

WILDWOOD CHURCH

Doctrinal Statement

Prepared for Ordination Council

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My view of end-time events is best summarized as dispensational, premillennial, pretribulational. I believe that the fullness of the land promise made to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21) and the unending reign of a Davidic King (2 Sam 7:13) are yet to be fulfilled, but will be fulfilled during the literal millennial reign of Jesus on earth.	17
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Section 1: Biographical Information

Question 1 – What is the candidate's general background data, education, and work experience?

I am married to Melissa Hall and together we have one son named Blaise who is 18 months old. My wife is a gifted teacher who spent seven years teaching in Christian education until our son was born. My wife and I have been married for seven years. We have been living in the Quad Cities area for six years.

I attended Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for my undergraduate program where I received a bachelor's in biblical studies. The benefit of being a biblical studies major at Moody was that it allowed me to take a lot of Bible classes compared to other majors. I did my best to take as many Old Testament electives as possible so that I could become more familiar with that portion of Scripture.

Wildwood is my home church which I have been attending since 2002. In 2008, I began working as the children's ministry director intern which was a new position designed to create a greater emphasis on kid's ministry at Wildwood. My responsibilities included overseeing the following programs: nursery, preschool, Awana, kid's small groups, Upward sports program, VBS, and a weekly kids' production.

After my first year of ministry at Wildwood, it was decided to keep me on staff in a permanent role. The following year, the youth pastor resigned which soon led to my current position as the family pastor where I now oversee ministries from birth through college-age. At the onset of becoming Family Pastor I began leading one staff member, the family ministries assistant. Then beginning in the fall of 2013, we hired the family ministries intern who I've been overseeing to this current date.

Question 2 – What is the candidate's testimony of conversion?

I grew up in an irreligious home with both parents and my sister who is eleven years older than me. My father had grown up in a Catholic family, but quickly dismissed both faith and practice upon confirmation. My mother was encouraged to participate in church if she wanted to by her parents, but this only amounted to extremely sporadic appearances at local church services. She became much more engaged by "spirituality" which most believers would consider demonic like Tarot cards. She is adamant that she has placed her faith in Jesus because of a existential experience during her father's dying hours.

Spiritual matters became increasingly important to me when I was seventeen years old in 2001. Due to poor decision-making, a chaotic family situation, drug use, and a number of other variables, my desire to know what was really true about human existence and God became an exalted goal. The pivotal moment which set me off on the journey was praying for the first time by asking God if he was real and if he wanted anything to do with me.

Following that prayer, the next year of my life was spent dabbling in a variety of spiritual sources ranging from astrology to new-age mysticism. It was through new-age teaching that I was first exposed to the idea of Jesus being a historical person. Prior to that, Jesus was viewed as a

fictitious character like Santa. At the same time, I began attending youth group at Wildwood, initially due to a romantic interest in a girl, but my consistent attendance was due primarily to my desire to convert Christians to my worldview.

Nearly a year to the date of my initial prayer, I was at a local restaurant with a group of friends. As I was exiting the restaurant, I was stopped by an elderly gentleman who asked me what I thought would happen to me when I died. He was clearly a Christian and we began to passionately debate for approximately twenty minutes while my friends sat on the curb. He dismantled all of my arguments by masterfully using Scripture in a way that no other believer had ever done with me.

Sensing that I had tested my friends' patience, I asked the man what I needed to do in order to end the conversation. He boldly proclaimed that I needed to put my faith in Jesus. I protested this by declaring that even if Jesus was the Savior that he wouldn't want anything to do with me due to the amount of things that I continued to do that were wrong.

The conversation took a final turn as he became irritated and asked me if I was incompetent and then explained that everyone will sin with or without Jesus, but that with Jesus we have forgiveness. At this point, I conceded and asked what I needed to do in order to put my faith in Jesus. He took me around the side of the building away from my friends and said that we were going to pray together, but that I needed to really mean what I said.

At that moment, I began to reason that if I could honestly and sincerely pray to put my faith in Jesus and if it didn't work, then that would be my final argument against Christianity. However, as I prayed for the forgiveness of my sins, confessing Jesus as my Savior, who died on the cross and rose from the grave, everything changed. I opened my eyes as though for the first time and I hugged the elderly gentleman who I had previously been arguing with.

From that evening it was a slow process of sanctification as I was unsure of what to do next. Fortunately, within the next two months, I was invited to an apologetic conference that helped to level many of my concerns related to the reliability of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus, and creation. Within that same weekend, I began to once again attend the youth group at Wildwood and began serving in various ways.

Question 3 – What is the candidate's call to ministry?

My call to ministry was a process that the Lord slowly revealed to me over time through the Church and through experiences in ministry. The catalyst experience came during my senior of high school while I was attending Fellowship of Christian Athletes. Our student leaders had been told to not prepare a lesson because the Huddle Coach was going to give the message that morning. We sat idly in a classroom because, unbeknownst to my peers or me, our Huddle Coach had uncharacteristically overslept. I decided to go to our public school library to obtain a Bible. The majority of my experiences thus far in devotions were limited to the book of Proverbs which I was accustomed to reading a corresponding chapter with each day of the month. Unsure of what to do, I opened up to the Proverb of the day and began to teach from it. There

was much affirmation from my peers that it was edifying and beneficial. Personally for me it was an extreme delight to teach from the Word of God and it awoke in me a desire I had never experienced before.

