



Grace Bible FELLOWSHIP

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I. GOD

A. Theology Proper

We believe that the Lord our God is one, the only living and true God (1 Cor 8:4-6; Deut 6:4). He is self-existent and infinite in being and perfection (Jer 10:10; Isa 48:12). His essence cannot be understood by anyone but Himself (Ex 3:14; 1 Cor 2:11).

God is a perfectly pure and infinite spirit (John 4:24). He alone is immortal by nature, dwelling in light that no one can approach (1 Tim 1:17; Deut 4:15-16; 1 Tim 6:16). He is holy, unchangeable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, perfectly wise, wholly free, completely absolute (Isa. 6:3; Mal 3:6; 1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:23; Ps 90:2; Gen 17:1; Ps 115:3; Isa 46:10; Ps 135:6).

God sovereignly and effortlessly created the cosmos, for His own joy and glory, by the power of His word (Gen 1; Ps 33:6; Col 1:16). As a sovereign and wise Creator, He has decreed the end from the beginning, and every means to that end (Isa 46:10; Eph 1:11; Rom 9:21-23). In His providence, He works all things according to the counsel of His own unchangeable and completely righteous will for His own glory (Ps 115:3; Prov 16:4; Zeph 3:5; Mal 3:6; Rom 11:36). God is most loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. He overflows with goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin (Ex 34:6-7). He rewards those who seek Him diligently (Heb 11:6). At the same time, He is perfectly just and terrifying in His judgments (Neh 9:32-33; Heb 10:26-31). He hates all sin and will certainly not clear the guilty (Exod 34:7; Ps 5:5-6; Nah 1:2-3).

B. The Trinity

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14). These three have the same substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence (Exod 3:14; John 14:11; 1 Cor 8:4-6). The three persons of the Trinity are distinguished as individuals by distinctive personal relations, not by different essential attributes. Together, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share the same divine attributes and work as one in creation, providence, and redemption, all the while retaining their personal properties (Isa 43:10; John 1:1; Eph 1:3-14; 1 Pet 1:2). All three are infinite and without beginning and are therefore only one God, who is not divided in nature or being (Deut 6:4; John 10:30).

1. God the Father

We believe that the Father is not derived from anyone, neither begotten nor proceeding. He is the cause, origin, and beginning of all things visible and invisible. In eternity past, the Father elected a people to be His adopted children in the Son (Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4–6). In creation, the Father made the world through the Son and by the Spirit (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16). In redemption, the Father sent the Son, and together, the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26). Today, the Father effectually calls these elect by means of the Son and the Spirit. The Father is enthroned in heaven, with the Son seated at His right hand. The Father hears and answers prayer according to His infinite wisdom. The saints pray to the Father in the name of the Son who intercedes for them (John 14:13; Heb 7:25), as the Spirit likewise intercedes for them (Rom 8:26).

2. God the Son

We believe the Son is eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18) and manifested in time as the Word, wisdom, and image of the Father. Likewise, Jesus Christ is fully God (John 1:1, 18; Col 1:1-20; Heb 1:1-14; Rev 1:4-8), and fully man (Luke 2:52; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 2:14-18). In eternity past, the Son received a people from the Father, whom He would redeem by His substitutionary atonement on the cross. In time, the Son was the goal of redemptive history (Gal 4:4; Eph 1:10), the promise of the Old Testament (Luke 24:27; John 5:39), and the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)—the Savior who is Prophet, Priest, and King.

Salvation is found in Christ alone, for He is the only way for sinful humanity to be reconciled to God (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5). We believe that the Son was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Isa 7:14; Lk 1:35), born of a virgin (Matt 1:23), and suffered under Pontius Pilate. He was crucified for our sins, died, and was buried. He descended into the grave, on the third day He rose bodily from the dead (1 Cor 15:3-4). He ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of God the Father (Eph 1:20), having sent the Holy Spirit to His church (John 15:26), and where today He lives to intercede for His saints (Rom 8:34). From there, He shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim 4:1).

