradictory to me that God is one, and yet God is three.' Well, listen. Don't worry if you can't understand it. ... Somebody said, 'Try to explain the Trinity, you lose your mind; deny it, you lose your soul.' You don't say, 'I figured this out.' You don't say, 'It makes logical sense to me.' The Trinity is not contrary to logic; the Trinity is beyond logic." Adrian Rogers, Sermon: "Treasuring the Trinity," #1884.

"The Bible is clear. There is only one God, yet He exists, and always has existed, as a Trinity of Persons -- the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (John 1:1-2). To deny or misunderstand the Trinity is to deny or misunderstand the very nature of God Himself." John MacArthur, Article: "Our Triune God," <https://www.gty.org/library/Articles/A215/Our-Triune-God>

"The concept of the Trinity has emerged as a touchstone of truth, a non-negotiable article of Christian orthodoxy." R.C. Sproul, [What is the Trinity?](https://www.ligonier.com/what-is-the-trinity/), Ligonier.com.

"The Trinity of God: God is one essence, but God is three in subsistence. He is three in modes of being. He is three in personality: three Persons co-eternal, co-equal, one in substance, in essence. There is one God, but He is three in personality." W.A. Criswell, Sermon: "God the Trinity," July 1, 1956.

"As we come to look upon [the doctrine of the Trinity] ourselves, our first admission would have to be that the human mind could in no wise encompass, much less give birth to, a doctrine like this. It has to come through the self-revelation of God. It must come through the self-disclosure of God. A man by his mind could never find it out. He could never search for it and discover it. It would be easy for a clod to emit light from itself and become a sun as for a man to discover the tri-personality of the one God. It must come through the self-disclosure, the self-revelation, of God or a man could never know it." W.A. Criswell, Sermon: "God the Trinity," July 1, 1956.

E. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE TRINITY

As amply attested by the Bible -- partially revealed in the Old Testament and fully revealed in the New Testament -- God has always existed, and always will exist, as one God in Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son Jesus, and God the Holy Spirit.

There has never been a time that God the Son did not exist. Jesus, like God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, has always existed -- even before he was born in human form unto Mary two-thousand years ago.

Everything God has ever done has always involved, and will always involve, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Though there remain mysteries about all aspects of the Holy Trinity, as there remain mysteries about other things (Deut. 29:29), we must believe it because the Bible clearly teaches it.

If God wanted us to know more about the Trinity, he would have told us. He told us precisely how much he wanted us to know about it and therefore what the Bible already says is thoroughly sufficient.

IV. JESUS IS FULLY MAN AND FULLY GOD

A. INTRODUCTION

As we considered in the Doctrine of the Trinity, Jesus is an eternal Person of the Holy Trinity (John 1:1-3, 14). What follows is a consideration of what the Bible says about Jesus being fully God and fully man, traditionally known as the **hypostatic union**.

B. JESUS IS FULLY HUMAN

Jesus' human body was miraculously conceived by God the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary.

(Matt. 1:18-20 NASB) "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, **before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit**. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is **of the Holy Spirit**.'"

These verses show us that Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit rather than by a human male.

(Matt. 1:24-25 CSB) "When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded him. **He married her but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son**. And he named him Jesus."

This further corroborates that Jesus was not conceived by a human male, including Joseph.

(Luke 1:35 NASB) "The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; **and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God**.'"

This verse explains why Jesus was born without sin even though he was born of a human mother (see, for example, Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12).

That Jesus would be born of a virgin was prophesied around 750 years earlier in Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6:

(Isa. 7:14 NASB) "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, **a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel**."

(Isa. 9:6 NASB) "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."

These two verses also refer to Jesus as God by calling him "Immanuel," which means "God with us," as well as "Mighty God." Calling him "Eternal Father" also equates Jesus with God the Father when read in light of John 10:30 (NASB) when Jesus said, "I and the Father are one."

Jesus had a human body like the rest of us and therefore experienced the limitations of the human body.

He experienced being a baby and growing up.

(Luke 2:7 CSB) "Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and **she wrapped him tightly in cloth and laid him in a manger**, because there was no guest room available for them."

(Luke 2:40 NASB) "The Child continued to **grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom**; and the grace of God was upon Him."

(Luke 2:52 KJV) "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

Jesus experienced being tired, hungry, and thirsty.

(John 4:6 CSB) "Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, **worn out from his journey**, sat down at the well. It was about noon."

(Matt. 4:2 KJV) "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward hungered."

(John 19:28 NASB) "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill Scripture, said, 'I am **thirsty**.'"

When Jesus was resurrected after his death on the cross, he returned to his disciples with his human body.

(Luke 24:39 KJV) "**Behold my hands and my feet**, that it is I myself: **handle me, and see**; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

(Luke 24:42-43 CSB) "So they gave him a piece of **broiled fish**, and **he took it and ate it** in their presence."

(John 20:24-27 NASB) "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my

finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then **He said to Thomas, 'Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side;** and do not be unbelieving, but believing.'"

When Jesus ascended into heaven, his human body went with him and remains with him.

(Luke 24:50-51 NASB) "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, **He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.**"

(Acts 1:9 KJV) "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight."

(Acts 1:11 CSB) "They [two angels] said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This **same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.**'"

(Acts 7:55-56 NASB) "But being full of the Holy Spirit, he [**Stephen**] **gazed intently into heaven** and saw the glory of God, and **Jesus standing at the right hand of God**; and he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.'"

C. JESUS IS SINLESS

Though Jesus was and is fully man, he was and is completely sinless.

(2 Cor. 5:21 NASB) "He made **Him who knew no sin** to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

(Heb. 4:15 NASB) "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet **without sin.**"

(Heb. 7:26 CSB) "For this is the kind of high priest we need: **holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners**, and exalted above the heavens."

(1 Pet. 1:19 KJV) "[B]ut with the precious blood of Christ, as of a **lamb without blemish and without spot.**"

(1 Pet. 2:22 CSB) "**He did not commit sin**, 'and no deceit was found in his mouth.'"

(1 John 3:5 NASB) "You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin."

D. JESUS IS FULLY GOD

There is ample Scriptural evidence that Jesus was and is fully God.

1. The Trinity References

The Scriptural references to the Trinity attest to Jesus being a Person of the Triune God.

Consider especially Jesus' own words:

(Matt. 28:18-20 NASB) [The Great Commission] "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'"

First, saying that "[a]ll authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth" means a level of authority that only God could have.

Second, he lists himself as a Person of the Trinity along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

2. Jesus Spoke of Himself as God

In the New Testament, Jesus referred to himself in a manner that clearly indicated his deity.

a. "I AM" (EGŌ EIMI)

In Exodus 3:14 (NASB), Moses asked God what name he should call him and "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

The "I AM" statement in Exodus 3:14 is YHWH (YAHWEH) in Hebrew. In most English translations, the name is rendered as "LORD" in all capital letters as distinguished from "Lord."

Moses wrote Exodus around 1450 B.C.

Fast forward to around 250 B.C. (1200 years later) when 72 Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Bible (what we call the Old Testament) into Greek, called the **Septuagint** (Sep-TOO-a-jint).

Now fast forward to New Testament times. The Jews living around Jesus had had about 300 years to be familiar with the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, especially since most Jews in that area were familiar with Greek at that time.

In the Septuagint, the statement "I AM" in Exodus 3:14 was translated in Greek as *egō eimi* (Ā-go Ā-mee). Therefore, the Greek-speaking Jews in New Testament times were very familiar with God's name "I AM" or YAHWEH being rendered as *egō eimi* in Greek.

Also in the New Testament context, people would normally not say "*egō eimi*" to refer to themselves. Rather, they would simply say "eimi."

Consider the following important passage:

(John 8:58 NASB) "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, **I am**.'"

And so, when Jesus used the term "*egō eimi*" in John 8:58, not only did he know he was unmistakably referring to himself with God's "I AM" name in Exodus 3:14, the Jews around him knew this as well, which made some of them angry enough to want to kill him.

Other prominent theologians agree, including:

Wayne Grudem: "Jesus' statement here [in John 8:58] is itself an explicit claiming of the name of God, 'I am who I am,' from Exodus 3:14, a name that also suggests a continual present existence: God is the eternal 'I am,' the one who eternally exists." Systematic Theology: Second Edition (2020), 199.

R.C. Sproul: "Here as perhaps nowhere else in Scripture Jesus claimed for Himself equality with the Father by clearly using the divine name that God revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:14). Jesus identified Himself as eternal deity, declaring that He was alive as the second person of the Trinity before Abraham was born." John: An Expositional Commentary (2009), 155.

John MacArthur: Jesus saying "'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am,' was nothing less than a claim to full deity." John 1-11: The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (2006).

b. Other Scriptural references by Jesus asserting his deity

The following are other Scriptural examples of Jesus' own words indicating that he was God.

(Matt. 11:27 NASB) "**All things have been handed to Me by My Father**; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

Jesus' statement that "All things have been handed to Me by My Father" would be repeated later in Matthew 28:18 (NASB) ("All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"). One can hardly imagine how someone could have "[a]ll things ... handed" to him and "[a]ll authority ... in heaven and on earth" given to him and not be God.

The statement that "no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son" reveals an intimacy that only Persons of a Triune God could have.

Finally, the statement that the Son chooses to reveal the Father to whom he will (and therefore, to whom he won't) clearly evidences deity since a mere mortal could not have the power to choose to reveal or not reveal God the Father.

(John 5:22-23 CSB) "The Father, in fact, judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, **so that all people may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.** Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."

Here, Jesus is equating himself with God the Father.

(John 10:30-33 NASB) "[Jesus said] **'I and the Father are one.'** The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, 'I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?' **The Jews answered Him,** 'For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because **You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.**'"

This is one of the strongest passages showing that Jesus equated himself with God the Father - not only that he was a "Son of God," but also that he was "one" with God the Father, thereby also being God.

The fact the Jews were going to stone him after saying this, and the fact Jesus did not take it back or explain it away, proves that Jesus knew that he was equating himself with God and that the Jews took it that way and that he knew they took it that way.

(John 14:9-11 CSB) "Jesus said to him, 'Have I been among you all this time and you do not know me, Philip? **The one who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, "Show us the Father"? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who lives in me does his works. **Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me.** Otherwise, believe because of the works themselves.'"

Again, Jesus is clearly equating himself with God the Father. This is also evidence for Jesus being a Person of the Trinity since, though Jesus is equating himself with God the Father, he is still distinct as God the Son.

(John 17:20-21 NASB) [Jesus praying to the Father] "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; **even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You,** that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."

This is another passage where Jesus clearly equates himself with God the Father.

(Rev. 1:8 NASB) "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' **says the Lord God**, 'who is and who was and who is to come, **the Almighty**.'"

This verse is in red-type in most Bibles that use such type to indicate the words of Jesus. Here, Jesus indicates his deity by saying he is the beginning and the end (as he does later in Rev. 22:13) and calling himself the "Almighty." Further, John refers to Jesus as "the Lord God."

(Rev. 1:17-18 CSB) "When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man. He laid his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid. **I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look -- I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.**'"

(Rev. 2:8 KJV) [Jesus] "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; **These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.**"

(Rev. 22:13 NASB) "'I am the **Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.**'"

Thus, there are four examples in the Book of Revelation where Jesus refers to himself as the equivalent of the beginning and the end of time, clearly indicating a deity that no human could ever have.

These statements should also be read in light of John 1:1-3, 14, also written by the Apostle John.

3. Jesus' Followers Spoke of Jesus as God

There are many examples in the New Testament where Jesus' followers spoke of Jesus as God. Consider these:

(John 1:1-3, 14 NASB) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Here, the Gospel of John begins with the beginning -- that Jesus, whom John will equate with the Word in verse 14, was always God who participated as God when "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" in Genesis 1:1.

(John 20:28 CSB) [After Jesus encouraged the Apostle Thomas to touch his wounds to prove Jesus was alive again] "Thomas responded to him, '**My Lord and my God!**'"

Here, the Apostle John tells us that the Apostle Thomas directly called Jesus God. There is no indication that Jesus disputed this name.

(Acts 20:28 NASB) [Paul's farewell to the Ephesian Elders] "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the **church of God which He purchased with His own blood.**"

Here, Paul refers to "the church of God" having been bought with God's "own blood" which was done through the blood of God the Son Jesus.

(Titus 2:11, 13 NASB) "For the grace of God has appeared ... looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of **our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus....**"

Here, Paul unmistakably refers to Jesus as "God **and** Savior."

(Col. 1:15-20 CSB) "**He is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn over all creation. For **everything was created by him**, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through him and for him. **He is before all things**, and **by him all things hold together**. He is also the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. **For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him**, and through him to reconcile everything to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Here, Paul equates Jesus as God who created everything, who is "before all things" and by whom "all things hold together," and in whom "God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell."

(Phil. 2:5-8 NASB) "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in **Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped**, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

Here, Paul speaks of Jesus as having "the form of God" and that Jesus knew that people would have trouble understanding His "equality with God."

(2 Pet. 1:1 NASB) "Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our **God and Savior, Jesus Christ.**"

Like Paul did in Titus 2:13, in this verse, Peter calls Jesus "God **and** Savior."

(Heb. 1:3 CSB) "**The Son** is the radiance of **God's** glory and the **exact expression of his nature**, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Here, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews (traditionally believed to be Paul) refers to Jesus the Son as the "exact expression of his [God's] nature."

(Heb. 1:8 KJV) "But **unto the Son he saith**, Thy throne, O **God**, is for ever and ever [quoting Ps. 45:6]"

Here, Jesus the Son is also referred to as "God."

Accordingly, the Bible features many instances of the followers of Jesus (including the Apostles John, Peter, and Paul, as well as Luke) referring to Jesus as God.

4. Jesus Was Worshiped as God

Even when Jesus was a child, there were those who worshiped him.

(Matt. 2:11a NASB) "After coming into the house they saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they [the magi] fell to the ground and worshiped Him."

The following are examples where people worshiped Jesus as an adult and he accepted such worship.

(Matt. 14:32-33 CSB) [Right after Jesus walked on water] "When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those in the boat **worshiped** him and said, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'"

(Matt. 28:9 NASB) "And they [the women] left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And **they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him.**"

(Matt. 28:16-17 NASB) "But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, **they worshiped Him**; but some were doubtful."

(Luke 24:51-52 CSB) "And while he was blessing them, he left them and was carried up into heaven. **After worshiping him**, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy."

(John 9:37-38 NASB) [When Jesus healed the man born blind] "Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him, and he is the one who is talking with you.' And he said, 'Lord, I believe.' And **he worshiped Him.**"

Therefore, the Bible teaches that Jesus' own followers worshiped Him as God and that Jesus did not reject such worship.

5. Jesus Had the Right to Forgive Sins

The following verses demonstrate that Jesus has the right to forgive sins which only God can do.

(Acts 5:31 NASB) "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and **forgiveness of sins**."

(Acts 13:39 CSB) "Everyone who believes is **justified through him** from everything that you could not be justified from through the law of Moses."

(Col. 3:13b NASB) "[J]ust as **the Lord forgave you**, so also should you."

(Ps. 130:3-4 KJV) "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O **Lord**, who shall stand? But **there is forgiveness with thee**, That thou mayest be feared."

(Jer. 31:34b CSB) [Regarding the New Covenant] "[T]his is the LORD's declaration. 'For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.'"

6. Jesus Performed Many Miracles

The Bible records many miracles performed by Jesus, authenticating his deity. For the sake of brevity, only the verse citations will be listed.

a. Healing miracles

Healing lepers (Matt. 8:1-4; Mark 1:41-45; Luke 5:12-14; 17:11-19)

Healing the blind (Matt. 9:27-31; Mark 8:22-26; 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43; John 9:1-38)

Healing from afar (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10; John 4:46-54)

Healing Peter's mother in law (Mark 1:29-31)

Healing the paralytic (Matt. 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26)

Healing by the touch of his clothing (Matt. 9:20-23; 14:35-36; Mark 5:25-34; 6:53-56; Luke 8:43-48)

Sabbath healings (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-10; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18)

Healing of deaf and mute man (Mark 7:31-37)

Returned cut-off ear (Luke 22:47-53)

Healing of multitudes (Matt. 9:35; 15:29-31; Mark 1:32-34; 3:9-12; Luke 6:17-19)

b. Raising the Dead

The synagogue ruler's (Jairus) daughter (Mark 5:21-43; Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 8:40-56)

The widow of Nain's son (Luke 7:11-17)

Lazarus (John 11:1-45)

c. Casting out demons

Jesus cast out many demons (Mark 1:34; Matt. 8:16-17; Luke 4:40-41):

from people in Galilee (Mark 1:39)

at the synagogue (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37)

from people at Capernaum (Matt. 9:32-33; 12:22; Luke 6:17-19; 11:14)

from a Greek woman's daughter (Matt. 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30)

from Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2)

from people at Sea of Galilee (Mark 3:10-12)

from the son at Caesarea Philippi (Matt. 17:14-21; Mark 9:17-29; Luke 9:38-47)

from the woman with an 18-year sickness of being bent double (Luke 13:10-13)

casting out Legion into a herd of pigs (Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-39)

rebuking demons (Luke 4:41)

casting out a demon that the disciples were unable to cast out (Matt. 17:14-20; Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43)

d. Additional miracles

Multiplication of food (Matt. 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Mark 6:33-44; 8:1-10; Luke 9:12-17; John 6:1-14)

Water into wine (John 2:7-11)

Calming a storm (Matt. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41; Luke 8:22-25)

Walking on water (Matt. 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-52; John 6:15-21)

Filling a net with fish (Luke 5:1-11; John 21:1-14)

Withering a tree (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-25)

Fish caught with money in its mouth to pay the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27)

e. Many other miracles not recorded in the Bible

(John 20:30-31 NASB) "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

E. CONCLUSION

The Bible records Jesus having spoken of himself in many different ways as God.

His followers (including those who wrote the New Testament) referred to Jesus as God.

The Bible says that Jesus was worshiped as God while he was on earth and he accepted such worship. The Bible does not indicate that Jesus rejected such worship as did mere angels (e.g., Rev. 22:8-9).

The Bible says Jesus had (and has) the right and power to forgive sins.

The Bible records Jesus having performed many miracles, including healing, raising people from the dead, casting out demons, turning water into wine, calming storms, and multiplying objects.

Accordingly, the Bible amply demonstrates that Jesus is fully human (yet sinless) and fully God, traditionally known as the **hypostatic union**.

There is mystery as to how this can be since it appears to defy human reason. However, it is no less mysterious than the eternal Trinity consisting of three Persons yet being one God, or how the Triune God can always have existed, or how he made everything out of nothing, and so on. But the Bible says these things are true and you either believe that "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim. 3:16 NASB) and that God's word is truth (John 17:17), or you do not.

V. HUMANITY AND SIN

A. INTRODUCTION

Before we can fully appreciate what Jesus did to save us, we need to understand two foundational truths about ourselves:

- (1) What God originally made us to be; and
- (2) What we have become because of sin.

The Bible's answers to "What is a human being?" and "What is wrong with the world?" are profoundly different from what the world says.

The world tells us we are accidents of evolution, basically good, and that our problems are mostly external — bad upbringing, bad systems, bad luck.

The Bible tells us something far more dignified and far more sobering: we are image-bearers of the eternal God who have rebelled against Him, and our deepest problem is internal.

Both truths must be held together. If we forget that humans are made in God's image, we will treat people as worthless. If we forget that humans are fallen, we will not understand why we need a Savior.