From that point, I continued to be discipled by my youth pastor and he began shepherding me for ministry. In addition to that, my opportunities for ministerial responsibility as a layman increased on a number of fronts from the local church to parachurch ministries and more. Consistently throughout those three years it was affirmed to me by Christian leaders and others that I had a gift for teaching and serving. This affirmation has continued to be true throughout my time being employed at Wildwood.

Question 4 – What is the candidate’s family information including the candidate’s wife’s testimony of conversion?

My wife grew up in a single parent household with her mother. She was raised with a strong Catholic background. Due to limited education options, her mother enrolled her in a Protestant high school where she came to a saving knowledge of Jesus through a number of her peers. She regularly cites Ephesians 2:8-9 as the key passage which convinced her that her Catholic view of grace and works was incompatible with the teaching of the Scriptures. Over the course of the next year she began to attend Willow Creek Community Church, and through a number of circumstances her mother came to faith as well.

Section 2: Doctrinal Statement

Bibliology

Revelation is both the process of how God reveals himself to mankind and the knowable content about Him. “The word *revelation* is derived from the Greek word *apokalupsis*, which means ‘disclosure’ or ‘unveiling.’”¹ God’s revelation is available to mankind in two primary forms which are typically designated as general revelation and special revelation.

General Revelation

General revelation is the way mankind can know of God and know things about Him (Rom 1:19-20). It is insufficient for salvation or knowledge of how to be in a relationship with Him. There are three primary modes of general revelation which are creation, conscience, and common grace.

Psalms 19 begins with “the sky above proclaims his handiwork.” (Ps 19:1-6). As he continues, it is clear that observing the world around us should lead us to the conclusion that there is a God and He is glorious. Paul builds on this further by stating, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them” (Rom 1:19). But despite God being

¹ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*

observable from creation, mankind has consistently chosen to worship creation instead of the Creator (Rom 1:23).

One of the unique qualities mankind possesses is the conscience. God has imprinted His law upon mankind (Rom 2:14-15). This is evident in the consistency of what people have felt guilty over despite time, location, and cultural differences.

Although the term “common grace” does not appear in the Bible, the concept is clear. This term refers to God’s unmerited favor is at times and in various ways displayed to people regardless of their beliefs and behaviors. An example of this is recorded in the book of Acts when Paul is speaking to the people of Lystra. He points out that despite people’s sinfulness the grace of God was upon them. His specific illustration is that of agriculture, for one cannot produce crops without God’s provision of grace (Acts 14:15-17).

Special Revelation

Special revelation is God’s great gift to mankind because by it we may experience salvation and be in relationship with Him. Special revelation is God directly communicating to man what is true of him. The two modes of special revelation with which God has communicated to mankind are through Jesus the Messiah and in the Scriptures.

God revealed two important things through Jesus to mankind. First, through Jesus’ teaching and ministry, He revealed what God is like (Jn 1:18, 5:36, 6:63). The second thing that God revealed through Jesus is how people can be saved by trusting in the Messiah (Heb 1:1-3).

God has revealed much about Himself through His written Word (Ps 119:9, 11, 105). In addition to revealing Himself through the Scriptures, He has also revealed guidelines for how one ought to live in relationship with Him and conduct themselves with others (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Nature of Scripture

Understanding the nature of Scripture is done by understanding the following two concepts: inspiration and inerrancy.

Inspiration is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit mediating the process between God and the writers of the Scriptures (2 Pet 1:21). The Holy Spirit guided each writer while still allowing their personality, context, and culture to be expressed through their own words (language, grammar, style, etc). Since The Holy Spirit is God and God is true then the original autographs must be free of errors (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 3:4). This applies to not only spiritual truths, but to the very words used (Mt 5:17-18). As a result, the Scriptures are sufficient for knowing God (Rom 10:13-17) and authoritative on instructing us how to live (2 Tim 3:17).

Interpretation of Scripture

I hold to a literal, grammatical, and historical hermeneutic. The Bible is best understood to be literal unless there is a literary device at work that should cause a particular portion of Scripture to be read differently. Another way of saying this is to say, “Go with the plain sense, unless the plain sense doesn’t make sense.”

The Bible is also to be read within the framework of the grammatical rules that apply to the original language. In God’s sovereignty, He had the original manuscripts written in time and place using human languages with rules in place to help make sense out of the words. To ignore the grammar of the original languages is to abandon reason and logic.

My understanding of a historical hermeneutic is two-fold. First, I believe the Bible is the best interpreter of the Bible. Therefore, a fuller understanding of the history presented in the Bible will help to interpret teachings and events that happen at other points within the Bible. Second, we have a wealth of archaeological records to help illuminate the world in which the Bible took place. There is benefit to understanding the world that the original audiences were living. It decreases the likelihood of reading our own cultural experiences back onto the biblical passages without first understanding the author's original intent.

