Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology

With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including God's Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity

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Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions

Introduction

Why This Course Is So Important

- Our Lord has given us his Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) to go into all the world and proclaim his Gospel which alone through the work of the Holy Spirit changes human hearts and minds bringing us into a relationship with the one true God.
- Not at all to minimize the importance of elections—which are so important every Christian should vote—but even if we put the best people in office and made the best laws in every level of government, while improvement would occur, we would still have much the same situation we have today, because all people are sinful and oriented away from God, and until human hearts and minds are changed, such disharmony will continue to exist.
- Our pastor is right on target in reminding us every Sunday to look for opportunities to tell people about Jesus.
- But what do we say?
- <u>That</u> is the subject of this course!

Introduction to Systematic Theology

What Is Systematic Theology?

1. The word, theology, like many words, is used in a narrower and in a broader sense.
   a. Theology (in the narrower sense) refers to the study of God. The term, theology, derives from two Greek words.

      Theology < θεός (*theos*) → God + λόγος (*logos*) → word, subject, message

   b. Theology (in the broader sense) refers to the study of God and the other main related teachings about God and his plan of redemption revealed throughout the Bible.
2. Christian theology brings together all the teaching of God's Word, the Bible, and groups the Scriptures by subject categories. That part of theology called systematic theology, arranges the categories in a Biblical sequence, or system, that explains the logic of God's plan of redeeming his creation after Adam and Eve corrupted it with their disobedience.
3. Throughout the church, theologians have used different designations of the main categories of the subjects of Scripture. One is **creation**, **fall**, **redemption**, and **consummation**. This paradigm is an easy-to-remember and helpful means of understanding and explaining the main message of God's Word in an historical and theological, linear and logical, framework. And, there's another that fits well with and further explains it.

Introduction to Systematic Theology
What Is Systematic Theology?

4. Early church leaders discerned six main subjects, also called doctrines, themes, or loci, that occur throughout Scripture, which is God's special revelation of himself: who he is; what he is like; what he has done; what he is doing; and what he will do.
5. All six of the loci are referred to in the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans; in fact all six are even referred to in one chapter (8). The word, loci, is the plural of the Latin word, *locus*, meaning place, locale, or site of something, in this case all the Bible has to say about each of these six subjects.
6. Further, these six loci offer essential Biblical content that helps us understand and explain life today and vital aspects of the Biblical teaching about the creation, fall, redemption, and consummation of God's plan to restore his creation perfectly and permanently.
7. The church early on saw that these six loci can be arranged in a system, a logical order, that explains the rationale of the main parts of God's revelation in the Bible. Knowing these six loci help us understand and help us to help others understand God's plan of redeeming his creation in and through Jesus Christ. (Cf. 1 Peter 3:15) What are these six loci?

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

1. **Theology**: What the Bible Reveals about God
2. **Anthropology**: What the Bible Reveals about Mankind
3. **Christology**: What the Bible Reveals about Jesus Christ
4. **Soteriology**: What the Bible Reveals about Salvation (This doctrine is also called **Pneumatology** and **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, What the Bible Reveals about the Holy Spirit, the key agent in applying Christ's redemption for our salvation)
5. **Ecclesiology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Church
6. **Eschatology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Last Things or The End Times, Consummation

Preface

The Bible is God's revelation to human beings, in which he explains the origin of his creation, the reality in which we live, how it came to be, and what he has in mind for the future in and through his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Thus, the Bible has historically been called the Word of God to us. In its explanation of the meaning of what we are experiencing today, the Bible reveals how the world was perfect when God first created it, next what caused the disharmony and unpleasantness in the world, and then what God has done and is doing to redeem, renew, and restore his creation in order to bring about a new heaven and new earth when the time is right in his sight. Thus, God's Word offers great hope and joy.

That Word is good news, yet at the same time, we notice right away that the Bible is a big book. Many people wonder where to start in reading it. Throughout the centuries several helpful guides for understanding the message of the Bible have been produced. One of the most helpful is a guide called systematic theology. Theology literally means the study of God, which is appropriate, since the Bible is his Word to us. The term, systematic, refers to the logical framework of this helpful organized approach to learning, remembering, and acting on God's Word as he has called us to do.

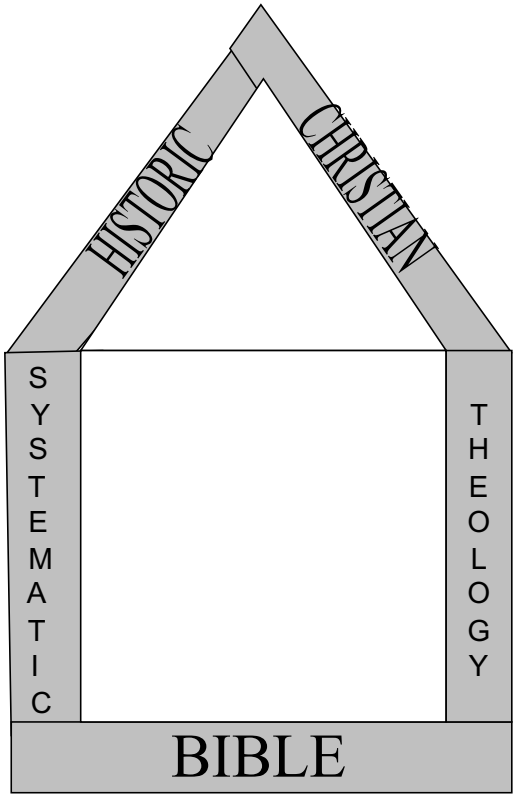
The following presentation is an explanation of the six loci, or main doctrines, of historic Christian systematic theology. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different kind of Bible study.

Preface Continued

1. These six loci are all based on, and summarize, the six main doctrines of the Bible in one locus, or place, for each. Their organization in this systematic order, provides a helpful means of learning, understanding, remembering, and easily explaining to others (in accord with Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 4:12-16) the logic of God's progressive revelation, as he gradually and patiently discloses his plan of the redemption of his creation, largely in an overall chronological order, through the Bible.

   Since God progressively unfolds and teaches his plan throughout Scripture when the times are right in his sight (e.g., Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 3:8-12), nowhere in the Bible is any doctrine taught in its entirety. Therefore, theologians have grouped the six main teachings of the Bible by subject, and systematic theology shows how the six loci are shown to be in a logical order.

   This systematic order is an ancient one in church history, that has its origin in the Bible. It's rudimentary basis is seen in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter eight itself containing references to all six. The church's outstanding theologians throughout the centuries have added Biblical explanations, implications, and applications to it, typically when the church has had to address and clarify its response to specific theological questions and issues that have arisen.



Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   a. Most, if not all, Christians understand that Bible study in groups with other believers in and followers of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ is vital for maturing in Christlikeness. Yet, to use an analogy, if one only studies Isaiah in the Fall, Luke in the Winter, Ephesians in the Spring, and Psalms in the Summer, in the best possible scenario, with the finest leadership, he or she will have an excellent understanding of a particular tree, but won't know where he or she is in the forest.

   b. In historic systematic theology, the study is all that the Bible teaches about each of these six main subjects, or loci, in a logically organized manner. Throughout Scripture we see many texts where God reasons with his people and where a matter is explained, "For this reason…." (E.g., Genesis 2:24; Exodus 9:16; 2 Samuel 7:22 (NASB); Isaiah 1:18; Matthew 6:25 NASB); Luke 7:47 (NASB); John 6:65 (NASB); Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 11:30 (NASB); Galatians 3:9; Philippians 2:9 (NASB); 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (NASB); Hebrews 2:16-18; 9:15. See also Leviticus 17:11.)

   c. These six loci of systematic theology provide the most meaningful and helpful worldview that enables us to understand reality. The loci help us respond most effectively to the realities of life that impact us.

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   d. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are given the reason to be prepared to give an account of why we believe as we do. We need to be able to explain the rationale for our faith in Christ.

   e. See also Hebrews 11:19, Abraham "reasoned." The Greek verb is λογίζομαι (*logizomai*), meaning reckon, calculate, consider, but it is not solely intellectual; it involves emotion and feeling. It is the basis from which our English word, logic, is derived. In this course, we learn the logic of the loci and some very practical implications and applications.

   f. The Bible itself speaks of the vital importance of knowing, teaching, and doing sound doctrine. For example Paul writes to Titus, "You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1) "…in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified, [8]sound *in* speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us." (Titus 2:7-8 NASB) "[An elder] must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it." (Titus 1:9) Also, "...for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine [11]that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me." (1 Timothy 1:10-11) See also 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 4:3; 2 John 1:10 (KJV).

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   f. Cont'd.: We observe here what Biblical literature scholars call a major motif, i.e., a major doctrine or theme that is taught throughout the whole Bible. This motif in particular is called the unity of word and deed. This unity is seen in the very word for "word" in both the Old Testament Hebrew word, דָּבָר (*dāvār*, word, deed), and the New Testament Greek word, λόγος (*logos*, word, deed). For more on this subject, see *op cit*. and my Bible Digest Notebook.

   Biblical theologians refer to this unity regarding word and deed with the terms orthodoxy (from two Greek words meaning *right* doctrine, i.e., Biblically correct words, teaching) and orthopraxy (from two Greek words meaning *right* practice, i.e., Biblically correct deeds, actions). As we'll see throughout this course, the Lord looks upon this matter very seriously. See, e.g., Deuteronomy 27:26; Matthew 7:21; 23; Titus 2:7-8; and James 1:22-26. In fact, orthopraxy is an essential part of Biblical orthodoxy, as we clearly see in this major motif of the unity of word and deed. Orthodoxy teaches true doctrine and its implications, including orthopraxy. The latter, orthopraxy, flows from the former. Both need to be kept in balance, but the latter must be subject to the former's essence: God's Word and Spirit.

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.
   f. Cont'd.: This distinction is very important in the Bible. While orthodoxy and orthopraxy need to be kept in balance, the former necessarily precedes the latter; the latter necessarily flows from the former; and the latter is accountable to the former (e.g., Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13). Our practice must be in accord with God's Word and Spirit. The Bible is God's Word, and it all points to and reveals Jesus Christ, who is "the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) God's Word and Spirit who guides us to understand it is how we know what is orthodox in the first place, and we need the Holy Spirit to help us put his Word into practice, i.e., our orthopraxy.

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   f. Cont'd.: Let's consider a couple examples of orthopraxy following orthodoxy. Notice their crucial importance for our raison d'être as believers in and followers of Jesus Christ.

      In his Great Commission, Jesus has commanded us—the Greek verb is in the imperative mood—to "disciple [μαθητεύσατε (*mathēteusate*)] all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey [τηρεῖν (*tērein*, infinitive, present tense: thus, continuous, durative, on going, nonstop obedience)] everything [he has] commanded [us]." (Matthew 28:19-20)

      And now a question for reflection and discussion: How likely are people to obey the Lord's commands, that we are teaching them to do, if they don't see us obeying his commands? In that case, how much more opportunity will we have? Who listens for long—much less heeds—hypocrites?

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   f. Cont'd.: Another example of orthopraxy following orthodoxy, is the Biblical teaching that we are to be "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), which should be evident in how we treat people each day. Before we can be speaking the truth (the Greek verb is a participle and in the present tense, indicating continuous, durative, action), we have to know what the truth is, including the standard we are to meet. As Paul explains in this passage (Ephesians 4:11-16ff.), we need God's help to do so in a spiritual development, i.e., sanctification (*op cit*.), a maturation process of growth toward Christlikeness that occurs throughout our lives.

   That maturing in Christ is expressed and seen by doing so in a very high form of love, ἀγάπη (*agapē*, love), a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Paul defines this special love in one of the best known passages in Scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, and he includes such deeds as being "patient,…kind,…not arrogant…not rude."

Preface Continued

2. The study of historic Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   f. Cont'd.: To be effective in our discipling, we need to be "speaking the truth in love," which occurs in words and in corresponding deeds. That maturing in Christ (Ephesians 4) is expressed and seen by doing so in this very high form of *agapē*, love, which is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

      In this example of orthopraxy within and following orthodoxy, the theological terms for the unity of word and deed, pertaining to the doctrine of Christian love, the nations (including our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and everyone else) need more than words. They need to see it in action, not only to understand it but to believe that it's real and that those bearing the message are for real, authentic and genuine. In his Word, God strongly condemns hypocrisy (e.g., Matthew 23).

      To be effective in our discipling, we need to love in word and in deed. Thus, our orthodox teaching in words that—and how—we are to love others, must be followed by our teaching as we continuously model that love in active orthopraxis.

Preface Continued

2. The study of Christian systematic theology can be seen as a different and more in-depth kind of Bible study.

   g. In both teaching Christian theology and in our witness for Christ, we must keep in mind a very important understanding pertaining to communication across cultures, both the cross-cultural differences between church people and non-Christians in our own country, and the cross-cultural differences between the Biblical worldview and the non-Biblical worldview in other parts of the world. It is vitally important to remember that people who are non-Christians use many of the same words Christians do, but they mean something totally different with those words. As Dr. Steve Leston, President of the mission organization, To Every Tribe, has well written, "As trust is built, one of the main relational goals of a missionary [or any Christian witness] is to understand how a person thinks about God, spirituality, life, death, meaning, etc. The reason this is important is that across the world there are terms used in the Bible that are also used by other religions. Yet, those religions do not mean the same thing a Christian means when using these terms. For example, if I say, 'God created the world,' there are many people who would affirm that truth yet we would not be saying the same thing. There are many religions in the world that teach that there is a god who [made] the world, yet their god and our God are not the same God. If I do not understand this about a person I am talking to, then when I share truths about God they will use their definition of those terms, not the Bible's definition. If this happens, what you have done without knowing it, is participated in syncretism. Syncretism is the combining of different religious beliefs into one. When this occurs, Christianity becomes reshaped and reformed into something that eventually becomes contrary to the Scriptures and the gospel." *Ekballo* Special Edition, December 2017, pp. 12-13.

Preface Continued

3. The six loci are manifest across all Christian denominations, and in recent times independent megachurches, worldwide and over the centuries. The only differences occur within certain of the doctrines as churches have inserted their denominational distinctives. Sometimes churches combine some of the loci to make the shortest possible statement. In all true churches, these distinctive differences are seen to be included in what the apostle Paul refers to as "disputable matters" in Romans 14:1ff. and do not affect the essential beliefs required for salvation.

4. This understanding of the Bible makes it easier to preach and teach to others and for all of us to provide a true and substantive witness for Jesus Christ. My students have learned the loci and report they have used them to explain the six main themes of the Bible to others.

Preface Continued

5. When we examine the loci carefully, we see that they have strikingly practical implications and applications. A focused emphasis in this presentation will be to explain each doctrine and explore the practical dimensions of each of the loci.
6. The following presentation has been developed as a stand-alone resource to aid in the teaching of the doctrines of historic Christian theology. It has also been produced as a companion to employ with teaching the book, *Basic Christianity*, by Arthur H. DeKruyter. I have therefore used, though with considerable adaptation, Dr. DeKruyter's outline for his book, and theologian Louis Berkhof's *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, as an organizing principle for this PowerPoint (PPT) program. I have also referred to many other theologians and scholars in the field of Biblical literature in the development of the program. Dr. DeKruyter has written as a pastor with the average Christian in mind. Whereas systematic theology over the centuries has become quite complex with the technical jargon of theologians, Dr. DeKruyter has faithfully explained the key teachings in these six doctrines in common language, as I also have tried to do.

Preface Continued

7. I've chosen the word "essential" in the course title to indicate not only the concept, basic, the very essence of what God is communicating in his Word, the Bible, but also the main points, what it is so vitally important for us to know, what we need to know to satisfy our deepest longings and live with and serve him most effectively. It also indicates how vital Christianity is.
8. I use the words "historic Christian systematic theology." The word historic is necessary to distinguish the time-tested teaching of the global church for thousands of years in contrast to some modern theologies that have arisen and falsely teach that the church has been wrong all this time. Careful study proves the consistency of the main doctrines of the church with the Bible, the infallible and inerrant Word of God. (Psalm 18:30; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Preface Continued

9. In addition to theology, I'm also asked to teach other subjects such as teaching methods and related topics pertaining to education in the church and in the home.
   a. One of those related subjects, that it is important to teach, is how human beings learn. Human learning research has revealed many helpful insights that enable teachers to teach God's Word more effectively.
      1) One of those helpful insights is that there are three domains of human learning that need to be nurtured in the process of helping God's people to become more Christ-like: **cognition** (information storage, retrieval and use), **affect** (feelings, emotions, attitudes, and motivations), and conation or **behavior** (applying and putting into practice the cognitive information and affect).
      2) Another insight from human learning research is that these domains are not discrete, separate, categories but exist on a continuum. As illustrated in the next slide, e.g., not all cognition is without affect; i.e., we tend to have some feelings about a lot of what we know. Affect requires some cognition in order to formulate feelings about it. Both cognition and affect influence our behavior; we tend to act on information, especially that about which we feel strongly.
      3) The Bible engages all three domains, and many verses, e.g., John 14:21, contain references to all three in the same verse! We all should ask ourselves, "How much do I love Jesus?"
      4) To teach God's Word most effectively, we need to engage all three domains, and Dr. DeKruyter's books, *Basic Christianity* and *Journey into Joy* are especially helpful for doing so. *Basic Christianity* is a valuable resource for engaging the cognitive domain, and *Journey into Joy* facilitates maturation of the affective domain. Both books foster the maturity in Christ-likeness that leads to the behavior change that brings us more into obedience to God and more effective witnesses for Christ Jesus.

Key Resources for Church Education

In the Bible the human mind and heart are connected and lead to behavior. Leading Greek scholar, R. C. H. Lenski in his commentary on Philippians 4:7 explains:

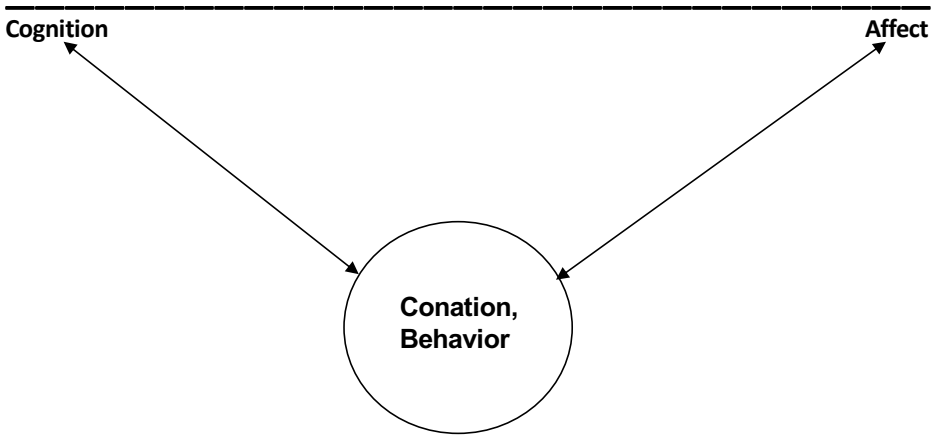
"In the Scriptures the heart is the center of the personality. There dwells the νοῦς which produces the νοήματα, the thoughts, theoretical and practical reasonings with their purposes, plans of action, and personal decisions. Heart, mind, and thoughts are constantly subject to assaults which distress, harass, and worry us. The νοῦς or mind bravely tries to hold the fort but is ever a poor guard and protector. The peace of God exceeds all mind in this function."*

Lenski also explains, "The Greek word for the heart [καρδία (*kardia*)], designates the center of the personality, the seat of thought, feeling, and volition; in English the word heart connotes chiefly the feeling."**

*R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians (Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), pp. 879–880.
** Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN, Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 186.