In this section, we will consider:

- Humanity created in the image of God
- The Fall and the entrance of sin into the world
- The effects of sin on every human being
- The universal need for salvation

This section is the bridge between the doctrine of God (Sections III and IV) and the doctrine of salvation (Section VI).

Without understanding what we are and what went wrong, we cannot fully grasp what Jesus came to do.

B. HUMANITY WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

1. What the Bible Says

The very first chapter of the Bible tells us something staggering about human beings: we are made in the image of God.

(Gen. 1:26-27 CSB) “Then God said, ‘**Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.** They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.’ **So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.**”

(Gen. 5:1-2 NASB) “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, **He made him in the likeness of God.** He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.”

(Gen. 9:6 KJV) “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for **in the image of God made he man.**”

The phrase “image of God” is the foundational truth about who we are.

2. What “Image of God” Means

To bear the “image of God” does not mean we look physically like God in His essential nature. God in His essence is spirit (John 4:24), without a physical body in His divine nature.

God the Son, in the incarnation, did take on a real human body — and still has His glorified resurrection body forever — but this is the uniqueness of the incarnation, not the way humanity in general was made in God’s image. Adam and Eve bore God’s image before the incarnation.

Rather, image-bearing means human beings uniquely reflect God in ways no other creature does.

Image-bearing involves at least the following:

Rationality and reason — We can think, reason, plan, and understand abstract concepts (Isa. 1:18; Prov. 2:1-6).

Moral awareness — We have a conscience that knows right from wrong (Rom. 2:14-15).

Capacity for relationship — We were made to relate to God and to one another (Gen. 2:18; 1 John 1:3).

Creativity and dominion — We were given authority to steward and develop creation (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 8:6-8).

Spiritual nature — We have an immortal soul that will exist forever (Eccl. 12:7; Matt. 10:28).

Communication — We use language, just as God speaks (Gen. 1:3; John 1:1).

Worship — We are wired to worship; the only question is what we will worship (Rom. 1:21-25).

3. Every Human Being Bears God's Image

The image of God is universal. It is not based on intelligence, ability, age, race, gender, social status, or moral performance.

Every single human being — from conception to death, from the most accomplished to the most disabled — bears the image of God.

(Ps. 139:13-14 CSB) “For it was you who created my inward parts; **you knit me together in my mother's womb**. I will praise you because **I have been remarkably and wondrously made**. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well.”

(James 3:9 NASB) “With it [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have **been made in the likeness of God...**”

This is why every human life has inherent dignity and worth. This is why murder is a uniquely serious sin (Gen. 9:6). This is why racism, abuse, and dehumanization are so sinful — they assault the image of God Himself.

4. Male and Female: Both Image-Bearers

The Bible explicitly teaches that both men and women bear God's image equally and fully.

(Gen. 1:27 NASB) “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; **male and female He created them.**”

Men and women are equal in dignity, value, and worth as image-bearers (Gen. 1:27; Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7) — even where Scripture assigns different roles in the home (Eph. 5:22-25; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Pet. 3:1-7) and church (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:11-13; 3:1-7). The image of God is borne fully by both (Gen. 1:27; 5:1-2).

The Bible also teaches that God created humanity as male and female from the beginning (Gen. 1:27; 5:2; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6) — a foundational truth about human design that runs throughout Scripture.

5. Humanity Was Created “Very Good”

When God finished creating, including humanity, He pronounced His creation “very good.”

(Gen. 1:31a CSB) “God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good** indeed.”

Human beings, as originally created, were:

- Without sin (Gen. 1:31; Eccl. 7:29)
- In perfect fellowship with God (Gen. 2:25; 3:8)
- In perfect fellowship with each other (Gen. 2:18-25)
- In dominion over creation (Gen. 1:28; 2:15)
- Free from death, suffering, and sorrow (Gen. 2:9; Rom. 5:12)

This is what humanity was meant to be. And, as we will see, what happened next changed everything.

C. THE FALL AND THE ENTRANCE OF SIN

1. The Original Command

In the Garden of Eden, God gave one prohibition.

(Gen. 2:16-17 NASB) “The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”

This was the simplest possible test of obedience. God gave Adam and Eve a paradise full of every other tree, but commanded them not to eat from one.

The command was not arbitrary — it was the test of whether they would trust and obey their Creator.

2. The Temptation

Satan, in the form of a serpent, came to Eve and tempted her by:

- Questioning God’s word: “Did God actually say...?” (Gen. 3:1 CSB)
- Denying God’s word: “You will certainly not die.” (Gen. 3:4 CSB)
- Slandering God’s character: “In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Gen. 3:5 CSB)

This is still Satan’s strategy today. Every false teaching, every cultural lie, every temptation to sin starts with one or more of these three moves: questioning, denying, or slandering what God has said.

3. The Disobedience

(Gen. 3:6 NASB) "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate."

The Apostle John later identifies the same three categories of temptation that Eve experienced:

(1 John 2:16 CSB) "For everything in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions -- is not from the Father, but is from the world."

- "Good for food" = "lust of the flesh"
- "Delight to the eyes" = "lust of the eyes"
- "Desired to make one wise" = "pride in one's possessions"

This same threefold pattern of temptation appears throughout Scripture — including in Satan's temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11) where, unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus resisted perfectly.

4. The Immediate Consequences

The moment Adam and Eve sinned, everything changed.

a. Spiritual death — separation from God.

(Gen. 3:8 CSB) "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

For the first time, humans hid from God. The fellowship that had defined Eden was broken.

b. Shame and guilt.

(Gen. 3:7 NASB) "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and **they knew they were naked**; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

c. Blame-shifting and broken human relationships.

(Gen. 3:12-13 CSB) "The man replied, 'The woman you gave to be with me -- she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.' So the LORD God asked the woman, 'What have you done?' And the woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'"

Adam blamed Eve (and indirectly God Himself). Eve blamed the serpent. Already, sin was poisoning every human relationship.

d. The curse on creation.

God pronounced specific consequences on the serpent (Gen. 3:14-15), the woman (Gen. 3:16), the man (Gen. 3:17-19), and the ground itself (Gen. 3:17-18). Pain, toil, thorns, and ultimately physical death entered the world.

(Gen. 3:19 KJV) "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: **for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.**"

e. Banishment from Eden and the tree of life.

(Gen. 3:23-24 NASB) "[T]herefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life."

5. The First Glimpse of the Gospel

Even in pronouncing the curse, God gave the first promise of the gospel — known as the **protoevangelium** (the "first gospel"):

(Gen. 3:15 CSB) "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

This is the first prophecy of the coming Messiah. The "offspring" of the woman who would crush the serpent's head is Jesus Christ. From the very first chapters of Scripture, God was already pointing toward the Savior who would undo what Adam had done (Rom. 16:20; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8).

D. THE EFFECTS OF SIN

The Fall did not just affect Adam and Eve. It affected every human being who would ever live, the entire human race, and all of creation.

1. Sin Spread to All Humanity (Original Sin)

Every human being descended from Adam inherits a sinful nature. This is sometimes called **original sin**.

(Ps. 51:5 NASB) "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and **in sin my mother conceived me.**"

(Ps. 58:3 CSB) "The **wicked go astray from the womb**; liars err from birth."

(Rom. 5:12 NASB) "Therefore, just as **through one man sin entered into the world**, and death through sin, and **so death spread to all men**, because all sinned..."

(Rom. 5:18-19 CSB) "So then, as **through one trespass there is condemnation for everyone**, so also through one righteous act there is justification leading to life for everyone. For just as through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

Every person is born with a sinful nature. This is not something we learn — it is something we inherit. We don't have to teach a toddler to be selfish; we have to teach them not to be.

2. All Have Sinned

Not only do we inherit a sinful nature, but every human being who has ever lived has personally sinned (except Jesus insofar as he was fully human).

(Rom. 3:10-12 CSB) "As it is written: **There is no one righteous, not even one**; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one."

(Rom. 3:23 KJV) "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.**"

(1 John 1:8 NASB) "**If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**"

See also: 1 Kings 8:46; Eccl. 7:20.

This is a universal diagnosis. There are no exceptions among humanity (other than Jesus Christ — Heb. 4:15).

3. Sin Affects Every Part of Us

Sin is not just bad behavior. It is a corruption of our entire being. This is sometimes called **total depravity** or radical corruption.

This doesn't mean every person is as evil as they could possibly be. It means that every part of us — heart, mind, will, and body — is affected by sin.

a. Sin affects our hearts.

(Mark 7:21-23 CSB) [Jesus] “And he said, 'What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of people's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immoralities, thefts, murders, adulteries, greed, evil actions, deceit, self-indulgence, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. **All these evil things come from within and defile a person.**”

(Jer. 17:9 NASB) “The **heart** is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”

b. Sin affects our minds.

(Rom. 1:21 CSB) “For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude. Instead, their **thinking** became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened.”

See also: Eph. 4:17-18; 2 Cor. 4:4.

c. Sin affects our wills.

We don't sin because we're forced to. We sin because we want to. The deepest problem is not that we lack information — it's that we love the wrong things.

(John 8:34 NASB) “Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the **slave of sin.**”

(Rom. 6:20 CSB) “For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were free with regard to righteousness.”

d. Sin affects our bodies.

The decay, sickness, aging, and death of our bodies are all results of sin entering the world.

(Rom. 8:10 KJV) “And if Christ be in you, **the body is dead because of sin**; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

4. Sin Separates Us from God

The most devastating effect of sin in this present life is that it cuts us off from fellowship with the holy God.

(Isa. 59:2 CSB) “But your iniquities are separating you from your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not listen.”

(Hab. 1:13a NASB) “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor.”

A holy God cannot simply overlook sin. His justice demands that sin be punished. This is the fundamental problem the gospel comes to solve.

5. Sin Affects All of Creation

The Fall didn’t just affect humans. The whole creation was subjected to corruption because of human sin.

(Rom. 8:20-22 NASB) “For the **creation** was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the **creation** itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that **the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth** together until now.”

Natural disasters, animal predation, disease, decay — these are all echoes of the Fall. Creation itself is waiting for the day Christ will renew it (Rom. 8:21; Rev. 21:1-5).

6. Sin Brings Death and Hell

The wages of sin is death. The Bible speaks of this death in **three dimensions**, and the third dimension is the most sobering of all.

a. Spiritual Death (Separation from God)

Spiritual death happens at the moment of sin and continues throughout earthly life unless God intervenes.

(Eph. 2:1 NASB) “And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins** ...”

(Col. 2:13a CSB) “And when you were **dead in trespasses** and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses.”

b. Physical Death (The Body Returning to Dust)

Physical death entered the world because of sin (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 5:12) and comes to every person.

(Heb. 9:27 KJV) “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.”

But physical death is not the worst death. Jesus made that explicit.

(Matt. 10:28 NASB) [Jesus] “Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

c. Eternal Death — Hell

The third and most terrifying dimension of death is eternal separation from God in hell. This is what every unsaved sinner faces after physical death and final judgment.

This is not a marginal teaching of the Bible. It is not a holdover from medieval imagination. It is a doctrine taught most forcefully and most often by Jesus Christ Himself.

i. Jesus Spoke About Hell More Than Anyone Else in the Bible

The Greek word translated “hell” in most English New Testaments is *gehenna*. The word appears 12 times in the New Testament — and 11 of those 12 times come from the lips of Jesus Himself. The only non-Jesus use is by James (James 3:6).

Gehenna referred to the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem — a place historically associated with child sacrifice (2 Kings 23:10; Jer. 7:31; 32:35) and, by Jesus’ day, a place of constant burning refuse. Jesus took that vivid, horrific image and used it as a picture of the final destination of unrepentant sinners.

If anyone wants to soften, downplay, or eliminate the doctrine of hell, they would have to silence Jesus first.

ii. What Jesus Said About Hell

The 11 times Jesus used *gehenna* span His ministry — from the Sermon on the Mount, to His warnings to His disciples, to His sharpest rebukes of the religious leaders.

(Matt. 5:22 NASB) [Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount] “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery **hell**.”

(Matt. 5:29-30 NASB) [Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount] "If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into **hell**. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into **hell**."

(Matt. 10:28 NASB) [Jesus, sending out the Twelve] "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**."

See also: Luke 12:5 (parallel warning about whom to fear).

(Matt. 18:9 CSB) [Jesus, on the seriousness of causing others to sin] "And if your eye causes you to fall away, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into **hellfire**."

See also: Mark 9:43, 45, 47 (parallel "cut it off" / "tear it out" warnings, all using *gehenna*).

(Matt. 23:15 CSB) [Jesus, to the scribes and Pharisees] "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a child of **hell** as you are!"

(Matt. 23:33 NASB) [Jesus, to the scribes and Pharisees] "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of **hell**?"

(Mark 9:43-48 NASB) [Jesus, to His disciples] "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into **hell**, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into **hell**, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into **hell**, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

That accounts for all 11 uses by Jesus across the four Gospels:

- Matthew (7): 5:22; 5:29; 5:30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15; 23:33
- Mark (3): 9:43; 9:45; 9:47
- Luke (1): 12:5

Notice the range. Jesus warned about hell to crowds (Sermon on the Mount), to His own disciples (Matt. 10; Mark 9), and to the most religious people of His day (Matt. 23). He warned about it for casual sins of the tongue (Matt. 5:22), for sins of the eye and hand (Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9; Mark 9:43-48), for fearing the wrong things (Matt. 10:28; Luke 12:5), and for false religion that corrupts others (Matt. 23:15, 33).

There is no class of person and no kind of sin to whom Jesus considered the warning of hell unnecessary.

The only non-Jesus use of gehenna in the New Testament:

(James 3:6 NASB) "And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by **hell**."

iii. Other Biblical Words and Images for Hell

The Bible uses several other terms and images to describe the place of final punishment.

"Hades" — the realm of the dead, sometimes carrying connotations of conscious torment for the wicked.

(Luke 16:22-24 NASB) [Jesus, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus] "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In **Hades** he lifted up his eyes, **being in torment**, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'"

This passage, taught by Jesus Himself, describes a real, conscious, agonizing place of torment for the unsaved after death.

"The lake of fire" — the final destination of the wicked at the end of time.

(Rev. 20:14-15 CSB) "Death and Hades were thrown into the **lake of fire**. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the **lake of fire**."

See also: Rev. 21:8.

"Outer darkness" — Jesus' description of being cast away from the presence of God forever.

(Matt. 22:13 NASB) [Jesus] "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'"

See also: Matt. 8:12; 25:30.

"Eternal punishment" — Jesus' direct description of the final state of the unsaved.

(Matt. 25:41 CSB) [Jesus] "Then he will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the **eternal fire** prepared for the devil and his angels!'"

Notice carefully: in Matthew 25:46, Jesus uses the same Greek word for “eternal” (*aiōnios*) to describe both the punishment of the wicked and the life of the righteous. Whatever “eternal” means for the believer’s joy, it means the same thing for the unbeliever’s punishment. You cannot affirm one without affirming the other.

iv. What the Bible Teaches About Hell

Pulling together what Jesus and the rest of Scripture teach, hell is:

Real. Jesus spoke of it as plainly and as often as He spoke of heaven.

Conscious. The Bible describes “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28), torment, and anguish (Luke 16:23-25; Rev. 14:10-11). It is not annihilation or unconsciousness — it is the everlasting, conscious experience of God’s just wrath.

Just. Hell is not God being cruel. Hell is God being just. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Gen. 18:25b NASB). A God who refused to punish sin would not be good — He would be unjust.

Deserved. We all deserve hell because we have all sinned (Rom. 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Every person in hell is there because of their own rebellion against a holy God who gave them every opportunity and reason to repent and believe in the gospel.

Eternal. Jesus repeatedly described hell as unending: “the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43 NASB); “where their worm does not die” (Mark 9:48 NASB); “eternal fire” (Matt. 18:8; 25:41 NASB); “eternal punishment” (Matt. 25:46 NASB). The torment never ends.

Separation from God’s blessing. Hell is being eternally cast out of God’s presence and goodness.

(2 Thess. 1:6-9 NASB) “For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.**”

Originally prepared for the devil and his angels — but inhabited by every human being who dies in their sins (Matt. 25:41).

v. What "Salvation" Actually Means

Here is why the doctrine of hell matters so much for understanding salvation: To be "**saved**" means, fundamentally, to be **saved from hell**. When the Bible says Jesus came to "**save** His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21 NASB), it means Jesus came to save them from the eternal consequence of their sins — the just wrath of God poured out forever in hell.

Other passages indicating to be "saved" means to be saved from hell include:

(Rom. 5:9 NASB) "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be **saved from the wrath of God** through Him."

(1 Thess. 1:10 CSB) "[A]nd to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead -- Jesus, who **rescues us from the coming wrath**."

(John 3:17-18 NASB) [Jesus] "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but **that the world might be saved through Him**. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

When you strip the doctrine of hell out of Christianity, you don't get a kinder gospel — you get no gospel. If there is nothing to be saved **from**, then there is nothing for Jesus to save us to. The cross becomes a sentimental symbol instead of the most important rescue in the history of the universe.

Hell is real. Jesus said so — repeatedly, urgently, and in graphic terms. And that is precisely why the gospel is good news: because the One who warned us most clearly about hell is the same One who went to the cross to take the wrath of God in our place so that anyone who trusts in Him will never go there.

(Rom. 8:1 NASB) "Therefore there is now no **condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus."

vi. Why Pastors and Christians Must Not Soften This Doctrine

Jesus warned about hell because He loved people. The most loving thing a Christian can do is to tell people the truth about where they are headed apart from Christ, and the way of escape that God has provided in His Son.

(Ezek. 3:18 NASB) "When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to **warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live**, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand."

(Jude 22-23 CSB) "Have mercy on those who waver; save others by **snatching them from the fire**; have mercy on others but with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

(2 Cor. 5:11a KJV) "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..."

If we believe what Jesus said about hell, we cannot be silent about it. To be silent is to be cruel — like a watchman who sees the fire and does not sound the alarm.

In short: Hell is real. Hell is eternal. Hell is just. Hell is what every sinner deserves. And hell is exactly what Jesus came to save us from. It is this bad news that makes the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ so good.

E. THE UNIVERSAL NEED FOR SALVATION

1. We Cannot Save Ourselves

If we are dead in sin, slaves to sin, and separated from God by sin, then we cannot rescue ourselves.

(Eph. 2:1, 8-9 CSB) "And you were **dead in your trespasses and sins ...** For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; **it is God's gift -- not from works, so that no one can boast.**"

(Titus 3:5 NASB) "**He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy,** by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit."

Religion cannot save. Morality cannot save. Good intentions cannot save. Sincerity cannot save. We are not in need of self-improvement — we are in need of resurrection (Eph. 2:4-5).

2. We Stand Under God's Just Judgment

Apart from Christ, every human being stands condemned before a holy God.

(John 3:36 NASB) "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

(Rom. 1:18-19 CSB) "For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth, since what can be known about God is evident among them, because God has shown it to them."

(Heb. 10:31 NASB) "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

This is not God being unloving — this is God being just. A judge who refused to punish evil would not be a good judge. God's wrath against sin is the necessary expression of His holiness and justice.

3. The Only Hope: A Savior

If humanity's problem is sin, and the penalty is death, and we cannot save ourselves, then we need someone outside of us — someone who is not under sin's curse — to save us.

This is exactly the Savior God promised from Genesis 3:15 onward.

(Rom. 5:6, 8 NASB) "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

(1 Tim. 1:15 CSB) "This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' -- and I am the worst of them."

The diagnosis is bleak. But the cure is glorious. The same God who pronounces our condemnation also provided our salvation.