Illumination

There is a need to have God help us with our understanding of the Scriptures (Lk 24:45). The reason for this is due to man's fallen condition (1 Cor 2:11). We need the work of the Holy Spirit to help us understand the mind of God (1 Cor 2:14). Furthermore, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to confirm within a person the truth of Scripture as they receive it either by reading or by hearing.

Canonicity

The Old Testament and New Testament make up the complete revelation of God's Word. This is limited to the sixty-six books found within English translations. These books exist in unity, without division or contradiction. The canon was closed after the completion of the book of Revelation. Nothing is to be added to God's Word (Rev 22:18-19).

The first 39 books (Tanakh/Old Testament/Hebrew Bible) were recognized as Scripture by Israel because they indicated divine authority and were received by a mediator who was speaking on behalf of God (Ex 17:14, 24:4, 34:27; Num 33:2; Deut 4:2; Josh 23:6). Books following the Torah (Pentateuch) must be in accordance with it. Before the time of Jesus these books were established, most likely during the ministry of Ezra. Jesus affirmed these books as being Scripture (Lk 24:44, Jn 10:35).

The following 27 books (Writings of the Apostles/New Testament) were recognized by the Church as Scripture, being divinely authoritative, and written by an Apostle or one who was writing under the authority of an Apostle. Even before the completion of the canon, there was recognition that what was being written was authoritative in the same way the Tanakh was (1 Tim 5:18; 2 Pet 3:15-16).

Theology Proper

Trinity

God is spirit (Jn 4:24; 1 Jn 4:12). God is one in essence and eternally exists in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Deut 6:4; Mt 3:16-17). Each person is equal in essence and attributes, but they each willingly function in a different role that is in perfect unity with one another (Gen 1:26). God the Father sends the Son and the Son sends the Holy Spirit as they function perfectly in submission to one another as well (Jn 5:37, 14:16).

Incommunicable Attributes of God

The following is a list of attributes that describe who God is. The first list includes His incommunicable attributes or the attributes that belong to God alone.

Perfection

God is holy; there is no flaw or sin in Him (Isa 6:3; 1 Pet 1:16). He is present at all places at once (Ps 139:7-10) and is not limited by space (Acts 7:48).

Eternally Self-Existent

He exists eternally, meaning that He always was, is and always will be in existence (Ps 90:2; Rev 1:8). His existence is not dependent upon anyone or anything else (Jn 5:26).

Sovereignty

In God's infinite wisdom, He has a plan that will cause Him to receive the greatest glory (Isa 46:10-11). In this plan, He has decreed Creation, the Fall, the election of saints and the Messiah (Eph 1:11-14, 3:11; Acts 2:22-24). All that God wills will come to pass (Rev 4:11).

Immutability

God does not change (Mal 3:6). This has always been true of him (Heb 13:8). This applies to not only His character, but His entire self (Heb 6:17; Jas 1:17).

Communicable Attributes of God

This list will contain the attributes of God that are shared with humanity. It is important to clarify that in each area God exhibits each one perfectly and humans demonstrate them imperfectly. These are God's communicable attributes: loving (1 John 4:8), just, (Deut 32:4), knowledgeable (Ps 147:5; 1 Jn 3:20), wisdom (Prov 2:6), truthful (Prov 30:5; Heb 6:18), compassionate (Ex 22:27, 34:6), powerful (Isa 46:10; Mt 19:26), good (Ps 34:8; Lk 18:19), peaceful (1 Cor 14:33, Phil 4:9), jealous (Ex 20:5, 34:14), and wrathful (Jn 3:36; Rom 1:18).

Christology

Deity of Messiah

On the basis of Messianic Prophecy, it is clear that the Messiah would not be only a man, but God as well (Isa 9:6; Mic 5:2). Numerous passages in the New Testament affirm that Jesus was divine (John 1:1, 5:18, 8:58; Col 1:15-17, 2:9; Heb 1:3, 8).

Jesus' Pre-existence

Prior to the incarnation of Messiah there are clear indications of the second member of the Trinity being present. First, the New Testament affirms His work in creation (Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6). Second, His presence in the Old Testament is often identified as "The Angel of the Lord" (Judg 6:11). The Angel of the Lord is also identified as Lord (Judg 6:14). In addition, the Angel of the Lord never appears after the incarnation of Messiah.

Incarnation and Hypostatic Union

Jesus was born a sinless man and lived a sinless life (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 2:22; 1 Jn 3:5) because He was conceived by a virgin named Mary and the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18, 22-23). Jesus' humanity is further demonstrated in the fact that He had a genealogy (Mt 1:1-16; Lk 3:23-38). He had a developmental process like most humans do (Lk 2:52). He had human desires and emotions like being hungry (Mt 4:2), weary (Jn 4:2), crying (Jn 11:35), and thirsty (Jn 19:28). There are numerous passages that demonstrate Jesus' humanity (Jn 1:14; Phil 2:7-8; 1 Tim 3:16).