From Human Learning Research: The Three Connected Domains of Human Learning

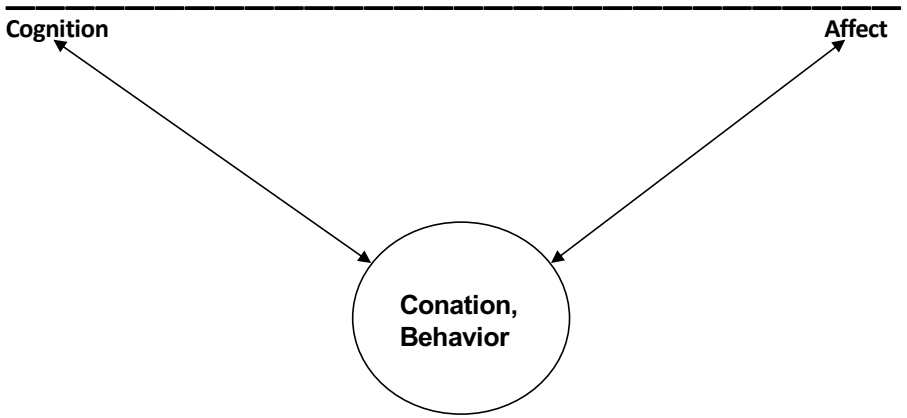
Jesus said, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." (John 14:21 NRSV)



Key Resources for Church Education

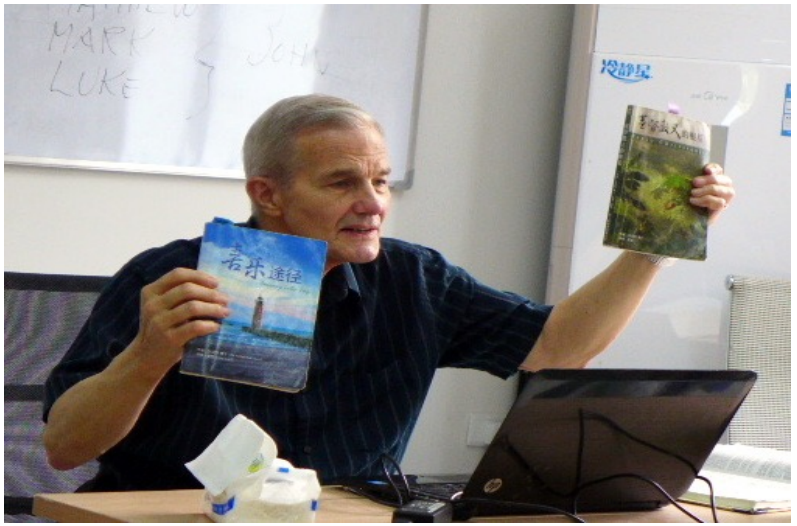
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Jesus said, "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." (John 14:21 NRSV)



For Focus on <u>Cognitive</u> Learning: *Basic Christianity* (Systematic Theology);

For Focus on <u>Affective</u> Learning: *Journey into Joy* (Spiritual Disciplines)



Preface Continued

9. In addition to theology, I'm also asked to teach other subjects such as teaching methods and related topics pertaining to education in the church.

   b. These other subjects I'm asked to teach include Christian education, worship, church leadership and administration, marriage and family. This course on historic Christian systematic theology is based on and uses one of the most effective models of teaching and curriculum construction for this type of instruction. The model, developed by educational theorist, David Ausubel, is called the advance organizer model.

      1) Briefly, in this model a basic overall concept, what educator Sara Little describes as "a substantive summary," is presented first in a general manner, in terms the students already know, which provides what Ausubel calls a cognitive scaffold or structure, that they can use to further construct and develop their understanding of what follows, as the more detailed and specific components of the subject are presented and carefully explained. In so doing, the logical sequence of the subject matter is emphasized and the subsequent information is integrated into the subject's components. The organizer in this course, "Essential Christianity," begins on the first slide of this Introduction.

      2) This model is especially useful for presenting large amounts of information in the most meaningful, logical, and efficient manner possible that also facilitates putting what has been learned into use and transfer of learning to other applications. The course that follows can be seen as demonstrating the advance organizer model and method of teaching. Educators Bruce Joyce, *et. al*, observe, "Generally speaking, the development of an intellectual structure… increases the probability that students will learn those structures and the thinking processes associated with them, and that they will retain material more fully." (*Models of Teaching*, Sixth Edition, p. 255.) When used as follows with prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit, the likelihood of students' maturity in Christ increases significantly. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Preface Continued

10. Thus, I suggest the following as some, but not the only, uses of this resource for the church. Consider using it for these purposes:

    a. Teaching in church courses, classes, seminars, special presentations, conferences, meetings, staff retreats.
    b. Personal study, reflection, and devotion.
    c. An easily remembered six-part plan for use in witnessing for Christ (1 Peter 3:15), e.g., using just the one-paragraph introductions to each of the six loci.
    d. The basis for a neighborhood home Bible study group.
    e. Sermon preparation.
    f. Leadership in worship. (See Edward D. Seely, *Worship: A Course on Worship in the Christian Church*, especially Lesson Four.)
    g. Pastors' seminars.
    h. Introductory course on theology in seminary.
    i. What other applications and uses come to your mind?

Preface Continued

11. As can be envisioned, the timeframe we have to help others learn the six loci will vary, thus requiring decision-making as to how much to say at a given time. Use the following to help in that decision-making.

    a. Do include all six of the loci and point out and explain their logical progression. Review them as a class at the beginning of each session.

    b. Two additional PowerPoint (PPT) programs have been made for teaching the loci. The larger one is an overview of that particular doctrine drawn from this original and unabridged version of *Essential Christianity: Historical Christian Systematic Theology*, which the teacher should read. Ask the class to read at least the overview prior to class. An accompanying abridged version of each overview, with yellow highlighting, is also available for use in the class sessions to maximize the amount of time the class has. Recall Jesus' teaching method; don't try to explain everything all at once.

    c. I have taught these six loci in less than five minutes in one-to-one conversations; in 20-minute sermons; in mini-courses of less than a week; and in full-length courses. In whatever timeframe you are given, using this historic Christian systematic theology will enable those you are helping to have a firmer grasp of God's Word, its essential message and its logic, and help them explain it to others more effectively.

Preface Continued

12. Notice that the discussion of the six loci is preceded by a section called “Prolegomena,” the plural of prolegomenon, which comes from the Greek word, προλέγω (*prolegō*), which literally means "to say beforehand.“ Thus, prolegomena are the preliminary observations, usually in a more formal or scholarly setting, that serve to introduce a more extended and profound subject.

    Since our examination of the six loci will all be based on what the Bible says about each one, the next logical question is, “How do we know the Bible is trustworthy and that it is what it claims to be, the Word of God?” Further, even if we don’t ask that question ourselves, other people will ask it of us, and God calls us to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,…” (1 Peter 3:15) So, in order to give the soundest and most helpful answer, we need to have a good handle on the reasons why we believe the Bible to be true and the authoritative Word of God. One more reason for studying the prolegomena: having a firm grasp of the reasons why we are persuaded that the Bible is God’s Word, is that we are enabled to stand on the firm ground of God’s Word, and thus we can more easily make our explanation and witness with “gentleness and respect” and doing so by “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15)

Prolegomena

(< Greek, προλέγω [*prolegō*], to say beforehand; cf. prologue)

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Why Do We Believe the Bible is True and that It is God's Word? We Begin with an Introduction to Theology: Who Is God; What Is He like; What Has He Done; and What Is He Doing?

Doctrine of God

- "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD.
[9]'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
[10]As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
[11]so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.'" (Isaiah 55:8-11)
- "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In order to understand the Bible, we need to carefully consider theology, the doctrine of God. All that we truly know about God has come from him.
- Throughout our thinking and talking about God, it will always be necessary to remember that God is unlimited, and we are limited; he is infinitely greater than we are, and therefore we cannot know everything about him.
- In fact theologians insist that what we know is only a type of what God is like. Christian theology distinguishes between archetypal theology and ectypal theology.
  + Archetype = the original pattern or model on which what follows that is similar is based < (ἀρχή [*archē*] = prior, original, first) and τύπος [*tupos*] = mold, form)
  + Ectype = a reproduction, copy, or reflection of the original on which it is based < (ἐκ [*ek*] = out of, away from + *tupos*)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Doctrine of God

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

- Thus, archetypal theology consists of God's essential and infinite knowledge of himself as he truly is and that is unable to be comprehended by any other being. Human sin further clouds and distorts any understanding of God.
- Since God cannot be fully known, he reveals as much of himself as human beings can understand. He lovingly accommodates himself to our finiteness and discloses aspects of his being by way of an ectype, an image or reflection of himself, as much as our finite and limited minds need and are able to know. He speaks in our language with words and figures including symbols about matters that transcend those words and figures. Thus, we must approach his Word with humility and the awareness that there is much more to and about God than meets the human eye.
- Related aspects of archetypal and ectypal knowledge, such as special and general revelation and further explanations will be presented below in the context of their topic.
- Nevertheless, what God has given us is understandable, true, and reliable. How we know that God's Word is true is the next subject of the Prolegomena.

An Abbreviated Apologetic

1. Apologetics is the branch of theology that addresses the defense of the Bible and Christian theology. The word, apologetics, comes from the Greek word ἀπολογία (*apologia*), which means a verbal defense in reply.
2. One of the clearest Biblical uses of this word is in 1 Peter 3:15, where we are commanded (the verb sanctify is in the imperative mood):
"…but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense [*apologia*] to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; [16] yet do it with gentleness and reverence [respect]." (NRSV)
3. Specifically, it provides a sound rationale for why we believe the Bible is the infallible and inerrant Word of God and is authoritative for Christianity.
4. Many sound reasons exist for believing the Bible as our highest authority. Due to the time constraints in this course, the following are sufficient to make the case.

How Do We Know?

- This is the starting point in our study of any subject, the most basic question.
- In philosophy it is called the epistemological question.
- Epistemology, part of the study of philosophy, comes from two Greek words:

  * **πίστις** (*pistis*) = faith, belief, doctrine

  +

  * **λόγος** (*logos*) = word, message, proclamation

- We should always ask this question to the source of the information we are receiving. It is one way to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God." (1 John 4:1)
- We should warmly invite and welcome others to ask us how we know what we are advocating and proclaiming.
- The Bible teaches that we must always be prepared to answer this question regarding our relationship with Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 3:15)

How Do We Know?

SPECIAL REVELATION	GENERAL REVELATION
Psalm 19:7-11 John 14:6 2 Timothy 3:14-17 God's disclosure that comes to us in His Word, the Bible, in the revelation of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation; he is the way, the truth, and the life. The Bible is the standard of truth against which we measure, assess, and evaluate all else, including general revelation. If something we read or hear contradicts the Bible, we believe the Bible.	Psalm 19:1-6 Romans 1:18-32 God's disclosure of some aspects of his being, that all people on earth can observe, which disclosure is sufficient for coming to some knowledge of God, enough to render all without excuse for not believing in him. As important and useful as is general revelation, it is insufficient for salvation. General revelation includes true science, and it never contradicts special revelation. All truth comes from God, and God does not contradict himself.

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason

1. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament. (See also Proverbs 30:5-6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 22:18-20.) For those who do not believe God's Word, evidence outside the Bible is needed, and plenty of it is available, some of which follows.
2. Eyewitnesses to Jesus' Resurrection and other events wrote the New Testament.

Support for the Reason

1. Matthew 5:17-18
2. Jesus' authority became apparent with his teaching, miracles, and especially his Resurrection. The apostle Paul testifies that over 500 eyewitnesses saw Jesus after his Resurrection and that many were still alive when he made that statement in 1 Corinthians 15:6, the implication being "Go talk to them; ask them what they saw." In that culture and small area, they were readily available for comment.

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Support for the Reason



The photo is a first century A.D. tomb in Israel.
See Matthew 28:2.

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason

3. Historical writings and archaeological findings confirm Scriptural statements. God acts in history.
   - People who attended the Christ Church Holy Land Tours with me saw inscribed on the wall of the temple of Amun at Karnak (Thebes) in Upper Egypt the Egyptian view of the event described in 1 Kings 14:25-28 and 2 Chronicles 12:1-12. Here, Egypt's king, Shishak, gives an account of his defeat of King Rheoboam and Israel. The Bible explains why: "because they ["Rheoboam and all Israel"] had been unfaithful to the LORD." (12:1-2) https://youtu.be/sHPfXfS6G48
   - Here is just one of many evidences disproving the assertion made in ignorance that nothing in the Bible is referred to elsewhere outside the Bible. Further, nothing in the Bible has ever been disproved by careful scientific research.

Place the cursor on the picture and click on the start button to view the video. Or click on the URL.

Support for the Reason



Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason

Another important truth for engaging individuals with the Gospel is seen in this video.

- Atheists and other critics of the Bible wrongly say there is nothing outside the Bible to corroborate what is in the Bible.
- Here is another of many phenomena. Of course the Bible doesn't need proof; it can stand on its own, but tell them about this ancient archaeological site or show them this video. (Place the cursor on the picture at the right and click on the start button. Or click on the URL: https://youtu.be/ioLgNen0KQI.
- This well is in Sychar (modern Nablus) where Jesus met the Samaritan woman. (John 4:1-42. Note v. 11, "the well is deep.") See all the rope needed to lower the bucket.
- The time it took water poured from a cup to reach the water in the well was four seconds! (Hear the splash.)

Support for the Reason



Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason	Support for the Reason
4. The first Christians chose death rather than deny Jesus Christ, whom they saw after he rose from the dead. They, and multitudes of Christians throughout history have willingly, even gladly, given up their lives here on earth rather than recant their faith in Jesus. More in the 20th and 21st centuries have already been martyred for their faith in Christ than in the whole preceding 20 centuries together. Many still are dying for their faith; please remember to pray for them and their families. Many others are suffering in other ways due to their refusal to recant their faith in Christ.	4. So, why is this support for believing that the Bible is true and the Word of God? One of the charges leveled against the New Testament is that it is a myth written by dispirited disciples who fabricated their accounts in order to save face. The blood of the martyrs discredits that opinion. Normal healthy people do not willingly die, or suffer in other ways, as many are also doing, for what they know to be a myth.

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason	Support for the Reason
5. Scholars have identified over 300 (one calculation being 332) OT Messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. In his book, *Science Speaks*, Peter W. Stoner, former Chairman of the Departments of Mathematics and Astronomy at Pasadena City College and Chairman of the Science Division at Westmont College, calculated the statistical probability of any man in the first century A.D. fulfilling only eight of these prophesies would be just 1 in 10^{17th} (1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000). He further calculated the statistical probability of any one man fulfilling only 48 of the prophesies to be the astronomical 1 in 10^{157}.	5. In accord with sound science, Stoner's work was peer reviewed. H. Harold Hartzler, Ph.D., of the American Scientific Affiliation, Goshen College, wrote in the forward to *Science Speaks*, "The manuscript for Science Speaks has been carefully reviewed by a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation members and by the Executive Council of the same group and has been found, in general, to be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way."

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason	Support for the Reason
6. Jesus did many miracles that no one else has done. The miracles, especially those done in fulfillment of prophecy (e.g., Isaiah 29:18/Matthew 11:5) testify to his divinity and to the Bible being true. Since Jesus has come and performed the miracles he has, those who do not believe will be held accountable for not believing in him. [Jesus said] "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. [14]But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you." (Luke 10:13–14)	6. [Jesus said] "The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me,…" (John 10:25) "Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. [38]But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John 10:37-38) "Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves." (John 14:11) "…false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. [23]So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time." (Mark 13:22)

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is God's Word?

Reason	Support for the Reason
7. When the Bible is properly interpreted, we observe that careful scientific research and other disciplines of inquiry are consistent with the Bible.	7. We must constantly discern the difference between science that has been done by people carefully following the established scientific method, and bogus "science" done by people with motives for personal gain, where they have ignored the scientific method and have produced worthless findings. Those empirical studies that have been carefully done, do not contradict but illustrate God's Word. For more on this subject, see "Science: Distinguishing Between Sound and Flawed Science."

The Scientific Method

- Careful science is one part of God's general revelation, ***when it is well done*** with thorough, painstaking, and precise adherence to the scientific method ***that yields true results***.
- The scientific method typically involves five steps, sometimes more.
  1. State the problem.
  2. Review relevant research.
  3. Establish the research plan.
  4. Report the findings of following the plan.
  5. State the significance of the research: what the findings mean.

- The first four steps are the most objective, but basic human sinfulness (e.g., Romans 8:12-14), personal opinion, philosophically-shaped bias, and desire to please those funding the study, influences all four and especially the fifth step.
- Replication is a key way to validate scientific research. Comparison with the Bible is the surest way.
- Science illustrates the Bible; the Bible does not need science to prove its truth. The Bible can stand on its own. The Bible properly interpreted in accord with historic hermeneutical (*op cit.*) principles and careful empirical science do not conflict.

Why Do We Believe the Bible Is True and that It Is The Word of God?

For more on the subjects in this section on why the historic Christian church believes the Bible is true and that it is the inerrant, infallible, and trustworthy Word of God, click on the Christian Theology page of my general Website at https://fromacorntooak12.com/. Click on the link, Prolegomena (Reasons Why We Believe the Bible Is the Trustworthy Word of God) and then on the title of the essay in which you are interested, e.g., Why the Bible is the Word of God: Jesus, Eyewitnesses, Archaeology, or Why the Bible is the Word of God: Fulfilled Prophesies, or Why the Bible is the Word of God: Bible and Science. On the Christian Education page, see Science: Distinguishing Between Sound and Flawed Science. Use the Search bar on the home page for any subject you want to access.

Systematic Theology and Biblical Hermeneutics

(< Greek, ἑρμηνεύω [*hermēneuō*], "to interpret")

Essential Prerequisite Premises for the Study of the Bible

Essential Prerequisite Premises for the Study of the Bible

1. Be sure to vet the professors and other teachers of the theology you hear and the authors of what you read. They should meet the following criteria:
   a. Before you even listen to them, inquire as to their authority and to whom they are accountable. In what church and denomination are they a member? In what seminary did they receive their degree, and in what seminary to they now teach?
      1) They should be a *member* in *good standing* in an *Bible-believing church*, where the *Gospel of Jesus Christ is faithfully taught*.
      2) The denomination of that church should be in the *main historic church tradition but have a conservative theology* that *holds closely to the Bible*. Ask from what seminary the teacher has graduated.
      3) If the teacher is a member of an independent church, not part of a denomination, ask what denomination has authorized him or her to teach.
         a) What are his or her credentials, e.g., ordained pastor? Accredited theologian?
         b) If a layperson, how long has he or she been a Christian; studied the Bible and with whom; and to whom is he or she accountable?
         c) Ask if he or she agrees with all aspects of the historic Nicene Creed.

Essential Prerequisite Premises for the Study of the Bible

1. Be sure to vet the teachers of the theology you hear and read.

   b. Vet with the Bible and prayer. Compare and contrast what you hear with what the Bible says, and ask God to guide you.

   c. Vet by *comparing and contrasting with historic Christian theology* that comes *from a trustworthy tradition, e.g., from Augustine, Luther, Calvin*.

   d. Inquire about the instructor's previous teaching here and elsewhere: e.g., has he or she stirred up dissention and controversy?