That salvation — what Jesus did, how He accomplished it, and how it is applied to us — is the subject of the next section.

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT HUMANITY AND SIN

Stepping back from everything we've covered, several central truths stand out:

1. Humanity is dignified.

We are not cosmic accidents. We are not mere animals. Every human being — from conception to natural death, from the brilliant to the disabled, from the powerful to the powerless — bears the image of the eternal God. This is the foundation of human dignity, human rights, and human worth. "I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made" (Ps. 139:14 CSB).

2. Humanity is fallen.

We are not basically good or slightly broken. We are deeply, comprehensively, personally sinful — by nature and by choice. "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10 NASB). This is not pessimism — it is honest diagnosis. And honest diagnosis is the first step toward real cure.

3. Sin is more than bad behavior.

Sin is rebellion against the Creator. It infects our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies. It separates us from God. It enslaves and kills us. And it cannot be fixed by trying harder, being more religious, or being sincere. "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9 NASB).

4. The penalty for sin is real and terrifying.

Sin earns death — spiritual, physical, and eternal. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23a KJV). A holy God cannot simply ignore sin without ceasing to be holy. His justice demands that sin be punished — and the Bible’s name for the eternal expression of that justice is hell.

5. We cannot save ourselves.

If we could fix our sin problem on our own, the cross would be unnecessary. But the Bible clearly teaches that the cross is necessary — which means we cannot fix our own problem. Self-improvement, religion, morality, good intentions, sincerity — none of these things can save. Only a Savior outside of us, who is not under sin’s curse, can rescue us.

6. God provided the Savior.

The breathtaking truth of the Bible is that the God we have sinned against is the same God who came to save us. From the protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 to the cross of Calvary to the empty tomb, God has been moving heaven and earth to redeem fallen image-bearers. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:8 KJV).

In short: You were made for more than you are. You have fallen further than you realize. But God loves you more than you can imagine. And He has done what you could never do — in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

VI. SALVATION IS THROUGH JESUS ALONE

A. INTRODUCTION

Now that we have established that the Bible says Jesus was, is, and ever shall be an eternal Person of the Trinity, namely, God the Son, we now turn to consider what Jesus did to offer us salvation.

In this section, we'll consider the following issues:

- Where does the Bible use salvation words?
- Important questions about salvation
- What did Jesus do to save us?
- What is the basic process of salvation?

B. WHERE DOES THE BIBLE USE SALVATION WORDS?

1. Jesus' Very Name Means Salvation

In Matthew 1:21 (NASB), the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him that his wife Mary "will bear a Son, and **you shall call His name Jesus**, for He will **save** His people from their sins."

The very name "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word *Yeshua* which means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation."

Yahweh is a name for God. Therefore, another way of looking at it is that Jesus means: "God saves."

2. Where Does the Bible Use the Term "Salvation"?

There are around **35 verses** in the **Old Testament** in English translations of the Bible that use the term "**salvation**" (Hebrew *yeshuah*) that Christians have commonly interpreted as pointing to Jesus the Messiah.

Psalm 18:35; 21:1, 5; 25:5; 62:2, 7; 68:19; 118:14, 17, 21; Isaiah 12:2–3; 25:9; 33:2, 6; 37:32; 45:17; 46:13; 49:6, 8; 51:6, 8; 52:7, 10; 59:11, 16–17; 60:18; 61:10; 62:11; 63:1; Joel 2:32; Habakkuk 3:8, 13, 18; Zechariah 9:9, 11

There are around **20 verses in the New Testament** in English translations that use the term "**salvation**" (Greek *sōtēria*) in connection with Jesus.

Luke 1:69; 2:30; 19:9; John 4:22; Acts 4:12; 13:47; 28:28; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 1:13; Philippians 2:12; Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:3, 2:10; 5:9; 7:25; 9:28; 1 Peter 1:9; 2:2; Jude 1:3; Revelation 7:10; 12:10

3. Where Does the Bible Use the Terms "Save," "Saves" or "Saved"?

There are approximately **7 verses in the OT** that use the terms "save," "saves" or "saved" (root Hebrew word *yāsha*) in connection with the Messiah.

Psalms 20:6; 22:8; 72:13; 109:31; Isaiah 33:22; 35:4; Zechariah 12:7

The word "**save**," "**saves**," or "**saved**" (variations of the Greek term *sōzō*) is used about **50 times** in the New Testament in connection with Jesus.

Matthew 1:21; 8:25; 14:30; 16:25; 18:11; 27:40; 27:42–49; Mark 5:23, 28, 34; 6:5; 10:26; 13:13, 20; 15:30–31; 16:16; Luke 6:9; 7:50; 8:12, 48, 50; 9:24; 9:56; 17:19, 33; 18:42; 19:10; 23:35–37, 39; John 12:47; 3:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 16:30–31; Romans 5:10; 10:9, 13; 1 Corinthians 1:18; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 5:7, 7:25; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:4; James 4:12; 5:15; 1 Peter 4:18; Jude 1:5; Revelation 21:24

4. Where Does the Bible Use the Word "Savior"?

There are around **9 instances** of the word "**Savior**" (Hebrew *mōshia*) in the Old Testament commonly interpreted by Christians to refer to Jesus.

2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 43:3; 43:11; 45:15, 21; 49:26; 60:16; Hosea 13:4

There are at least **21 instances** of the word "**Savior**" (Greek *sōtēr*) in the New Testament used in connection with Jesus.

Luke 2:11; John 4:42; Acts 5:31; 13:23; Ephesians 5:23; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2:3; 4:10; 2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:3; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6; 2 Peter 1:1, 11; 2 Peter 2:20; 3:2, 18; Jude 1:25

And so, the Bible very frequently uses the terms "save," "saves," "saved," "salvation," and "Savior."

C. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT SALVATION

Important questions regarding salvation include:

1. Why do we need to be saved?
2. What do we need to be saved from?
3. Who or what can save us?

What follows are a few key passages giving the answers to these questions, though there are many more.

1. Why Do We Need to Be Saved?

We are all sinners.

(Rom. 3:23 KJV) "[F]or all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Sin leads to death.

(Rom. 6:23 NASB) "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

We cannot save ourselves by our own good works.

(Eph. 2:8-9 CSB) "For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift -- not from works, so that no one can boast."

2. What Do We Need to be Saved From?

We need to be saved from God's judgment for our sins.

(John 3:18 NASB) [Jesus] "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

We need to be saved from God's just wrath for our sins.

(Rom. 5:8-9 CSB) "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath."

We need to be saved from death.

(Rom. 6:23a CSB) "For the wages of sin is death..."

We need to be saved from eternal punishment in hell.

(Matt. 10:28 NASB) [Jesus] "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

We need saving from being separated from God.

(Isaiah 59:2 KJV) "[B]ut your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."

We need saving from slavery to sin.

(John 8:34, 36 CSB) "Jesus responded, 'Truly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. ... So if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.'"

3. Who or What Can Save Us?

God alone is our source of salvation.

(Isa. 43:11 NASB) "I, even I, am the LORD, and **there is no savior besides Me.**"

(Jonah 2:9b KJV) "**Salvation** is of the LORD."

God the Son Jesus Christ is our only Savior.

(John 14:6 CSB) "Jesus told him, '**I am the way**, the truth, and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me.**'"

(Acts 4:12 NASB) "And there is **salvation in no one else**; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Grace and faith in Jesus are how we receive salvation.

(Eph. 2:8-9 NASB) "For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

(Rom. 10:9 CSB) "[I]f you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We must repent, which means to admit our sins and turn back from our sins.

(Acts 3:19 KJV) "**Repent** ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord..."

(Acts 17:30b NASB) "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should **repent...**"

The requirement to repent for salvation is mentioned at least 20 times in the NT: Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15; 6:12; Luke 5:31-32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 24:46b-47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:9-10; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; 2 Pet. 3:9; Rev. 3:19.

Repentance and faith go together.

(Mark 1:14-15 NASB) "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**'"

(Acts 20:21 CSB) [Paul] "I testified to both Jews and Greeks about **repentance** toward God and **faith** in our Lord Jesus."

God the Holy Spirit applies salvation to our lives.

(Titus 3:5-6 CSB) "[H]e saved us -- not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy -- through the washing of regeneration and renewal by **the Holy Spirit**. He poured out his **Spirit** on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior..."

D. WHAT DID JESUS DO TO SAVE US?

1. Jesus was destined to pay for our sins from the beginning.

(Acts 2:23a CSB) "Though he was delivered up according to God's **determined plan and foreknowledge...**"

(1 Peter 1:20 NASB) "For He was known **before the foundation of the world**, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you...."

(Rev. 13:8 KJV) "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain **from the foundation of the world.**"

2. Jesus lived a sinless life and never sinned.

(2 Cor. 5:21 KJV) "For he hath made him to be sin for us, **who knew no sin**; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

(Heb. 4:15 NASB) "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet **without sin**."

(Heb. 7:26 CSB) "For this is the kind of high priest we need: holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens."

(1 Pet. 2:21-22 NASB) [quoting Isaiah 53:9] "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, '**who committed no sin**, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.'"

(1 John 3:5 KJV) "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and **in him is no sin**."

3. Jesus died by crucifixion.

(Matt. 27:50 CSB) "But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and **gave up his spirit**."

(Mark 15:37 NASB) "And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and **breathed His last**."

(Luke 23:46 CSB) "And Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.' Saying this, he **breathed his last**."

(John 19:30 NASB) "Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And He bowed His head and **gave up His spirit**."

(Rom. 5:6 KJV) "For when we were yet without strength, in due time **Christ died** for the ungodly."

(Rom. 5:8 KJV) "[B]ut God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died** for us."

(Rom. 6:10 NASB) "For the death that He died, **He died** to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God."

(1 Cor. 15:3b CSB) "**Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures...."

(Phil. 2:8 CSB) "[H]e humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to **death on a cross**."

(1 Thess. 5:9-10 KJV) "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who **died** for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

4. Jesus' death on the cross paid our sin debts.

(Gal. 3:13 CSB) "**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law** by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, *Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.*"

(Col. 2:13-14 NASB) "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us**, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

5. Jesus's blood gave us atonement with God.

(Matt. 26:27-28 CSB) "Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is my **blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

(Eph. 1:7 NASB) "In Him we have redemption through His **blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace."

(Heb. 9:12-14 KJV) "[N]either by the blood of goats and calves, but **by his own blood** he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

6. Jesus died on the cross as our substitute and as the propitiation for our sins, satisfying God's wrath through His sacrifice.

(Rom. 3:24b-25 NASB) "Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a **propitiation** in His blood through faith."

(1 John 2:2 NASB) "He himself is the **propitiation** for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."

(2 Cor. 5:21 CSB) "**He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

(Heb. 10:12 KJV) "[B]ut this man, after he had offered one **sacrifice** for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God."

(1 Pet. 2:24 NASB) "[A]nd He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for **by His wounds you were healed.**"

(1 John 4:10 CSB) "Love consists of this: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning **sacrifice** for our sins."

(Isa. 53:5 CSB) "But he was pierced because of our rebellion, crushed because of our iniquities; punishment for our peace was on him, and **we are healed by his wounds.**"

7. Jesus' death on the cross was our ransom and redemption.

(Mark 10:45 NASB) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a **ransom** for many."

(Matt. 20:28 KJV) "[E]ven as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as a **ransom** for many."

(1 Tim. 2:5-6 NASB) "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a **ransom** for all, the testimony given at the proper time."

(Titus 2:14 CSB) "He gave himself for us to **redeem** us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people for his own possession, eager to do good works."

8. Jesus died for our sins.

(Rom. 4:25 CSB) "**He was delivered up for our** trespasses and raised for our justification."

(Rom. 5:8 CSB) "But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.**"

(1 Cor. 15:3 NASB) "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures."

9. Jesus was raised from the dead.

(Acts 2:24 NASB) "But **God raised Him up again**, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

(Acts 3:15 CSB) "You killed the source of life, whom **God raised from the dead**; we are witnesses of this."

(Acts 4:10 KJV) "[B]e it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom **God raised from the dead**, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole."

(Acts 10:39-40 NASB) "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. **God raised Him up** on the third day and granted that He become visible..."

(Acts 13:30 NASB) "But **God raised Him from the dead.**"

(Rom. 4:24-25 CSB) "It will be credited to us who believe in him who **raised** Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered up for our trespasses and **raised** for our justification."

(Rom. 6:4 CSB) "Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as **Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father**, so we too may walk in newness of life."

(Rom. 6:9 NASB) "Christ, having been **raised from the dead**, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him."

(Rom. 8:11 KJV) "But if the Spirit of him that **raised up Jesus from the dead** dwell in you, he that **raised up Christ from the dead** shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

(Rom. 10:9 CSB) "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God **raised him from the dead**, you will be saved."

(1 Cor. 15:4 NASB) "He was buried, and that **He was raised on the third day** according to the Scriptures."

(2 Cor. 4:14b CSB) "For we know that the one who **raised** the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you."

(Gal. 1:1 KJV) "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and **God the Father, who raised him from the dead**)...."

(Eph. 1:20 CSB) "He exercised this power in Christ by **raising him from the dead** and seating him at the right hand in the heavens..."

(Col. 2:12 CSB) "[W]hen you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of **God, who raised him from the dead.**"

(1 Thess. 1:10 NASB) "[A]nd to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He **raised from the dead**, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."

(1 Pet. 1:20-21 NASB) "For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in **God, who raised Him from the dead** and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

10. Only Jesus could have paid our sin debts because he was the sinless, spotless lamb.

(John 1:29 NASB) "The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, 'Behold, **the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!'"

(1 Pet. 1:18-19 CSB) "For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an **unblemished and spotless lamb**."

(Isa. 53:7 KJV) "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a **lamb** to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

11. Blood is required for forgiveness of sin

(Lev. 17:11 KJV) "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for **it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul**."

(Matt. 26:28 NASB) "[F]or this is My **blood** of the covenant, which is **poured out for many for forgiveness of sins**."

(Eph. 1:7 CSB) "**In him we have redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."

(Heb. 9:22 KJV) "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; **and without shedding of blood is no remission**."

E. WHAT IS THE BASIC PROCESS OF SALVATION?

There is a basic process or order of salvation from unbelief to belief, culminating in glorified bodies in heaven.

Faithful Southern Baptists have described this order in different ways depending on how they weigh predestination and free will in relation to one another. The basic elements, however, are common ground across SBC life:

Election (God's choice of His people, grounded in His sovereignty and foreknowledge — Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:29-30; 1 Pet. 1:1-2)

The Gospel Call (God genuinely calls sinners through the preaching of the gospel — Matt. 11:28; Acts 17:30; Rev. 22:17)

Regeneration (being “born again” by the Holy Spirit — John 3:3-8; Titus 3:5)

Conversion (faith and repentance — Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21)

Justification (being declared righteous in a legal sense before God based on Jesus' salvation work, not on our own works — Rom. 3:23-26; 5:1)

Adoption (being brought into God's family as His children — John 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4-7)

Sanctification (the lifelong process by which the Holy Spirit makes us holier and more like Jesus — 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:23)

Glorification (receiving a resurrection body and dwelling forever with Christ — Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 15:42-44; 1 John 3:2)

A Note on the Order of Salvation in Southern Baptist Life

As discussed below, the Bible clearly teaches both predestination and a measure of free will. Faithful Southern Baptists have historically affirmed both, and the exact measure of each remains a mystery (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 11:33-36).

Faithful Southern Baptists have written about the order of salvation in different ways depending on how they weigh these two truths.

Some, following voices like Charles Spurgeon and John MacArthur, place greater emphasis on God's sovereign initiative at every step. On this view, the gospel call goes out to all, but the Holy Spirit also issues an effectual inward call by which He draws the elect irresistibly and willingly to Christ. **Regeneration is understood to precede faith — the new birth enables the believing.**

Others, following voices like Adrian Rogers and Jerry Vines, place greater emphasis on human response within God's sovereign plan. On this view, the gospel call is sincere and goes out to all, the Holy Spirit convicts the heart, and the sinner exercises real, God-given ability to repent and believe. **Faith is understood to precede regeneration — the believing receives the new birth.**

Both affirm salvation is entirely a gift of God's grace. Both reject works-righteousness. Both affirm the security of the believer. Both are passionate about evangelism and missions. **Both fit comfortably within the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.**

The goal of this section is to explain what God does in salvation — not to settle the exact measure between God's choice and ours. As always, spread and defend the gospel to everyone, trust God with the results, and rest in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

1. ELECTION

a. Election - Predestination and Free Will

Before we consider regeneration, we should consider again the issues of predestination and free will. The relationship between those two issues has unnecessarily divided Christians for centuries.

Summary: The Bible clearly teaches that we are predestined AND that we have a measure of free will. Regardless of how we understand the relationship between the two, the Bible clearly commands us to spread (Matt. 28:19) and defend (1 Pet. 3:15) the gospel. We should therefore obey these commandments and not focus on whether we think someone is elect or not -- especially since only God knows who is predestined and to what extent people use their free will.

The Bible teaches both predestination and free will, and while their exact relationship remains a mystery (Deut. 29:29), Scripture affirms both as true.

Predestination means God, in His sovereignty, has chosen from before creation those who will be saved (Rom. 8:29–30; Eph. 1:4–5), drawing them through the Holy Spirit (John 6:44; Acts 13:48).

However, this does not eliminate human responsibility or the need to repent and believe (Mark 1:15; Rom. 10:13).

Free will, though not always named explicitly in Scripture, is implied in numerous calls to choose, repent, and follow God (Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; John 3:16; Rev. 3:20).

Thus, while salvation is a gift from God (Eph. 2:8–9), people must still respond in faith and obedience.

Scripture alone, not human tradition, defines doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16; John 17:17), and any tension between divine sovereignty (predestination) and human responsibility (free will) must be held in reverent humility.

Thus, the question is not predestination or free will, the question is: What is the measure of God's choice and our choice?

The precise answer to that question remains a mystery to us (Deut. 29:29), but we know that both are involved.

How one understands the relationship between God's choice and our choice often directly affects one's view on evangelism.

Regardless of how one weighs God's sovereignty and human choice, the fact remains that Christians -- all of whom are commanded to spread (Matt. 28:19-20) and defend (1 Pet. 3:15) the Gospel -- are not going to know whether the potential believer is elect or not.

The takeaway? Spread and defend the Gospel to anyone and everyone and don't worry about whether they're predestined to believe or not.

b. Election - Foreknowledge

Some argue that God merely foreknows who will believe and, on that basis, elects them — making election essentially a divine response to a foreseen human choice.

This view, however, reduces predestination to divine prediction and ultimately makes salvation rest on man rather than on God.

Scripture teaches that God's foreknowledge is far richer than mere advance awareness of future events.

When Paul writes that those whom God "foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son," (Rom. 8:29 NASB), the word "foreknew" (Greek: *proegnō*) carries the Old Testament sense of God's covenantal, loving choice to set His affection upon a people beforehand (Amos 3:2; Jer. 1:5). It is relational, not merely informational.

Peter likewise pairs foreknowledge with election as a sovereign act of God the Father (1 Pet. 1:1–2).

At the same time, foreknowledge does not cancel out human responsibility.

God's exhaustive knowledge of all future events — including our choices (Ps. 139:4, 16; Isa. 46:9–10) — does not make Him the author of those choices, nor does it reduce humans to robots.

A helpful way to think about it: God's knowing is not the same as God's causing, and His sovereign decree is broad enough to include real human choices as genuine secondary causes.

So foreknowledge, predestination, and free will are not competing categories.