Hypostatic union is the key term in describing the relationship between Jesus' two natures. Jesus is the same person He was before His incarnation, but at the incarnation His divine

nature took on His human nature as well. In regards to Jesus “empt[ying] Himself” (Phil 2:7), it is clear from the context that Jesus did not lose any of His divinity. Instead, He added to Himself a human nature (Phil 2:8). Plus, He temporarily relinquished His freedom to exercise some of His incommunicable attributes (Mt 24:36) and relied upon the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16). Jesus’ two natures remain inseparable, but distinguished by not diminishing or mixing the divine and human natures.

There are multiple accounts of Jesus’ humanity and divinity being present at the same time. One particular example is when Jesus goes from sleeping in a boat due to His need for rest (humanity) and then wakes up and demonstrates His authority over nature (divinity) (Mk 4:35-41).

Earthly Ministry

The purpose of Jesus’ earthly ministry was to authenticate himself as Messiah through ministering to the lost sheep of Israel by revealing Himself through signs and wonders and teaching (Mt 11:4-5, 15:24; Jn 10:10).

Death, Resurrection, and Ascension

Jesus predicted His death to be a ransom for many (Mk 10:45). It was a ransom because He was a substitution for those who believed in Him (Isa 53:4-6; 1 Pet 2:24). The Scriptures teach that we have been redeemed or purchased by a price which was done through Jesus’ death (1 Cor 6:20). Since Jesus has satisfied the wrath of God (Rom 5:25) through His death then we can be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18-19). Therefore we have been justified (Rom 5:1).

Jesus predicted His resurrection as well (Mt 16:21). It was prophesied that Messiah would be raised from the grave (Ps 16:10). His resurrection was a bodily resurrection (Mt 28:9; Lk 24:30, 39; Jn 21:12). His resurrection is the guarantee of our hope and the authenticity of Jesus’ identity (Col 2:12-15). Paul concluded that without the resurrection then our faith is futile (1 Cor 15:17).

After 40 days (Acts 1:3), Jesus ascended into heaven (Lk 24:52; Acts 1:9). Following the ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell believers (Jn 16:7; Acts 2:33). While Jesus is in Heaven, He is our Great High Priest who is interceding on our behalf (Heb 4:14-16). He is preparing a place for us as well (Jn 14:3).

Pneumatology

Deity and “personhood”

As stated earlier, the Holy Spirit is one person of the Trinity. The clearest example of this comes from Acts 5 where Ananias and Sapphira brought to Peter a portion of money they had received from selling a piece of property. However, they were deceitful and presented it as though it was all of the money they had received. In verse 3, Peter states that Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit. In the same train of thought in verse 5, he restates his point only instead of specifying the Holy Spirit he says God. This clearly implies that the Holy Spirit is God, a member of the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit’s personhood is clearly established by Jesus in John 14. Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as “another counselor” (Jn 14:16). Jesus goes on to refer to the Holy Spirit in the third person singular as “he” and “him.”

Not only is He referenced as a person by Jesus, but He is described as having characteristics of a person: knowledgeable (1 Cor 2:11), wise (Eph 1:17), having a mind (Rom 8:27), being grieved (Eph 4:30), and forbidding (Acts 16:6). His works confirm his personhood: helper (Jn 14:16), witness (Jn 15:26), convict (Jn 16:8), renew (Titus 3:5), intercede (Rom 8:28), sets apart (Acts 13:2) and sends out (Acts 13:4).

Old Testament ministry and works

From the very beginning of the Bible and of Creation the Holy Spirit is actively present (Gen 1:2). Isaiah frequently foretells of the future outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Isa 32:15, 44:3).

Not only is the future work of the Holy Spirit evident in the Old Testament, but his present work is clear as well. For example, the Holy Spirit filled Bezalel for building the Tabernacle (Exd 35:30-31). He filled Joshua with wisdom as he became the new leader of the Israelites following Moses' death (Deut 34:9). He stirred Samson (Judg 13:25), came upon Saul in power (1 Sam 11:6) and David (1 Sam 16:13). Several of the prophets had the Holy Spirit within them (Ezk 3:24; Dan 5:11; Mic 3:8). However, the filling of the Holy Spirit during the Old Testament could be temporary as the Holy Spirit left Saul (1 Sam 16:14).

His ministry related to Messiah, believers and the world

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus during his earthly ministry starting at His baptism (Mt 3:16). As He went into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan He was full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). Similar to how He empowered Jesus' ministry, He also empowered the disciples following Jesus' ascension when He was poured out on them in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Acts 1:8, 2:3-4).

Upon trusting in Jesus, a person is baptized by the Holy Spirit or indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13). The result of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit is that the person is now sealed (2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13-14) resulting in security of salvation. The Holy Spirit continues to empower each believer with gifts (Rom 12:3, 6; 1 Cor 12:1-11; Heb 2:4) for spiritual service. Evidence of the Holy Spirit in one's life is manifested through "fruit" (Gal 5:22-23) when one walks by the Spirit (Gal 5:16).