      1) If so, what was the nature of the issue: were the students unwilling to accept the truth, or was the teacher teaching false doctrine?

      2) One clue to which is the case in the preceding question is to ask if this teacher's teaching regularly results in controversy or if the issue in the last place was unique.

2. Give your credentials, including who has authorized you to teach and to whom you are accountable.

Essential Prerequisite Premises for the Study of the Bible

3. Does the professor/teacher carefully explain the Biblical basis for all he or she teaches? He or she should be glad to take the time to show exactly how the Bible supports his or her theological position. ***Do not be afraid to insist on a clear explanation of the Biblical support for his or her position.*** If anyone gets upset, that is an indication that his or her position is weak and likely unsupportable. On the contrary ***the teacher should be glad*** you are asking and that he or she has the privilege of helping you learn.
4. Be sure to also teach your students to be discerning as to whom they listen and allow to shape their thinking. Help your students to vet their teachers and offer to provide them the information they need pertaining to you, as I have done on the "About this Web Site."
5. Always remember that due to human sin, it is only the Holy Spirit who can give openness and faith to believe in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3) and in his Word. Yet, we have many sound reasons for why the Bible is God's Word, and we are called to teach them (e.g., Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15) together with the Word; therefore, we can do so in love and without compulsion, for all people will be held accountable for so believing in Jesus Christ, to whom the whole Bible points and explains his Gospel.
6. In logic, the burden of proof lies with the skeptic, the unbeliever. Just because someone doesn't believe the Bible is God's Word, does not make it untrue. All we're called to do as Christians and teachers is to present the evidence and rationale for why it is more reasonable to believe the Bible is the true and only Word of God. The Holy Spirit will help us with this explanation and then do the rest. For the above reasons, and because all that follows is based and depends on the Bible, this section, the prolegomena, is necessary.

Essential Prerequisite Premises for the Study of the Bible

7. Remember to use the historic principles of hermeneutics (interpretation) that are common to most literature and those that apply specifically to the Bible.
   a. For example, keep in mind that our historic Christian theology is a study of all the Bible teaches about specific subjects and that sometimes no one chapter or verse speaks about that subject, e.g., the doctrine of the Trinity. The word Trinity occurs nowhere in the Bible, but all true branches of the church believe in the concept of the Trinity; this understanding of God's being is clearly taught throughout the whole Bible, as will be seen herein in *Essential Christianity*. The word and its doctrinal explanation are the result of theologians over the centuries bringing several Biblical passages together to explain the rationale of this essential doctrine of God. The same is true for infant baptism and other doctrines, as will be explained in this PowerPoint program.
   b. Read any one verse in its context. Find its meaning in the verses before and after it in its chapter and in the rest of the book.
   c. Distinguish between principle and application of principle. Is a given subject the principle being taught in that chapter or an application of a principle?
   d. Is a given word to be interpreted literally or figuratively?

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

An Overview

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

1. **Theology**: What the Bible Reveals about God
2. **Anthropology**: What the Bible Reveals about Mankind
3. **Christology**: What the Bible Reveals about Jesus Christ
4. **Soteriology**: What the Bible Reveals about Salvation (This doctrine is also called **Pneumatology** and **The Application of Christ's Redemption**, What the Bible Reveals about the Holy Spirit, the key agent in applying Christ's redemption for our salvation)
5. **Ecclesiology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Church
6. **Eschatology**: What the Bible Reveals about the Last Things or The End Times

Now, let's take a closer look at what these key terms mean.

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology: Biblical Derivation and Meaning of the Terms

1. **Theology** > θεός, *theos* → God + λόγος, *logos* → word, subject, message
2. **Anthropology** > ἄνθρωπος, *anthrōpos* → mankind + λόγος
3. **Christology** > Χριστός, *Christos* → Christ, the Anointed One + λόγος
4. **Soteriology** > σῴζω, *sōzō* → save, keep safe, preserve, rescue, make well + λόγος; (cognate: σωτήρ, *sōtēr* → Savior, redeemer, deliverer, preserver); **Pneumatology** > πνεῦμα, *pneuma* → Spirit (the Holy Spirit); wind, breath + λόγος; **The Application of Christ's Redemption.**
5. **Ecclesiology** > ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia* → assembly, congregation, church > (ἐκ, *ek* → from, out of, away from + καλέω, *kaleō* → call, name, summon, invite → literally, [the ones] called out [by the Lord]) + λόγος
6. **Eschatology** > ἔσχατον, *eschaton* → last + λόγος

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

1. **Theology**: Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
2. **Anthropology**: God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
3. **Christology**: Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
4. **Soteriology**: This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
5. **Ecclesiology**: This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
6. **Eschatology**: When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming: Consummation.

Using the Six Loci

1. Try to remember the technical terms. If you use them, explain their meaning.
   a. As we've seen, the words contain very significant meaning in themselves, e.g., ecclesiology, meaning those who are called out (to be holy to and serve God who is most holy as well as all love). Think of the implications! *Cite some*.
   b. Knowing the theological language can help in some conversations.
   c. Consider this: Schools require students to know such multisyllabic terms as deoxyribonucleic acid (better known as DNA). Notice how many more syllables that term has than the technical terms of the six loci! Don't be afraid to learn, and help others learn, the language of the Christian community.
   d. If learning the technical terms is hard at first, then use the more common words with the same meaning. Don't worry about those terms, it is most important to know what they mean and their logical order to explain God's plan of redemption to others. Keep studying God's Word and historic Christian systematic theology, and you'll grow in your knowledge and joy about your relationship with God, your place in God's plan, and in your ability to help others to do so as well. You'll even eventually feel comfortable with the technical terms.

Using the Six Loci to Teach and Witness

2. It is most important that you remember and at least use the common terms for the six loci. For example, offer to others such an explanation as the following, adding more as you do.
   a. It all begins with our triune God who is all love as well as most holy and just. (Theology)
   b. He created mankind perfect, even bearing his image, but humans chose to sin and thereby separated themselves from our most holy God, corrupting his perfect creation, and causing the death he warned them would occur if they disobeyed him. (Anthropology)
   c. Yet, since God's justice is an aspect of his love, and he is unwilling to destroy the humans who bear his image, he implemented his plan to redeem his creation, including the crown of his creation, his image bearers, by sending his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who, being fully man as well as fully God, would perfectly fulfill God's commands, suffer and die in our place, and rise again to eternal life, foretelling our resurrection. (Christology)
   d. God sent his Holy Spirit to enable humans to believe, obey, and be credited with Jesus' righteousness through their faith, and be saved for eternal life with God. (Soteriology)
   e. The Spirit gathers those who believe in Jesus Christ to come together to support one another and be able to most effectively reach out to the whole world with the Good News of what Christ Jesus has done to enable everyone who will believe to be permitted into the presence of God who is most holy, just, and full of love. (Ecclesiology)
   f. This phase of life will end, for all of us individually when we die, and for the present world when Jesus returns in his Second Coming. He will then conduct the final judgment and bring about the new heaven and the new earth for God and his believers. (Eschatology)

This Summary of Historic Christian Systematic Theology Informs and Guides the Life and Work of the Church in Many Ways.

Do Any Come to Mind?

How Can the Loci Help You Plan and Function Effectively in Your Professional or Volunteer Ministry?

The Schema of the Six Loci Are Seen in the Worship Liturgy of the Church throughout the History of the Church Since Bible Times. (E.g., Exodus 24; Joshua 24; Nehemiah 8-10)

The Six Loci	***Examples*** **in the Elements of Corporate Worship**
1. Theology: Honor God	1. God's Call to Worship & Hymns of Praise
2. Anthropology: Assure Forgiveness	2. The Prayer of Confession + Words of Assurance immediately following confession of sin
3. Christology: Glorify Christ	3. The Word and Sacraments and Songs
4. Soteriology: Edify Worshipers	4. The Sermon & Creeds
5. Ecclesiology: Renew Covenant Obligations	5. The Hymn of Response to the Word
6. Eschatology: Offer Hope	6. The Sermon, Music, Words of Assurance, and the Benediction

The Schema of the Six Loci Are Seen in the Worship Liturgy of the Church throughout the History of the Church Since Bible Times.

The Six Loci

1. Honor God: Nehemiah 9:5-15, 17-25, 27, 28, 33-35; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 28:19; Leviticus 19:2; 1 John 4:16
2. Assure Forgiveness: Nehemiah 9:16-17, 26-27, 28, 29, 30, 33-35; 1 John 1:9
3. Glorify Christ: Ephesians 1:21; Philippians 2:9-11
4. Edify Worshipers: Nehemiah 9:3, 20, 30; 1 Corinthians 12:3, 14:1-17; Ephesians 2:8-10; John 3:3, 6:37-40, 10:27-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18
5. Renew Covenant Obligations: Genesis 12:1-4, 17:1-7; Exodus 24:1-8; Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Peter 2:9
6. Offer Hope: Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 73:1-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 25:31-35; Revelation 5:6-12, 21:1-4

Examples in the Elements of Corporate Worship

1. God's Call to Worship and Hymns of Praise; Worship in the Bible is a dialogue with God.
2. The Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance immediately following confession of sin
3. The Word and Sacraments and Songs
4. The Sermon and the Creeds
5. The Hymn of Response to the Word
6. The Sermon, Music, Words of Assurance, and the Benediction

The Nicene Creed

- The historic Nicene Creed was constructed and approved by the first ecumenical, worldwide, council of the Western and Eastern parts of the church that met in Nicea (in Asia Minor, now eastern Turkey) in A.D. 325 to resolve important doctrinal issues that had arisen, first and foremost involving the divinity of Christ as being coeternal with the Father. Contrary to contemporary atheists and other skeptics, Jesus' divinity was upheld by over 300 of the bishop delegates signing the creed to only two who did not sign it; Jesus did not "win buy a squeaker!" The creed, which has withstood all the centuries since, and which should remain until the Lord returns, contains the most essential of the essential Christian doctrines, and this creed is the most widely used among churches throughout the world in their worship, study, and witness for the triune God. It is thus appropriate to include here as an advance organizer for our study of historic Christian systematic theology.
- Notice that all six of the loci are present, and in their essential logical systematic order. Notice also that the negative aspect of anthropology, human sin, is expressed in the most positive and uplifting manner, and is incorporated by implication in the section on Christ, e.g., "for us and for our salvation," and as a part of what Jesus took upon himself "for our sake."
- It is significant that the Nicene Creed was originally written in the first person plural. This wording is very important to maintain, especially in the West with its highly individualistic, even narcissistic, cultural characteristics. See more in the notes on the following slides.

The Nicene Creed

DISCUSS AND/OR REFLECT: *As we recite the original Nicene Creed, identify each of the six loci*.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge both the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene Creed

Some students and other readers may notice small, but very important, differences in this version of the Nicene Creed from what they have heard elsewhere, beginning with the first word, "We." The original Nicene Creed was written in the first person plural. I prefer to use the original version, especially for accuracy and also in contemporary America and in other Western contexts, to counter the pervasive individualism in this part of the world that is conducive to much unbiblical thinking and acting, even to the extent of heresy.

Also, sadly, many Protestant congregations have substituted the word Christian for the original and very significant word, catholic (meaning universal, global < Greek, κατά [*kata*], throughout, + ὅλος [*holos*] all, whole, entire). Since the words catholic and Christian are not synonyms, for accuracy (not only to the original creed but most importantly to God's Word, which throughout, from Genesis through Revelation, emphasizes God's call to his people to carry his plan of redemption to every nation, tribe, people, and language), and to indicate the oneness and unity of the global church for which Jesus so fervently prayed (John 17), which is emphasized in the Bible and in the creed and is under such damaging attack today, I maintain, and strongly urge the worldwide church, to hold to the original word catholic.

Also, while the versions of the Nicene Creed that prevail today are essentially the same, certain phrases in one version are easier to understand than the corresponding phrase in others. Therefore, I've used the most readily understandable phrases to produce the above rendering, which is true to the original and contains the wording I've heard and read most recited in church congregations worldwide.

The Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

What will occur at the end—the end of my life, and the end of history?

What?! Why are we talking about eschatology at the beginning? Systematic theology is supposed to be a logical progression.

1. Eschatology comes from the Greek word, ἔσχατον, transliterated *eschaton*, which means last. Why then are we beginning with eschatology, or at least part of it?
2. As theologians Anthony Hoekema and Jürgen Moltmann have observed, eschatology is at the core of Christian theology and the plan of God's redemption and renewal of his creation. In his classic text, *The Bible and the Future*, Hoekema writes, "PROPERLY TO UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY, WE must see it as an integral aspect of all of biblical revelation. Eschatology must not be thought of as something which is found only in, say, such Bible books as Daniel and Revelation, but as dominating and permeating the entire message of the Bible."
3. Hoekema then quotes Moltmann as follows: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set...Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, and of every Christian existence and of the whole Church." As we will see when we study the Biblical teaching of the church, the church is the major human means through which God is fulfilling his plan of redemption of his creation, a reality that has profound, extensive, and very practical implications and applications.

Eschatology Continued

4. We see what Hoekema and Moltmann mean when we observe already in Genesis 3:15 where God proclaims what Biblical scholars call the protoevangelium, literally the first Gospel, or the first proclamation of the Gospel, the good news of God's plan of the redemption of his creation, including the salvation that he is bringing in Jesus Christ, to whom the whole Old Testament points and Whom the New Testament presents and explains.*
5. This first proclamation of the Gospel…
   a. comes immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. God acted fast; he loves his people who alone bear his image, and he would not permit them to languish in the lamentable situation they brought upon themselves devoid of hope.
   b. Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis are the preface of the Bible. The whole remainder of the Bible is the progressive unfolding of God's plan of redemption of his creation in Jesus Christ.

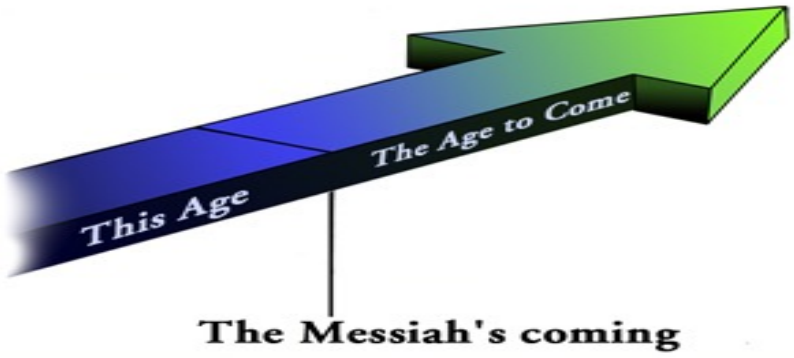
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* See also the article by Arie C. Leder, "Reading the Bible Backwards: From the Ending to its Beginning and Back Again," in the Calvin Seminary *Forum*, Spring 2014, pp. 3-5. Dr. Leder is Professor in Old Testament Studies at Calvin Theological Seminary.

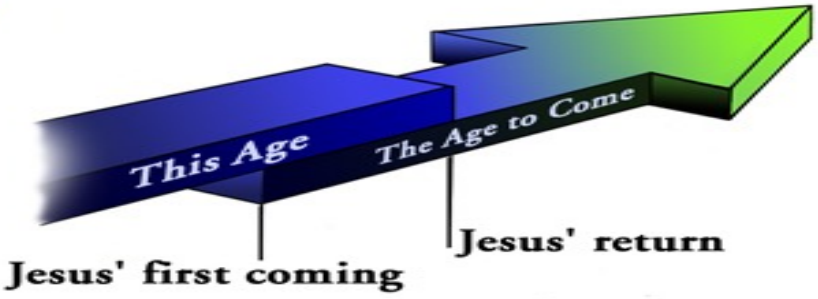
Eschatology Continued

6. Another place to discuss eschatology, in addition to the end, the sixth of the loci, is in Christology, which we will do.
   a. Historically, the Biblical term, “the last times,” (e.g., 1 Titus 4:1; 1 Peter 1:20; Jude 1:8) refers to the entire time between Christ’s First Coming (also called his First Advent) and his Second Coming (or Second Advent).

Old Testament View



New Testament Additional Revelation



Eschatology Continued

6. Therefore, another place to discuss eschatology, in addition to the end, the sixth of the loci, is in Christology, which we will do.
   b. In other words, Biblically speaking we are now in the last times, because this is the last part of God's plan of redemption in Jesus Christ.
   c. We'll return to this subject more in our study of Christology and also when we undertake our study of eschatology in its traditional, and indeed also proper, place at the end of our study, the last of the loci, when we carefully consider what the Bible teaches about the consummation of God's plan of redemption when Jesus returns to accomplish everything, (Matthew 5:18) including the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the New Heaven and the New Earth.
   d. We'll examine and evaluate in the light of God's Word four main worldviews.
      1) Everything will stay the same as it is forever. (A depressing perspective)
      2) Everything will improve and mankind will finally "get it right." (Neither a likely nor realistic view)
      3) Mankind will destroy everything. (An even more depressing view)
      4) The Biblical view: Jesus Christ is Lord; he is coming again, and he will judge and destroy evil and bring his righteous believers into the presence and service of the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to live with him in glory forever in the new heaven and the new earth.
   e. Biblical eschatology has profound and pervasive implications and applications, which we'll also reflect on in our study of this subject. To cite just one example, since our triune God has established his plan of redemption, whereby we can relate to him by virtue of being credited with Christ's righteousness by faith (Romans 4), we don't have to worry about any aspect of the future: today, tonight, tomorrow, or forever! Those in Christ can commune with God and receive his all-sufficient help: "all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)

A Question about the Preceding Section

So OK. To properly understand the main message of the Bible, that it is the gradual unfolding of God's revelation of his plan of redemption in Jesus Christ, how do we answer the question of why this is all necessary?

Among many related questions: Why is any redemption needed? Why are certain behaviors sinful? Why will there be a final judgment?

Countless people are asking these questions, especially in this postmodern age (*op cit*.), and in order to fulfill our God-given calling to help people understand, and to understand more ourselves so we can help others, we need to start with God. Until we consider God, there is no final answer to these questions—everything finds its meaning in him: in who he is, in what he is like, in what he has done, and in what he is doing. Therefore, let's begin.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Theology is a study of all the Bible teaches about God, including who he is (e.g., triune, owner, sovereign, personal, transcendent and immanent), what he is like, and how he is involved with his creation and the goodness it had when he created it out of nothing. Theology includes what the Bible teaches about God's character, that while he is essentially love to the core of his being, that love issues forth in his other characteristics or attributes, including being Most Holy, righteous, and just. The Bible explains what those qualities of God's essence are like and their significance to his creation, including to us. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of theology. The study of who God is and what he is like is the essential starting point of all theology. In order to make sense out of life and to understand Christianity, including the rest of the six main doctrines, we must know who God truly is, what he is like, and how he is engaged in his creation, especially with us human beings who alone bear his image and are the crown of his creation.