3. God the Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 4:6; Rev 22:1). The Holy Spirit is the eternal power and might, proceeding from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified. We believe that the Holy Spirit spoke by the Scriptures (1 Pet 1:10-12; 2 Pet 1:19-21), and that His power conceived the incarnate Son and empowered Him for ministry (Luke 1:35; Acts 10:38).

The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). He regenerates, seals, sanctifies, and indwells the church for whom He is an abiding helper, teacher, guide, and intercessor (Titus 3:5; Eph 1:13-14; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Cor 3:16; 1 Jn 2:27; Rom 8:26). Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a one-time act whereby Jesus Christ places the believer into the Body of Christ, the universal church (1 Cor 12:13).

This act of regeneration and sealing takes place at the moment of salvation (1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 1:13; Titus 3:5) and ensures gospel conversion. The sealing of the Spirit guarantees that the saints will receive their promised inheritance in glory (Eph 1:14).

II. THE WORD OF GOD

We believe the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, in its sixty-six books from Genesis through Revelation, is the only verbally inspired written Word of God (1 Cor 2:7-14; 2 Pet 1:20-21), and is without error in its original autographs (Matt 5:18, 24:35; Ps 119:89), that it is the full and complete revelation of God's will for the salvation of man, and the Divine and final authority for Christian faith and conduct (John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Cor 2:13; 2 Tim 3:15-17; Heb 4:12). It is God's objective propositional revelation and is verbally inspired in every word (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16). We believe the canon is closed and all who add or take away from it shall suffer the wrath of God (Rev 22:18-19; Deut 4:2; Jude 3).

III. MAN

A. Creation

We believe that God created humanity for His own glory, that mankind is uniquely made in the divine image (Gen 1:26-27; 2:7; Matt 19:4; 1 Thess 5:23), and is made up of both body (material) and soul (immaterial). Man was the direct creation of God, and is not in any sense the product of an animal ancestry.

B. Race and Ethnicity

We believe that there is one human race which has descended from Adam (Acts 17:26). Though humanity was divided by God at Babel (Gen 11:1-9), Christ has ransomed people from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev 5:9). This one new man in Christ (Eph 2:13-16) will praise the Lord forever (Rev 5:9; 7:9). The basic divide in humanity stands between those in Adam and those in Christ (Rom 5:12-19). And the only true and lasting unity between people is spiritual (Eph 4:1-7), granted by God the Father, when He transfers the children of Adam into the kingdom of the beloved Son (Col 1:13), by means of the Spirit's new birth (John 3:5-8).

C. The Sanctity of Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image (Gen 1:27). Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps 139).

D. Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two, distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen 1:26-27). Gender is determined by God, and it is one and the same with one's biological sex (male or female), being irrevocably tied to human biology. As Creator, God alone determines the gender of each person and gives definition to all of His creatures. Rejection of one's God-given gender is to rebel against God's good design and is a futile attempt to usurp the authority of

God. The term “marriage” has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman into a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Gen 2:18-25). God created the institution of marriage in Eden (Gen 2:21-24), and He is the one who joins husband and wife together (Matt 19:6). Marriage is created to be a picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32; Rev 19:6-9).

God has designed sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor 7:2-5; Heb 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman (1 Cor 6:18). For example, any form of sexual immorality (including but not limited to adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt 15:18-20; 1 Cor 6:9-10).

E. The Family

We believe that the family is the basic institution that God has created for humanity, and that new families are created through marriage (Gen 2:24). We also recognize that Scripture defines the family as a father and mother, and the children God has given to them, whether members related by birth, legal adoption, or guardianship. Every child is a gift from the Lord (Ps 127-128), and fathers and mothers bear the primary responsibility for the care, discipleship, and instruction of their children (Deut 6:4-9; Eph 6:1-4; Col 3:20-21).