Sign gifts

In John 20:30, the writer states, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples," and in John 21:25, "if every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." Jesus' ministry was marked by signs and wonders as prophesied by Isaiah (Isa 29:18-19; Lk 7:22-23).

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He designated some of His disciples to be Apostles (Luke 6:13). There are people outside of this group referred to as apostles, but the term is used in a more general sense as in "sent ones" (Acts 14:14). To be an Apostle, one had to have been with Jesus since His baptism and witnessed His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). The only exception was Paul (1 Cor 15:8-9), whom Jesus appeared to after His ascension (Acts 9:3-6). Additionally, the sign gifts were associated with the Apostles (2 Cor 12:12).

Paul made it clear that the role of Apostleship was part of the foundation of the Church (Eph 2:20). However, the authority of an Apostle is no longer possible based on the requirements set forth, and it is no longer needed due to the canon of Scripture being complete (1 Cor 13:10). Since the sign gifts are so closely associated with establishing the identity and authority of an

Apostle, it follows that there is no longer a need for these gifts to be demonstrated. This is not to say that miracles do not occur. God still answers prayers and miracles occur. People simply do not have miraculous gifts to use at their own discretion as Peter did (Acts 3:6).

Furthermore, the gift of tongues, which refers to known languages (Acts 2:4-8), was a sign against Israel (1 Cor 14:22). The sign, however, is not for evangelistic purposes (1 Cor 14:23) and possessed little value for edification (1 Cor 14:19). This sign, along with the other miraculous gifts, has ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10).

Angelology, Satanology, and Demonology

Existence, creation, and nature of angels

The existence of angels is confirmed in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Angels served as God's messengers to the patriarchs and prophets (Gen 19:1; Isa 6:6). Angels announced Jesus' birth to shepherds (Lk 28-9) and attended to Him after His temptation in the wilderness (Mk 1:13).

Angels were created all at one time (Col 1:16), and it is uncertain how many there are (Heb 12:22; Rev 5:11). They are spiritual beings (Heb 1:14) and only occasionally appear in physical form (Acts 1:10). They do not marry (Mt 22:30), and they do not die (Lk 20:36).

Holy Angels

The most common names used for angels infer that they are messengers that are commissioned by God for various purposes, such as guarding the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:24) and Israel (2 Kings 6:16-17). They declare praises to God (Rev 4:8) and execute His judgments (Rev 16:1). Additionally, they minister to human beings (Heb 1:14). Examples range from deliverance (Acts 5:19) to nourishment (1 Kings 19:5-7).

Satan

Satan is the premier fallen angel (Ezk 28:14) whose sin is pride (Ezk 28:17). He is the one responsible for tempting Eve to sin (Gen 3:1; Rev 20:2). He tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Mk 1:13) and possessed Judas in order to betray Him (Lk 22:3).

He currently attempts to be a force of opposition to Christians (Jn 10:10; Eph 6:11; 1 Peter 5:8). His defeat has been foretold since the Fall (Gen 3:15). He will be initially bound for 1,000 years (Rev 20:2-3) and will finally be cast into the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:7-10).

Demonic Activity

Demons are the result of angels who followed Satan in his rebellion. They are often referred to as "his angels" (Mt 25:41; Rev 12:7). Some demons are confined (Jude 6) while others are allowed to be temporarily active. Their activities involve inflicting disease (Lk 13:11) and negatively influence people's thinking (2 Cor 4:4, 11:3).

The most significant activity that demons demonstrate is that of possession. This is when a demon resides within a person in order to control them. This can only occur to a person who isn't indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Demon possession appears to have been more rampant at the time of the coming of Messiah than any other time period based on the vast amount of accounts in the Gospels. Some of the

characteristic traits of demon possession were unique knowledge (Mk 1:23-24) and unusual strength (Mk 5:3-4).

Anthropology and Harmartiology

Theory of Creation

Creation is the result of six literal and consecutive days where God made everything out of nothing (Gen 1:1-2). This is made most clear through God's instructions to the Israelites to honor the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath (Exd 20:10-11). It would appear inconsistent if God commanded one literal day of rest for the Israelites if he had not rested on a literal seventh day.

God made a mature creation. He did not create Adam and Eve as infants or children, but as adults. The same appears to be true of the animals and may be appropriately applied to the rest of creation as well. All of God's creation was originally identified by him as good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 24, 25, 31).

Image of God

The single greatest distinguishing factor between humans and all other creation is that God made us "in our image" (Gen 1:26) referring to Himself. This remains true even after the fall of man (Gen 9:6). It is best to understand this to mean we are to be like God or that we are God's representatives in creation. Therefore, our inherent worth is based on the position within creation that God has bestowed upon mankind instead of what we are capable of doing or specific characteristics. This view maintains the ethical integrity of the inherent worth and value of each person apart from ability. This idea is reinforced throughout the New Testament since there is the continual press to be like Jesus (Lk 6:40; 1 Cor 11:1; 1 Jn 1:6).