Essential Christianity: So What Kind of a Religion Is it?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

1. Christianity is formed by and based on the Bible, God's Word, which is his revelation of himself, his creation, and his plan of redemption.
2. Contrary to other religions, in his Word he discloses that he is a personal being who loves and interacts with the people he has created. He is not an impersonal "force," "the greatest idea," or any other man-made philosophical conception, such as Aristotle's "prime mover" or "unmoved mover."
3. God's interaction with people involves a revelation of his Word and his will as to how to have a relationship with him. Most people who believe in God want to have a relationship with this most wonderful of all beings.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God is a personal being. In Psalm 139:1, we read, "You know me:" The Hebrew word is יָדַע (*yādhaʿ*) a covenant word meaning to know intimately, personally, relationally. God knows us intimately, even before our birth, and he interacts with individuals. (Psalm 139:1-18; Jeremiah 1:4-10)
- He communicates with his people, listening to what they say and genuinely changes circumstances according to their requests which accord with his perfect will. (Exodus 3; Proverbs 15:29; 1 John 3:21-22; 5:13-15; James 5:16)
- Jesus Christ said, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21)

Essential Christianity: So What Kind of a Religion Is it?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

4. The same is true on the human plane. In order to have a relationship with someone, one has to know who that person is and what the person is like, including what that one likes to do and is doing. For example, a wise woman does not fall in love with, commit to, and marry a man until she knows who he is, what he is like, and what that person does and is planning to do. A wise man does the same before he begins to love and commit to a woman and marry her.
5. To know God, so as to have a relationship with him, including sensing his love for us and loving him in return, we must begin by reading, studying, and reflecting on his Word, and communing with him in prayer, in order to learn who he is. Thus, we begin with the subject of theology, followed by the other five loci of historic Christian systematic theology, all of which are connected with and follow logically, systematically, from the true, Biblical, understanding of who God is, what he is like, and what he has done, is doing, and planning to do in and through history.

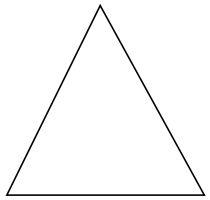
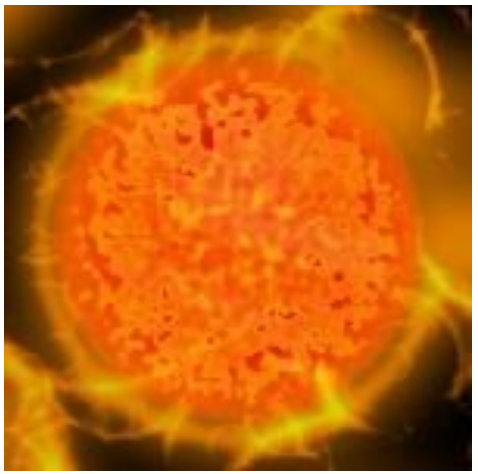
Meaning and Practical Benefits

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD…For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you." (Psalm 139:1-4; 13-18)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

- In the triune God, three distinct Persons share one substance. God is one.
- All three Persons coexist at the same time and have for eternity but are one in essence.
- What phenomena and graphic descriptions exist to help us understand God's triune being?
- A point does occur where all three forms of water do coexist simultaneously in thermodynamic equilibrium at a singular temperature and pressure called the triple point, but not at atmospheric pressures we experience.
- Of all the symbols for the Trinity, the sun is one of the best, for it shows that it is reasonable for an entity to have three simultaneously distinct components that simultaneously share one substance. (Romans 1:20)





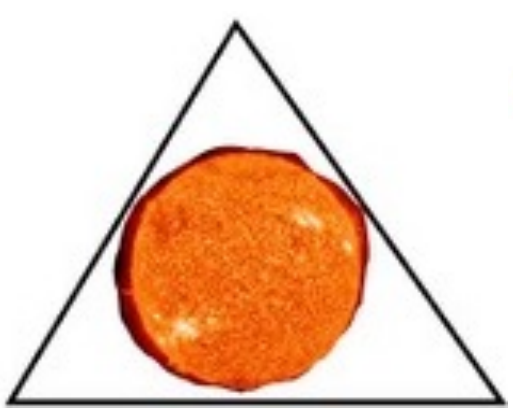


Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

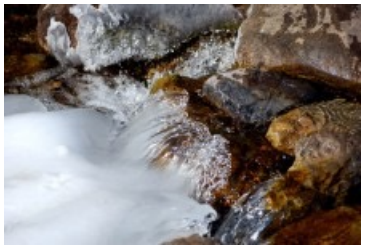
- To avoid confusion, the sun symbol should be within the triangle.
- Students have mentioned other symbols that demonstrate the reasonableness of something being three and one at the same time including the following:
  + Colors composed of the three primary colors.
  + Light being composed of energy, heat, and pressure.

- **Question for Reflection and Discussion:** Do any others come to your mind?







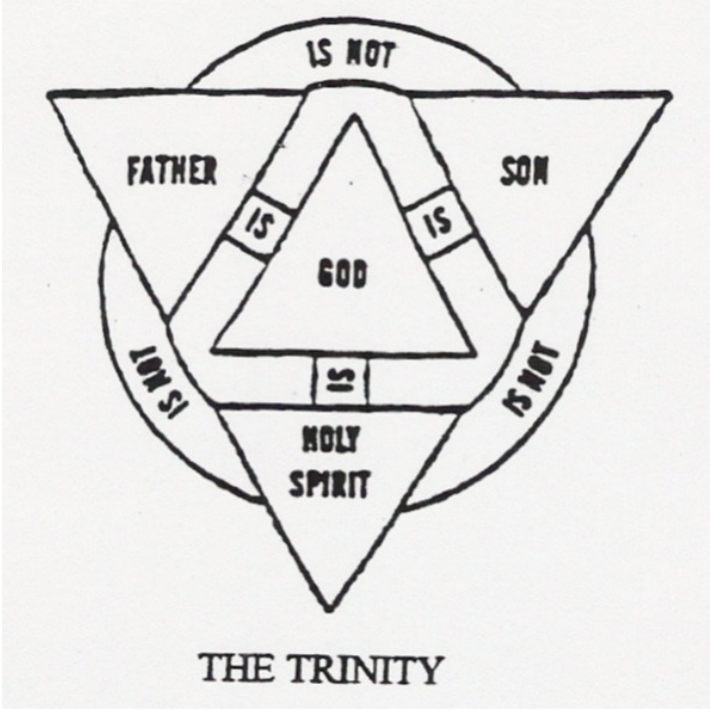


Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

- In addition to symbols from the natural order, that God has built into his creation to point to him (Romans 1:20), humans have made graphic symbols to try to visualize and understand the Biblical revelation of God as being three distinct Persons who share one substance, one essence.
- Here is one ancient symbol, referred to as the shield of the Holy Trinity, that has been found in medieval stained glass. The words, usually in Latin, read logically in any direction.

The Shield of the Holy Trinity



Original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃

ʾeḥād	*yehwāh*	*ʾĕlōhênû*	*yehwāh*	yiśrāʾēl	*šĕmaʿ*
one	Yahweh (LORD)	our God	Yahweh (LORD)	Israel	hear

The Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 (Cf. Mark 12:29)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃

ʾeḥād	*yehwāh*	*ʾĕlōhênû*	*yehwāh*	yiśrāʾēl	*šĕmaʿ*
one	Yahweh (LORD)	our God	Yahweh (LORD)	Israel	hear

יְהוָה (*yehwāh*), Yahweh, the LORD < אֶהְיֶה (*ʾehyeh*), I AM < הָיָה (*hāyāh*), to be

God's name, Yahweh, the LORD, communicates that he is the ground, the fundamental logical condition and basis, for all that exists. And there's more…

The Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 (Cf. Mark 12:29)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃

ʾeḥād	*yehwāh*	*ʾĕlōhênû*	*yehwāh*	yiśrāʾēl	*šĕmaʿ*
one	Yahweh (LORD)	our God	Yahweh (LORD)	Israel	hear

יְהוָה (*yehwāh*), Yahweh, the LORD < אֶהְיֶה (*ʾehyeh*), I AM < הָיָה (*hāyāh*), to be

- "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:14)
- "'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58) The Jews to whom he was speaking, clearly understood that Jesus was identifying himself with God; that is why they picked up stones to kill him. (8:59)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 32:29)
- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4)
- "there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Corinthians 8:6)
- "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,"(1 Timothy 2:5)
- See also Isaiah 44:6; 46:8-9; Mark 12:29.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance, one essence. God is One.
- He is not composed of divisible parts as humans are, e.g. with a body and a soul. The whole being of God is in each of the Persons. (E.g., John 14:9-11)
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity.
- All of his attributes, his characteristics, are one with him; thus, e.g., he is love; he is life; he is truth; he is just.
- "'The most important [commandment],' answered Jesus, 'is this: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'" (Mark 12:29)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

We'll explore more of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine when we focus on each of the three Persons who share one substance. To begin we can also say:

- Since all three Persons share one substance and are one God who is perfect, all three are in accord, and when we pray, all three know what we need and function in unity to provide what we need.
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity.
- Of all the symbols for the Trinity, the sun is maybe the best, for it shows that it is reasonable for an entity to have three distinct components that share one substance. (Romans 1:20)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. [3] The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation (χαρακτήρ [*charaktēr*], reproduction, exact likeness) of his being (ὑποστάσεως < ὑποστασις [*hupostasis*], substance, underlying essence), sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:1-3)
- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

Passages where all three Persons are alluded to or mentioned specifically:

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)
- "Then God (אֱלֹהִים [*ʾĕlōhîm*]) said, 'Let us make man in our image…'" (Genesis 1:26-28)
- "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isaiah 6:8)
- "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor." (Isaiah 61:1)
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19)
- See also Genesis 11:7; 2 Corinthians 3:14; Ephesians 2:18; 1 Peter 1:1,2

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity.
- The Old Testament Hebrew word translated God is אֱלֹהִים (*ʾĕlōhîm*), which is a plural word translated in other Old Testament (OT) texts as gods, when referring to the idols and false gods. The context of a given passage tells us whether *ʾĕlōhîm*, is referring to the one true God or to the false gods that are part of demon worship. (1 Corinthians 10:20; Isaiah 44:6; 45:21; John 8:44; 14:6) The context is clear, e.g., in Genesis 1:1, while *ʾĕlōhîm* is plural, the verb is singular, which occurs throughout the OT when *ʾĕlōhîm* refers to the one and only true, triune, God.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

Passages pertaining to the Father:

- "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name," (Matthew 6:9)
- "your Father in heaven…causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45)
- "I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." (John 8:38)
- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17; Malachi 3:6)
- "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation (χαρακτήρ [*character*], reproduction, exact likeness) of his being (> ὑπόστασις [*hupostasis*], substance, underlying essence), sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:3; cf., Colossians 2:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity.
- In historic Christian theology this unity of the three Persons is called the **hypostatic** (< Greek *hypo*, under + *histēmi*, cause to stand = *hypostasis*, substance, essence, basis, subsistence, substructure) **union**, as we see in Hebrews 1:3. Notice especially the Greek words in the parentheses, including both the English transliterations and the translations. Thus the three Persons of the Trinity share an underlying substance the essence of their unity.
- The term is also applied to the union of the two natures of Christ Jesus, the divine and the human. The Lord credits righteousness to us who believe in him and do God's will. (Romans 4:1,24-25; cf. 8:1-4; Matthew 7:21) See more below in the section on Christology.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

Passages pertaining to the Son:

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made…." (John 1:1-3a; cf. Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,8)
- "yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Corinthians 8:6)
- "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:23)
- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," (John 3:16 Greek, NASB)
- "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30; cf. 5:18; 10:38; 14:11, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me; …at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.")
- "Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- "Before Abraham was born, I am." (John 8:58) Here is another reference to Jesus' deity. See Exodus 3:14, "God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites, "I AM has sent me to you."'" In John 8:58, Jesus was identifying with God, which is why the Jews picked up stones and tried to kill Jesus.
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity. (Cf. John 17:24)
- Of all the symbols for the Trinity, the sun is maybe the best, for it shows that it is reasonable for an entity to have three distinct components that share one substance. (Romans 1:20)
- God the Father has created everything through Christ Jesus.
- Jesus reconciles us with the Father.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

Passages pertaining to the Holy Spirit:

- "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." (John 14:26 NASB)
- "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," (John 15:26 NASB)
- "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. [10]If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness." (Romans 8:9-10 NASB) Theologically, this reality is referred to as the mystical union of the believer with Christ Jesus; it is true and operative even though invisible.
- "…no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The triune God consists of three distinct Persons who share one substance. God is One.
- All three Persons exist at the same time and have for eternity.
- Pertaining to Romans 8:9, Biblical literature scholar, R.C.H. Lenski, explains "No one is to think that 'God's Spirit' is the divine Spirit in general, as so many who deny the deity of Christ and the Trinity conceive him. This Spirit is equally God's and Christ's; and by naming him thus, all his saving power is indicated. These two designations also serve as the basis for the *Filioque* of the Nicene Creed. Making the Spirit equally God's and Christ's constitutes a *testimonium illustre de S. Trinitate*, Bengel." (*Lenski New Testament Commentary* – The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 511) See also Luke 24:49.
- In Ephesians 4:30, the verb, grieve, shows that the Holy Spirit is a person and not just an impersonal influence. Only a person can be grieved. (See Walter L. Liefeld commentary on Ephesians 4:30 in *The NIV Study Bible*.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- Father: He is the Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; James 1:17) and Giver of "Every good and perfect gift" of all we value and enjoy. (James 1:17)
- Only begotten Son Jesus Christ: He reconciles us with the Father. All things were created through him, by him, and for him, and in him they hold together. As Lord over all we need not fear the world going out of control. (Psalm 8:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 2:6-8; 5:5 (Greek, NASB); Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,8; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Titus 2:13)
- Holy Spirit: He applies Christ's redemption to us, gives us saving faith, guides us into all truth, and helps us. (1 Corinthians 12:3; John 16:13) He also regenerates us, i.e., gives us new birth (e.g., John 3:1-8), sanctification (e.g., Galatians 6:7-8), and gifts to serve (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- For more of the practical implications and applications of the doctrine of the Trinity, see the sections on Theology, Christology, and Pneumatology/Soteriology.
- For more on the Trinity specifically, see my essay, "Who is God, and what is he like? Part 1: What is the Trinity?" https://fromacorntooak12.com/who-is-God/.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Here in these previous slides we have one of the many reasons why the early church began to formulate a system of Christian theology. The Bible from the first chapter of Genesis through the last chapter of the Book of Revelation reveals God as being triune, but the words triune or Trinity do not appear anywhere in the Bible. The doctrine is there, but it is not developed all in one place.

This is why we need theology: to help us bring together all the passages in the Bible that teach each of the six main themes of God's Word. Doing so enables us to understand these vital doctrines for ourselves and to be able to explain them to others in fulfillment of our Lord's Great Commission to us in e.g., Matthew 28:18-20.

Theology: The Doctrine of God

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Incommunicable Characteristics

Theology: What Are God's Incommunicable Characteristics?

God's incommunicable characteristics are those aspects of his being that he has in macrocosm that are unique to him. He does not share them with any other being, human or otherwise.

God is unlike any of the false gods that have been made in the image of sinful human beings. The false gods (actually the demons behind them, since the false gods don't even exist) do evil as do those who make them.

God's incommunicable characteristics, or attributes, are typically identified as follows. A brief explanation and indication of their practical blessings will be presented in this section. His incommunicable characteristics include his being infinite, transcendent **and** immanent, perfect in every way including totally good, eternal, everywhere present, independent, immutable, unchangeable.

A Very Important Aspect of Learning and Wisdom

In all of life, and especially in the most important matters of life and eternity, look for relationships, implications and applications. For example, when considering the Bible's teaching about God being holy, indeed that he is most holy, in Hebrew terminology, holy, holy, holy, look for what that means in many related aspects of life. Ask, "What does God's being most holy mean for how I treat other people whom he also loves and who bear his image?"

To help us make those connections, most of the PowerPoint slides in this course will have two columns:

Doctrinal Subject	**Meaning and Practical Benefits**
Biblical basis, texts	Implications and applications

As you read and study, think about connections and inferences. This course is designed to help us do so.

A Very Important Aspect of Learning and Wisdom

As we look for these relationships, implications and applications, we seek to understand—and be able to help others understand—the connections with God's Word, the Bible. We learn learn to "connect the dots" between the Word and the other aspects of life.

In doing so, we mature in Christ. The learning we seek—cognition (knowledge, facts), affect (feelings, emotion), and behavior (acting in accord with, obeying, God's Word)—with the help of the Holy Spirit produces wisdom that enables us to mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:13) and become oaks of righteousness (Isaiah 61:3) in order to serve God most effectively.

As we prayerfully read and study, thinking about the Bible and historic Christian doctrines, and the additional subjects within the Bible and outside the Bible, such as research from sound science, seeking to "connect the dots" in order to make sense of what we are reading, *it is essential to incorporate the latter within the former*. God's Word and its theological framework is the criterion and light we need in order to have wisdom (Proverbs 9:10) as well as knowledge and to please God. We thereby learn to relate God's Word to daily life and to eternity.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Infinite, Transcendent

"The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.
5 Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,
6 who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" (Psalm 113:4-6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Because God is transcendent, over all, and infinite, he has no limitations and thus no needs.

1. Regarding his being: he is perfect and unlimited in every way, e.g., all-knowing (or omniscient); all-powerful (or omnipotent); all-wise; totally good; all-loving; completely righteous; and as will also be explained below, holy, holy, holy. (Deuteronomy 8:17-18; 32:4; Job 38-39; Psalm 18:30; 139; Isaiah 6:3; 10:13; 25:1; 40:26; 50:2; Jeremiah 23:23-24; 51:15; Revelation 4:8)

+ Nothing can control or interfere with him; he sees what is going on all over the world; he sees our needs and he is able to help us; he accomplishes all his purposes. (Isaiah 55:11)
+ He is in full control of everything; we need have no anxiety. (Philippians 4:6)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Infinite, Transcendent

"The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.
5Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,
6who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?"
(Psalm 113:4-6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Regarding time: he is eternal; he is above time and not subject to its limitations. (Psalm 90:2; 102:12; 25-28)
   + God will never grow old, become feeble, and die. He will always "be here for us."
   + No one can ever "get rid of God."
   + He will never be succeeded by a malevolent being.
   + We will never be alone, no matter where we are on earth or in space. (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5; cf. Isaiah 41:10)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Infinite, Transcendent

- "The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.
  5Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,
  6who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?" (Psalm 113:4-6)
- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. <u>Regarding space</u>: he is everywhere present, or omnipresent, and even beyond the universe. (Psalm 113:4-6; 139:7-12; 2 Chronicles 2:6)
   a. There is nowhere in the cosmos we can go that God is not already there (and been there from everlasting) to help us. Neither does he just "show up." He's already here!
   b. Nothing can contain, confine, or be confused with God. He is not one with his creation. He, not his creation, is to be worshiped.
   c. When problems arise and people ask, "Where is God in all this?" ask them, "What is one thing that occurred today that you value, that you see as good?" Then ask them, "What else do you see that is good?" If a person has difficulty seeing anything good, help him or her by making suggestions of the many, even countless, ones surrounding him or her, e.g., "Are you breathing pain free? Do you have a loved one? How about the sun?" Then remind him or her of James 1:17, saying, "In all these ways, there you see the hand of God."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

As we have just seen in the preceding slides, God is transcendent. Nevertheless, he reveals in his Word that he is also always immanent. This reality about God is unique to the Biblical faith.