In addition to this, the people of God have a shared responsibility to raise up each successive generation to set their hope in God (Ps 78:1-8; Matt 28:18-20). While family members bear primary responsibility for the care of the widowed and aged (1 Tim 5:4-8), the saints should also care for the widowed and orphaned (James 1:27). We believe that the family, not the individual, is the basic institution for humanity. While God treats every image-bearer personally and specifically (Ps 139:13-16; Jer 31:30), and while sin and death often destroy households, every person is created to be in a family, even if that family is only to be found within the church (Mark 10:29-30). Therefore, the family is the divinely ordained institution for all humanity, and in redemption God is creating a new household, where the children of God are a family united by the Spirit, not the flesh.

F. Sexual Integrity

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Bible Fellowship as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Grace Bible Fellowship members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Grace Bible Fellowship in any capacity or who serve as volunteers believe, agree to, and abide by our Statement on Gender, Marriage, Family, and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22). We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Acts 3:19-21; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 6:9-11). We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31). Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Grace Bible Fellowship.

IV. SIN

We believe in the fall of man, that by personal disobedience of Adam to the revealed will of God, man became a sinful creature and the progenitor of a fallen race (Gen 3:1-24; 5:3). All of mankind is universally sinful in both nature and practice (Eph 2:3; Rom 3:23; 5:12), and are therefore each individually under condemnation, being alienated from the life and family of God (Eph 4:18, John 8:42-44), and under the righteous judgment and wrath of God (Rom 1:18; 3:19). Mankind has within himself no possible means of recovery or salvation (Matt 19:25-26; Mark 7:21-23; Rom 7:18).

V. SALVATION

We believe salvation is a work of God from beginning to end (Heb 12:2). Every saint is foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified (Rom 8:28-30). We believe that we are granted salvation from our enslavement to sin and its penalty as a free gift by grace alone through faith alone (Rom 6:23), unaided by human effort or merit (John 3:16; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-7).

A. Predestination/Election

We believe that predestination is the gracious purpose of God, by which the Father in eternity past chose a particular and vast number of people to give to the Son (John 6:37; 10:29; 17:6, 9, 24; Rom 8:28-30; Rev 13:8; 17:8), whom in time, the Son will redeem by His blood and the Spirit will regenerate by His power (Eph 1:3-14). Election is consistent with the free agency of man and encompasses all the means in connection with the end (Prov. 16:1; 9; Rom. 9:7-23). It is for the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable (Rom. 11:33-36). It excludes boasting and promotes humility (1 Cor. 1:26-31; Eph 2:8-9).

B. Effectual Calling

We believe that the effectual call is the work of God the Father's power and grace, whereby He calls His sheep unto Jesus Christ by His Word and Spirit (John 6:44; 1 Cor 1:9; Gal 1:15; Eph 4:4; 2 Tim 1:9). In this calling, He regenerates their hearts, enlightens their minds in the knowledge of Christ, and grants them spiritual life to turn from sin and to embrace Jesus Christ, as freely offered in the true gospel (2 Cor 4:6; Eph. 1:18; Titus 3:4-7).

C. Regeneration and Conversion

We believe regeneration is the removal of a spiritually dead heart and the granting of Christ's resurrection life (Ezek 36:25-27; John 5:25; Eph 2:5). In accordance with God's purposes of grace, all who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit will freely repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, receiving the forgiveness of their sins (Ps. 110:2-3; Titus 3:5; Rom 10:9-13). We believe conversion includes faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ and repentance from sin (Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21). Saving faith is demonstrated by obedience to the command to trust in Christ (Rom 1:5). Conversely, no amount of good deeds will save anyone (Eph 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16). Yet, good works necessarily follow and proceed from faith (James 2:14-26), giving evidence to its genuineness (Eph 2:10).

D. Justification

We believe that the death of Christ provides full payment for our sin and satisfies the just requirement of God's law (1 Cor 15:3; Heb 9:12; 1 Pet 1:18-21). In justification, God imputes the righteousness of Christ to the ungodly by grace through faith in Him (Rom 3:24-26; 5:18-19).