Foreknowledge expresses God's intimate, eternal knowing of His people; **predestination** expresses His sovereign decision to save them; and **human choice** expresses our genuine duty to repent and believe.

All three stand together in Scripture — and as before, where the precise relationship lies beyond our grasp, we rest in the wisdom of God (Deut. 29:29; Rom. 11:33–36).

2. THE GOSPEL CALL

a. The Gospel Call - Definition

The **gospel call** is the work of God by which He draws sinners to faith in Jesus Christ through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit (John 6:44; Rom. 8:30; 2 Thess. 2:13–14). Scripture distinguishes two dimensions of the gospel call:

The general (external) call. This is the open, universal invitation of the gospel preached to all people. Whenever the gospel is proclaimed — in a sermon, a conversation, a tract, a song — God is genuinely calling sinners to repent and believe (Matt. 11:28; Acts 17:30; Rev. 22:17). This call goes out to everyone who hears, and it is a sincere offer of salvation to all (1 Tim. 2:3–4; 2 Pet. 3:9). Yet not everyone responds. Some reject it. Some delay. Some scoff (Acts 17:32).

The internal call. This is the Holy Spirit's powerful inward work that accompanies the outward preaching of the gospel — opening the heart, awakening the conscience, and drawing the sinner toward Christ (Acts 16:14; John 6:44–45; 16:8–11).

Without this inward work of the Spirit, no one would come to Christ at all (Rom. 3:11; John 6:44).

A note on Southern Baptist diversity here. Faithful Southern Baptists describe the relationship between the external and internal call differently depending on how they weigh predestination and free will:

Some Southern Baptists (following voices like Charles Spurgeon and John MacArthur) understand the internal call as an **effectual call** — meaning that when the Holy Spirit issues this inward call to one of the elect, the sinner is irresistibly and willingly drawn to Christ and certainly responds in faith. On this view, the internal call always succeeds in bringing the elect to salvation. This is sometimes called “irresistible grace.”

Other Southern Baptists (following voices like Adrian Rogers and Jerry Vines) understand the Holy Spirit's inward call as a powerful, gracious enabling that genuinely empowers the sinner to respond — but does not override the sinner's real ability to resist (Acts 7:51; Matt. 23:37). On this view, the Spirit's inward work is necessary for anyone to come to Christ, but the sinner's response remains genuinely his own.

Both views agree on the fundamentals:

- No one comes to Christ apart from the Holy Spirit's gracious initiative (John 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14).
- The gospel call is sincere and goes out to all who hear (Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17).
- The Holy Spirit works through the preached Word (Rom. 10:14–17; 1 Pet. 1:23).
- Salvation, when it comes, is entirely a gift of God's grace (Eph. 2:8–9).
- Christians are commanded to spread the gospel to everyone (Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Pet. 3:15) precisely because we don't know whom God is drawing.

The gospel call is not coercion. God does not drag anyone to Christ against his will. Whether you understand the Spirit's inward work as irresistible (the more sovereignty-emphasizing view) or as powerful but resistible (the more response-emphasizing view), both sides agree that the sinner who comes to Christ comes willingly — even gladly.

What was once unattractive about Christ becomes the most beautiful reality in the universe. The sinner doesn't believe because he was forced — he believes because, for the first time, he truly sees.

The gospel call is also closely tied to regeneration (the new birth, considered in the next section).

Faithful Southern Baptists differ on whether regeneration precedes faith (the Reformed-leaning view) or whether faith precedes regeneration (the traditionalist view). Both agree that both are necessary, both are works of God, and both occur at salvation.

In short: God doesn't just announce the gospel from a distance. Through the preaching of His Word and the work of His Spirit, He personally draws sinners to Himself. This is why evangelism matters so much. We are commanded to spread the gospel to everyone (Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Pet. 3:15) because God uses our witness as the very means by which His call reaches its appointed hearers.

If you have come to Christ, the answer to the question “Why did I come to Christ when so many around me didn't?” is not that you were smarter, more spiritual, or more sincere. The answer is grace. God called you through His Word. The Holy Spirit worked in your heart. You heard. You came. And you will keep coming, because the One who called you is faithful (1 Thess. 5:24).

b. The Gospel Call - Scripture

The following passages show that no one comes to Christ apart from God's gracious initiative.

(John 6:44 NASB) [Jesus] "**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day."

(John 6:65 NASB) [Jesus] "For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me unless it has been granted from the Father.**"

(John 10:27–28 NASB) [Jesus] "**My sheep hear My voice**, and I know them, **and they follow Me**; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

See also: John 6:37; Rom. 3:11; Acts 13:48.

The gospel call is the Spirit's work through the preached gospel.

(Acts 16:14 CSB) "A God-fearing woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, was listening. **The Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying.**"

(2 Thess. 2:13–14 NASB) "But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this **He called you** through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Rom. 10:14–15, 17 KJV) "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?... So then **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**"

See also: 1 Cor. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:23–25; James 1:18.

The gospel call goes out sincerely to all people.

(Matt. 11:28 NASB) [Jesus] "Come to Me, **all** who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

(Acts 17:30 CSB) "Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands **all** people everywhere to repent."

(Rev. 22:17 KJV) "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And **whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**"

See also: Isa. 55:1–3; Matt. 22:14; John 7:37.

Those whom God calls He brings to salvation.

(Rom. 8:30 NASB) "[A]nd **these whom He predestined, He also called**, and those whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified."

(1 Cor. 1:9 CSB) "God is faithful; **you were called by him into fellowship with his Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord."

(2 Tim. 1:9 NASB) "[He] has saved us and **called us** with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity."

See also: 1 Thess. 2:12; 1 Pet. 5:10; Jude 1:1.

3. REGENERATION (BEING "BORN AGAIN")

a. Regeneration - Definition

Regeneration is the sovereign, supernatural act of God by which the Holy Spirit imparts new spiritual life to a sinner, raising the soul from spiritual death to life.

Regeneration is not a human decision or moral improvement, but a divine transformation — where the heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

This inward renewal enables a person to repent, believe, and walk in newness of life.

Regeneration precedes faith, produces a new nature with new desires, and marks the beginning of the believer's union with Christ. It is what Jesus declared essential when He said, "you must be born again." (John 3:7b CSB)

In other words, **regeneration** means God gives you a brand-new life. It's not just turning over a new leaf — it's receiving a brand-new heart.

When you get saved, the Holy Spirit moves in, takes out your old sin-loving nature, and puts His life within you. You're not just patched up — you're born again. It's the difference between mere religion and an actual relationship with Jesus.

b. Regeneration - Scripture

The following passages show that regeneration involves a new birth or being "born again" to receive salvation.

(John 3:3-8 CSB) "Jesus replied [to Nicodemus], 'Truly I tell you, **unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' 'How can anyone be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked him. 'Can he enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?'

Jesus answered, "Truly I tell you, **unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you that you must be born again. The wind blows where it pleases, and you hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

(Titus 3:5 CSB) "[H]e saved us -- not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy -- **through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit.**"

(2 Cor. 5:17 NASB) "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creature**; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."

(1 Pet. 1:3 CSB) "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his great mercy he has given us **new birth** into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

(1 Pet. 1:22-23 KJV) "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being **born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

(Ezek. 36:26-27 NASB) "Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."

The process of regeneration also involves a spiritual resurrection.

(Eph. 2:4-5 NASB) "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even **when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved)."

(Col. 2:13 CSB) "And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, **he made you alive with him** and forgave us all our trespasses."

4. JUSTIFICATION

a. Justification - Definition

Justification is the sovereign and gracious act of God, in which he, as holy Judge, declares a sinner to be righteous in his sight. This declaration is not on the basis of the sinner's merit or works, but solely through faith in Jesus Christ, whose perfect obedience and atoning death are credited to the believer (Romans 3:23–26; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Justification is a **legal declaration**, not a process of moral transformation.

At the very moment of true faith (that is, genuine saving trust - not mere intellectual agreement), God forgives the believer's sins entirely and counts them as righteous in God's court by the righteousness of Christ alone (Romans 5:1; Philippians 3:9).

Justification is "just as if I'd never sinned" and "just as if I'd always obeyed"—not because of anything in us, but because Jesus stood in our place at the cross (Isaiah 53:5–6; Galatians 2:16).

Justification is by **grace alone** (Romans 3:24), through **faith alone** (Ephesians 2:8–9), in **Christ alone** (Acts 4:12), and to the **glory of God alone** (Romans 11:36).

It secures peace with God (Romans 5:1), assures us of no condemnation (Romans 8:1), and flows from God's eternal purpose to redeem a people for Himself (Ephesians 1:4–5).

Though **justification and sanctification** (sanctification will be discussed next) are inseparably linked, they are not the same. **Justification** changes our legal status before God (God declares us righteous) while **sanctification** changes our actual condition (God makes us progressively holy).

Justification is once-for-all and cannot be lost, for it depends entirely on Christ's finished work and God's unchanging verdict (John 5:24; Hebrews 10:14).

God does not justify those who remain in rebellion, nor does He ignore sin. Rather, He justifies the ungodly who come to Him in repentant faith (Romans 4:5; Mark 1:15), trusting not in their righteousness but in Christ's blood and righteousness alone. To reject or confuse this is to distort the gospel itself (Galatians 1:6–9).

The Scriptural bases for the doctrine of justification follow below.

b. Justification - Scripture

Justification is by faith in Jesus alone, not by works.

(Eph. 2:8–9 NASB) "For **by grace you have been saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; **not as a result of works**, so that no one may boast."

(Rom. 3:28 NASB) "For we maintain that a man is **justified by faith** apart from works of the Law."

(Rom. 5:1 CSB) "Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Gal. 2:16 NASB) "[N]evertheless knowing that **a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since **by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**"

See also: John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 3:20, 24; 4:4-5; Gal. 3:10-11; Titus 3:5-7

Justification is grounded in Jesus' substitutionary death.

(Isa. 53:5–6 NASB) "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and **by His scourging we are healed.** All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him."

(Rom. 3:23–26 KJV) "[F]or all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being **justified** freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

See also: Rom. 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24.

God legally credits Christ's righteousness to believers.

(Rom. 4:5 CSB) "But to the one who does not work, but believes on him who **justifies** the ungodly, **his faith is credited for righteousness.**"

See also: Rom. 4:22-25; 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-9.

Abraham is the Bible's premier example of being justified by faith.

(Rom. 4:3 KJV) "For what saith the scripture? **Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**"

(Gal. 3:6–7 NASB) "Even so Abraham 'believed God, and it was **reckoned to him as righteousness.**' Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham."

See also: Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:13-22; Gal. 3:8-11, 24; James 2:21-24

Justification gives peace with God and freedom from condemnation.

(Rom. 5:1 CSB) "Therefore, since we have been **justified by faith**, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Rom. 8:1 NASB) "Therefore there is now **no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus**."

See also: Rom. 5:9; 8:33-34; 1 Cor. 6:11.

5. ADOPTION

a. Adoption - Definition

Adoption is the gracious act of God by which He takes a sinner who has been justified through faith in Jesus Christ and brings him into His own family as a beloved son or daughter, with all the rights, privileges, and inheritance that belong to the children of God (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:4–7; Eph. 1:5).

If justification answers the question "How can I stand before a holy God?", **adoption** answers the question "How does God now relate to me?" The answer is breathtaking: as a Father to His own beloved child.

Justification gives us a verdict. **Adoption** gives us a family.

Justification declares us righteous. **Adoption** makes us sons and daughters.

Justification makes us right with God the Judge. **Adoption** makes us dear to God the Father.

Both are true at the moment of salvation. Both are gifts of God's grace. But adoption adds something deeply personal: God doesn't just acquit us — He takes us home.

In the ancient Roman world, adoption was a legal and life-changing act. An adopted son was given a new name, a new family, a new inheritance, and a permanent place in his father's household. He could not be disowned. His old debts were canceled. His new father became fully responsible for him. Paul uses this picture deliberately, especially in writing to readers in Rome and the Greco-Roman cities, because it captured exactly what God does for the believer in Christ.

When God adopts a sinner:

He gives us a new name. We are no longer called "enemies" or "strangers" or "children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3, 12). We are called sons of God (1 John 3:1).

He gives us a new family. Every other believer becomes a brother or sister in Christ — a real spiritual family that crosses every line of race, class, language, and nation (Gal. 3:26–28; Eph. 2:19).

He gives us a new Father. The God who once stood as our Judge now stands as our Father. We are invited — even commanded — to call Him “Abba” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6) — an Aramaic word so intimate it’s roughly the equivalent of “Daddy” or “dear Father.”

He gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit. Paul calls Him the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15) — the Spirit who personally assures the believer’s heart that he truly belongs to God (Rom. 8:16).

He gives us an inheritance. As children of God, we are also heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). Everything that belongs to Jesus by right belongs to us by grace.

He gives us His fatherly love, discipline, and care. A good father provides for his children, protects them, listens to them, disciplines them when they go astray, and never abandons them. God does all this for His adopted children — perfectly (Matt. 7:9–11; Heb. 12:5–11).

Adoption is also unbreakable. Earthly adoptions can sometimes go wrong, but God’s adoption never does. Once a child of God, always a child of God. Jesus Himself said, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. **No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.** I and the Father are one” (John 10:29 CSB).

This means the believer can rest in something more secure than his own performance: his Father’s grip.

A few important clarifications:

Adoption is not the same as creation. It is sometimes said today that “everyone is a child of God.” That is true only in the broadest creational sense — God made every human being and loves every human being. But in the saving, family sense, only those who have trusted Christ are God’s children (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26). Jesus Himself drew this line sharply (John 8:42–44).

Adoption is not earned. Like every other gift of salvation, adoption is by grace, through faith, in Christ alone (Eph. 1:5). We don’t behave our way into the family. We are brought in.

Adoption shapes how we live. A child of God doesn’t live in fear of being kicked out — he lives in the freedom and joy of belonging. Paul says the Spirit of adoption frees us from the spirit of slavery and fear (Rom. 8:15). We obey God not as terrified subjects, but as loved children who want to please our Father (1 John 3:1–3).

Adoption will be fully experienced at glorification. Even now, we are God’s children — but the fullness of our adoption is still ahead. Paul says creation itself groans as we wait for “our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23 NASB). The day is coming when every adopted child of God will be welcomed into the Father’s house in resurrection glory and never leave.

In simple terms: Justification means God says, "Not guilty." Adoption means God says, "Welcome home, my child."

That is the heart of the gospel. Not just acquittal — but family. Not just a verdict — but a Father's embrace.

b. Adoption - Scripture

The following passages show that believers are adopted as God's own children.

(John 1:12 KJV) "But as many as received him, to them gave **he power to become sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name..."

(Rom. 8:15 CSB) "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, **you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father!'**"

(Gal. 4:4–7 NASB) "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."

(Eph. 1:5 CSB) "He predestined us to be **adopted** as sons through Jesus Christ for himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

See also: 2 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 2:10–11; 1 John 3:1.

Believers are loved by God as His dear children.

(1 John 3:1a NASB) "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that **we would be called children of God**; and such we are."

(Rom. 8:16 CSB) "The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that **we are God's children**."

(Matt. 7:11 KJV) "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall **your Father** which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

See also: Matt. 6:9; Luke 11:13; 1 John 3:2.

Believers are heirs with Christ of all God's promises.

(Rom. 8:17 KJV) "[A]nd if children, then heirs; **heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ**; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together."

(Gal. 3:29 CSB) "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, **heirs according to the promise.**"

(Titus 3:7 NASB) "[S]o that being justified by His grace we would be made **heirs** according to the hope of eternal life."

See also: Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:11, 14; 1 Pet. 1:3–4.

A loving Father lovingly disciplines His children.

(Heb. 12:5–7 NASB) "[A]nd you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproofed by Him; for **those whom the LORD loves He disciplines**, and He scourges every son whom He receives.' It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?"

(Prov. 3:11–12 NASB) "My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, for **whom the LORD loves He reproves**, even as a father corrects the son in whom He delights."

See also: Deut. 8:5; Rev. 3:19.

6. SANCTIFICATION

a. Sanctification - Definition

Sanctification is the lifelong work of God by which the Holy Spirit gradually makes a believer more and more like Jesus Christ — holier in heart, mind, and behavior (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 5:23).

Justification happens in a moment. God declares us "not guilty" the instant we trust Jesus, and that verdict never changes.

Sanctification, by contrast, takes a lifetime. It's the slow, steady process of God actually making us holier — not just declaring us righteous.

The Bible describes **sanctification in three stages**:

- **The moment you're saved.** The second you trust Jesus, God sets you apart as His own. You're now called a "saint" (which simply means "holy one") — not because you're already perfect, but because you belong to Him (1 Cor. 6:11; Heb. 10:10).

- **The rest of your life.** Day by day, year by year, the Holy Spirit shapes you to look more like Jesus. He uses the Bible, prayer, other Christians, and even hard circumstances to grow you (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 2:12–13).
- **When you see Jesus.** When you die or when Jesus returns, the process is finished. You'll be completely and finally like Christ (1 John 3:2; 1 Thess. 5:23).

Sanctification is something God starts and God sustains — but it's also something we're called to actively pursue. Paul says to "work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13 NASB).

In other words: God is working in you, so you keep working it out.

Sanctification doesn't happen at the same speed for every Christian. Some believers grow quickly; others grow slowly. Some have big breakthroughs; others creep along inch by inch. Some struggle with sins they conquered years ago. That's normal. The Christian life is not a sprint — it's a long, sometimes-uphill walk with Jesus.

But while the speed varies, the direction should not. A truly saved person will, over time, look more like Jesus and less like their old self. There will be real, observable change — even if that change is sometimes hidden or slower than we can see (Gal. 5:22–23; 1 John 3:9–10).

Sanctification is not how we get saved — that's justification, by faith alone.

Sanctification is how we grow after we're saved. We don't earn God's love by becoming holy; we become holy because we're already loved (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:19).

Sanctification is not perfection in this life. Every Christian still sins (1 John 1:8–10). The difference is that a believer no longer loves sin the way they used to. Sin becomes something we fight, confess, and grieve over — not something we're comfortable with.

The goal of sanctification is not just personal improvement. The goal is Christlikeness — being conformed to the image of Jesus, for the glory of God and the good of others (Rom. 8:29; Matt. 5:16).

In short: God saves you in a moment. God grows you over a lifetime. God will perfect you when you see Jesus face to face.

b. Sanctification - Scripture

The following passages show that sanctification is God's work in us — making us holy and more like Jesus.

(1 Thess. 5:23 NASB) "Now may the God of peace Himself **sanctify** you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

(Phil. 1:6 CSB) "I am sure of this, that **he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus."

(Phil. 2:12–13 NASB) "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your salvation with fear and trembling**; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

(2 Cor. 3:18 CSB) "**We all**, with unveiled faces, are reflecting the glory of the Lord and **are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory**; this is from the Lord who is the Spirit."

(Heb. 12:14 KJV) "**Follow** peace with all men, and **holiness**, without which no man shall see the Lord."

See also: Rom. 6:19–22; Eph. 4:22–24; Col. 3:9–10.

Sanctification produces real change — the fruit of the Spirit.

(Gal. 5:22–23 NASB) "But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law."

(John 15:5 CSB) "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much **fruit**, because you can do nothing without me."

See also: Matt. 7:16–20; Eph. 5:8–11; James 2:14–18.

Sanctification involves putting sin to death and putting on Christlikeness.

(Rom. 8:13 NASB) "[F]or if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

(Col. 3:5, 10 CSB) "Therefore, put to death what belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry ... and ... **put on the new self**. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator."