- "He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap, [8]To make *them* sit with princes, With the princes of His people. [9]He makes the barren woman abide in the house *As* a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 113:7-9 NASB)
- "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. [2]Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea," (Psalm 46:1-2)
- "and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20; cf. Deuteronomy 31:6,8; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5; cf. Isaiah 41:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- All other religions view their god or whatever is divine as either transcendent or immanent but not both. For example, Deism and Islam see God as transcendent even to the extent of being aloof and uninvolved with humans or our condition. The religions whose gods are in the world, e.g., Hinduism, are part of the world and act like humans but are not transcendent. The Bible reveals that God is both transcendent and immanent.
- Because God is immanent, he is with us; he is involved in our lives; he knows what we need; and he is ready and able to help us. (Psalm 46:1) Because of his transcendence, which we studied earlier (e.g., Psalm 113:4-6), he is fully capable of supplying all we need. Cf. Jeremiah 23:23-24.
- In his immanence, we see him in a loving, caring relationship with his people. He is with us in all the difficult times we experience and helps us cope with, manage well, and overcome those difficulties, and even emerge from them stronger.
- You never have to wonder where God is when challenging times occur. He is right there with you. Ask him to help you, and then be confident that he will, and even already is!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

- "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God." (1 Corinthians 6:19)
- "The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing." (Zephaniah 3:17, ESV)
- "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)
- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father…." (James 1:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Carefully observe the difference between what Jesus said and what the monist philosophy and theology maintains. That God dwells in us does not mean we are one in essence with God, which is what New Agers and other panentheists (God in all) believe and why they say everyone (and everything) is God.
- The Greek and the context in 1 Corinthians 6:19 clearly refers to believers individually. (Previously in the third chapter he used a similar expression except with the plural referring to the whole church.) Though God dwells in us he is still different from us and far transcends us, as we've seen. We must recognize both his transcendence and his immanence. Thus, he never "just shows up," as is often said when something good occurs; he was always—and still is—there, giving it!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

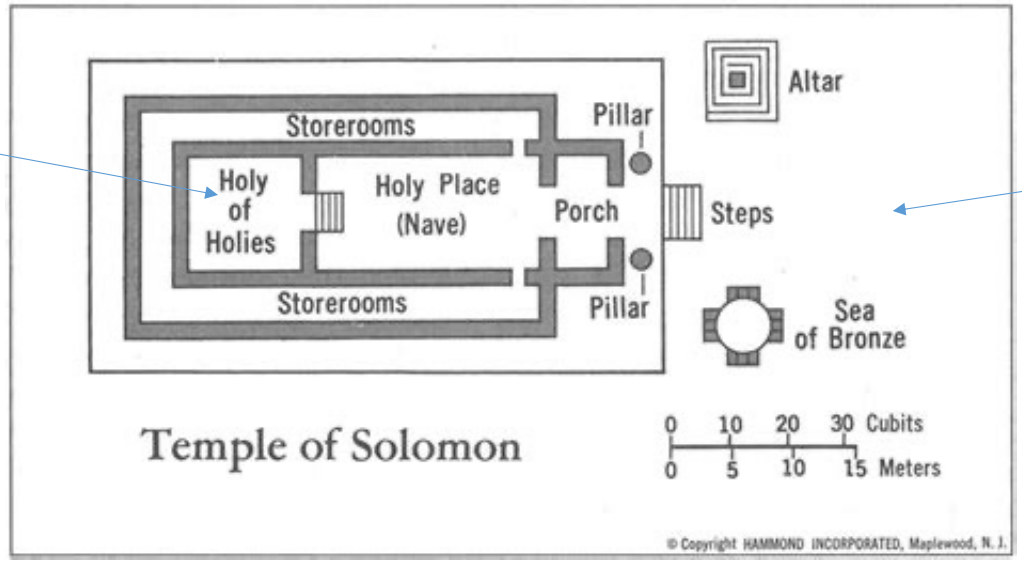
- "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16 [*context is plural, referring to the church*])
- "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God." (1 Corinthians 6:19 [*context is singular, referring to individual believers in Christ*])

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Notice a striking blessing in these passages. When Paul says your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, he uses the special Greek word, ναός (*naos*) , the sanctuary where God dwelt. Paul did not use the word, ἱερόν (*hieron*), which referred to the whole temple complex with its buildings and courts.
- "…*naos*…denotes the shrine proper, the sanctuary. The word points us to the very presence of God. This is brought out explicitly with the assertion that the Spirit dwells in the Corinthian believers. *The Spirit of God* is not a common expression. It emphasizes the connection of the Spirit with the Father, and underlines the deity of the Spirit. The Spirit is God as He dwells in the Church. The words of [1 Corinthians 3:16] are sometimes applied to the individual believer, but it is vi. 19 which speaks of the individual believer as God's temple. [In 3:16] the thought is that of the whole community of believers as God's shrine. *Temple* is singular, but *ye* is plural. The reference is to the Church." (New Testament scholar, author, Leon Morris)
- Great holiness is thereby attributed to your body!

Temple Built by Solomon
Schematic

naos



hieron

https://duckduckgo.com/?q=solomon%27s+temple+layout&t=chromentp&iax=images&ia=images (Accessed 01/23/2023)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

- "Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me." (John 6:54-57)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- By participating in the holy sacraments Jesus established, we experience the Lord's immanent and intimate presence with his people.
- True Christians in the main branches of the historic Christian church hold to different interpretations as to the meaning of the Biblical texts that teach the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper and of the Holy Spirit in Baptism.
- They have a different understanding of what the texts mean as to <u>how</u> Christ and the Holy Spirit are present, but they do <u>not</u> dispute <u>that</u> these two Persons in the triune God <u>are</u> truly present and that they are blessing believers in profound and extensive ways, already now but also forever! Further, since God is one, three distinct Persons sharing the same substance, when any one Person is present, we are in communion with all of God!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

- "Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other." (Deuteronomy 4:39; cf. 1 Kings 8:60; Isaiah 45:6,21)
- "The Lord is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. 5Who is like the Lord our God, Who is enthroned on high, 6Who humbles Himself to behold *The things that are* in heaven and in the earth? 7He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap, 8To make *them* sit with princes, With the princes of His people. 9He makes the barren woman abide in the house *As* a joyful mother of children. Praise the Lord! (Psalm 113:4-6 and 7-9 NASB)
- "For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: 'I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.'" (Isaiah 57:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Contrary to false religions that portray the divine as either all transcendent (e.g., Deism) or only immanent (e.g., the New Age religion and other forms of pantheism), the Bible always portrays a balance between God's transcendence and his immanence.
- These two complementary aspects of his being, transcendence and immanence, occur together in many Bible texts, e.g., Deuteronomy 4:39, Psalm 113:4-9, and Isaiah 57:14-15.
- Consider another implication especially applicable in some Western countries: The attributes of God being both transcendent and immanent free us from any concern when some ignorantly try to "get God out of the schools" or "remove God from the public square." Since God is transcendent and omnipotent, no little human being, or any number of humans, will ever remove God from anyplace. Since he is also immanent, omnipresent, and loves us, he will always be with us, as he has promised. (Deut. 31:6; Joshua 1:5; Hebrews 13:5, Matthew 28:20; cf. Isaiah 41:10) We never have to worry.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immanent

- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)
- "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)
- "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:22-23)
- See also Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5,9; Hebrews 13:5; Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 28:20.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- At one point in my ministry an especially significant challenge arose. Aware of what God says in James 1:17, I could not help but notice constant occurrences of much that could only be called good which emerged daily in the midst of that challenging time. I sat down at my computer and began to list all these blessings, and I added to the list each day. I stopped writing when I had recorded 50 of these observations of goodness from God the Father…but the blessings did not stop; they kept coming!
- How can you identify God's blessings in your life? Where can you see evidences of how God is giving you what you need and much more? Start with James 1:17 and look all around you. Begin right where you are; you don't even have to move! What do you see that is good? There you see where the hand of the Father has been!
- Remember one of Jesus' names and what it means: Immanuel, God with us!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Independent

- "…the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations." (Psalm 33:11)
- "Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him." (Psalm 115:3)
- "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- This attribute is called in theology, God's aseity (> Latin: *a* [from] + *se* [oneself]); i.e., his self-origination, self-existence, self-derivation, self-sufficiency, autonomy, independence.
- Because God is independent, he is in full control of everything; nothing in the universe can control, prohibit, or interfere with him and the accomplishment of his purposes. (Isaiah 55:11; Job 42:2) He has no needs; he is all-capable. (Acts 17:25)
  + He is totally able to help us with all we need, and nothing can interfere with his doing so for us.
  + He is able to keep all his promises.
  + And he always does!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immutable, Unchangeable

- "God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?" (Numbers 23:19)
- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)
- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)
- "…you remain the same, and your years will never end." (Psalm 102:27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We never have to wake up in the morning and wonder if God "had a bad night" and now "has it in for us."
- We never have to be concerned about God getting in a bad mood and "taking it out on us."
- We can always depend on God. He is trustworthy. He keeps his promises. He is consistent.
- God does not contradict himself; he will never say one thing in his Word and something contrary to a human being. This is one reason why the Bible must be held as our standard, our criterion, for discerning his will and determining what is right and what is wrong.
- In Christ, we can always come to God in prayer and know that he listens in love and acts with power as he always has and as he always will.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Immutable, Unchangeable

- "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)
- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)
- "…you remain the same, and your years will never end." (Psalm 102:27)
- "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." (Malachi 3:6)

Practical Benefits

A Question for Reflection and Discussion:

What other practical benefits of God's attribute of being unchangeable can we list?

Practical Benefits of God's Incommunicable Characteristic of Being Immutable

- God remains faithful to his covenant with his people; he is dependable.
- His love is unchangeable, and therefore we don't need to fear.
- Once you follow him, he will not change.
- No matter what happens or circumstances we can trust God.
- God is our helper and satisfaction.
- His love is unchangeable so we can trust him.
- God will never let us down; we can count on him. He will not say one thing now and the opposite another time.
- God loves those who love him; that is unchangeable.
- That could be the foundation for the whole church.
- We can have security.

Original Hebrew of Genesis 1:1

1 .1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

hāʾāreṣ	*wĕʾēt*	*haššāmayim*	*ēt*	*ʾĕlōhîm*	*bārāʾ*	*bĕrēʾšît*
the earth	and	the heavens	*	God	created	In the beginning

---

* A primary particle indicating the accusative case (grammatical case that marks the direct objective of the verb) in Hebrew and is not translated.

The Hebrew text, not the transliteration or the translation, is from The Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

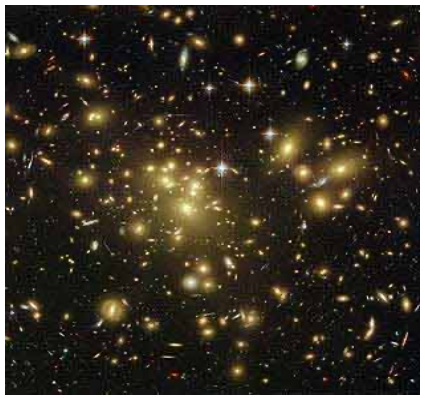
God Is Creator

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

- Only God creates. In the Bible God is the sole subject of the verb to create, בָּרָא (*bārāʾ*), i.e., to make something without using a preexistent substance (ex nihilo, out of nothing).
- God has always existed. There has never been a time when God did not exist.
- No other being is ever the subject of *bārāʾ*, which is why in the light of his revelation of who he is, what he is like, and what he does, I maintain it is important to classify this characteristic of God as one of his incommunicable attributes.
- "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name." (Psalm 147:4) God knows each of the one trillion stars in the Abell 1689 galaxy (hubblesite photo at the right); we have all we can do to name whole galaxies usually just with numbers and letters.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- That God is so great and the only one in the whole cosmos who can create something out of nothing, we are assured that he can always supply anything we now, or ever will, need.
- We are comforted by knowing that no malevolent being can make something out of nothing that would harm us.



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

God has accomplished his creating in and through his Son, the Second Person of the Trinity. All things originate in the Father but come through the Son. (Colossians 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2)



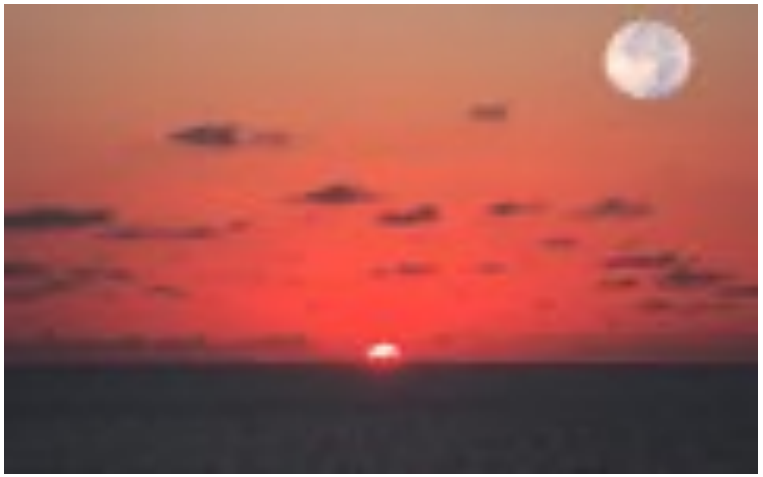
Meaning and Practical Benefits

Four of the great overarching themes that run throughout the Bible are creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. Due to the fall, without redemption, the creation would be destroyed. As we will consider further and more closely, God is most holy, and he will not compromise his integrity by associating with that which is sinful and evil. Yet because his being is essentially love, which includes justice, he is not willing to destroy his creation but chose from the beginning to redeem and renew it, and at great cost to himself. (Romans 8; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)



Meaning and Practical Benefits

- While God formed the universe by creating many things out of nothing, he also used some of those things to make others. For example, in Genesis 1:16 we read that God had made (translating the verb, עָשָׂה [*ʿāsāh*] to make, as being in the pluperfect tense) the sun and the moon (implied in 1:3-5, "Let there be light….").
- And God has given much of it to us to enjoy yet as caretakers. (Genesis 1:26-29)
- True scientific research helps us discover countless aspects of God's general revelation, that which he has built into his creation for all to see (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20).

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)
- When, in Genesis 1 the Hebrew word, יוֹם (*yôm,* day), is interpreted as an indefinite period of time, as it is sometimes used elsewhere in the Bible, rather than a twenty-four-hour period, as it is also used elsewhere in holy Scripture, we typically see the Bible's account of God's creative acts occurring as scientists have discovered in their careful research.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

According to analysis of lunar rock samples brought back from the Apollo moon mission, the earth existed for some 340,000,000 years without the moon but with conditions too inhospitable to permit life, such as too heavy and thick an atmosphere. From evidence discovered, astronomers believe that about 4.25 billion years ago a body at least the size of Mars and one-ninth the mass of Earth struck our planet almost head-on, becoming absorbed for the most part into Earth. That blast propelled the thick atmosphere into outer space, and replaced it with an atmosphere and other elements that would permit life as we know it; made a cloud of material that would coalesce to form the moon; slowed Earth's rotation to a rate that would permit life; and stabilized the tilt of Earth's rotation axis to protect the planet from climatic extremes that would extinguish life.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

"God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars." (Genesis 1:16)



Meaning and Practical Benefits

Astrophysicist Hugh Ross, a Christian, observes that "this amazing collision, for which we have an abundance of circumstantial evidence, appears to have been perfectly timed and designed to transform Earth from a 'formless and empty' place into a site where life could survive and thrive…the number of conditions that must be fine-tuned—and the degree of fine-tuning needed for each of these conditions—for life to possibly survive that is manifested in this single event argues powerfully on its own for a divine Creator. Even if the universe contains as many as 10 billion trillion (10^{22}) planets, we would not expect even one, by natural processes alone, to end up with the surface gravity, surface temperature, atmospheric composition, atmospheric pressure, crustal iron abundance, tectonics, vulcanism, rotation rate, rate of decline in rotation rate, and stable rotation axis tilt necessary for the support of life. To those who express the desire to see a miracle, we can assure them they are looking at one whenever they gaze up at the moon."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

- "For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Greek: θειότης (*theiotēs*), Divinity];…" (Romans 1:20 KJV)
- "Then God said, 'Let the waters teem with swarms [שָׁרַץ (*shārats*), teem, swarm] of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.' God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good….Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind;' and it was so. God made the beasts of the earth after their kind…; and God saw that it was good." (Genesis 1:20-25 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- From this understanding emerges a well-spring of aesthetic appreciation of the natural phenomena all about us.
- How many species of animals and plants did God create? *Science Daily* estimates there are now:
  - Animals: 7.77 million
  - Plants: 298,000
  - Fungi (molds, mushrooms): 611,000
  - Protozoa (single-cell organisms with animal-like behavior): 36,400
  - Chromista (e.g., brown algae, diatoms, water molds): 27,500
- Clearly God is creative and values variety.
- For us to appreciate the beauty of God's creation, use all five senses when observing all these many different aspects of God's creation.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

"For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Greek: θειότης (*theiotēs*), Divinity];…" (Romans 1:20 KJV)



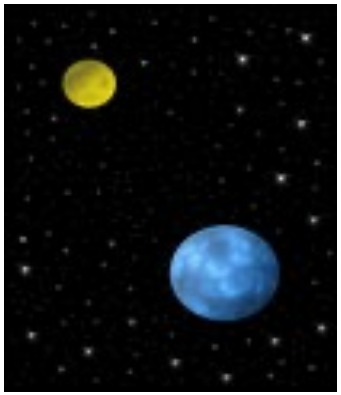
Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since the world in which we live and all within it have been created, and since the Creator, as we'll see further, is essentially loving, good, and sovereign, we observe countless evidences everyday that we are not accidents in a chaos that is out of control.
- Having been planned, we have a profound sense of value and purpose. Recognizing the mathematical precision in which the elements of the universe have been formed and function, we sense meaning in the cosmos and its components. Our being here is significant; our lives matter.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- From this understanding emerges a well-spring of aesthetic appreciation of the natural phenomena all about us. From now on can you ever think of the moon in a mundane manner?
- Further, as we learn more about these and the other aspects of creation, we see beyond them and learn more about and respect more deeply their, indeed our, Creator!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As we study God's creation scientifically and in the reflections of our mental processes, we are struck with the magnitude of who God is and what he is like, and how small, even though significant, we are. This humility is healthy, for "[p]ride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:8)
- Such falls are frequently very painful, not only to ourselves but to many others, and a practice of continually keeping in perspective who we are and what we are like is highly beneficial and keeps us out of much trouble. "Before a downfall the heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor." (Proverbs 18:12 TNIV)
- Likewise, Jesus Christ said, "those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." (Matthew 23:12 TNIV)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Nonbiblical views that try to explain what is, such as the theory of macroevolution, offer no meaning, purpose, or hope. With tragic consequences, they offer no explanation for or need of a relationship with the triune God who has revealed himself in the Bible and in his creation. (Cf., e.g., Romans 1:20)
- Recognizing that we are part of God's creation, and in humility accepting our place in that creation, gives us a strong sense of security. Our sovereign and loving Creator is able to protect what he has created and what belongs to him.
- Together with what follows, that he has also revealed, his reality is exceedingly comforting! Sleep well tonight, and live in the peace and joy which transcends understanding tomorrow and in the days ahead.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)



Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The photo here illustrates how Gothic church architecture points to the heavens and especially beyond the moon to God in heaven.
- "To have a creation—something with both deep structures and also continuous change and process—is to have a place that is both stable and dynamic. In a creation of this kind we may make enduring commitments, confident that God's handiwork is anchored into *God's* enduring commitments." (Theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr.)
- Such an environment has made science and its manifold contributions possible. It is no accident that science grew out of a Biblical worldview.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Creator

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Theology: The Doctrine of God

Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Communicable Characteristics

Theology: What Are God's Communicable Characteristics?