E. Adoption

We are no longer slaves to sin, but have been adopted as children by God, becoming co-heirs with Christ (John 1:12; Rom 6; 8:14-17). The saints thus possess every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph 1:3).

F. Sanctification

Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress in conformity to Christ toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him (Heb. 9:13-14; 10:10). Growth in grace will continue throughout the regenerate person's life, and will be characterized by living for the glory of God and loving one's neighbor, and increasing transformation to Christ-likeness (1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 3:18; Gal 5:14; Eph 4:11-16; Phil 1:6; 2:1-15; Heb. 10:14).

G. Preservation and Assurance

Every justified person is absolutely secure in the permanency of his salvation and will neither totally nor finally fall or be removed from his converted state (John 3:16, 36; 5:34; 6:39-40; 10:25-30; Rom 8:1, 29-39; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 1:12-14; 4:30; Phil 1:6; 2 Tim 2:12-13; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 1:3-5; 1 John 2:19, 25; 5:13). It is the privilege of all saints to be assured of their salvation from the very day of their true conversion based exclusively on the testimony of God's Word (2 Cor 5:1, 6-8; 2 Tim 1:12; 3:15; Heb 6:1; 10:22; 2 Pet 1:10; 1 John 5:13) and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16).

H. Glorification

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed in glory, whereby they are made to be like Christ and are totally released from sin and the effects of its curse (Rom 8:30; 1 Cor 15:42-55; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Thess 4:17; 1 John 3:2; Rev 21-22).

VI. THE CHURCH

A. The Universal Church

We believe the universal Church is the elect company of believers, birthed at Pentecost, spread throughout the earth, present in all generations, made visible when local churches assemble, and who will be finally and fully gathered to Christ at the end of the age. God's Church is created by the Word of Christ (Rom 10:17) and baptized into the Holy Spirit, in one body whose head is Christ (1 Cor 12:12-13). Christ alone is Lord over the Church, and He alone holds authority over the Church's worship (Col 1:18; Acts 5:29). The Church is the Bride of Christ, and that which belongs to God must not be given to Caesar (Ps 2:10-12; Mark 12:13-17).

We believe in the spiritual unity of the universal Church (1 Cor 12:12–13), the autonomy of the local churches (Matt 18:15–17), and the cooperation of local churches for the sake of advancing the gospel (Acts 11:29; Rom 15:24; 3 John 8).

B. The Local Church

We believe the local church glorifies God by making disciples (John 15:7–8). As an organized local fellowship of the universal church, these disciples gather regularly for corporate worship (Heb 10:24–25) on the Lord's Day (John 20:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10) in order to proclaim the Word, share in the fellowship of prayer and praise, and keep the ordinances of New Covenant believers (Matt 28:19–20; Acts 2:42–47).

C. Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Table

Baptism and the Lord's Table are the only two ordinances given to the church. They are to be observed by the church when the church gathers for worship (1 Cor 11:33–34). While neither add to nor in any way aid an individual in meriting salvation, both should be seen as an obedient expression of one's vital union to Christ by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in their life. They should be viewed as demonstrations of God's grace inasmuch as they communicate in visible expression the message of God's grace, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water symbolizing the believer's death to sin, union with Christ, burial of the old life, and resurrection to walk in newness of life (Matt 28:18–20; Acts 10:47–48; 16:32–33; 18:7–8; Rom 6:1–4). In baptism, the repentant believer bears witness to personal faith in Christ, just as the church bears witness to the visible faith of the baptized.

The Lord's Table is a symbolic act testifying of Christ's saving work for the redeemed and expectant anticipation of Christ's Second Coming (Acts 2:42–47; 1 Cor 11:17–32). When we partake in the Lord's Supper, we proclaim the death of Christ and bear witness to one another of our mutual participation in Christ (1 Cor 11:17, 18, 20). We believe that baptism precedes admission to the Lord's Table, with baptism being the initiatory rite of the New Covenant and the Lord's Supper being an ongoing rite for those who belong to the New Covenant.