See also: Eph. 4:22–24; Rom. 6:11–14; 1 Pet. 2:11.

Sanctification will be completed when we see Jesus.

(1 John 3:2 CSB) "Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that **when he appears, we will be like him** because we will see him as he is."

(Phil. 3:20–21 NASB) "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, **the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

See also: Rom. 8:29–30; 1 Cor. 15:49–53; Col. 3:4.

7. GLORIFICATION

a. Glorification - Definition

Glorification is the final stage of salvation in which God completes His saving work in the believer by raising the body from the dead, freeing the believer fully and forever from sin, suffering, and death, and bringing him into the eternal presence of Christ in resurrection glory (Rom. 8:30; Phil. 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2).

If **justification** is the beginning of salvation and **sanctification** is the middle, **glorification** is the end — not the end of life, but the end of the saving process and the beginning of eternal joy.

Glorification is what every believer is moving toward. Paul makes the order clear: "And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified" (Rom. 8:30 CSB).

Notice that Paul speaks of glorification as so certain that he writes it in the past tense — as if it has already happened. From God's perspective, it's as good as done.

Glorification has two aspects in Scripture:

- **The moment a believer dies.** When a Christian dies, the soul goes immediately to be with the Lord in conscious joy (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; Luke 23:43). The body is buried, but the soul is consciously, joyfully present with Christ. This is sometimes called **the intermediate state** — the time between physical death and bodily resurrection. The believer is already in heaven, but not yet glorified in body.
- **When Jesus returns.** At the return of Christ, every believer — those who have died and those still living — will receive a glorified resurrection body, fully like Christ's resurrection body (1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; Phil. 3:20–21). This is the **full and final glorification**. The soul is reunited with a transformed body that will never sin, never sicken, never age, and never die.

In simple terms: **at death, the believer's soul is glorified. At Christ's return, the believer's body is glorified too.**

The glorified body will be a real, physical body — not a ghost or a spirit. Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, ate fish (Luke 24:42–43), invited Thomas to touch His wounds (John 20:27), and walked and talked with His disciples (Luke 24:13–32).

Our resurrection bodies will be like His — physical, but transformed: imperishable, glorious, powerful, and Spirit-empowered (1 Cor. 15:42–44).

Glorification means the complete and final removal of sin. The believer will never sin again. Never struggle with temptation. Never battle the flesh. Never weep over a moral failure. The lifelong war between flesh and Spirit (Gal. 5:17) will be over — and the Spirit will have won completely.

Glorification means the complete and final removal of suffering. "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4 CSB). No more disease or ailments. No more funerals. No more divorce. No more abuse. No more depression. No more loneliness. The aches and griefs of this fallen world will be gone forever.

Glorification means the eternal presence of Christ. The greatest joy of heaven is not streets of gold or pearly gates — it's seeing Jesus face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 22:4). Every other joy of glorification flows from this one.

Glorification is also tied to the renewal of all creation. Paul says creation itself groans, waiting for the glorification of God's children (Rom. 8:19–23). When the saints are glorified, the cosmos will be renewed too — a new heavens and a new earth, the dwelling place of righteousness (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–5).

Glorification is certain for every true believer. Once God justifies a person, glorification is guaranteed (Rom. 8:30; Phil. 1:6). It cannot be lost, forfeited, or undone — because it depends entirely on Christ's finished work, not on us.

In short: God saved you in a moment. God grew you over a lifetime. And one day — at His return — God will perfect you, body and soul, forever.

Glorification is the final answer to every prayer, the final relief of every burden, and the final fulfillment of every gospel promise.

b. Glorification - Scripture

The following passages show that glorification involves a glorified resurrection body like Christ's.

(1 Cor. 15:42–44 NASB) "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in **glory**; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body."

(1 Cor. 15:51–53 NASB) "Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in a twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and **we will be changed**. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality."

(Phil. 3:20–21 NASB) "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; **who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

See also: Rom. 8:23; 1 Thess. 4:16–17; 1 John 3:2; Job 19:25–27.

Glorification is the certain completion of God's saving work.

(Rom. 8:30 CSB) "And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also **glorified**."

(Rom. 8:18 CSB) "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the **glory** that is going to be revealed to us."

(Phil. 1:6 NASB) "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

See also: 2 Cor. 4:17; Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:10.

Glorification means no more sin, suffering, or death.

(Rev. 21:4 CSB) "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away."

(Isa. 25:8 NASB) "**He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces**, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken."

(1 Cor. 15:54–55 KJV) "[T]hen shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?**"

See also: Rev. 7:16–17; Rom. 8:21.

Glorification means seeing Jesus face to face and dwelling with Him forever.

(Rev. 22:3–5 NASB) “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; **they will see His face**, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and **they will reign forever and ever.**”

(1 Cor. 13:12 KJV) “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then **face to face**: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.”

(John 17:24 NASB) “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, **be with Me where I am**, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

See also: Ps. 17:15; Matt. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:8.

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SALVATION

Salvation is the most glorious doctrine in all of Scripture. It is the storyline that runs from Genesis to Revelation. It is the reason Jesus came. It is the message the church has been entrusted to proclaim until He returns.

Stepping back from everything we’ve covered in this section, a few central truths stand out:

1. Salvation is God’s work, but human responsibility is real too.

From eternity past, God chose a people for Himself (Eph. 1:4–5). In time, He calls them through the gospel, regenerates their dead hearts, justifies them by faith, adopts them into His family, sanctifies them over a lifetime, and finally glorifies them in resurrection bodies. Every link in this chain is forged by God Himself.

It bears repeating again that Paul put it plainly in Romans 8:30 (CSB): “And those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also justified; and those he justified, he also glorified.”

At the same time, Scripture clearly affirms that human beings have a real measure of choice. We are commanded to repent and believe (Mark 1:15; Acts 17:30). We are warned not to harden our hearts (Heb. 3:15). We are invited to come to Jesus (Matt. 11:28; Rev. 22:17). These calls are sincere, and our response matters.

How God’s sovereign work and our genuine choice fit together is, in the end, a mystery. The Bible teaches both, and we should believe both — even where we cannot fully reconcile them. “The hidden things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children forever, so that we may follow all the words of this law” (Deut. 29:29 CSB).

What we can say with confidence is this: salvation is not a 50/50 partnership where God does His part and we do ours. The initiative is God's. The grace is God's. The power is God's. But the response is genuinely ours — and the gospel call genuinely comes to every person who hears.

2. Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

There is no other Savior. No other name. No other way. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6 NASB). Peter declared, "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NASB).

Religion cannot save. Morality cannot save. Sincerity cannot save. Good intentions cannot save. Only Jesus saves — because only Jesus lived the life we could not live, died the death we deserved to die, and rose from the grave to give us life forever.

3. Salvation comes by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

We are not saved by being good enough. We are not saved by trying harder. We are not saved by religious rituals or church attendance or family heritage. We are saved by trusting Jesus Christ — fully and only — for our forgiveness and standing before God (Eph. 2:8–9; Rom. 10:9). This is wonderfully humbling and wonderfully freeing. Humbling, because it strips away every reason to boast in ourselves. Freeing, because it means salvation does not depend on our shaky performance but on Christ's finished work.

4. Salvation transforms everything.

Genuine salvation is not just a one-time decision that has no effect on the rest of life. The gospel that saves us also changes us. The same Spirit who regenerates our hearts also fills them, leads them, and slowly conforms them to the image of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). True saving faith always shows itself in real, observable fruit — not perfection, but direction (Gal. 5:22–23; James 2:14–18).

If a person claims to be saved but shows no love for Christ, no hunger for His Word, no fight against sin, and no love for God's people — there is reason to question whether the salvation was ever real (1 John 2:3–4; Matt. 7:21–23).

Salvation that does not transform was never salvation at all.

5. Salvation is secure and eternal.

Once a person is truly saved, that salvation cannot be lost.

Jesus Himself said, "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:28 CSB). Similarly, Paul said God "will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8 NASB).

The believer's security does not rest on his ability to hold onto God, but on God's unbreakable grip on him.

This does not give license to live carelessly — those who are truly saved will persevere in faith and obedience. But it does give comfort to every weary, struggling believer: your Father's grip is stronger than your weakness.

6. Salvation must be received personally.

It is not enough to know about Jesus. It is not enough to grow up in a Christian home. It is not enough to attend church or be baptized as an infant or pray a prayer once long ago.

Salvation must be received personally, by repentant faith in the living Jesus Christ.

Have you done this?

If not, the gospel call comes to you right now: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28 NASB). Turn from your sin. Trust in Jesus. Confess Him as Lord. Believe that God raised Him from the dead. And you will be saved (Rom. 10:9–10).

If you already are saved, then live in the joy and freedom of all that God has given you in Christ — and tell others. The same Savior who rescued you stands ready to rescue them too. The harvest is plentiful (Matt. 9:37). The fields are white (John 4:35). The Great Commission still stands (Matt. 28:19–20).

7. Salvation will end in glory.

The believer's story does not end at the grave. It ends in resurrection. It ends in glory. It ends in seeing Jesus face to face and dwelling with Him forever in a renewed creation where there is no more sin, no more sorrow, no more death (Rev. 21:1–5; 22:3–5).

This is the hope that sustains every Christian through every trial. The sufferings of this life are real — but they are "not worth comparing with the glory that is going to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18 CSB).

In the end, every true believer will join the redeemed of every age in singing: "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Rev. 7:10 CSB).

To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

VII. THE CHURCH

A. INTRODUCTION

Once a person is saved, they are not saved into isolation. They are saved into a family — the people of God across every age, language, and nation. The Bible calls this family the Church.

Many today think of the church as optional — a nice-to-have for those who like that sort of thing. The Bible thinks otherwise. In Matthew 16:18 (CSB), Christ Himself said: "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it."

The church is not a man-made institution. It is the church of Jesus Christ — bought with His blood (Acts 20:28), built on His Word (Eph. 2:20), led by His Spirit (John 14:26), and destined for His glory (Eph. 5:27).

In this section, we will consider:

- What the church is
- The marks of a true church
- The mission of the church
- The ordinances of the church
- Church leadership
- The importance of the local church

This section deliberately focuses on the unifying, biblical core of what the church is — what faithful evangelical Christians have affirmed across centuries and denominations.

There are real and important differences between traditions on matters like baptism, the Lord's Supper, and church government.

Faithful Bible-believing Christians have come to different conclusions on those issues. This section will not try to resolve those differences. Rather, it will focus on what the Bible clearly teaches that all evangelical Christians can affirm together.

B. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

1. Two Senses of “Church”

The Bible uses the word “church” in two distinct but related senses.

a. The universal church — all true believers in Jesus Christ across all time and all places.

(Eph. 1:22-23 NASB) “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the **church**, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

(Heb. 12:22-23 KJV) “[B]ut ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and **church** of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect...”

The universal church includes every saved person — whether in heaven now or still on earth, whether in your congregation or in a persecuted house church on the other side of the world. There is one true church, and every born-again believer belongs to it.

b. The local church — a specific gathering of believers in a specific place who meet for worship, teaching, fellowship, and mission.

(1 Cor. 1:2a NASB) “To the **church of God which is at Corinth**, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling...”

(1 Thess. 1:1 CSB) “Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy: To the **church of the Thessalonians** in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace.”

The New Testament writers wrote letters to specific local churches — Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica, and the seven churches of Revelation.

The local church is where the universal church becomes visible and tangible in a particular place and time.

Both senses are real. Every believer belongs to the universal church automatically. Every believer is also commanded to belong to a faithful local church.

2. Biblical Pictures of the Church

The Bible uses several rich images to describe what the church is:

a. **The body of Christ** — Jesus is the head; believers are the members.

(1 Cor. 12:27 NASB) “Now **you are Christ's body**, and individually members of it.”

(Eph. 4:15-16 CSB) “But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head -- Christ. From him the whole **body**, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the **body** for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.”

See also: Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 1:18.

b. **The bride of Christ** — the church is loved, cherished, and pursued by Christ as a husband loves his wife.

(Eph. 5:25-27 NASB) “Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ also loved the church** and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the **church** in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”

See also: Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2.

c. **The temple of the Holy Spirit** — believers, joined together, are God's dwelling place.

(Eph. 2:21-22 CSB) “So in him the whole building, being put together, grows into a **holy temple in the Lord**. In him you are also being **built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit**.”

See also: 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:5.

d. **The family of God** — believers are brothers and sisters with one Father.

(Eph. 2:19 CSB) “So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and **members of God's household**...”

See also: Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:15.

e. **The flock of God** — Jesus is the Shepherd; believers are His sheep.

(John 10:14-16 NASB) [Jesus] "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and **they will become one flock with one shepherd.**"

See also: 1 Pet. 5:2-4; Acts 20:28.

Each picture highlights a different facet of the same glorious reality: the church is the people of God, united to Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, on mission until He returns.

3. The Church Was Christ's Plan from the Beginning

The church is not a backup plan or an afterthought. It was God's purpose from before the foundation of the world.

(Eph. 1:4-5 CSB) "For **he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world**, to be holy and blameless in love before him. **He predestined us to be adopted as sons through Jesus Christ for himself**, according to the good pleasure of his will..."

(Eph. 3:10-11 NASB) "[S]o that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. **This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord...**"

The church is so important that Jesus shed His blood for it (Acts 20:28), promised that hell would not overcome it (Matt. 16:18), and is even now preparing it as a bride for Himself (Eph. 5:27; Rev. 19:7-9).

C. THE MARKS OF A TRUE CHURCH

How can you tell whether a particular gathering is actually a faithful Christian church and not just a religious club using Christian language?

Throughout church history, evangelical Christians have generally identified **three biblical marks of a true church**.

1. The Word of God Is Faithfully Preached and Taught

A true church preaches the Bible — all of it, faithfully, as the actual Word of God.

(2 Tim. 4:2 NASB) "[P]reach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

(Acts 2:42 CSB) “**They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching**, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.”

(Titus 1:9 NASB) “[H]olding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the **teaching**, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

If a church does not faithfully preach the Bible, it is not a true church — no matter how big it is, how sincere its members are, or how good its programs are. **The Word must be central.**

2. The Ordinances Are Faithfully Administered

A true church practices the ordinances Christ commanded — **baptism and the Lord's Supper** — as expressions of the gospel.

(Matt. 28:19 NASB) [Jesus] “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

(1 Cor. 11:23-26 CSB) “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For **as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**”

Faithful evangelical Christians have come to different conclusions about how baptism and the Lord's Supper should be administered — including who should be baptized and the meaning of Christ's presence in the Supper.

But faithful churches across all evangelical traditions agree that these two ordinances were instituted by Christ, are commanded for the church, and are means by which the gospel is visibly proclaimed.

3. Church Discipline Is Faithfully Practiced

A true church takes seriously the holiness of its members and lovingly addresses sin within the body.

(Matt. 18:15-17 NASB) [Jesus] “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.’ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the **church**; and if he refuses to listen even to the **church**, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

(1 Cor. 5:12-13 CSB) “For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Don't you judge those who are inside? God judges outsiders. **Remove the evil person from among you.**”

See also: Gal. 6:1; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10.

Church discipline is not punishment — it is loving correction with the goal of restoration (Gal. 6:1; 2 Cor. 2:6-8).

A church that ignores blatant, unrepentant sin among its members is not loving the sinner; it is harming them and the whole body.

These three marks — **Word, ordinances, and discipline** — are the historic, biblical signs that a gathering is in fact a true Christian church. A church may have many other good things going for it, but without these, it is not what Jesus said His church would be.

D. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Why does the church exist?

1. To Worship God

The church exists first and foremost to glorify God through worship.

(John 4:23-24 NASB) [Jesus] “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will **worship** the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who **worship** Him must **worship** in spirit and truth.”

(Heb. 13:15 KJV) “By him [Jesus] therefore let us **offer the sacrifice of praise to God** continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”

Worship includes singing (Eph. 5:19), praying (Acts 2:42), giving (2 Cor. 9:7), reading and preaching the Word (1 Tim. 4:13), observing the ordinances (1 Cor. 11:26), and ultimately offering our whole lives in obedience (Rom. 12:1).

2. To Make Disciples

The Great Commission was given to the church.

(Matt. 28:19-20 NASB) [Jesus] “Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Discipleship is a two-stage mission: **evangelism** (bringing people to Christ) and **teaching** (helping them grow in Christ).

A church that does only evangelism without teaching produces shallow converts. A church that does only teaching without evangelism produces inward-focused congregations. The Great Commission requires both.

3. To Build Up Believers

The church exists to spiritually mature its own members so they grow up into Christ.

(Eph. 4:11-13 NASB) “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the **building up of the body of Christ**; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

This is what the New Testament calls edification — building up believers in faith, knowledge, holiness, and love (1 Cor. 14:26; 1 Thess. 5:11).

4. To Care for One Another

The church is a family, and families take care of each other.

(Gal. 6:10 NASB) “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

(Acts 2:44-45 CSB) “Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need.”

(James 1:27 KJV) “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

The “one another” passages of the New Testament — love one another, bear one another’s burdens, encourage one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, etc. — are commands that can only be obeyed in the context of meaningful relationships within a local church.

5. To Be a Light to the World

The church is to be a visible witness to the watching world.

(Matt. 5:14-16 NASB) [Jesus] “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in this house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

(John 13:35 KJV) [Jesus] “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

The world should be able to look at a faithful local church and see something it cannot explain by mere human effort — a community of forgiven sinners loving one another and loving their neighbors in a way that points to the reality of Jesus Christ.

E. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Jesus instituted two ordinances (some traditions call them sacraments) for His church to practice until He returns: baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

Faithful Bible-believing Christians have come to different conclusions on the details of these ordinances. This study guide will not try to resolve those differences. What follows is what evangelical Christians broadly affirm together.

1. Baptism

Jesus commanded His followers to be baptized.

(Matt. 28:19 NASB) [Jesus] “Go therefore and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit...”

What the Bible clearly teaches about baptism:

- Baptism was commanded by Christ Himself (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16).
- Baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — a Trinitarian act (Matt. 28:19).
- Baptism is a public identification with Jesus Christ — His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12).
- Baptism is associated with repentance, faith, and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16).
- Baptism does not save apart from faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9; the saved thief on the cross was never baptized — Luke 23:43).
- Baptism is the proper public entry point into the visible Christian life and church.

What faithful Christians differ on:

- The proper subjects of baptism (believers only, or also infants of believing parents)
- The proper mode of baptism (immersion, pouring, or sprinkling)
- The exact spiritual significance of baptism

Baptists believe that (1) only believers who are old enough to have repented and professed faith in the gospel should be baptized (credobaptism); and (2) they should be baptized by full submersion.

What is not in dispute among faithful Christians: every believer should be baptized in obedience to Christ's command, and baptism should never be treated as optional or merely symbolic of personal preference.

2. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus on the night He was betrayed.

(1 Cor. 11:23-26 CSB) "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**"

What the Bible clearly teaches about the Lord's Supper:

- It was instituted by Christ Himself (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).
- It is to be observed by His followers until He returns (1 Cor. 11:26).
- It commemorates Christ's atoning death (1 Cor. 11:24-25).
- It involves both the bread (representing Christ's body) and the cup (representing Christ's blood of the new covenant).
- It is to be taken in a worthy manner — not lightly, not flippantly, and only by genuine believers (1 Cor. 11:27-29).
- It is an act of fellowship and unity within the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:16-17).
- It looks backward to the cross, present at our communion with Christ, and forward to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

What faithful Christians differ on:

- The exact nature of Christ's presence in the Supper (real spiritual presence, memorial-only, or other views)
- How often the Supper should be observed
- Who may administer the Supper

What is not in dispute: every believer should partake of the Lord's Supper regularly, with reverence and self-examination, as a means of remembering and proclaiming the gospel.

F. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

The Bible identifies two ordained offices in the New Testament church: elders (also called pastors, overseers, or bishops) and deacons.

1. Elders / Pastors / Overseers / Bishops

The New Testament uses three terms for the same office:

Elder (*presbyteros*) — emphasizing maturity and spiritual oversight (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; James 5:14)

Pastor (*poimēn*) — emphasizing the shepherding of God's flock (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:2)

Overseer / Bishop (*episkopos*) — emphasizing watchful supervision (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1–2)

These three terms refer to the same office, as is clear in passages like Acts 20:17, 28 and 1 Peter 5:1–2, where elders are described as overseers and shepherds.

The qualifications for an elder are laid out in Scripture, including in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

(1 Tim. 3:1–7 NASB) "It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

The primary responsibilities of elders are to:

- Shepherd and care for God's people (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28)
- Teach the Word faithfully (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9)
- Lead and guide the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17)
- Pray for the flock (James 5:14)
- Guard against false teaching (Acts 20:28–31; Titus 1:9)
- Set an example of godliness (1 Pet. 5:3)

Immediately before listing the qualifications for overseers in 1 Timothy 3, Paul says, "I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet" (1 Tim. 2:12 NASB). Then Paul describes the overseers as the "husband" of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2 NASB).

For those reasons, and in agreement with the Baptist Faith & Message 2000, Southern Baptists affirm that the office of **pastor/elder/overseer/bishop is reserved for qualified men**. This does not mean women are less important in the church. Men and women are equally made in God's image and equally redeemed in Christ, but God has assigned different roles in the ordering of the church.

2. Deacons

Deacons are a second New Testament office, focused primarily on practical service to the body. Deacons are not elders and do not have ruling functions.

The first deacons were appointed in Acts 6 to handle the practical care of widows so the apostles could focus on prayer and the Word.

(Acts 6:2-4 CSB) "The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, 'It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables. Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"

The qualifications for deacons are also given in Scripture.

(1 Tim. 3:8-13 NASB) "Deacons likewise must be **men** of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These **men** must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach... Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

3. Church Government

Faithful Christians have come to different conclusions on the precise structure of church government or "polity":

- Congregational — final authority rests with the gathered congregation (**most common in SBC churches**).
- Presbyterian — authority rests with elders, organized in graded courts of session, presbytery, and general assembly.
- Episcopal — authority rests with bishops in apostolic succession (Anglican, Methodist, Lutheran).

What is not in dispute among faithful Bible-believing Christians is that Christ alone is the Head of His church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 5:23), that He has appointed elders and deacons as the offices of the church, and that the qualifications for those offices are clearly laid out in Scripture and must be observed.

G. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Some today claim they can be a Christian without belonging to a local church — that they can worship God on a hike, listen to sermons online, and call it good. The Bible does not allow this.

1. Christians Are Commanded to Gather

(Heb. 10:24-25 CSB) "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

This is not a suggestion. It is a command. The author of Hebrews was writing to people facing persecution — and even then, neglecting the gathering was unacceptable.

2. Believers Are Designed for One Another

The "one another" commands of the New Testament — love one another (John 13:34), bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2), encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11), pray for one another (James 5:16), forgive one another (Eph. 4:32), serve one another (Gal. 5:13), confess sin to one another (James 5:16), and many more — cannot be lived out alone. They require a community of believers in real, ongoing relationships.

3. Believers Need Spiritual Authority and Accountability

(Heb. 13:17 NASB) "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

Every Christian needs spiritual leaders to teach them, pray for them, watch over them, and lovingly correct them when they go astray. That kind of pastoral care does not happen through podcasts or livestreams — it happens through committed membership in a local church.

4. The Lord's Supper Is a Local Church Practice

(1 Cor. 11:33 NASB) "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another."

The Lord's Supper is not a private devotional act. It is the church's family meal, observed when the body comes together.

5. Spiritual Gifts Function in the Local Church

(1 Cor. 12:7 CSB) "A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good."

(Eph. 4:16 NASB) "Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."

Every believer has gifts from the Holy Spirit that are designed to build up other believers. Those gifts are useless apart from a body in which to use them.

6. The Local Church Is the Visible Outpost of the Kingdom of God

The local church is where the gospel is proclaimed publicly, where saints are baptized into the visible body, where the Lord's Supper is observed, where discipline is exercised, where mercy ministry happens, where missionaries are sent, and where the next generation is taught.

Apart from local churches, the universal church has no visible expression on earth.

In short: You cannot be a healthy Christian on your own. You were saved into a family. Live like it.

H. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE CHURCH

Stepping back from everything we've covered, several central truths stand out:

1. The church belongs to Jesus Christ.

The church is not a human invention, not a denominational organization, and not a social club. It is the church of Jesus Christ — purchased with His blood, built on His Word, indwelt by His Spirit, and destined for His glory. "[O]n this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matt. 16:18 CSB).

2. Every believer belongs to the universal church.

The moment a person trusts Jesus Christ, they are added to the universal church — the body of Christ that spans every age and every nation. This is automatic, irreversible, and glorious.

3. Every believer should belong to a faithful local church.

The universal church is real, but it is meant to be lived out in real, committed, ongoing relationships in a local body where the Word is preached, the ordinances are practiced, and discipline is exercised. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:24-25 (CSB) "And let us consider one another in order to provoke love and good works, not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day approaching."

4. A true church is marked by the Word, ordinances, and discipline.

Not every gathering that calls itself a church is a true church. A faithful church preaches the Word, practices baptism and the Lord's Supper, and lovingly disciplines its members. Anything less is something other than what Christ said His church would be.

5. The church exists for worship, discipleship, edification, mercy, and witness.

The church does not exist to entertain people. It exists to glorify God, to make and grow disciples, to build up believers, to care for one another and the needy, and to be a light to the watching world.

6. Christ alone is the Head of His church.

No pastor, no denomination, no council, no tradition stands above Christ. "He is also head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18a NASB).

Faithful churches submit to Christ through His Word and seek His glory above all.

7. The church will not fail.

Despite persecution, false teachers, cultural opposition, and our own failings, the church Christ is building will not fail. Hell itself cannot stop it. The same Lord who said "I will build my church" is the One who is sustaining her now and will return to claim her at the end. The church will not be defeated. The bride will be made ready. And the wedding feast of the Lamb will come (Rev. 19:7-9).

In short: You were not saved into isolation. You were saved into the family of God, the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb. Belong to it. Serve it. Love it. Build it up. Christ Himself died for it — and Christ Himself will perfect it on the day He returns.

VIII. SPREADING & DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

A. INTRODUCTION

We have considered why we should study doctrine (I), the Bible (II), the Trinity (III), Jesus (IV), humanity and sin (V), salvation (VI), and the church (VII). The natural question now is: What are Christians supposed to do with all of this?

The Bible's answer: Spread it. Defend it. Live it.

This section is intentionally a thumbnail sketch. **Season 2 of The 3D Series — Defense 2: Practical Evangelism & Apologetics** — covers these topics in detail, including evangelism methods, apologetic approaches, common objections to Christianity, and even legal rights for evangelists in the United States.

The purpose here is simply to anchor the doctrine of the Christian's missional duty firmly in Scripture, so that no reader of this study guide leaves with the impression that doctrine is something to be merely learned rather than lived.

This section will consider:

- The biblical duty to spread the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20)
- The biblical duty to defend the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15)
- The biblical duty to "do" and live the Word (James 1:22)
- These are not three separate duties — they are three dimensions of one calling

B. THE BIBLICAL DUTY TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL (Matt. 28:19-20)

The most famous and most important commission Jesus ever gave His followers is what we now call the Great Commission.

(Matt. 28:18-20 NASB) [Jesus] "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. **Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Notice four things about this commission:

a. It is universal in scope. "All the nations." Not just our friends, family, or comfortable cultural setting. Every tribe, tongue, and nation is in view (Rev. 7:9).

b. It is comprehensive in content. "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Not a watered-down gospel. Not selective verses. The whole counsel of God.

c. **It is authoritative in its source.** Jesus prefaces the command with “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” This isn't a suggestion — it's a command from the King.

d. **It is personal in its assurance.** “And lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Christians do not evangelize alone. The risen Christ goes with them.

The Great Commission wasn't given only to the Apostles. It was given to the whole church, and through them to every Christian who would ever live. **Every disciple of Jesus is called to make more disciples of Jesus.**

(Mark 16:15 KJV) [Jesus] “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

(Acts 1:8 NASB) [Jesus] “[B]ut you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

(Rom. 10:14-15 CSB) “How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.”

The gospel does not spread by accident. It spreads because Christians deliberately tell people about Jesus. Every Christian — pastor or plumber, retiree or college student, man or woman — is called to participate in this mission in their own God-given way.

In short: Since Jesus is who He says He is, and salvation is what the Bible says it is, then sharing the gospel is not optional. It is the first calling of every saved person.

C. THE BIBLICAL DUTY TO DEFEND THE GOSPEL (1 PET. 3:15)

The Bible does not just call Christians to spread the gospel, the Bible also calls us to defend it when challenged.

(1 Pet. 3:15 NASB) “[S]anctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, **always being ready to make a defense** to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”

The Greek word for “defense” in this verse is *apologia* — the source of our English word apologetics. It does not mean “apologize” in the modern sense of saying sorry. It means to make a reasoned case in defense of something.

A few things stand out from this verse:

a. Christ must be honored as Lord first. Defending the faith starts with the heart. We don't argue people into the kingdom; we represent the King.

b. Defense must be ready always. Not just when convenient. Not just when prepared. The Christian should be growing in knowledge of the faith continuously, ready when the opportunity comes.

c. Defense is owed to anyone who asks. Not just fellow Christians. Not just easy questioners. Anyone — friend, stranger, skeptic, mocker.

d. Defense must be done with gentleness and respect. Not arrogance. Not combativeness. Not treating the questioner as an enemy. Defending the faith is itself an act of love.

(Jude 3 CSB) "Dear friends, although I was eager to write you about the salvation we share, I found it necessary to write, appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was delivered to the saints once for all."

(2 Cor. 10:5 NASB) "[W]e are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

Apologetics isn't a hobby for theologians — it's a basic Christian responsibility. Every Christian will encounter objections, doubts, false teachings, and skeptical questions in their lifetime. Christ commands us to be ready.

In short: Spreading the gospel and defending the gospel are two sides of the same coin. Both are commanded. Both are necessary. Both are loving.

D. THE BIBLICAL DUTY TO "DO" THE WORD (JAMES 1:22)

Spreading and defending the gospel are not enough. The Bible commands a third dimension that completes the calling: doing the Word.

(James 1:22-25 CSB) "But **be doers of the word** and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Because if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like someone looking at his own face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of person he was. But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works -- this person will be blessed in what he does."

Doctrine that does not transform behavior is not really believed. James pulls no punches on this point. A Christian who hears the Word but does not do the Word is self-deceived.

Jesus said the same thing in His own words.

(Matt. 7:24-27 KJV) [Jesus] "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and **doeth** them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone who heareth these sayings of mine and **doeth them not**, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

(Luke 6:46 NASB) [Jesus] "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and **do** not do what I say?"

(John 14:15 CSB) [Jesus] "If you love me, you will **keep** my commands."

The Christian life is not just an intellectual exercise. It is the daily practice of following Jesus Christ.

"Doing" or living the Word includes:

- Personal holiness and the fight against sin (Rom. 8:13; 1 Pet. 1:14-16)
- Prayer and worship (1 Thess. 5:17; John 4:24)
- Loving one another within the body (John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-8)
- Caring for the poor, widows, and orphans (James 1:27)
- Honest, faithful work in our God-given vocations (Col. 3:23-24; 1 Thess. 4:11-12)
- Faithful marriage and family life (Eph. 5:22-6:4)
- Persevering through trials (James 1:2-4; Heb. 12:1-2)
- Public witness and good works that point others to Christ (Matt. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:12)

The connection to spreading and defending the gospel is direct. A Christian who proclaims a gospel they do not visibly live betrays the gospel itself. The watching world is not wrong to be skeptical of Christians whose lives contradict their profession.

(Titus 1:16 CSB) "They claim to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, and unfit for any good work."

(1 John 2:3-6 NASB) "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

In short: A faith that does not change a life was never saving faith to begin with. The way we live our lives is itself a sermon — preaching either the truth or a lie about Christ.

E. THE THREE DUTIES ARE ONE CALLING

Spreading, defending, and doing are not three separate Christian duties competing for our time. They are three dimensions of one calling.

- We spread the gospel because we are ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).
- We defend the gospel because we honor Christ as Lord (1 Pet. 3:15).
- We do the gospel because we love Christ as Lord (John 14:15).

When all three are present, the Christian life is whole. When any one is missing, something is broken.

A Christian who spreads the gospel but cannot defend it will be confused or silenced when objections come.

A Christian who defends the gospel but does not spread it has become a debater rather than a witness.

A Christian who spreads and defends the gospel but does not do the Word destroys their own witness through hypocrisy.

But a Christian who spreads, defends, and lives the gospel — week after week, year after year, in ordinary faithful obedience — that Christian is a powerful instrument in the hands of God.

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SPREADING AND DEFENDING THE GOSPEL

Stepping back, several truths stand out:

1. The Christian life is missional by nature.

Once you are saved, you are commissioned. There is no such thing as a Christian who is exempt from the Great Commission, the call to defend the faith, or the call to live in obedience. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19 NASB).

2. Every Christian is called to spread the gospel.

Not just pastors. Not just missionaries. Not just gifted evangelists. Every believer is sent into the world as a witness for Christ. Your neighbors, coworkers, family members, and friends are part of "all nations." So is the stranger God puts in your path.

3. Every Christian is called to defend the gospel.

Not just apologists. Not just seminary graduates. Every believer must be ready to give a reasoned answer for the hope that is in them — with gentleness and respect, but also with conviction and clarity. We should be "ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15 CSB).

4. Every Christian is called to "do" and live the gospel.

Not just the spiritually elite. Not just the ones who feel like it. Every believer is called to be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only. The Word must reach the hands and feet, not just the head. "But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22 CSB).

5. Spreading, defending, and doing are inseparable.

A church that proclaims a gospel it does not defend will be silenced. A church that defends a gospel it does not proclaim will become a debate club. A church that proclaims and defends a gospel it does not live will be exposed as hypocrites. All three together make a faithful, healthy, biblical Christian life.

6. The Holy Spirit empowers the work.

We are not on our own. "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses" (Acts 1:8 NASB). The same Spirit who saved us empowers us for the mission.

7. The mission is urgent.

People are dying every day without Christ. Eternity hangs in the balance. The fields are white for harvest (John 4:35). The laborers are still few (Matt. 9:37). And Jesus is still saying, "Go."

In short: You were saved to be sent. You were taught to teach. You were defended to defend. And you were transformed to live transformed — every day, in every sphere of life, for the glory of Jesus Christ.

IX. THE KINGDOM

A. INTRODUCTION

Jesus' very first public message was about the kingdom.

(Mark 1:14-15 NASB) "Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'"

The kingdom of God is one of the most important — and most misunderstood — themes in the entire Bible.

Jesus mentioned the kingdom over 100 times in the Gospels. He taught about it in parable after parable. He instructed His followers to seek it first (Matt. 6:33) and to pray for its coming (Matt. 6:10).

And yet many Christians today have only the vaguest sense of what the kingdom is, what it demands, and how it applies to their lives right now.

This section will consider:

- What the kingdom of God is
- The kingdom is "already" present and "not yet" fully consummated
- Citizens of the kingdom are called to actively live as such
- The King will return to consummate His kingdom

The kingdom is **not** heaven (though heaven is part of it). The kingdom is **not** the church (though the church proclaims it). The kingdom is **not** a future political utopia (though Christ will reign forever).

The kingdom **is** the active reign of God — present now in the hearts of those who submit to King Jesus, and one day to be fully realized when He returns to make all things new.

B. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

1. The Kingdom Is the Reign of God

The Greek word translated “kingdom” (*basileia*) refers primarily to kingly rule or royal authority, not just a geographic territory. To speak of “the kingdom of God” is to speak of God reigning as King.

(Ps. 103:19 CSB) “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his **kingdom** rules over all.”

(Dan. 4:34b KJV) “I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his **kingdom** is from generation to generation...”

(1 Tim. 1:17 NASB) “Now to the **King** eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

In one sense, God always reigns over all creation as Sovereign Lord — that is His unchallengeable rule over everything He has made. But in the redemptive sense, God’s kingdom is His active, gracious reign over the people who willingly submit to Him as King through Jesus Christ.

2. Jesus Is the King

The Bible identifies Jesus Christ as the promised King of God’s kingdom.

(Luke 1:32-33 NASB) [The angel to Mary, regarding Jesus] “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and **His kingdom will have no end.**”

(John 18:36-37 CSB) “Jesus said, ‘My **kingdom** is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn’t be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’ ‘You are a king then?’ Pilate asked. ‘You say that I’m a king,’ Jesus replied. ‘I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth.’”

(Rev. 19:16 KJV) “And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.**”

When Jesus stood before Pilate, He did not deny being a king. He simply clarified that His kingdom was of a different nature than the political kingdoms of this world. His kingdom would not be advanced by sword, but by the proclamation of the gospel.

Yet make no mistake — He is the King, and He will return one day to reign visibly over all the earth (Rev. 11:15; 19:11-16).

3. The Kingdom Is Entered by Repentance and Faith

Jesus made the entry requirements clear from the beginning of His ministry.

(Mark 1:15 CSB) [Jesus] “The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom** of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

(John 3:3 NASB) [Jesus to Nicodemus] “Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**”

(Col. 1:13-14 NASB) “For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the **kingdom** of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

You do not enter the kingdom by being born into a Christian family, by being baptized as an infant, by being morally good, by being religious, or by being sincere.

You enter the kingdom only by being born again through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other door.

C. THE KINGDOM IS “ALREADY” AND “NOT YET”

One of the most important — and most freeing — biblical truths about the kingdom is that it is both already here and not yet fully here. Theologians sometimes call this the “already / not yet” tension.

1. The Kingdom Is Already Present

Jesus inaugurated the kingdom at His first coming. When He cast out demons, healed the sick, forgave sins, and rose from the dead, the kingdom of God was breaking into history.

(Matt. 12:28 NASB) [Jesus] “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then **the kingdom of God has come upon you.**”

(Luke 17:20-21 CSB) “When he was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with something observable; no one will say, ‘See, here!’ or ‘There!’ For you see, **the kingdom of God is in your midst.**”

(Col. 1:13 CSB) “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and **transferred us into the kingdom** of the Son he loves.”

When a person is born again, they are already citizens of God's kingdom. They live under the King's reign right now. They obey His commands right now. They serve His mission right now. Heaven has not waited until death to begin — it has already invaded the present.

2. The Kingdom Is Not Yet Consummated

At the same time, the kingdom is not yet fully here. Sin still exists. Death still reigns. Evil still afflicts the world. Christians still struggle. The King has not yet returned visibly to set everything right.

(Rom. 8:22-23 CSB) "For we know that **the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now**. Not only that, but we ourselves who have the Spirit as the firstfruits -- we also groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for adoption, the redemption of our bodies."

(1 Cor. 15:24-25 NASB) "[T]hen comes the end, when He hands over the **kingdom** to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

(Rev. 11:15 CSB) "The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the **kingdom** of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'"

So the Christian lives in the overlap of the ages — saved citizens of an already-arrived kingdom that has not yet been consummated.