The outstanding Dutch minister and theologian, Wilhelmus à Brakel, has well-written that all God's attributes "are equally incommunicable as far as their [essence] is concerned. This distinction [between incommunicable and communicable characteristics] is merely made for the purpose of comparison. God has created man in His image and likeness....This does not imply that…a sinner becomes divine and is a partaker of the very being and attributes of God." (89-90) What the Scripture means by man being created in the image of God, is that some attributes of God's being, which he has in macrocosm, he has built into us in microcosm; these attributes are called God's communicable characteristics. They are attributes of God in which we see a small resemblance in human beings. God's communicable characteristics, or attributes, include his being a living being; his holiness; knowledge; wisdom; love, grace, mercy, forbearance; righteousness; truth; sovereignty; power.

A brief explanation and an indication of the practical blessings of these attributes will be presented in this section. We will return to his communicable characteristics when we study the image of God in the doctrine of anthropology.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God and Is Spirit

As we saw in the section on God's triune being, he is a spiritual being and personal, living in relationships, within himself and, we see here, with people whom he has created.

- "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)
- "Who shapes a god and casts an idol, which can profit him nothing?...Half of the wood he burns in the fire; over it he prepares his meal…From the rest he makes a god, his idol; he bows down to it and worships. He prays to it and says, 'Save me; you are my god.' They know nothing, they understand nothing;…No one stops to think…Half of it I used for fuel…Shall I bow down to a block of wood?...a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, 'Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?' Remember these things, O Jacob, for you are my servant, O Israel. I have made you,…" (Isaiah 44:10, 16-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- On every page of the Bible, we see that God lives and acts. His very name in Hebrew, יְהָוָה (*Yahweh*) comes from the root word הָיָה (*hāyāh*), meaning "to be." Thus, the only true God lives, is the ground of all being, and is able to help his people. The true God has made mankind in his image; false gods are made by fallen men in their image. Any false god made by humans is unable to help anyone; it cannot even stand up by itself. "…it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his trouble." (Isaiah 46:7; cf. 45:6,21)
- "Remember this, fix it in mind, take it to heart, you rebels. Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me." (Isaiah 46:8-9; cf. 1 Kings 8:60)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God and Is Spirit

As we saw in the section on God's triune being, he is a spiritual being and personal, living in relationships, within himself and, we see here, with people whom he has created.

- "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.'" (Exodus 20:1-3)
- "'To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?' says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and complain, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the LORD; my cause is disregarded by my God'? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom." (Isaiah 40: 25-28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "[God] gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." (Isaiah 40:29-31)
- No idol or any false god can do this. In his love for people, the one true God desires people to turn to him, the only one who can help them.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God and Is Spirit

The one true, triune, living God is a spirit, and thus he does not have a shape. He is invisible. (1 Timothy 6:16) All idols are false gods and cannot help themselves; they cannot even stand up by themselves. They cannot help anyone.

"A man…looks for a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple." (Isaiah 40:20)

"The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer spurs on him who strikes the anvil. He says of the welding, 'It is good.' He nails down the idol so it will not topple." (Isaiah 41:7)

"The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not…take up their names on my lips." (Psalm 16:4)

"the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God…" (1 Corinthians 10:20; cf. Isaiah 44:6; 45:21; John 8:44; 14:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits: An Idol Does Not Live, Hear, or See, and Cannot Help

(The apples are offerings from a worshiper of this Buddhist idol.)



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God and Is Spirit

God's command that we never make or worship an idol is not only because it is a dishonoring and rejection of him. It is also because he loves us and always desires what is best for us. Worshiping an idol, something far beneath human beings, dehumanizes and destroys the one who turns to it for help. The idol can do nothing for anyone.

"…it cannot move. Though one cries out to it, it does not answer; it cannot save him from his trouble." (Isaiah 46:7)

"The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not…take up their names on my lips." (Psalm 16:4)

"Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:19-21; cf. Isaiah 44:6; John 8:44; 14:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits: An Idol Does Not Live, Does Not Hear or See, and It Cannot Help



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

- Jesus plainly pointed out to the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar, Samaria, that "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24)
- "**…**God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen." (1 Timothy 6:15b-16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

The believer in the one true triune God who is spirit, worships him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24),

+ with no physical representation of him,

+ in faith, not by sight,

+ believing in and following the only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

+ experiencing the love and succor of the only living, powerful, personal, and true God.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD…For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you." (Psalm 139:1-4; 13-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God is a personal being. We read in Psalm 139:1, "…you know me." The Hebrew word is יָדַע (*yādhaʿ*); it is a covenant word meaning to know intimately, personally, relationally. God knows us intimately; he doesn't just know about us. Even before our birth, he knew us, and he interacts with individuals. (Psalm 139:1-18; Jeremiah 1:4-10) He communicates with his people, listening to what they say and genuinely changes circumstances according to their requests which accord with his perfect will. (Exodus 3; 1 John 3:21-22; 5:13-15)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

"O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD…For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you." (Psalm 139:1-4; 13-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Understanding that God is spirit and personal means he is a living being. As such he cares about you and me, and he provides all-sufficient help wherever we are and in whatever circumstances we exist.
- As spirit he is not limited by time and space. Neither do other obstacles and constraints that hinder the rest of his creation encumber him.
- Since he is personal we can engage in a relationship with him, unlike we would be able to do if he were only an impersonal "force." Therefore, you need never be lonely wherever you are in the world.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Triune God: The Only Living God Is Spirit and Personal, Engages in Relationships

- "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints." (Psalm 116:15)
- "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)
- "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)
- "[Grace in Christ Jesus]…has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God has feelings. He grieves when his holy children die. (Psalm 116:15; John 11:35) He also grieves when we sin. (Ephesians 4:30) He loves us, having done so even before we loved him (Romans 5:6-11; John 15:13).
- The one true God has destroyed death. (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Holy, Holy, Holy

- “In the year [740 B.C.] that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.’” (Isaiah 6:1-3)
- “Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.’” (Revelation 4:8)
- "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.” (Leviticus 19:2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Holy means separated from, uncommon, pure, upright. Essentially, it means separate from the sin and evil of the world.
- The Hebrew grammar, lacking the superlative, expresses the concept of “most” or “greatest” by repeating the word three times.
- His holiness is the only one of God’s attributes that is repeated three times.
- Even though our language can express the superlative, repeating holy, holy, holy when addressing God in prayer helps us sense this aspect of God’s character in a very special way. Try it!
- Since God is love to the core of his being, it is encouraging to include God’s being most holy in the context of his love. (1 John 4:8 “…God is love.”) For example, in the praise part of our prayers we can say, “Dear triune God, holy, holy, holy and all love, including most gracious, most merciful, and most patient are you alone!”

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Understanding God's holiness and the holiness he requires of his people is a key to understanding many of his laws, teachings, and actions in the Bible, e.g., why he will not allow that which is sinful or evil in his presence. We must remember, and help others know, that we come into God's presence on his terms, not on our terms.
- Corporate implications: Many people saunter lackadaisically into God's sanctuary for worship without sensing God's being holy, holy, holy; they view God as a pal, almost as a peer, their great friend in the sky ("the man upstairs"), and they act disrespectfully toward God. Consider, e.g., how they dress (immodestly), laughing with each other during worship, using electronic devices for other than worship, drinking coffee and eating.
- **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:** What other examples can you cite? How can we help people to keep in mind that God is holy, holy, holy and act accordingly in his worship in his sanctuary?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Holy, Holy, Holy

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Understanding God's holiness and the holiness he requires of his people is a key to understanding many of his laws, teachings, and actions in the Bible, e.g., why he will not allow that which is sinful or evil in his presence.
- Individual implications: Almost all of the problems people have could have been avoided if they kept God's being most holy in their consciousness and obeyed his law. They would not have done what they did that resulted in such a painful situation, e.g., the couple who have been committing adultery. The woman is despondent that her paramour will not divorce his wife and marry her, and she has low sense of self-worth.
- **A Question for Reflection and Discussion:** How can we help people to keep in mind that God is holy, holy, holy and act accordingly in their lives?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Holy, Holy, Holy

[*Put yourself in the context of this passage and read it with the tone of voice of the apostle John and the four living creatures.*]

"Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.' Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say: 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.'" (Revelation 4:8-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Notice the additional meaning of the three-fold praise, "glory and honor and power." The numbers in Revelation are also symbolic; three is a spiritual number.
- Since our triune God is holy, holy, holy, and he does not permit that which is sinful and evil to come into his presence, he makes it possible for us who are sinners (Romans 3:23) to enter his presence and have communion and communicate with him by being credited with Christ's righteousness through faith. (Romans 4)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Holy, Holy, Holy

- "In the year [740 B.C.] that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.'" (Isaiah 6:1-3)
- "Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.'" (Revelation 4:8)
- "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

A Question for Reflection and Discussion: What should we do, and avoid doing, when we enter God's sanctuary, in order to glorify and honor him, to connect with him most meaningfully, and help ourselves and others benefit most from the worship service?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Perfect

- Moses sang, "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)
- "The LORD…is righteous; he does no wrong….and every new day he does not fail…." Zephaniah 3:5
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since God is perfect, you and I can have no small comfort in always being certain that no matter what God causes or allows to occur in our lives, he doesn't make mistakes. That awareness should be one of the bases, or basic assumptions, the starting point, for our perception of and trying to understand the circumstances we engage. For believers in Christ, "who love him, who have been called according to his purpose," God works in all things for our good, even though that good may be perceived only in retrospect after time, sometimes substantial time, has elapsed. (Romans 8:28)
- Whatever we experience that is unpleasant he will help us overcome. (2 Corinthians 12:10; Philippians 4:11-13)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Perfect

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- Jesus said that God is perfect, and he calls us to be perfect. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since God is perfect, he has no needs. He is not inadequate in any way; therefore, he can always help us.
- God defines perfection. His perfection is the standard by which he and we determine what is perfect. The converse is not also true.
- We call something perfect if it conforms to God's standard. God is not to be judged, and neither are others, by our standard of what we think is perfect. Our perception is finite and flawed by sin. (Romans 3:23)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Perfect

- Jesus said that God is perfect, and he calls us to be perfect. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)
- Moses sang, "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since God is perfect, this means he never makes a mistake.
- It means if ever I wonder why God didn't do something, I need to begin my reasoning with the basic premise of his perfection, which means that I need to conform my understanding to him and his ways; he, being perfect, never has to conform to my limited, flawed, and sinful, ways.
- This understanding helps us make sense out of our circumstances. That sense often occurs in retrospect but especially within the perspective of God's perfection. For example, today I was disappointed when a friend said he couldn't visit as we had planned. But during his absence, I received a call from a beloved member of our family who needed to talk with me then about a challenge he was having. I was able to help and was delighted to have the conversation with him that we had, which could only have occurred because of God's perfect changing of my schedule! He also made possible my friend to come for that visit only 48 hours later!
- It also helps us to learn from our circumstances.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Perfect

- Jesus said that God is perfect, and he calls us to be perfect. "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)
- Moses sang, "I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since God is perfect, he does not make mistakes. Furthermore, it is not that he doesn't make mistakes because he's had so much practice: he has never erred and he never will.
- Therefore, <u>when</u> something painful occurs in my life, (<u>not if</u>, since we live in a fallen world where everyone sins) I can rule out any thought that God is at fault; he is not; he never was; and he never will be culpable.
- In order to make sense out of, and manage, what has occurred and what I should do now, I turn to him and ask him to help me, directly and indirectly through the church, the body of Christ, where I can find more true wisdom that is helpful.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

- God's goodness is proclaimed throughout the Bible.
- David, whom God disciplined due to his heinous deeds, praised God saying, "You are forgiving and good, O LORD, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5; cf. 25:7-10)
- In two other psalms we read, "…the LORD is good and his love endures forever." (Psalm 100:5a)
- "You are good, and what you do is good; teach me your decrees." (Psalm 119:68)
- Jesus said, "No one is good—except God alone." (Mark 10:18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When people say that God "has a dark side," they are disclosing a human tendency to make God in their own fallen image, which has been done in all other religions apart from the Bible.
- To cite only a few examples, in Greek mythology we see gods portrayed as greedy, lying, and sexually promiscuous, among many other negative characteristics, typical of corrupt human nature rather than of divine perfection.
- How wonderful to contemplate, always know, and be assured that God is totally good and that he will always treat us well!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. What demon-inspired false gods in other religions that are made in the image of fallen human nature come to mind that, even though they neither truly live nor act, are portrayed as doing so?
2. What false gods are contemporary men and women in Western cultures worshiping? The Colson Center for Christian Worldview identifies the following: Sex, State, Science, and Stuff. Roman Catholic Professor Daniel Mahoney cites humanism. An evangelical Protestant pastor added "any other 'ism' that should be a 'wasm.'"
3. Distinguish between true science (e.g., astronomy, part of God's general revelation [cf. Romans 1:20ff.] and the false god of astrology, a demonic religion that seeks hidden knowledge, guidance, and to predict aspects of the future by studying the alignment of stars and other celestial bodies.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

- God's goodness is proclaimed throughout the Bible.
- "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." (1 John 1:5)
- "'…I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45]that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.'" (Matthew 5:44–45)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The goodness of the one true God revealed in the Bible is seen in the kind and bountiful blessings he continually bestows upon all people, the absence of any flaw, or "dark side," in him.
- People who claim to see a "dark side" in God do not understand or know the God who has revealed himself in his Word. Instead, they have made a god in their own fallen image.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

"And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.'

"Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The goodness of God is also seen in the reality that everything he does or allows is for the ultimate good of others, *even when that ultimate good is unapparent to our limited perspective*.
- To illustrate, sometimes for our own good we need correctives, which are not always pleasant, in order to refocus our attention on what is right, just as our earthly parents had to do at times. The Israelites, whom God disciplined for their disobedience, recognized that reality and responded accordingly: they "worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, 'He is good; his love endures forever.'" (2 Chronicles 7:3)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

- "[Jesus said] I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45)
- "[Jesus said] So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God is good not only to those who trust and obey him, but even to those who disregard and disobey him. (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17) We should not fail to note that the Lord made this statement as a basis for his teaching that he commands us to do what is good to all people, specifically showing love (defined by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 as being patient, kind, etc.) to all, not just to those who love us. "If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:46-48)
- He requires us, who have been called to be his witnesses, to live differently. We'll only be effective on this mission if we act Godly and not as the world does.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

- "For the LORD God is a sun and shield; the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. LORD Almighty, blessed are those who trust in you." (Psalm 84:11-12 TNIV)
- "Surely God is good to Israel,
  To those who are pure in heart!"
  (Psalm 73:1 NASB)
- "The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. 9The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." (Psalm 145:8-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's goodness is a blessing to us in itself. We have no fear of him doing any wrong to us. On the contrary, he is compassionate on us.
- Further, he blesses obedience. He gives what is good to those who obey him. (Psalm 84:11) "Blameless?" Have we not all sinned?
  - Of course, but God credits Christ's righteousness to those who believe, who follow him, and who ask his forgiveness when they fail in obeying. (John 15:9-12, Romans 4, James 2:14-23) <u>Talk about good news!</u>

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

1. Indeed, all that is good has come from God. What immediately comes to your mind that you consider good?
   - Let us thank God for these gifts from his wonderful hand!
2. We can say, "If it's truly good it's from God." However, the next question is: How do we know what we think is good is good in God's sight and, therefore, that it's from Him?" (Cf. Isaiah 5:20) The first answer: what makes something good is it's conformity and consistency with what God says in his Word (the Bible). See the discussion on God's will.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Good

"Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Let us always express our gratitude to God for himself, including for the many blessings we receive from the attributes of his character, in particular his perfection and goodness.
- Those two characteristics will be abundantly perceived on Thanksgiving Day, but we will not have to look hard to see them on every other day of the year.
- As we become ever more aware of these blessings, let us look for ways to help others perceive them as well.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The word used in Psalm 86:5, translated love is חֶסֶד (*chesedh*), a major Hebrew term in the Old Testament that denotes God's love as an enduring commitment of his love, often translated as steadfast love; God's love is a loyal love especially to and for his covenant people.
- The word love in the Greek of 1 John 4:8 is ἀγάπη (*agapē*), which Paul defines as being patient; kind; not envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, or delighting in evil; but instead rejoicing with the truth and always protecting, trusting, and persevering. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God is love, but of course the converse is not true. We cannot say that love is God, which would be to improperly interpret the statement as a chiasmus, a popular grammatical and rhetorical verbal pattern, where the second half of an expression, when reversed, is also usually true or makes a point. An old example is the statement that in the prophetic part of ministry, "we need to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."
- Nowhere does the Bible teach, in this passage or anywhere else, that love is God; that would be to make a false god out of love.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "God is love." This verse means that the essence of God's being is love; i.e., love characterizes who he is. Nevertheless, his love issues forth in other attributes as well.
- What God has revealed through John's statement is that love describes the core of God's character. God's love is not just a part of him or something he does at certain times. Love depicts himself, his essential being. All else about him, including his acts, comes from his love, what the outstanding German theologian, Karl Barth, described as "an overflow of His essence." We don't agree with all that Barth taught, but he said this well!
- Everything God does, or allows, is for the good of all involved—even though we may not understand at the time. Which also makes sense, since we are limited; we are incapable of comprehending all of reality. So we trust in God's goodness and love for all.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." (Ephesians 1:4-8)
- "the tender mercy of our God..." (Luke 1:78)
- "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God's love is also referred to by other words in the Bible, depending on its expression being explained.

- *Grace* refers to the unmerited and undeserved aspect of his love revealed in his pardoning our sin at such a huge cost to himself. (Ephesians 1:6-7)
- M*ercy* or tender compassion is the expression of God's love in relieving the misery of those bearing the consequences of their own or others' sin. (Luke 1:78)
- *Patience*, also called *longsuffering*, is that aspect of God's love when he continues to bear with unrepentant sinners who don't heed his warning and instructions, as he postpones their judgment, giving them sufficient time to repent and change their ways. (Romans 2:4)

What great comfort!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

"You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Biblical Christianity is unique among all other religions in referring to God as love. Throughout history other faiths around the world describe their gods as beings requiring specific human actions in order to be appeased and to grant salvation, but they are not characterized as love and most all are not viewed as loving.
- Arabic-speaking scholars say that the word love doesn't even occur in the Arabic version of Qur'an, which Muslims maintain is the only accurate version.
- And, while some Hindus see Brahman as a personal and loving god, usually he is described as an impersonal being above all creation and completely uninvolved with human life on earth. That concept is an oxymoron, for love denotes involvement with the one loved, expressed in feelings and actions, including help.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

"You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We see God's love on every page of the Bible, even on those pages where for a period of time in the Old Testament we see God telling his people to kill all men, women, and children in the pagan tribes inhabiting the land he was giving to the Israelites.
- When we remember his being holy, holy, holy and his plan of redemption we can see why he did what he did: he had us and all future generations in mind.
- If God allowed the exceedingly evil pagans (to whom he patiently gave plenty of time before judging their evil [Genesis 15:16]) to corrupt all his people, our salvation would be in jeopardy. (As it was, only a remnant of his people remained faithful, and out of them came the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.) As we will see more, God's justice comes from his love.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call to you." (Psalm 86:5)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)
- "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Genesis 15:16)
- Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36)

Using a concept familiar to everyone—a covenant that kings made with their people—God executed a covenant with Abraham in which God revealed he would implement his just plan for salvation from the evil Adam and Eve's sin brought on His perfect creation. The covenant thus establishes the basis for the Biblical concept of God's kingship and the major motif of the kingdom of God, which pointed to and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God's kingdom is his rule over his people, through whom he would bring salvation. His rule is most evident in the Old Testament in his first governing his chosen people, the Israelites, directly as their king and then indirectly through human kings God appointed through Samuel and then kings he allowed. In the New Testament he revealed that his kingdom is in his people's minds and hearts. (John 18:36)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



This graphic depicts the evil worship of the Canaanite fertility god, Baal, showing the practice of child sacrifice, abhorrent to God and his people, and that God forbade. (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.'" (Exodus 20:1-6)
- "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

Here in this graphic is depicted the nature and fertility cult goddess, Diana (the Roman name) or Artemis (the Greek name). Unsurprisingly, unspeakable evil occurred during the worship of this false goddess, including ceremonial prostitution that was part of her worship in Ephesus. (Cf. Acts 19:23-41)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Another idol that can't even breathe or hold itself up, much less help anyone else!