Composition of Man

Man is a physical creature made out of the dust possessing an immaterial portion known as the soul or spirit (Gen 2:7). From man, God made woman out of man's rib (Gen 2:21-22).

Therefore, man and woman are both physical and spiritual beings. The implication being that each gender is created by God. Jesus affirmed that the current state of our physical body was temporary, but that the soul was permanent (Mt 10:28).

The Fall of Man

Adam and Eve were created free of sin (Gen 1:31). Their placement in the Garden had only one restriction which was not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). However, they did eat the fruit after being tempted by Satan (Gen 3:1-6). This single sin resulted in the condemnation of all mankind because the sin nature and the guilt of Adam were imputed to all of mankind (Rom 5:12-19). This is true starting at the time of conception (Ps 51:5).

Sin is either the omission of what God has commanded us to do or the commission of what God has instructed us not to do. This includes how we relate to God, others, and ourselves (Exd 20:1-17). The propensity for sin has been a part of mankind's nature since the initial act of sin (Rom 7:14, 17-24). Everyone sins (1 John 1:8).

Mankind is totally depraved, meaning that every aspect of mankind is impacted, not that mankind does the greatest amount of evil that is potentially possible (Rom 1:28; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph

4:18; 1 Tim 4:2). The penalty for sin is separation from God and judgment (Rom 1:18-20; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:1-3). Mankind is incapable of reconciling himself with God (Rom 8:7-8).

Role of Man and Woman

God designed man and woman to be in a marital relationship. (Paul does state positively that there are benefits for the single person when it comes to kingdom work (1 Cor 7:6-10, 27-28, 32)). This is stated at the time of creation and reaffirmed by Jesus (Gen 2:24-25; Mt 19:4-6). Sexual intimacy is designed to take place only within a marital relationship between one man and one woman (1 Cor 7:3-5). Man is designed to be the leader of the relationship and the family (Eph 5:21-24). This leadership is to be modeled after Jesus' self-sacrificial leadership that He demonstrated for the Church (Eph 5:25-33).

Soteriology

Salvation (Rom 10:9-10) is by grace alone (Eph 2:8-9) through faith alone (Heb 11:1, 6) in Messiah alone (Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 15:3-4).

Grace

Grace is the unearned or unmerited favor of God (Rom 3:24, 12:3; Eph 2:8-9). As mentioned under *Bibliology*, common grace is a form of general revelation. In relation to salvation, there is effectual grace (Jer 24:27, 31:33). This effectual grace will a person to salvation (Jn 6:44). Grace is foundational to the entire experience of salvation (Eph 1:5-8). Grace is necessary because there is no way to earn the favor of God (Isa 64:6).

Election

Election is God's choosing of a person. It can refer to God choosing someone for a specific task (Num 16:5-7; 2 Sam 6:21; Ps 105:26; Hag 2:23). The chief example of this is Jesus (Mt 12:18; Lk 9:35). God also chose the nation of Israel (Deut 7:6-8). From Abraham there was the election between his two grandchildren, Jacob and Esau (Rom 9:10-13).

The topic of election and predestination as it relates to salvation has been a divisive topic within the Church. In the Lord's infinite wisdom and based on His mercy, He has predetermined to save some people. However, Paul spoke frequently about believers being predestined by God (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4, 11). This raises the question of how man can be held accountable for not having placed his faith in Jesus if he was not predestined. Paul dealt with this question in this way, "Who are you to talk back to God?" (Rom 9:19-21).

Atonement

Atonement is the way in which God deals with the human problem of sin (Ex 32:30). Since the original sin in the Garden, there has been a severed relationship between God and man. Atonement is the path God uses to restore that relationship and involves the shedding of blood (Heb 9:22). Throughout Leviticus, the sacrificial system is tied directly to the concept of atonement (Lev 17:11). However, the sacrifice of animals was only a temporary way of dealing with sin (Heb 10:4, 11). God's permanent solution of dealing with sin was by offering His own Son, Jesus, as a substitution for us (1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

The way in which the atonement provided by Jesus worked is known as penal substitution (2 Cor 5:21); Jesus was offered as a ransom for us (1 Tim 2:5-6) and that means we were bought at a price (1 Cor 6:20, 7:23), which was Jesus' death (Acts 20:28). This ransom situation

means that we were redeemed or bought back (Eph 1:7). Since it was Jesus' death that paid the price that means that Jesus is the one who has redeemed us (Rom 3:24; Col 1:14).

Jesus' sacrificial death turned away the wrath of God (propitiation), which was directed at us due to our sin (1 Jn 2:2, 4:10). This way, God's holy nature would not be violated by overlooking our sin because our sin has been dealt with through Jesus taking our place by dying on the cross (Heb 2:17).

Not only did Jesus' death turn away God's wrath from our sin, but it purifies us from our sin (1 Jn 1:7, 9). God chooses not to remember our sins (Isa 43:25). This applies to all of our sins past, present and future (Jer 33:8).