As a local church with many visiting saints from other churches, we practice "close" communion, where we invite believers from other gospel-believing congregations to share in the Lord's Table with our members.

D. Church Membership in the Local Church

We believe in a regenerate church membership and that those seeking membership should demonstrate a credible profession of faith. Church members partner together in the local church for the sake of advancing the gospel (Acts 13:1–3; Phil 4:16–18). While believer's baptism is necessary for church membership, we gladly recognize baptism from other churches who share our faith and practice. As local church members walk together, they are to love, serve, and build up one another to bring every believer to maturity in Christ (John 13:34–35; Eph 4:12–16; 1 Pet 4:10–11).

Sharing in membership together includes mutual accountability to each other, the discipline of sinning members in accord with Biblical standards (Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:1-13; Gal 6:1-2), and submission to the leaders God has given them (Heb 13:7, 17). Together, the gathered assembly possesses the keys of the kingdom and exercises the authority of Christ on earth (Matt 16:19; 18:18-20; 1 Cor 5:4-5).

E. The Mission of the Church

We believe the mission of the church is to glorify God by making disciples of all the nations (Matt 28:19), so that we can present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:28). Discipleship begins with evangelism (Mark 13:10; Rom. 10:13-17), is carried along by mutual edification as well as formative and corrective discipline (Eph. 4:7-16; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Tim. 4:11-13), and includes doing good to all, especially the household of God (Gal. 6:10). We believe the priority of the local church is to gather in person (1 Thess. 2:17; Heb. 10:24-25), on the Lord's Day, to worship God (Heb 12:22-24), equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:11-16), and teach disciples to obey all that Christ has commanded (Matt 28:19).

Individual church members are to go out (2 John 1-4), proclaiming the risen Christ to the world (Acts 1:8; Col 4:6), all the while loving our neighbors by means of using the various abilities, gifts, and talents God has given to them (Mark 12:28-29; Matt 5:13-16).

F. Offices: Elders and Deacons

We believe there are two distinct offices within the local church (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13), and these are: (1) elders, otherwise called pastors or overseers, and (2) deacons.

Elders are chosen and appointed by the church, and a plurality of qualified elders shepherd, lead, teach, equip, protect, and pray for the congregation (Acts 14:23; 20:28; Eph 4:11-12; 1 Tim 3:1-7; 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-5).

Deacons, also chosen and appointed by the church, are recognized by the church as faithful servants, whose model of good works gains confidence in the gospel and cares for the physical needs of the church body (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Tim 3:8-13; 5:9-16). Complementing one another in the household of God, elders, who must be male (2 Tim 2:12-13; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6), lead the church from God's Word, and deacons (1 Tim 3:11-12) serve the church and help in a variety of ministries, enabling the elders to give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:3,4).

VII. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY/LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

We believe that the liberty Christ has purchased for believers under the gospel is found in their freedom from the guilt of sin (Rom 8:1), the condemning wrath of God (1 Thess 1:10), and curse of the law (Gal 3:13). It also includes their deliverance from this present evil age (Gal 1:4), bondage to Satan (Acts 26:18), the dominion of sin (Rom 8:3), the evil of afflictions (Rom 8:28), the fear and sting of death and victory of the grave (1 Cor 15:54-57), and everlasting damnation (2 Thess 1:9-10). In addition, it includes their free access to God and their obedience to Him,

not from slavish fear (Rom 8:15) but from a childlike love and willing mind (Luke 1:73-75; 1 John 4:18).

God alone is Lord of the conscience (James 4:12; Rom 14:4), and He has left it free from human doctrines and commandments of men that are in any way contrary to His word or not contained in it (Acts 4:19, 29; 1 Cor 7:23; Matt 15:9). So, believing such doctrines, or obeying such commands, is a betrayal of true liberty of conscience (Col 2:20-23). We must be careful not to bind the consciences of other believers in such a way that requires blind obedience and destroys liberty of conscience.