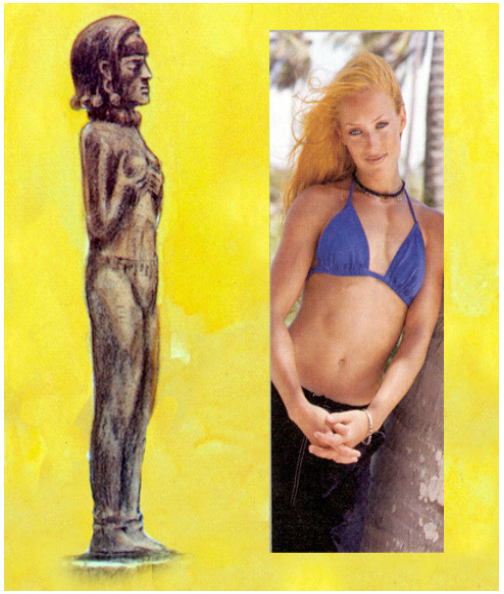
Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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- "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

On the left of this graphic is an idol of an ancient fertility cult goddess. Cult prostitution and other egregious evil that destroyed people God loves occurred during the worship of these demonic idols. God gave the nations sufficient time to repent and change before he judged them. (Genesis 15:16-21)

Meaning and Practical Application



For Reflection and Discussion: Is the world essentially different now? In what was has it changed and not changed in 4,000 years?

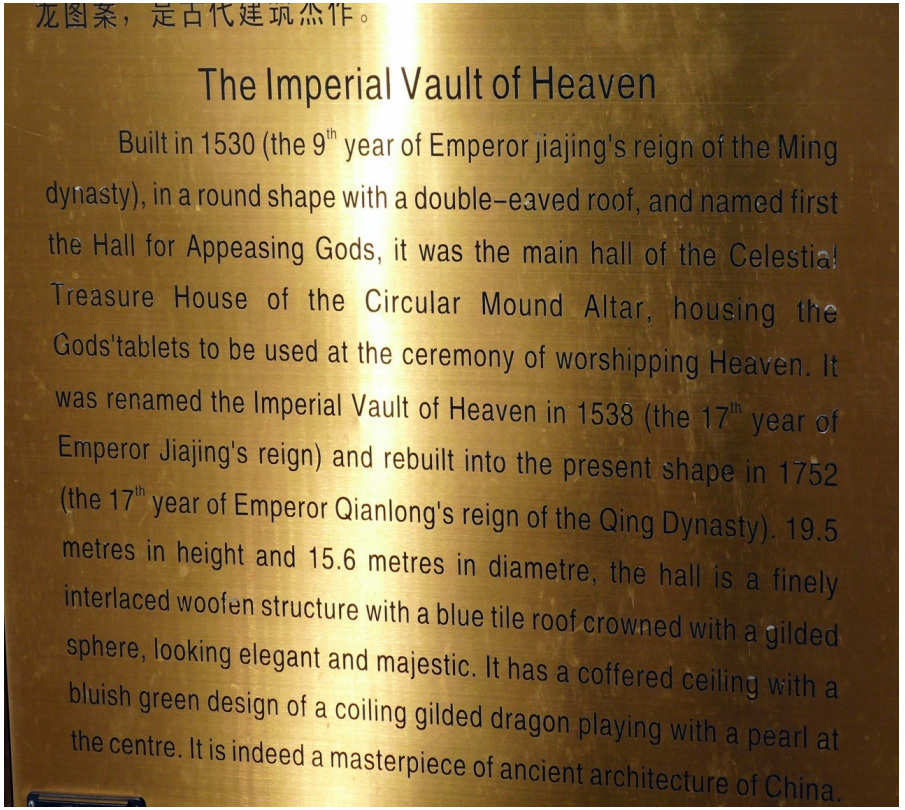
Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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- "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

Throughout history fallen human beings separated from God who is most holy, have been demonically led to worship false gods to appease them out of fear. Demons do not love. The one true God, who does love and who is love (1 John 4:8), frees people who bear his image from such fear.

Meaning and Practical Application



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.'" (Exodus 20:1-6)
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China's emperors in the Ming (A.D. 1368-1644) and Qing (A.D. 1644-1911) Dynasties worshiped in the Imperial Vault of Heaven in the Temple of Heaven in Beijing to appease the false gods in order to have fertile crops. How sad when they could have turned to the Father, the only giver of every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17) Here we see our calling, our mission; how else will they know? (Genesis 12:3; Revelation 7:9)

Meaning and Practical Application



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.'" (Exodus 20:1-6)
- "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 44:6)

"A man…looks for a skilled craftsman to set up an idol that will not topple." (Isaiah 40:20) "The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not…take up their names on my lips." (Psalm 16:4) These worshipers of the false gods need to know that Jesus has performed the once-for-all sacrifice that alone is effective and that Buddhist teaching that one has to die many times is unnecessary and untrue. (Hebrews 9:26-27)

Meaning and Practical Application



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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"The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer spurs on him who strikes the anvil. He says of the welding, 'It is good.' He nails down the idol so it will not topple." (Isaiah 41:7) Unlike the one true God, the false demonic gods do not live or love; they cannot and will not help.

Meaning and Practical Application



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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"the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God…" (1 Corinthians 10:20; Isaiah 44:6; 45:21; *John 8:44; 14:6) Contrary to Satan and the demons, the one true God, who is holy, holy, holy, loves people who bear his image in which he created them. So these people will not destroy themselves, he calls us to lead them to the one true God.*

Meaning and Practical Application



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation." (Psalm 13:5)
- "For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100:5)
- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NASB)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT) reveal the same God. Some people wrongly say that the God of the OT is a God of wrath, and the God of the NT is a God of love. This error is not new; it is an ancient heresy promoted by a wealthy businessman influenced by Gnosticism that the church in Rome condemned when it excommunicated him in A.D. 144.
- As we've just seen, the one true God is love, and we can see his love on every page of both testaments of the Bible.
- As we will see in our study of what God has revealed about himself, he exhibits wrath against sin, one reason being that it harms people he loves and who bear his image, but that wrath does not characterize God; God is love.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Whenever we speak of God's love we must clarify what we mean, because our society's understanding of love has been shaped by Hollywood's misunderstanding as well as other cultural influences contrary to the Bible.
- The Apostle Paul defined that special type of love, called ἀγάπη (*agapē*), which characterizes God, as we see in the New Testament, including in 1 John 4:8, and in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, as being patient; kind; not envious, boastful, proud, rude, self-seeking, easily angered, or delighting in evil; but instead rejoicing with the truth; always protecting, trusting, and persevering. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
- Significantly, that same word, *agapē*, which characterizes God's love, is the very word in 1 John 4:8 that we are to demonstrate in order to show that we do know God.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

German theologian Emil Brunner explained that "The Love of God…*Agape*…does not seek value, but it creates value or gives value; it does not desire to get but to give; it is not 'attracted' by some lovable quality, but it is poured out on those who are worthless and degraded…Here the One who loves does not seek anything for Himself; all He desires is to benefit the one He loves. And the benefit He wants to impart is not 'something', but His very Self, for this Love is…self-giving to the other, to whom love is directed." (*The Christian Doctrine of God*, 186-187)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Brunner makes that statement on the preceding slide in the context of his observation that God's love must be seen in connection with his holiness, which he rightly refers to as an indissoluble connection, "the characteristic and decisive element" in the Christian understanding of God.
- To understand the love of God as fully as possible, we must keep in mind his holiness, his justice, and our sinfulness, three subjects we'll explore more in upcoming sections.
- A woman said, "My earthly father was horrible and terribly abused me. If God is a Father, I don't want anything to do with him." We need to help such people know the truth about God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is perfect and all love. Think how the Biblical understanding of God could help her!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

In Exodus 3 God tells Moses that

- "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them…." (Exodus 3:7-8)

- "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Up to this point we've been considering the results of God's love, the actions he takes that flow from his love, which as Paul indicates is at the core of what the highest form of love means. Love in the Bible is behavioral, expressed in action.
- Yet, it's also important that we see God as having feelings; he has emotion as well as infinite intellect. God is not an impersonal force that is devoid of sensitivity, feeling, and emotion.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

In Exodus 3 God tells Moses that

- "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about יָדַע (*yādha ʿ*), their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them…." (Exodus 3:7-8)
- "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- An examination of the original Hebrew in which God is speaking to Moses, the English words, "I am concerned about their suffering" are in the Hebrew, "I know their pain." The root word for "I know" is יָדַע (*yādha ʿ*), a covenantal word meaning to know in an intimate, personal, relational, experiential manner, a term that involves a thorough and complete knowing due to an intimate loving relationship.
- He cares deeply for his people and plans to relieve them of their pain, their suffering, through Moses' leading them out of Egypt to the land God was giving them. Because God loves and cares, he acts accordingly.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

- In Exodus 3, God tells Moses that "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them…." (Exodus 3:7-8)
- "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion." (Psalm 116:5)
- "Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- One of the expressions of God's emotion is his compassion. In Psalm 116:5, the Hebrew word translated "compassion" is רָחַם (*rācham*), to love, to be merciful, showing compassion (love in action stemming from the core of God's being), a deep affection for another.
- This word is only used once for a person having and showing such affection to God (Psalm 18:1); all other times it is used to describe God's love for or on occasion his withholding such love for people.
- Notice this effect and great benefit of God's being gracious, righteous, full of compassion, and his salvation: "Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you." (Psalm 116:7)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

- "In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the LORD, your Redeemer. This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you." (Isaiah 54:8-10 NRSV)
- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness,…" (Romans 3:23-25 NASB)
- "…also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. [25]He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:24–25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We read in the Bible of God's anger, even wrath. Yet that wrath is due to his love for people who are being unjustly victimized or who are acting in ways that are very counterproductive to their own spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being or counter to God's will, i.e., counter to what he sees as ultimately best for everyone, all of which offends his holiness. God removes his wrath from those whose faith in Christ Jesus credits them/us with his justice, his righteousness. As we see in this section and especially in our study of Christology, soteriology, and eschatology, God will bring justice, even now when the time is right in his sight, and in the final judgment when Jesus Christ returns in his Second Coming.
- We are assured in God's Word through Isaiah and others that God's love will always remain with us.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

- "Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name.
  5For his anger is but for a moment; his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning." (Psalm 30:4-5 NRSV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We read in the Bible of God's anger, even wrath. Yet that is due to his love for people who are being unjustly victimized or who are acting in ways counterproductive to their own spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being or counter to God's will, what he sees as ultimately best for all. As we see especially in our study of Christology and eschatology, God will bring justice, even now when the time is right in his sight, and in the final judgment when Jesus Christ returns in his Second Coming.
- We are assured in God's Word through Isaiah and others that God's love will always remain with us.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: His Love Includes Feelings.

- "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:30-32)
- And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God," (Colossians 1:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We sadden the Holy Spirit when we act in these and the other ways in chapters four and five that "are improper for God's holy people." (Ephesians 5:3)
- Instead we are to "find out what pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10) and to act in those ways that please him. The original Greek word in this verse is εὐάρεστος (*euarestos*), well pleasing and acceptable. When we obey him, and act in accord with his will, he has a pleasant feeling about that; we give him pleasure. (See also 2 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 1:10.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation." (Psalm 13:5)
- "For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100:5)
- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16 NASB)
- "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's love for his people never fails; we can always count on his loving us.
- God's love for us lasts forever. No day will come where we discover that he doesn't love us anymore. We never have to worry about whether he still loves us.
- When we sin, we disappoint God (Ephesians 4:30), but he doesn't withdraw his love from us.
- Even when he needs to discipline us, it is because he loves us. (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "We love, because [God] first loved us." (1 John 4:19)
- Moreover, he loved us before we loved him, while we were alienated from him by our sin, as the Apostle Paul writes: "Vary rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:7-8)
- John adds, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Because God, who is most holy, righteous, and just, is essentially loving, he has chosen to not destroy us. Those credited with the righteousness of Christ by faith will be saved.
- Truly, God's love for us cost him dearly!
- Reflect on the meaning for you personally, as well as corporately, of *this most wonderful demonstration of love ever! The next time you doubt your worth, question the value of your life, or wonder whether your existence has meaning to anyone, remember what God went through as he watched his Son be so cruelly crucified and abused in many other ways…for you.*
- Pass this Good News along to others as well!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

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- John adds, "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

As contemporary theologian, J.I. Packer, observed (*Knowing God*, 111), "the statement 'God is love' means that His love finds expression in everything that He says and does. The knowledge that this is so [also] for him personally is the Christian's supreme comfort. As a believer, he finds in the cross of Christ assurance that he, as an individual, is beloved of God; 'the Son of God…loved *me* and gave himself for *me*.' (Gal. 2:20) …Even when he cannot see the why and the wherefore of God's dealings, he knows that there is love in and behind them, and so he can rejoice always, even when, humanly speaking, things are going wrong. He knows that the true story of his life, when known, will prove to be, as the hymn says, 'mercy from first to last'—and he is content."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

- "Then the LORD said to [Abram], 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions….In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here [the land of the Canaanites, et al.], for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.'" (Genesis 15:13-16)
- "and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned." (Jeremiah 18:8)
- "Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city…On the first day, Jonah…proclaimed: 'Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned.' The Ninevites believed God…When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened." (Jonah 3:1-10)
- "You are the salt of the earth…the light of the world….let your light shine before men…." (Matthew 5:13-16)
- "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago…." (Luke 10:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits Also Corporately, for Nations

- God loves, cares for, and is involved in the world he has created (John 3:16), including the nations. The word for world in 3:16 is κόσμος (*kosmos*) and includes its evil. God loves the world, but not its evil, which he calls us, his children in Christ, to address, to shed light on and expose, as he leads and helps us to do.
- Being just, righteous, and patient, God allows the nations time to repent of their evil ways, but that time is limited. Evil harms people he loves.
- DISCUSS AND/OR REFLECT:

1. How much time do you think God will yet give our country to repent and change our ways?
2. Name one action you can take in addition to prayer to help our country to make the needed changes before God's judgment comes. Include any of these not mentioned: Write to or call government representatives. Write letters to the editor of the local newspaper. Call talk radio programs. Talk to family, neighbors, friends, coworkers. How can we do so most effectively in our country? (E.g., Ephesians 4:15)
3. How do we distinguish between witness and Christian action?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Love: Always Expressed in Action

"[16]When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. [17]Then the LORD said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? [18]Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. [19]For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.' …
[22]…Abraham remained standing before the LORD. [23]Then Abraham approached him and said: 'Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? [24]What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?'...
[26]The LORD said, 'If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.'
[27]Then Abraham spoke up again: 'Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, though I am nothing but dust and ashes, [28]what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?' 'If I find forty-five there,' he said, 'I will not destroy it.' …
[32]Then he said, 'May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?' He answered, 'For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.'
[33]When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home." (Genesis 18:16-33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits Also Corporately, for Nations

FOR GROUP DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

4. We are called to extend and nurture God's kingdom throughout our country and the rest of the world. Extending God's kingdom (*op cit*), which Jesus says is not of this world and is within us who believe and obey him (John 18:36; Luke 17:21), is done by evangelism and Christian witness. Nurturing God's kingdom is done through teaching God's Word. Both are necessary to rescue our country. Only when people's hearts are changed, will their behavior be closer to God's will. Politics cannot change the heart; the Holy Spirit does.

   a. In the light of the Bible texts in this and the previous slide, how will our facilitating the extension and nurture of God's kingdom give our country more time before God's judgment upon the evil in it?

   b. How do spiritual gifts (*op cit.*) help us to understand who should do what? For example, let us not put pressure on our brothers and sisters in Christ to evangelize if they don't have the gift of evangelism; guilt is not a motivator, nor is it fair, healthy, or effective, but we are all to witness for Christ (1 Peter 3:15). How will you do so?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

- King Solomon prayed, “you alone know the hearts of all men.” (1 Kings 8:39)
- “Do you know how the clouds hang poised, those wonders of him who is perfect in knowledge?” (Job 37:16)
- “Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.” (Psalm 147:5)
- “God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.” (1 John 3:20)
- “Lord, you know all things.” (John 21:17)
- “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- From the beginning God, who is beyond space and time limits, knows all things, past, present, and future as well as all that even has possibility. From a human perspective what God sees in the future is foreknowledge, but his perspective permits him to view all things simultaneously.
- While he has decreed from before time that certain events will occur, his complete knowledge of everything does not preclude human freedom and responsibility. (Ephesians 3:9-11)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

- "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." (Isaiah 46:10)
- Our limited and finite knowledge and understanding should always acknowledge God's unlimited and infinite knowledge and understanding. As Isaiah adds, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (55:8-9) That's perfectly logical.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Compare Paul's observation of the difference between God's and human beings' understanding:

- Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)
- Such awareness helps us remember who we are and avoid arrogance. "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand." (Job 38:2-4)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

God has a special relationship with his covenant people whom he knows in the most personal manner. He knows us so well that he is aware of what we will do before we do it, even before we think of it. David sings in Psalm 139,

- "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD." (Vss. 1-4)

The Hebrew word in verse one translated "know" is יָדַע (*yādhaʿ*), a deeply experiential knowing within a most intimate covenant relationship, the one God has with believers in Christ.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The thought that God is all knowing terrifies many people. They fear this aspect of God, being aware that he knows about all our sins, even those we've done in secret. Yet it need not be so for us who are in Christ.
- That God knows all our secrets and everything we've ever done, including all we've ever thought, is a spiritually healthy reality and good. What is a great fear for those outside of Christ is a great blessing, including comfort, for those in Christ whom he has forgiven and who walk with him daily. Remembering that God is all-knowing helps motivate us to know what is right and to do it. (See Psalm 32:1-5,10-11.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Therefore, we never have to be concerned that there is some wickedness we've committed that he doesn't know about that would threaten our salvation if it ever came to his attention. He already knows about it.
- In fact, he knew about it eons before we ever did it, and he forgives us in Christ! He still loves us, even though he knows all our sins. We don't have to worry that he may someday find out something bad about us that he didn't know and then won't love us anymore.
- God's omniscience thus gives great joy to our understanding of our forgiveness in Christ. He knows all about us and he still loves and forgives us!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

God has a special relationship with his covenant people whom he knows in the most personal manner. He knows us so well that he is aware of what we will do before we do it, even before we think of it. David sings in Psalm 139,

- "O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD." (Vss. 1-4)

The Hebrew word in verse one translated "know" is יָדַע (*yādha ʿ*), a deeply experiential knowing within a most intimate covenant relationship, the one God has with believers in Christ.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's knowledge in macrocosm is unlimited; he is all-knowing. His being all-knowing is one of his incommunicable characteristics, but he gives us some knowledge. We can never be all-knowing, but we can have some knowledge, even much knowledge, yet nowhere near having knowledge of everything.
- He has communicated the capability for us to know things in microcosm, and even to know much, which gives us great joy and significance; but what we know, as important as it is, is infinitesimal contrasted with God's knowledge. Our knowledge is considerable but not all encompassing, as is God's.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

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The Hebrew word in verse one translated "know" is יָדַע (*yādha*ʿ), a deeply experiential knowing within a most intimate covenant relationship, the one God has with believers in Christ.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since God is all knowing, we need never worry that he doesn't understand. We'll never have a problem he doesn't know about. His intimate relationship with us and constant presence, as well as his personal experiences with humanity in and through his Son, Jesus the Christ, assure us that he knows what we are going through at every moment.
- He knows the injustices we experience that others don't see.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Being all-knowing, God knows the struggles we're having as we seek to walk the high road and yet slip into the gutter.
- Conscious of God's holiness and his requirement that we also be holy, as we try our best to avoid temptations, we sometimes give in where we are most vulnerable. "Does God know how hard I'm trying?" we wonder. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews answers that question with a resounding "Yes!"