We have one foot in this present age (with all its brokenness) and one foot in the age to come (with all its glory).

3. Why This Matters

The "already / not yet" tension answers two of the most important questions a Christian can ask.

Question 1: Why is there still so much evil in the world if Jesus is King?

Answer: Because the kingdom is not yet fully consummated. The King reigns, but His enemies have not yet been finally defeated. That day is coming — but it has not yet come.

Question 2: What am I supposed to do in the meantime?

Answer: Live as a citizen of the kingdom right now. Obey the King. Pray for His kingdom to advance (Matt. 6:10). Proclaim His kingship. Work for truth, justice, and righteousness wherever God has placed you. The King has come. The King is reigning. The King is returning. Live like it.

D. CITIZENS OF THE KINGDOM ARE CALLED TO ACTIVE LIVING

The kingdom of God is not a passive religion of private inner peace. It is an active reign that demands active citizenship.

A Christian who has been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13) is now under new orders. The King has commanded His people to live actively — not passively — in this present age.

1. Seek First the Kingdom

Above every other priority in life, kingdom citizens are commanded to seek God's kingdom first.

(Matt. 6:33 NASB) [Jesus] "But **seek first His kingdom** and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

This is not a promise that Christians won't have to work, plan, save, or strive. It is a command about what comes first. The career, the family, the home, the hobbies, the retirement plan — none of these is to compete with the kingdom of God for first place in a Christian's heart.

2. Love God and Love Neighbor

Kingdom citizenship is summarized in two great commands.

(Matt. 22:37-39 CSB) [Jesus] "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself."

These are not two soft sentiments. They are two active commands.

Loving God means doing what He says (John 14:15). Loving neighbor means acting for their good — including their eternal good.

A Christianity that is content to think nice thoughts about God and our neighbors but does nothing for either is not the Christianity of the Bible.

3. Spread the King's Gospel

Kingdom citizens are sent into all the world as the King's ambassadors, proclaiming the good news of His reign and inviting others to repent and enter.

(Matt. 28:18-19 CSB) [Jesus] "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."

(2 Cor. 5:20 NASB) “Therefore, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us**; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Section VIII covered this in more depth. The point here is that evangelism is not optional Christian extracurricular activity — it is the basic mission of every kingdom citizen.

4. Live as Light in the Darkness

Kingdom citizens are called to bring the King’s truth and justice into a dark world.

(Matt. 5:14-16 CSB) [Jesus] “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.**”

(Eph. 5:11 CSB) “Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead **expose them.**”

(Phil. 2:14-15 NASB) “Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you **appear as lights in the world.**”

Jesus did not say “you are the light of the church.” He said “you are the light of the world.” Salt is useless in the salt-shaker. Light is useless under a basket.

Kingdom citizens are sent into the world to make a visible difference for righteousness.

5. Seek Justice and Righteousness

Throughout Scripture, God’s people are called to actively pursue justice and righteousness in every sphere of life.

(Mic. 6:8 NASB) “He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to **do justice, to love kindness**, and to walk humbly with your God?”

(Isa. 1:17 CSB) “**Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice.** Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.”

(Amos 5:24 KJV) “But **let judgment run down as waters**, and righteousness as a mighty stream.”

(Prov. 21:3 NASB) “To **do righteousness and justice** is desired by the LORD more than sacrifice.”

(Prov. 31:8-9 CSB) “Speak up for those who have no voice, for the justice of all who are dispossessed. **Speak up, judge righteously, and defend the cause of the oppressed and needy.**”

To do justice is to give people what they are rightly owed — including the unborn, the widow, the orphan, the persecuted, the poor, and the powerless. To pursue righteousness is to live according to God’s standards in every area of life.

In short: kingdom citizens are not called to merely avoid injustice. They are called to actively pursue justice and righteousness — wherever God has placed them, with whatever lawful means are available to them.

6. Be Doers of the Word

Kingdom citizenship is not measured by what we say but by what we do.

(James 1:22 CSB) “But **be doers of the word and not hearers only**, deceiving yourselves.”

(Matt. 7:21 KJV) [Jesus] “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; **but he that doeth the will of my father** which is in heaven.”

(1 John 3:18 NASB) “Little children, **let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.**”

A “kingdom citizen” who never actually obeys the King is no citizen at all.

7. Engage as Salt and Light Through Lawful Means

In countries with participatory government — like the United States — kingdom citizens have a unique opportunity to engage in lawful, peaceful means of advancing truth, justice, and righteousness in the public square.

This includes voting according to biblical convictions, peacefully petitioning the government, running for office, joining godly organizations, supporting just causes, helping the poor and lost, suing for violation of constitutional rights, and otherwise exercising the rights and freedoms God has providentially provided through these forms of government.

(1 Pet. 2:13-15 NASB) “Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

Submitting to legitimate authority is a Christian duty. But so is doing good — and in countries where good can be done lawfully through political and civic engagement, kingdom citizens are not free to passively withdraw from the world. The world will not become more righteous by Christians refusing to engage with it.

(Acts 5:29 NASB) “But Peter and the apostles answered, **‘We must obey God rather than men.’**”

When human laws or commands clearly contradict the law of God, kingdom citizens must obey God first. But until that line is crossed, faithful, lawful engagement with civil society is a way of loving God and loving neighbor.

For more on the Christian’s calling to engage culture, see **Season 4: Discernment**.

E. THE KING WILL RETURN TO CONSUMMATE HIS KINGDOM

The kingdom is already here. The kingdom is not yet fully here. But the kingdom will be fully here.

(Rev. 11:15 CSB) “The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, **‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.’**”

(Rev. 19:11, 16 NASB) “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ... And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, **‘King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.’**”

(1 Cor. 15:24-25 CSB) “Then comes the end, when **he hands over the kingdom to God the Father**, when he abolishes all rule and authority and power. For he must reign until he puts all his enemies under his feet.”

(Phil. 2:9-11 NASB) “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that **at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”

When Christ returns, every knee will bow — willingly or unwillingly — and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. Sin, death, Satan, and evil will be finally and forever defeated. The new heavens and new earth will dawn. And the King will reign in unhindered glory forever.

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE KINGDOM

Stepping back, several truths stand out:

1. Jesus Christ is King.

He is not merely a teacher, a prophet, or a religious figure. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords — the rightful Ruler of every human heart and of every nation on earth. “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:36 CSB).

2. The kingdom is here now.

When Jesus came, the kingdom of God broke into history. Every person who repents and believes in Him is already a citizen of His kingdom — not waiting for someday, but living under His reign right now.

3. The kingdom is not yet fully here.

Sin, death, suffering, and evil still afflict this present age. The King reigns, but His enemies have not yet been finally vanquished. Creation still groans. Christians still struggle. We live in the tension of the “**already / not yet.**”

4. Kingdom citizenship is active, not passive.

The King has not commissioned His people to retreat from the world and wait. He has commissioned them to seek first the kingdom, to spread the gospel, to be salt and light, to do justice and love mercy, to expose darkness, to be doers of the Word — in every sphere of life and through every lawful means available.

5. The church is not a showboat — it is a battleship (A. Rogers)

The Christian life is not a leisure cruise. It is active spiritual warfare in service of an active King who is on mission to redeem a fallen world. Kingdom citizens are sailors and soldiers, not spectators.

6. The King is coming back.

The same Jesus who came the first time as a suffering Savior will return as a conquering King. “He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15 CSB). Every wrong will be righted. Every tear will be wiped away. Every enemy will be put under His feet. And the kingdom will be consummated in glory.

7. Live like a citizen of that kingdom.

The most important question for every Christian is not, “Am I going to heaven when I die?” — though that question matters.

The most important question is, “Am I living right now as a citizen of the kingdom of God?”

Are you obeying the King? Spreading His gospel? Loving your neighbor? Doing justice? Walking humbly with your God? Being a doer of the Word?

In short: The King has come. The King is reigning. The King is returning. Live like it.

X. END TIMES

A. INTRODUCTION

The Bible's teaching about the future — what theologians call **eschatology** (from Greek *eschatos*, “last things”) — has fascinated, comforted, and puzzled Christians for two thousand years.

Some Christians spend so much time speculating about the end times that they neglect the present. Others avoid the subject entirely because it seems too complex or too divisive. Both extremes miss the point.

The Bible has much to say about the end of history. Roughly **one out of every twenty verses in the New Testament** addresses some aspect of the second coming, the resurrection, the judgment, or the eternal state. Jesus Himself spoke of His return repeatedly. The Apostles preached it. The early church lived in expectation of it. We should too.

This section will consider:

- What all orthodox Christians agree about the end times
- The major views faithful Christians hold on the sequence of end-time events
- What most Southern Baptists believe
- How end-times truth should shape our living right now — especially evangelism

Two important reminders before we begin.

First, faithful Christians have disagreed on the timing and sequence of end-time events for the entire history of the church. Augustine held one view. The early church fathers leaned another way. The Reformers held different views still.

Today, faithful evangelicals hold a variety of positions. Disagreement on the sequence of end-time events is not a denial of Christian orthodoxy. What unites all faithful Christians is the certainty of Christ's return, not the timing of intermediate events.

Second, eschatology is the most heavily debated area of Christian doctrine for a reason. Much of the relevant biblical material is symbolic, prophetic, and apocalyptic — genres that require careful interpretation. Reverent humility is appropriate. Anyone who claims to have the end times perfectly mapped out probably doesn't.

B. WHAT ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AGREE ABOUT THE END TIMES

Before we consider the differences, let's be clear about the massive common ground all faithful, Bible-believing Christians share. These are the non-negotiables of biblical eschatology — the doctrines no orthodox Christian denies.

1. Jesus Christ Will Personally and Visibly Return

Every orthodox Christian affirms that the same Jesus who ascended into heaven will personally return.

(Acts 1:11 CSB) [The two angels] “They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven.’”

(1 Thess. 4:16 NASB) “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

(Rev. 1:7 KJV) “Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.”

This return will not be secret, symbolic, or merely spiritual. It will be personal, visible, bodily, and unmistakable. Every eye will see Him.

2. There Will Be a Bodily Resurrection of the Dead

All who have died — believers and unbelievers — will be raised bodily.

(John 5:28-29 NASB) [Jesus] “Do not marvel at this: for an hour is coming, in which **all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth**; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.”

(1 Cor. 15:51-53 KJV) “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and **the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed**. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

(Dan. 12:2 CSB) “Many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to disgrace and eternal contempt.”

3. There Will Be a Final Judgment

Every human being who has ever lived will stand before God in judgment.

(Heb. 9:27 NASB) “[I]t is appointed for men to die once and after this comes **the judgment...**”

(2 Cor. 5:10 CSB) “For we must all appear before the **judgment** seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”

(Rev. 20:11-12 NASB) “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened...”

4. There Will Be Two Eternal Destinies

Believers will spend eternity in conscious joy with God in heaven. Unbelievers will spend eternity in conscious punishment in hell.

(Matt. 25:46 KJV) [Jesus] “And these shall go away into **everlasting punishment**; but the righteous into **life eternal**.”

(Rev. 21:3-4 NASB) “And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.'”

(Rev. 20:15 CSB) “And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

See Section V.D.6. for fuller treatment of hell.

5. There Will Be a New Heavens and a New Earth

Creation itself will be renewed, freed from the curse, and made the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed.

(2 Pet. 3:13 NASB) “But according to His promise we are looking for **new heavens and a new earth**, in which righteousness dwells.”

(Rev. 21:1-2 NASB) “Then I saw **a new heaven and a new earth**; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband."

6. Satan Will Be Finally and Forever Defeated

The defeat of Satan that was secured at the cross will be completed and made manifest at the end.

(Rev. 20:10 NASB) "And the **devil** who deceived them was **thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night **forever and ever**."

(Rom. 16:20a KJV) "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

7. The Kingdom of God Will Be Fully Consummated

The kingdom that began with Christ's first coming will be brought to its final and complete fulfillment.

(Rev. 11:15 CSB) "The seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven saying, 'The **kingdom** of the world has become the **kingdom** of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'"

(1 Cor. 15:24-25 NASB) "[T]hen comes the end, when He hands over the **kingdom** to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet."

These seven affirmations are non-negotiable. Every faithful Christian believes them.

Where Christians genuinely disagree is in how and when these things relate to one another — and especially the meaning of the millennium, the timing of the rapture, and the interpretation of various prophetic symbols.

C. THE MAJOR END TIMES VIEWS FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS HOLD

What follows is a fair, brief sketch of the major positions held by orthodox, Bible-believing Christians on the sequence of end-time events.

Each view has serious biblical scholars, faithful pastors, and devoted believers behind it. Each can be held in reverent humility before the Word of God.

The two main areas of disagreement are:

- **The Millennium** — what to make of the thousand-year reign of Christ described in Revelation 20:1-6.
- **The Tribulation and the Rapture** — what to make of the period of intense tribulation described in Daniel, Matthew 24, and Revelation, and how the rapture (1 Thess. 4:16-17) relates to it.

1. Classical (Historical) Premillennialism

Core claim: Jesus Christ will return before (pre-) the millennium. The “thousand years” of Revelation 20 is a literal future earthly reign of Christ.

Classical premillennialism is the **oldest** end-times view in church history. The earliest church fathers — including Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others in the first three centuries after the Apostles — held some form of premillennialism.

The basic sequence on this view:

- The present church age continues, with both growth of the gospel and growing opposition.
- A period of great tribulation comes before Christ’s return.
- Christ returns visibly and personally to defeat His enemies.
- Christ establishes a literal thousand-year reign on earth.
- After the millennium, Satan is finally defeated, the dead are judged, and the new heavens and new earth come.

Classical premillennialism distinguishes itself from later dispensational premillennialism primarily by its more unified view of God’s people (one redeemed people of God across the testaments, rather than a sharp Israel/church distinction) and its tendency to place the rapture at or near the end of the tribulation rather than before it. Modern proponents include Wayne Grudem and George Eldon Ladd.

2. Dispensational Premillennialism

Core claim: Same basic premillennial framework — Christ returns before a literal thousand-year reign — but with a sharper distinction between Israel and the church, and typically (though not always) a pretribulational rapture.

Dispensational premillennialism became widespread in the late 1800s and dominated much of American evangelicalism in the 20th century, especially through the Scofield Reference Bible, Dallas Theological Seminary, and authors like Hal Lindsey and the Left Behind series.

The basic sequence on the most common dispensational view:

- The church age continues until the rapture.
- Christ returns to take His church to heaven (the pretribulational rapture), removing believers before the worst tribulation begins.
- A seven-year tribulation period begins on earth, focused largely on Israel.
- At the end of the tribulation, Christ returns visibly with His church to defeat His enemies (this is the second phase of His coming).
- Christ establishes a literal thousand-year reign on earth, with Israel having a distinct role.
- After the millennium, Satan is finally defeated, the dead are judged, and the new heavens and new earth come.

Some dispensationalists hold to **midtribulational** or **post-tribulational rapture** timing rather than pretribulational, but pretribulationism is the most common dispensational position.

Major proponents include John MacArthur, Adrian Rogers, and Charles Ryrie.

3. Amillennialism

Core claim: The “thousand years” of Revelation 20 is symbolic, not literal. It represents the entire current church age — the period between Christ’s first and second comings — during which Christ reigns spiritually from heaven through His church.

The “a-” prefix is misleading. Amillennialists do not deny a millennium; **they affirm that we are in the millennium right now, understood symbolically.**

The basic sequence on the amillennial view:

- The church age (the symbolic “thousand years”) continues, with both growth of the gospel and continued opposition.

- Christ reigns spiritually now from heaven through His Spirit and His church.
- Toward the end, evil intensifies and there is a final tribulation.
- Christ returns visibly and personally one time (no separate rapture phase).
- The dead are raised at the same moment, both believers and unbelievers.
- The final judgment occurs.
- The new heavens and new earth come.

Amillennialism is a growing view within the SBC and has been the dominant view of much of the historic Reformed and Lutheran traditions, as well as "regular" Baptists. Major proponents include Augustine (the originator of this view), Martin Luther, and John Calvin.

4. Postmillennialism

Core claim: Christ will return after (post-) the millennium. The gospel will so successfully transform the world that there will be a long period of Christian dominance and global righteousness before Christ returns.

The basic sequence on the postmillennial view:

- The church age continues, with the gospel progressively winning more and more of the world.
- A long period of widespread Christianization and relative peace and righteousness comes (the "millennium" — sometimes understood literally as 1,000 years, sometimes symbolically as a long period).
- At the end of this period, there may be a brief final rebellion.
- Christ returns visibly and personally one time.
- The dead are raised, the final judgment occurs, and the new heavens and new earth come.

Postmillennialism was very popular in the 1700s and 1800s (especially in America among the Puritans) and influenced much of the missionary movement of that era.

This view declined sharply after the world wars and the Holocaust made the optimism of "things are getting better and better" seem hard to sustain.

Major historical proponents include Jonathan Edwards, Charles Hodge, and B.B. Warfield.

5. A Note on Preterism (Full vs. Partial)

A closely related interpretive question is **preterism** — the view that many or all of the prophetic events in books like Matthew 24 and Revelation were already fulfilled in the past, especially in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

There are two forms of preterism:

Partial preterism holds that some of the prophetic material — especially the “Olivet Discourse” of Matthew 24 and parts of Revelation — was fulfilled in the events of A.D. 70 (the destruction of the Jerusalem temple by the Romans), while the second coming, resurrection, judgment, and new creation are still future.

Full preterism (sometimes called hyper-preterism or consistent preterism) holds that all prophecy — including the second coming, resurrection of the dead, and final judgment — was fulfilled in A.D. 70.

Full preterism is outside the bounds of historic Christian orthodoxy because it usually denies a future bodily return of Christ, a future bodily resurrection of believers, and a future final judgment. It is rejected by all the major branches of Christianity — Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant.

When this study guide uses the word “preterism” with approval anywhere, it means partial preterism, never full preterism.

D. WHAT MOST SOUTHERN BAPTISTS BELIEVE

Most Southern Baptists hold to some form of premillennialism — the view that Jesus Christ will return before a literal thousand-year reign on earth. Within Southern Baptist life, this generally takes one of two forms:

- **Dispensational premillennialism** — historically popular in many SBC churches, especially in the 20th century, often with a pretribulational rapture and a sharp Israel/church distinction.
- **Classical (historical) premillennialism** — held by other SBC pastors and theologians, with a more unified view of God’s people and a tendency toward post-tribulational rapture timing.

A significant number of SBC pastors hold a position somewhere between these two — affirming a future, premillennial return of Christ followed by a literal thousand-year reign on earth, while leaving the precise timing of the rapture (pretribulational, midtribulational, or post-tribulational) as an open question on which faithful Christians have legitimately disagreed.

The Baptist Faith & Message 2000 affirms the second coming, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the eternal states of heaven and hell — but does not require a specific millennial position. Faithful Southern Baptists may (and do) differ on the millennium and the timing of the rapture.

This study guide deliberately does not treat any one millennial position as a test of orthodoxy. The Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the historic confessions of the church do not require a specific millennial position.

Faithful Christians may differ — and have, throughout church history.

E. WHAT YOU SHOULD ABSOLUTELY NOT DO WITH ESCHATOLOGY

A few warnings before closing.

1. Do Not Set Dates

Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul could not have been clearer.