Those who use Christian liberty as an excuse to practice sin or nurture sinful desire pervert the main objective of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction (Rom 6:1-2) and completely destroy the purpose of Christian liberty. This purpose is that we, having been delivered from the hands of all our enemies, may serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our lives (Gal 5:13; 2 Pet 2:18-21).

VIII. ANGELS

A. Holy Angels

We believe that angels are created beings and therefore are not to be worshipped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to worship God (Luke 2:9-14; Heb 1:6-7; 2:6-7; Rev 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9) and to serve those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:14).

B. Fallen Angels

We believe that Satan, who is also called the devil and that ancient serpent (Matt. 4:1, 5, 8; Rev. 12:9), is a created angel, the father of lies, and a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44). He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, involving numerous angels in his fall (Rev. 12:3-4), and introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Gen 3:1-14). We believe that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Matt 4:1-11; 25:41), the god of this age who is now at work in the sons of disobedience (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph 2:3). Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Satan was defeated (Heb. 2:14), just as it was promised (Gen 3:15). At the end of the age, he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).

IX. THE LAST THINGS

We believe that God has declared the end from the beginning (Isa. 46:10) and predestined everything in time to occur according to His perfect and unchanging will (Eph 1:11). The earth is the Lord's (Ps. 24:1), and so is history. In His book of life are written all the names of His elect (Rev 13:8; 17:8), and in His decree are written every event in human history (1 Cor 2:7). Biblical eschatology (last things), therefore, begins with protology (first things): Before the beginning, God planned for His Son, as the Lamb of God (1 Pet. 1:20), to receive eternal praise from a kingdom of redeemed sinners (Matt 25:34) taken from every tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9-10; 7:9-10). In time God has revealed by promise and fulfillment (Acts 13:32-33), shadow

and substance (Col 2:17; Heb 10:1), a plan of salvation whereby God will bring all things under the feet of His Son, Jesus Christ (Ps 2:7; 110:1; Eph 1:10, 22–23). Accordingly, all of the Old Testament was written to reveal Christ (Luke 24:27, 44–49; Jn 5:39). And in the fullness of time (Gal 4:4), the Son of God took on flesh (Jn 1:14), so that every promise could be fulfilled in Him (2 Cor 1:20). After fulfilling all of His earthly works (Jn 19:30), Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead (1 Cor 15), walked the earth for forty days teaching about the kingdom (Acts 1:8–11), and ascended bodily to heaven (Acts 1:9–11), where He now reigns as King (Ps 2:7; Matt 28:18), lives to intercede for us as our true high Priest (Ps 110:4; Heb 7:25), and sends forth His Spirit and His word as the true Prophet (John 15:26; Acts 3:22–26).

Because of Christ's exaltation and the promises of God, we believe in the personal, bodily, visible, and glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Already, God has given all authority to His Son to put all things under His feet (Eph 1:22–23) and to send forth His disciples with the gospel of the kingdom (Acts 8:12). Yet, we eagerly await His Second Coming, when He will bring to consummation His kingdom on earth and finally and fully reign over all creation (Col 1:20; Rev 19:1–22:21).

We believe in the future eternal life, bodily resurrection, and final judgment: that upon death, the souls of the saved go immediately to be with Christ in Heaven (Phil 1:21–23; 2 Cor 5:8), where they abide in joyful fellowship with Him until His Second Coming, when their bodies shall be raised from the grave and changed into the likeness of His own glorious body (1 Cor 15:35–58; Phil 3:20–21; 1 John 3:2). We also believe that the souls of the unsaved at death descend immediately into Hades where they are kept under punishment until the final day of judgment (Luke 16:19–31; 2 Pet 2:9), at which time their bodies will be raised from the grave, and they shall be judged according to their works and cast into the lake of fire, a place of final and everlasting punishment (Mk 9:43–48; Jude 1:13; Rev 20:11–15; 21:8).

After the final judgment, there will be a new heaven and new earth where the final state of the redeemed will be in a new creation (Rev 21–22). In that glorious day, life will be as it should be, and mankind glorified by the finished work of God will enjoy eternal blessedness with their Creator.