Since the wrath of God has been turned away and we've been cleansed of our sin, then we are reconciled in our relationship to Him (2 Cor 5:18-19). Therefore, we go from being enemies of God (Rom 5:10-11) to being friends with God (Jn 15:15).

Conversion

Conversion is the experience of a person turning from sin to God. There are many examples of conversion in the book of Acts (Acts 8:26-38, 9:1-18, 10:44-48, 16:14-15, 27-34). Although it is difficult to identify a normative conversion experience, there are two consistent components: repentance and faith.

Repentance can be used literally to describe the act of turning in the opposite direction. Spiritually, the command to repent means to turn from sin to God in our allegiance and devotion (Acts 3:19, 17:30, 26:20). Repentance has three parts to it: intellectual (Jer 3:13), emotional (Jer 31:19), and volitional (Jer 18:11).

The other component, faith, is the belief or trust in Jesus' death and resurrection (Rom 10:9-10). Martin Luther said it well in *The Bondage of the Will*, "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone." This time statement recognizes that faith precedes action and that the life lived in faith will produce evidence of faith. A truly saved person will demonstrate tangible evidence like deeds (James 2:17) and fruit (Gal 5:22-24) although this will not be instantaneous, but a process over time.

Repentance and faith work together like two sides of the same coin. It is difficult to imagine a person desiring faith in Jesus without an acknowledgement of spiritual need due to sin. It is equally difficult to imagine one repenting of sin without having faith in Jesus to turn towards.

Regeneration

Regeneration is the spiritually healing that is a result of a person being indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). Two common word pictures are used to describe this process. The first one is being born again (Jn 3:3). The second image is becoming a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). The result of God's work allows the believer to live life for God (Mt 22:37).

Justification

Justification is a legal term that implies the idea of being pardoned from punishment. This term is applied to believers to understand that in God's economy we do not have to face the punishment that our sins deserve (Rom 4:5). It is through justification that we are declared righteous (Rom 5:1). Justification is the result of faith alone (Rom 3:28).

Sanctification

From the moment of salvation, we are sanctified in the sense that we are viewed as holy because of Jesus' imputed righteousness (Heb 10:10). Yet sanctification is a lifelong process of becoming more holy in the way that we think, speak, and act (Rom 12:1-2; 1 Thess 4:3-8). Although we may increase in sanctification we will never be perfect (Rom 7:18-19).

Perseverance

Salvation is permanent (Jn 10:28; Rom 8:38-39) for it was not the result of our own doing, but God's grace (2 Tim 1:9).

Glorification

Salvation will culminate in believers' glorification (Rom 8:30; Phil 3:21). At the time of the resurrection, each believer will receive a glorified body (Rom 8:23). These bodies will be distinct from our earthly bodies (1 Cor 15:35-54). Furthermore, we have glimpses of what these glorified bodies will be like based on the accounts of Jesus' glorified body following Jesus' resurrection (Lk 24:15-16, 30-31; Jn 20:19, 26-27, 21:12-15; Acts 1:9).

Ecclesiology

Origin of the Church

Jesus promised, "on this rock I will build my church" (Mt 16:18). Great debate has taken place over who or what the rock is. In regard to "the keys" this is by no means indicating or establishing a chain of authority extending beyond him. The fulfillment of this promise is evident in the book of Acts since Peter was present from the beginning (Acts 2) and each time the gospel extended (Acts 8:14-17, 10:44-48).

The Church is the collective whole of everyone who has placed their faith in Jesus and is known as the Universal Church (Eph 1:22-23, 5:25). The Universal Church is represented by local congregations.

The Distinction between Israel and the Church

Of all of the uses of the terms Israel and Church, there is a lack of convincing evidence that the Church has replaced Israel. It is important to recognize that God established an everlasting covenant with Abraham that maintains the existence of Israel as a distinct group of people with unique promises (Gen 12:2-4, 18:13, 22:16-18). The Church, on the other hand, is a new and distinct institution that Jesus promised to build (Mt. 16:18). Furthermore, Paul's position towards Israel indicates an attitude to imitate (Rom 10:1) and further clarifies the distinction between Israel and the Church (Rom 11:1, 25-32).

Purpose of the Church

The church's primary function is to fulfill Jesus' command to make disciples (Mt 28:18-20). This is accomplished through the local church ministering to individuals through corporate worship (Acts 2:42), instruction (1 Tim 4:6-16), fellowship (Heb 10:24-25), evangelism (Acts 1:8), and missions.

Church Leadership and Government

Jesus is ultimately the leader of the Universal Church (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18). Due to the complexity created by the Universal Church existing as distinct congregations various levels of leadership and structure are required (Exd 18, Acts 6:1-7). As mentioned before, during the

establishment of the early church there was the role of the Apostle which is no longer required since we have the scriptures.