(Matt. 24:36 NASB) [Jesus] “But **of that day and hour no one knows**, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

(Matt. 24:42 CSB) [Jesus] “Therefore be alert, since **you don't know what day your Lord is coming.**”

(Acts 1:7 KJV) [Jesus] “**It is not for you to know the times** or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.”

Paul echoed Jesus' warning using vivid language:

(1 Thess. 5:1-3 NASB) “Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. For you yourselves know full well that **the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night**. While they are saying, 'Peace and safety!' then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.”

(2 Pet. 3:10 KJV) “But **the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night**; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

(Rev. 16:15a CSB) [Jesus] “Look, **I am coming like a thief.**”

The “thief in the night” image carries a very specific point: a thief does not announce his arrival. He comes when he is not expected. If you knew when the thief was coming, you would be ready. The whole point is that you do not know — so you must always be ready.

Throughout church history, person after person has confidently predicted the date of Christ’s return. Every single one has been wrong. Do not be the next one.

2. “But There Are Signs of the Times” — The Counterargument and Its Limits

Some Christians point out, rightly, that Jesus did describe certain “signs” that would precede His return — wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, the rise of false christs, persecution of believers, the gospel being preached to all nations, and so on.

(Matt. 24:6-8 NASB) [Jesus] “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”

(Matt. 24:14 CSB) [Jesus] “This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

(Luke 21:28 NASB) [Jesus] “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Some argue that since there are signs, we can know — at least roughly — when Christ is returning. There is a measure of truth here. Jesus did give signs, and He did expect His followers to be discerning observers of their times.

But notice three crucial qualifications:

First, every single one of these signs has been visible in every generation since the first century. There have always been wars, famines, earthquakes, false teachers, and persecution. The early church believed they were living in the last days (1 John 2:18; Heb. 1:2). And in one sense, they were — the “last days” began with Christ’s first coming and will continue until His return.

Second, even after listing the signs, Jesus immediately said in Matthew 24:36 (NASB): “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”

If anyone could have used the signs to calculate the timing, it would have been Jesus Himself. He knew the signs better than anyone. And He said even He (in His human knowledge during His earthly ministry) did not know the day or the hour. If Jesus refused to set a date based on the signs, neither should we.

Third, the purpose of the signs is not to enable date-setting. It is to call us to readiness.

(Matt. 24:42-44 NASB) [Jesus] "Therefore, be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."

The signs are pastoral warnings, not chronological data. They are meant to keep us awake and faithful — not to give us a countdown clock.

3. Do Not Make a Millennial Position a Test of Fellowship

A Christian's position on the millennium is not a test of orthodoxy.

We are saved by grace through faith in Christ — not by holding the right view on Revelation 20.

To break fellowship with another faithful, Bible-believing Christian over premil-vs-amil-vs-postmil is to make secondary issues primary, which the Bible warns against.

(Rom. 14:1 CSB) "Welcome anyone who is weak in faith, but don't argue about disputed matters."

4. Do Not Let End-Times Speculation Distract You from Evangelism

This is perhaps the most important warning of all. If you really believe Jesus is returning — and you really believe what He said about hell — then end-times truth should make you more evangelistic, not less. Much more.

Notice what Jesus did when His disciples asked an end-times question:

(Acts 1:6-8 NASB) "So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, 'Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.'"

He told them what they did not need to know (the timing) and what they did need to do (be His witnesses). This is the proper Christian response to end-times truth: the more you believe Jesus is coming back, the more urgently you should want to snatch people from the fire.

(Jude 22-23 CSB) "Have mercy on those who waver; save others by snatching them from the fire; have mercy on others but with fear, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh."

If a building were on fire and you knew people were trapped inside, you would not stand outside and theorize about how the fire started. You would run in and pull people out.

This world is on fire. Eternity is real. Hell is real. Christ is returning. The harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. The time is short. If you really believe what the Bible says about the end, you cannot also believe that evangelism is optional.

A Christian who spends hours debating the timing of the rapture but never shares the gospel with their neighbor has missed the point entirely.

5. Do Not Lose Hope

Whatever your eschatological view, the conclusion is the same: **Jesus wins**. Sin loses. Death loses. Satan loses. Evil loses. The King returns. The dead are raised. The redeemed are glorified. The new heavens and new earth come. And the Bride dwells with her Husband forever.

This is the great hope of every Christian — across every denomination, across every century, across every millennial position.

(Rev. 22:20 KJV) "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

F. CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE END TIMES

Stepping back, several truths stand out:

1. The Bible teaches that history is heading somewhere.

It is not random. It is not endless. It is moving toward the day when Christ returns and God's kingdom is consummated. "[H]e hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:31a KJV).

2. Jesus Christ will personally, visibly, and bodily return.

This is not metaphor, not myth, not a spiritual hope only — it is the literal future return of the same Jesus who walked the earth, died on a cross, rose bodily, and ascended bodily into heaven. "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11b CSB).

3. There will be a bodily resurrection of all the dead.

Believers and unbelievers alike will be raised bodily and stand before God. "[A]n hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth" (John 5:28b-29a NASB).

4. There will be a final judgment.

Every human being will give an account. The redeemed will be welcomed into eternal joy with God. The lost will go away into eternal punishment. "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46 CSB).

5. There will be a new heavens and a new earth.

Creation itself will be renewed. The curse will be reversed. Death will be swallowed up forever. The redeemed will dwell with God in unhindered fellowship for all eternity. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death" (Rev. 21:4a KJV).

6. Faithful Christians have differed on the sequence of intermediate events — and that is okay.

Most Southern Baptists are premillennial, with internal disagreement on rapture timing. Faithful Christians across denominations have loved the Lord and served His church through every position on the millennium. The mark of a true Christian is not a specific millennial chart — it is repentance, faith in Christ, love for God, love for neighbor, and faithful obedience until He comes.

7. Christ will come like a thief in the night — so be ready, and be on mission.

We do not know the day or the hour. Jesus said so. Paul said so. Peter said so. The signs are real, but they will not give us a countdown. The point of the signs is to keep us awake — and the point of being awake is to be on mission.

The disciples asked an end-times question. Jesus answered with a mission: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me ... unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8b KJV).

The more confident you are that Jesus is returning, the more urgently you should snatch people from the fire. The end of all things is at hand. Eternity hangs in the balance. Souls are perishing. The harvest is plentiful. The laborers are few. Go.

In short: Christ is coming. The dead will be raised. Justice will be done. Tears will be wiped away. Evil will be defeated. The kingdom will be consummated. And the Bride will dwell with her Husband forever. Until that day — be ready, be faithful, be on mission, snatch them from the fire.

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

CONCLUSIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

We have come a long way together. We began in **Section I** by asking why a Christian should study doctrine at all, and we have walked through the foundational doctrines of the Christian faith — the Bible, the Trinity, Jesus Christ, humanity and sin, salvation, the church, our mission to spread and defend the gospel, the kingdom of God, and the end times.

The goal of this study guide has not been to make every reader a theologian. The goal has been to give every Christian — pastor or pew, mature believer or new convert — a solid biblical foundation on the things that matter most.

Sound doctrine is not for seminaries alone. Sound doctrine is for ordinary believers who want to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength (Mark 12:30) — and to love their neighbors as themselves (Mark 12:31).

B. SUMMARY OF THE CENTRAL TRUTHS IN THIS STUDY

Stepping back across all sections of this guide, certain great truths stand out — the unshakable foundations of the historic Christian faith. These are the truths every faithful Bible-believing Christian affirms, and these are the truths upon which every Christian life must be built.

1. The Bible Is the Actual Word of God (Section II)

The Bible is not a human book about God. It is God's book to humanity (2 Tim. 3:16). It is breathed out by Him, true in all that it teaches, and the final authority over every other voice — including our own opinions, the voices of culture, and even the voices of well-meaning religious leaders.

The Bible is inerrant, fully sufficient, and completely trustworthy. To submit to the Bible is to submit to God. To set ourselves above the Bible is to set ourselves above God Himself (Col. 2:8).

2. God Is Eternally Triune (Section III)

There is one God. He has eternally existed as three distinct Persons — God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person is fully God. There is one God in three Persons.

This is not a contradiction. It is a mystery. We do not understand it fully — but the Bible teaches it clearly, and we believe it.

3. Jesus Christ Is Fully God and Fully Man (Section IV)

The eternal Son of God — without ceasing to be fully God — took on a real human body in the womb of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life. He died a real death. He rose bodily from the dead. He ascended bodily into heaven. He is even now seated at the right hand of God the Father in His glorified human body — and He is coming back.

To know Jesus is to know God (John 14:9). To reject Jesus is to reject God (1 John 2:23). There is no third option.

4. Humanity Is Both Dignified and Fallen (Section V)

Every human being bears the image of God (Gen. 1:27). This makes every human life sacred, valuable, and worth protecting — from conception to natural death, from the most accomplished to the most disabled.

But every human being has also fallen, inheriting Adam's sinful nature and personally rebelling against the holy God who made us. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) — and not just physical death, but eternal death in hell, which Jesus warned about more than anyone else in the Bible.

We were made for more than we are. We have fallen further than we realize. And we cannot save ourselves.

5. Salvation Is Through Jesus Christ Alone (Section VI)

Jesus Christ — the sinless Son of God — lived the life we could not live, died the death we deserved to die, and rose from the grave to give us life forever. He is the only Savior. He is the only Way. He is the only Name under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It is not earned. It is received. From eternity past, God elects His people. In time, He calls them, regenerates their dead hearts, justifies them by faith, adopts them as His children, sanctifies them over a lifetime, and finally glorifies them in resurrection bodies.

6. The Church Is the Body and Bride of Christ (Section VII)

Once a person is saved, they are saved into a family — the Church. Every believer belongs automatically to the universal church (the body of Christ across every age and nation). Every believer should also belong to a faithful local church where the Word is preached, the ordinances are practiced, and discipline is exercised.

The Church is not optional. The Church is not a man-made institution. The Church belongs to Jesus Christ Himself, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

7. All Christians Are Called to Spread, Defend, and Do the Word (Section VIII)

Every Christian — without exception — is called to spread the gospel (Matt. 28:19-20), defend the gospel (1 Pet. 3:15), and do the Word (James 1:22). These three duties are not optional additions for spiritually elite Christians. They are the basic shape of every Christian life.

A church that does all three is a healthy church. A church that does only one or two is a wounded church. A church that does none is no church at all.

8. The Kingdom of God Is Already Here and Not Yet Fully Here (Section IX)

Jesus Christ is King. His kingdom broke into history at His first coming and will be consummated at His return. Every believer is already a citizen of this kingdom — called to seek it first (Matt. 6:33), live actively under the King's reign, love God and love neighbor, spread the gospel, do justice, walk humbly with God, and shine as light in the darkness.

We are not on a cruise. We are on a mission.

9. Christ Will Return, and All Things Will Be Made New (Section X)

The same Jesus who walked the earth, died on a cross, rose bodily, and ascended bodily into heaven will personally and visibly return. The dead will be raised. Every human being will face final judgment. Believers will dwell forever with God in resurrection glory in a new heavens and new earth. Unbelievers will face eternal punishment in hell.

We do not know when. Jesus does not want us to know when. He wants us to be ready (Matt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:1-3).

C. WHAT THESE DOCTRINES MEAN FOR DAILY LIVING

Doctrine is not just for the head. It is for the heart, the hands, and the feet. Every doctrine in this study guide should change the way Christians actually live.

1. The Bible Is the Word of God — So Read It, Study It, Submit to It

Since the Bible really is the Word of God, it deserves the very best of our time, attention, and obedience. Read it daily. Study it deeply. Memorize it. Meditate on it (Joshua 1:8; Ps. 1:1-2). Submit to it even when — especially when — it cuts against your culture, your preferences, or your sin.

2. God Is Triune — So Worship Him as He Has Revealed Himself

Do not reduce the Father to a distant deity. Do not reduce Jesus to a mere teacher. Do not reduce the Holy Spirit to a mere force. Worship the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, as the New Testament consistently teaches.

3. Jesus Is God — So Love Him, Trust Him, and Obey Him as God

Since Jesus really is God, He is worthy of every ounce of devotion you can give Him. He is not merely your Savior — He is also your Lord. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15 NASB).

4. You Are an Image-Bearer Who Has Fallen — So Live in Humble Dependence on God

You are not a self-made person. You are not basically good. You are not the master of your own destiny. You are a fallen image-bearer in desperate need of grace — and the grace is freely available in Christ. Repent often. Walk in humility. Treat every other human being as a fellow image-bearer of God.

5. You Have Been Saved by Christ Alone — So Rest in Him and Live for Him

Stop trying to earn what God has freely given. Stop trying to add to what Christ has finished. Rest in Him. And out of that rest, live for Him — not to be saved, but because you have been.

6. You Belong to the Church — So Belong to the Church

Get into a faithful local church. Get baptized in obedience to Christ. Take the Lord's Supper regularly with your church family. Submit to godly leadership. Use your gifts to serve others. Encourage other believers. Bear their burdens. Carry the load with them "not neglecting to gather together, as some are in the habit of doing" (Heb. 10:25a CSB).

7. You Are on Mission — So Spread, Defend, and Do the Gospel

Stop waiting for some special moment to get serious about the Great Commission. The moment is now. Share the gospel with your neighbor (Matt. 28:19-20). Be ready with answers (1 Pet. 3:15). Live a life that reflects the gospel you preach. The fields are white for harvest (John 4:35). The laborers are few (Matt. 9:37). And Jesus is still saying, "Go."

8. You Are a Kingdom Citizen — So Live as One

Seek first the kingdom (Matt. 6:33). Pray for it to come (Matt. 6:10). Work for truth, justice, and righteousness wherever God has placed you. Be salt and light. Expose the works of darkness. Refuse to live by lies. "Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God" (Mic. 6:8).

9. Christ Is Coming Back — So Be Ready, and Snatch Others from the Fire

Live every day as if it could be your last on earth — because it could be. Live every day as if Jesus could return today — because He could. And the more you believe He is coming, the more urgently you should want to snatch people from the fire (Jude 23).

D. A FINAL CALL TO FAITHFUL CHRISTIANITY

We end where we began — with the call to active, faithful, mission-driven Christianity.

The world doesn't need more lukewarm Christians. The world doesn't need more Christians who know just enough doctrine to feel comfortable, but not enough to be transformed. The world doesn't need more pew-sitters, showboat-cruisers, or seeker-soft religious consumers.

The world needs Christians who know what they believe and why they believe it — and who live like it matters. That is what this study guide has aimed for from the first page to the last.

You are an image-bearer of the eternal God (Gen. 1:27).

You are a sinner saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9).

You are a member of the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the family of God (1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 2:19; 5:25-27).

You are an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

You are a kingdom citizen called to active service of the King (Matt. 6:33; Phil. 3:20).

You are a soldier in spiritual warfare, equipped with the armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

You are a watchman who must sound the alarm (Ezek. 3:18).

You are a witness called to snatch people from the fire (Jude 23).

You are waiting for the King who is returning soon (Rev. 22:20).

So go. Know the Word. Defend the Word. Do the Word. Love God. Love your neighbor. Spread the gospel. Make disciples. Build up the church. Seek truth, justice, and righteousness.

Be ready when the King comes back. And until that glorious day: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58 NASB)

E. CLOSING WORD

May the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, strengthen you, establish you, and keep you faithful until the day of Jesus Christ.

May you grow in the knowledge of Him through His Word.

May you walk in the light of His truth.

May you be active in the work of His kingdom.

May you be a faithful witness to His gospel.

And may you finish the race set before you, looking always to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of your faith.

"Now to him who is able to protect you from stumbling and to make you stand in the presence of his glory, without blemish and with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time, now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25 CSB).

APPENDIX A: EXCERPTS FROM THE 1978 CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY

"The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age."

"Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word."

"To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master."

"Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority."

"We are persuaded that to deny it [the inerrancy of Scripture] is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith."

A Short Statement

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church."

Articles of Affirmation and Denial

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.

APPENDIX B: PRINCIPLES FOR INTERPRETING THE BIBLE

The 3D Series operates on the following basic assumptions regarding the Bible, covered in more detail in **Season 1: The Authority of Scripture**:

- (1) The entire Bible, the Old and New Testaments (but not the Apocrypha), is the actual Word of God written by divinely inspired human writers (2 Tim. 3:16).
- (2) Though there have been minor copy errors and translation variations over the years, the Bible we have today is over 99.5% accurate to the original writings.
- (3) None of the copy errors and translation variations seriously affect any doctrinal issue. Therefore, the translated Bible in your hand is "effectively" or "substantively" inerrant (without error) and infallible (incapable of error). Jesus and the Apostles, for example, still respected OT Scripture as God's actual word, even though they didn't have the original copies.
- (4) Since the Bible is the actual Word of God, it is consistent and it is the truth.
- (5) Any apparent inconsistencies are only apparent on the surface and should be construed in favor of consistency. See **Appendix B: The Apparent Inconsistency Resolution (AIR) Method**.
- (6) "Red letter only" Christianity is biblically unsound. Since God has existed as an eternal Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, "God's Word" involves the entire Trinity. Therefore, anything done by or said by God in the Bible involves Jesus (for example, John 1:1-3).
- (7) Because of the eternal nature of the Trinity, it is not true that God is mean and wrathful in the OT and nice in the NT. God has always been loving, but he is also just and has the supreme right to expect obedience and to punish for disobedience.
- (8) The NT does not replace the OT. Though most of the ceremonial and dietary laws have been fulfilled by Christ and therefore are inapplicable to Christians today, and though the Israelite civil laws were primarily applicable to the nation of Israel, the moral laws underlying all of the OT laws are, for the most part, still applicable to everyone.
- (9) If the Bible covers an issue or can be reasonably construed as covering an issue, what the Bible says about it is final over any other opinion. The Bible is the rock upon which our opinions should break, not the other way around. The Bible should not be conformed to culture (Col. 2:8).
- (10) Avoid cherry-picking verses out of context. Scripture should be interpreted in context and by other Scripture.
- (11) Pray for wisdom to understand Scripture (James 1:5).
- (12) Consider that there are some things we may not be meant to know (Deut. 29:29).

APPENDIX C:

THE APPARENT INCONSISTENCY (AIR) RESOLUTION METHOD

What follows is a method a Christian can use to understand difficult passages in the Bible that **seem** to be inconsistent.

The "**apparent inconsistency method**" consists of the following basic steps:

- (1) **Pray for wisdom to understand the passages** (James 1:5 KJV: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.");
- (2) **Always assume that the Bible is consistent and true and therefore there is a right answer, even if you cannot figure it out** (2 Tim. 3:16 CSB: "All Scripture is inspired by God"; John 17:17 KJV: "Thy word is truth");
- (3) **Consider that "all Scripture is breathed out by" the eternal Trinity** (for example, Gen. 1:26; Matt. 28:18-20; John 1:1-3, 14). Therefore, (a) Jesus always spoke on behalf of the Triune God as a Person of the Triune God and therefore did not contradict what God has said before Jesus was physically born of Mary, (b) everything God has ever done in the OT and NT involved Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14), and (c) the red-letter-only philosophy contradicts Jesus' own opinion of Scripture (e.g., John 10:35b);
- (4) **Do not subject the Bible to your own judgment but rather submit to the Bible** (Col. 2:8 KJV: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.");
- (5) **Consider we may not be meant to know** (Deut. 29:29 KJV: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of his law.");
- (6) **Consider what other faithful teachers have said about it and study the issue more** (Prov. 11:14 KJV: "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety"; Josh. 1:8 CSB: "meditate on it [the word] day and night"); and
- (7) **Interpret Scripture with Scripture** since all Scripture is consistent, but do not take passages out of context.