The members of the congregation ought to establish elders (Titus 1:5). These elders serve as mature leaders able to minister to the congregation and lead them. The terms overseer (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1; Titus 1:7) and shepherd (Eph 4:11) refer to role of Elder. The qualifications for an elder are as follows: above reproach, male, slow to anger, hospitable, not a drunkard, able to teach, able to defend the faith, and respected by outsiders (1 Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9). There are biblical precedents for some elders to be compensated for their ministry (Lk 8:1-3; 1 Cor 9:14; 1 Tim 5:17-18).

Church ordinances

Baptism by immersion is the practice that resembles the precedents set in the Bible. This is confirmed to a greater extent when one considers that John's method of baptism was based off of ritual washing, which was done by immersion in a mikveh (Mt 3:6; Lev 11:36; Num 19:9).

Baptism is an opportunity for a person who has already put his or her faith in Jesus (Acts 9:39, 16:33) to publicly declare his or her faith (Rom 6:3-4), to follow in obedience to Jesus' command (Mt 28:19), and to follow His example (Mt 3:16).

Communion (1 Cor 11:23-29) is done for the purpose of remembering Jesus' death (1 Cor 11:28). Jesus specifically states that both the bread and the cup are to be eaten in remembrance of Him (1 Cor 11:24-25). A person should have a time reflection and self-examination prior to taking communion (1 Cor 11:28) in order to confess sin (1 Jn 1:9).

Eschatology

My view of end-time events is best summarized as dispensational, premillennial, pretribulational. I believe that the fullness of the land promise made to Abraham (Gen 15:18-21) and the unending reign of a Davidic King (2 Sam 7:13) are yet to be fulfilled, but will be fulfilled during the literal millennial reign of Jesus on earth.

Death

There are three types of death that are referenced in the Bible, which are all the result of original sin (Gen 3:6-7; 1 Cor 15:21). The first type of death is physical death, which all of humanity experiences with the exception of a few (2 Cor 4:11-12; Heb 9:27). Physical death is not the end of mankind, but existence continues while the soul is separated from the body (Eccles 12:7; Mt 10:28; Jas 2:26). The believer enters immediately into the presence of God (Lk 23:43; 2 Cor 5:6-8).

The second type of death is spiritual death, which all people have (Eph 2:1-2; Ps 51:5). This death is the separation between God and man.

The third type of death is eternal death, which will only be experienced by those who are not believers (Rev 20:6). The Bible refers to this as the second death (Rev 21:8).

Eventually, God will destroy death in the sense that there will be no more physical or spiritual death and no one else will experience eternal death (Isa 25:8; Rev 20:14, 21:3-4).

Rapture

The rapture is when Jesus will appear in the air and the believers who have died since Pentecost will be resurrected to meet Him. Then, the believers who are alive will meet Him in the air as well (1 Thess 4:13-18).

The first reason I hold to a pretribulation view on the Rapture is because it is supposed to happen suddenly. No one is able to know the moment when Jesus will return (Mt 24:36). He will appear suddenly like a thief in a night (1 Thess 5:2). Jesus compared it to the days of Noah (Mt 24:36-39) and the days of Lot (Lk 17:28-29).

The second reason is that the Church is to be spared from God's wrath (1 Thess 5:9).

Following the rapture, each believer will be judged by Jesus (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Cor 5:10). This is referred to as the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor 3:11-15). The judgment will be based on the works of the believer and will determine the rewards they'll receive (1 Cor 4:5; Rev 22:12), but will have no bearing on our security of salvation.

The marriage supper of the Lamb will occur after the judgment (Rev 17:7-9). This is the union of Jesus taking His bride, the Church.

The Great Tribulation

Following the rapture will be a time known as the tribulation (Mt 24:21). The tribulation is the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy (Dan 9:24-27). The coming of Messiah began a pause between the 69th and 70th week. The 70th week isn't a literal seven day period, but rather a seven year period. This period of time will be the most troubling part of history (Jer 30:7; Dan 12:1; Joel 2:2).

The purpose of this time is two-fold. The first reason is the result of the sinfulness of the world (Ps 2:5; Rev 3:10). The second reason is to prepare Israel to place their trust in Messiah Jesus (Zech 13:8-9).

During this time, the Anti-Christ will leverage other nations to fight Israel (Rev 16:16). Ultimately, this will lead to the nation of Israel repenting and coming to faith in Messiah (Ezk 37:14).

Jesus' Second Coming

Following the seven years of tribulation, Jesus will return (Mt 24:29-31; Rev 19:11-16). This will begin the thousand year reign of Jesus on earth (Rev 20:4, 6). At this time the Messiah will take His rightful reign of Israel as promised. Additionally, Satan is bound (Rev 20:2-3). Following the thousand years, there will be a short time where Satan will be freed and those individuals who did not come to faith during the millennial kingdom will have the opportunity to rebel with him (Rev 20:7-9).

Following the millennial kingdom, everyone who hasn't been resurrected yet will be, and those whose name is not in the book of life will be thrown into the lake of fire because they have been judged based on their own works (Mt 25:31-46). This judgment is referred to as the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

Eternal State

Following the Great White Throne Judgment, God will usher in a new heaven and earth where believers will fellowship with him for all of eternity (Rev 21-22).