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

- “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” (Romans 8:26-27)
- “O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.
  2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
  3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
  4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.
  6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain." (Psalm 139:1-4,6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God knows all our needs, so even at times when we don’t know how to pray, he understands; in fact the Holy Spirit even intercedes for us! (Romans 8:26-27)
- Furthermore, God knows what we mean even before we express it (Psalm 139:3) when we try to articulate our concerns to him in prayer.
- He anticipates our needs and acts to help us, even in ways of which we are unaware! Through countless means unknown to us he blesses us, for example providing a required resource through someone else, sometimes before the need arises in our consciousness.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing? God is omniscient, all knowing, an ever present and practical help!

My precious wife of 48 ½ years, Carol, died of a serious disease. To this day many years later, I have times of sadness each day; she is, and always will be, a vital part of me and of who I am. Indeed, I feel like I've, temporarily, lost the better half of me; I feel incomplete without her here with me. Thanks be to our triune God, my loss is only temporary; I'll be with her again, next time forever! Yet, while my loss is limited to the time I have remaining here on earth, it is still very painful at times, especially when I think of all the "coulda, shoulda, woulda's," i.e., the times when I failed to do what I could have and should have done, which would have made her glad, even very glad, and which I would have done, if I knew then what I know now. I definitely would have done so.

At such times, including when the ache in my heart is exceedingly excruciating, God immediately brings to mind a comment Carol made during a tender moment one evening a couple of weeks before she died. She said, "You're a good husband." I cannot adequately and fully describe how comforting those words are to me during these times of sadness!! Further, when God brings this recollection of her words to my mind and heart, and so quickly, I right away thank God, the Giver of every good and perfect gift, (James 1:17) for this multidimensional blessing that instantly pulls me out of my sadness. It is clear that this monumental blessing comes from God's love and his being omniscient—knowing eons ago how I would be feeling at times, and so he lead Carol to speak those anticipatory words of comfort while she was still with me! Further, she said these same words to a friend who told me what Carol said. Thanks be to God! I'm forever grateful to God and also to Carol!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

- "If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13)
- "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15)
- "God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble." (Psalm 46:1 (NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Through countless means unknown to us God blesses us, for example providing a required resource through someone else, sometimes before the need arises in our consciousness.
- When we receive such resources, let's not call them luck, but recognize God's Providence, expressions of his love and care, from the Giver of every good and perfect gift! (James 1:17)
- Moreover, there is nothing God doesn't know how to do.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

- “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” (Romans 8:26-27)
- “O LORD, you have searched me and you know me.
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  3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
  4 Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD.
  6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain." (Psalm 139:1-4, 6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Since he knows all about us, including what we are experiencing, he won’t ask or expect us to do something we cannot do. He won’t make a decision without having all the facts. He is completely realistic.
- But being all-knowing and perfect, God doesn’t commit the naturalistic fallacy, as we do; he doesn’t conclude that what is is what should be. He helps us rise above ourselves as we are to new heights of holiness and higher humanity in his image that we with his help can be. We’ll examine how he does that in chapters to come.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

When God forgives us it is permanent; his pardon will not be retracted in the future. When he revealed through Jeremiah his plans for the new covenant in Christ, he said, "I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (31:34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

The Hebrew concept of memory makes this statement striking. In the Hebrew mentality something existed as long as it was remembered. Here God graphically says our sins, all of them including the most despicable, no longer exist!

A Question for Reflection and Discussion: When we in Christ repent of a sin, and God forgives us and forgets the sin, causing it to no longer exist, how can we avoid continuing to feel bad and berate ourselves for that wrongdoing?

Responses from Dyads to the Discussion Question on How to Avoid Continuing to Feel Bad and Berate Ourselves

- Keep a thankful heart; accept our forgiveness; focus on the Great Commission—don't look back at the sin just go forward.
- Remember Isaiah 44:22; Micah 7:18-19; and 1 John 1:9.
- Pray any time those feelings come up, ask God to forgive and help us to let go.
- Have Prayer of Confession followed by Words of Assurance in each worship service.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Omniscient, All-Knowing

God has a special relationship with his covenant people whom he knows in the most personal manner. He knows us so well that he is aware of what we will do before we do it, even before we think of it. David sings in Psalm 139,

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The Hebrew word in verse one translated "know" is יָדַע (*yādha*ʿ), a deeply experiential knowing within a most intimate covenant relationship, the one God has with believers in Christ.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In sum, since God is omniscient, there is never going to be a time when he will discover something about us he does not already know. How comforting!
- While he knows us thoroughly, including all we've done that is ugly, he loves, forgives, and restores us in Christ, our greatest joy! Shalom.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Rational; He Reasons.

- “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)
- “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD.” (Isaiah 1:18)
- “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” (Luke 7:47 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God is not only all-knowing; he uses his unlimited knowledge with an unfathomable capacity to reason. Throughout his Word we see many texts where God reasons with his people and where a matter is explained, “For this reason….”
- Employing the common Old Testament literary device of the lawsuit motif, Isaiah portrays God’s forensic case against Israel’s constant disobedience as a charge against his people, wherein God calls them to reason together as in a court of law; they are given a wake-up call to change before they receive a severe sentence.
- Jesus explained to Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7), with an exceptionally insightful and wise rationale, why he forgave a sinful woman.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Rational; He Reasons.

- "'Come now, let us reason together,' says the LORD." (Isaiah 1:18)
- "…my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. 9For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9, ESV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's creation of the human brain so we humans can reason—far above the ability of any animal—is awesome. Empirical brain research reveals why. John Stonestreet, President of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview, explains the findings of the research:
  - "…scientists digitally mapped a cubic millimeter of the brain, equivalent to two grains of sand. The results are mindboggling.

    [This tiny segment of the human temporal cortex contained] 'about 57,000 cells, about 230 millimeters of blood vessels, and about 150 synapses and comprises 1.4 petabytes.' A petabyte is a measure of memory capacity. So, as one website described,

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

[A] typical DVD holds 4.7 GB of data. That means a single terabyte of storage could hold 217.8 DVD-quality movies, while a single petabyte of storage could hold 223,101 DVD-quality movies.

Since the whole human brain is much, much larger than a cubic millimeter, that means that every person is walking around with a few hundred million DVDs worth of data. This, [podcaster Aakash] Gupta concluded, puts our work with AI within a larger context:

*We're building AI systems that loosely mimic neural networks while still unable to fully read the wiring diagram of a single cubic millimeter of the thing we're trying to imitate. … Every AI model on Earth fits in a fraction of that. The brain runs on 20 watts and fits in your skull. The data center required to merely describe one-millionth of it would span 140 acres.**

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* John Stonestreet, "The Human Brain is Better Than Artificial Ones," *Daily Citizen*, March 19, 2026

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

- "How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all…" (Psalm 104:24)
- "Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.'" 12 But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding." (Jeremiah 10:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Because he is perfect and infinitely wise, we have confidence that his purposes are not only good but the most perfect of all possibilities. His wisdom involves his understanding, intelligence, ability, and skill with which he created the world.
- His wisdom also includes firmness and steadfastness, the root meaning of the Old Testament word referring to this characteristic.
- In his wisdom he places the parts in proper conjunction with the whole and develops the right means to accomplish the ends he has determined, including incorporating our requests.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

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- "Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.'" But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding." (Jeremiah 10:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's wisdom, German theologian Karl Barth wrote, "is that God not only wills but knows what He wills…and…why and wherefore He wills it…and wherefore is then his own meaning, plan and intention. To this extent there is in it light and no darkness."
- Barth explains that God's wisdom revealed in the Bible enables us to "hear the reason, meaning, purpose and intention of God. When we hear it, we are instructed, enlightened, knowing and wise."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

"Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Romans 11:33-36)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The wisdom of God is infinitely superior to human wisdom. As such it includes an understandable element of mystery that is unfathomable to us. This reality is perfectly logical: that which is finite cannot comprehend that which is infinite, nor the limited the unlimited.
- Such awareness helps us maintain the respect God alone deserves; gives us a secure confidence and peace in knowing that God's way is best; and motivates us to maintain our trust in and commitment to him, and obedience to his Word and his will. (Cf. Hebrews 5:7-9)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

- "…Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:24)
- "My purpose is that they [the church in Colossae and Laodicea] may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments." (Colossians 2:2-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Christ is the perfect expression of God's great love and the only means of making us, who are unworthy, fit for fellowship with God who is holy, holy, holy. Through Christ's obedience and sacrifice, God maintains his integrity and justice. He credits to believers the righteousness of Christ whereby we become worthy to draw near to him, to serve him, and have eternal joy in his presence.
- It does not surprise us that the world cannot understand the wisdom of this plan, indeed that they consider it foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23), for the new nature provided by the Holy Spirit is required for such understanding.
- Part of our calling, our mission, is to make known this wisdom of God. (Ephesians 3:10-12)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

- "But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding." (Jeremiah 10:12)
- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's wisdom is related to the other characteristics of his being as well. For example, he has the power to bring about what he wills in his wisdom, as Jeremiah proclaims in 10:12.
- Also, his wisdom is linked with his truthfulness: he and his will can always be trusted.
- True wisdom comes from God. Another dimension of God's wisdom, which the world also cannot understand, as well as many Christians, is that human wisdom comes by a healthy fear of God, which we'll discuss in a later section.
- Observe how many worldly people can be very knowledgeable but lack wisdom.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

- "Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies…I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes." (119:97-99)
- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We have assurance that when we turn to God for counsel and direction, he'll lead us to that which is true and most helpful. We know it is his leading because the answer we receive is in accord with his Word in the Bible; he does not contradict himself, nor is he a hypocrite who says something and later says or does the opposite.
- We always have access to God's wisdom. It won't disappear or be replaced by something more current, applicable, or useful.
- As Barth has also written, "The whole art of living and understanding life consists in heeding and accepting divine wisdom and in this way becoming wise…which distinguishes the wise [person] from the fool…."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Wise

- "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him." (1 John 5:14-15)
- "All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom." (Isaiah 28:29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- I've often been faced with either not knowing how to do something or which of more than one option to select regarding a specific matter. When such times occur, I ask the Lord for help, praying a form of this prayer: "Gracious God, you know this question I have before me. I am uncertain what to do. Please grant me your wisdom that I may know what to do and the guidance to do so in the way that will most please you."
- Many times I have the answer before I have finished the prayer! An idea comes to mind that I had not thought of prior to that time. On other occasions the answer has come later. Sometimes it comes through other people through whom God works.
- Yet, it always comes, is always practical, and is always the most helpful approach to take.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just

- "…but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD." (Jeremiah 9:24 NRSV)
- "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The NIV and TNIV translate the original Hebrew word, חֶסֶד (*chesedh*), as kindness, but while kindness is a meaning of *chesedh*, since God's essence is love (1 John 4:8), I prefer the translation of *chesedh* as steadfast love, also a primary meaning of *chesedh*, as in the RSV, the NRSV, and the GW. See also the NASB and the KJV, lovingkindness.
- Thus, God's being just is rooted in and stems from his essential love.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just

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- "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Justice is an integral part of love. In the best relationships both qualities are present, for justice without love is harsh, and love without justice is mere sentimentality.
- Since God's love is completely true and genuine, it is not surprising therefore to expect that his love will include justice.
- God's righteousness or justice is never separated from his love; they are two sides of the same coin. Since God is just, he will not simply look at sin and smile at it, which would be to deny and compromise his integrity, his basic character, and hurt people he loves.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just

- “but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:24 NRSV)
- “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- “Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” (Deuteronomy 16:20 NRSV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In both the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament the words translated justice in the English also mean righteousness and involve being correct, equitable, fair.
- According to what standard? As owner and ruler of the universe, God defines the standard of what constitutes the justice that characterizes his most holy being and which he requires for us in order to be in his presence and acceptable to him. (Leviticus 19:2, Deuteronomy 16:20; Micah 6:8) His just acts are rooted in his essential righteousness. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Injustices are sins against people whom God loves and therefore ultimately against himself (Psalm 51:4); they are violations of his holiness.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just

- "but let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the LORD; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, for in these things I delight, says the LORD." (Jeremiah 9:24 NRSV)
- "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Nothing is more practical than Biblical theology. Because God is righteous, just we have a standard for what is right, and it is good. This is a needed message in our postmodern age where many hold that there is no universal truth and thus no standard.
- On the contrary, we can distinguish between right and wrong. Objective and universal truth is possible only because of God's character. When one looks solely to any other standard he or she makes truth relative. The belief system of no one person or culture is authoritative for all.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

We see the essential linkage of love and justice in many places in the Bible.

- The Queen of Sheba tells King Solomon, “Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the LORD your God. Because of the **love** of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain **justice and righteousness**.” (2 Chronicles 9:8)
- “**Righteousness and justice** are the foundation of your throne; **love** and faithfulness go before you.” (Psalm 89:14)
- “I will sing of your **love** and **justice**; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise.” (Psalm 101:1)
- Matthew shows how Jesus fulfills Isaiah 42:1-4, when he writes, “Here is my servant whom I have chosen, the one I **love**, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim **justice** to the nations.” (12:18)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Rectal Justice

- "For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us." (Psalm 99:4)
- "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing." (Romans 13:1-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Because God loves and cares about people, and to maintain his integrity and holiness, he exercises justice. Theologians discern three aspects of God's justice.

1. **Rectal** Justice: The love of God as revealed in the rectitude (righteousness) of his rulership over all human affairs wherein he has established government with levels of authority, laws, and rewards for the obedient as well as punishments for the disobedient.
   + Recall that Paul wrote these words in Romans 13 during the harsh rule of the Roman government.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Remunerative Justice

"Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of our land—your new grain, new wine and oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you." (Deuteronomy 9:9,12,13; cf. Psalm 58:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Because God loves and cares about people, and to maintain his integrity and holiness, he exercises justice. Theologians discern three aspects of God's justice.

2. **Remunerative** Justice: His *remunerative justice* is a manifestation of his love expressed in the distribution of rewards.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His <u>Remunerative</u> Justice

This justice is also seen in the New Testament:

- "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism." (Romans 2:7-11)
- "He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Because God loves and cares about people, and to maintain his integrity and holiness, he exercises justice. Theologians discern three aspects of God's justice.

2. **<u>Remunerative</u>** Justice: His *remunerative justice* is a manifestation of his love expressed in the distribution of rewards.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Remunerative Justice

This justice is also seen in the New Testament:

- "To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For God does not show favoritism." (Romans 2:7-11)
- "He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God's rewarding his people for their faithfulness is an expression of his grace, unmerited expressions of love from him. Such rewards should not be confused with the unbiblical concept of salvation by merit. We do that which is good out of gratitude for God's grace in Christ, not to earn it. God has always blessed his people when they are obedient. Our ultimate reward is to serve him in the bliss of his eternal fellowship.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Remunerative Justice

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- "He [Moses] regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (Hebrews 11:26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

That God is just means he is fair, he has no favorites, and he is unreachable by bribe or any of the other unfair methods people use. Whenever we are victimized, oppressed, abused, or mistreated by others in any way, instead of being overcome with bitterness that eats away like a cancer within us, our response can be guided by the awareness that God will call them to account. We can take comfort in knowing that he will make the matter right sooner or later. (Psalm 73:17)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Retributive Justice

- "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.'" (Hebrews 12:5-6)
- "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Because God loves and cares about people, and to maintain his integrity and holiness, he exercises justice. Theologians discern three aspects of God's justice.

3. **Retributive** Justice: His *retributive justice* expresses God's love for those who are and will become his people in his wrath against sin; this justice manifests itself in the penalties the wicked bring on themselves. While the Bible emphasizes God's rewarding the righteous for their faithfulness and obedience, the punishment of those who do evil is sure and certain.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His Retributive Justice

- "And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.'" (Hebrews 12:5-6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God models true love and righteousness in his discipline of his people as we've seen in the texts above and in many others in the Bible, e.g., Proverbs 3:11, 12, and that discipline is life saving.
- Parents do well to follow his model. "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him." (Proverbs 13:24) "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." (Proverbs 19:18) (See also Hebrews 12:5-11.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: His <u>Retributive</u> Justice

- "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. [19]Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. [20]On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' [21]Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-21, esp. 19)
- " 'And forgive us our debts [ὀφειλήματα (*opheilēmata*), in the sense of transgressions, trespasses, sins], as we also have forgiven our debtors.' [Matthew 6:12] …for if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- This comfort is immediate. When I have been treated unfairly and my stomach churned with anger, I have recalled Romans 12:17-21, especially verse 19. It is important that I am not involved in this process. God alone will be just. The person who treated me unfairly must be treated fairly. Sinner that I am, and biased in this case, I would not likely be just in my judgment of him or her. When I remember that verse I feel my stomach relax. "It's OK, I remind myself. God knows; he saw it; he'll make it right when the time is best in his sight." Here we see how *realistic and comforting* God's plan of salvation is. ***What peace! Thanks be to God!***
- This awareness enables me to take one more necessary step: to forgive that person. A big help to do that forgiving is when I remember that I, too, need God's forgiveness, and to receive that forgiveness I also must forgive. And doing so also results in relief of anguish over the offense.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'" (Genesis 50:20)
- "Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong;
2for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.
7Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
8Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil.
9For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.
10A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found." (Psalm 37:1-2, 7-10, 14-20, 32, 39-40)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

At times of personal and national crisis or tragedy, one of the first questions people ask is, "How can a just God allow such things to occur?" This question, one I've been asked a lot in over half a century as an ordained minister, is called the theodicy question (< Greek θεός, *theos,* God + δικαιοσύνη [*dikaiosunē*] justice, uprightness, righteousness): i.e., is God just when he allows evil to occur? His Word offers a clear answer to this question. (See also Romans 3:21-26.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'" (Genesis 50:20)
- "The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright.
15 But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.
16 Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked;
17 for the power of the wicked will be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.
18 The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure forever.
19 In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.
20 But the wicked will perish: The LORD's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields, they will vanish--vanish like smoke." (Psalm 37:14-20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God uses circumstances in this fallen world to accomplish his purposes, bring good out of evil. (Cf. Romans 8:28)
- Thus, to understand, we need to lift our viewpoint beyond the pain of the particular circumstance to take into account the broad, including the eternal, perspective.
  Remember: always think eschatologically!
- We see God's justice and righteousness even and in spite of the suffering experienced by people that they did little, and sometimes nothing, to cause.
- While easier to understand, we also need to see his justice in other human suffering, e.g., the suffering that people bring on themselves, which is an outcome of God's justice.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "'You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.'" (Genesis 50:20)
- "The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives;
  [39]The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
  [40]The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him." (Psalm 37:32, 39-40)
- "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, [13]while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Timothy 3:12-13)
- "Through your own fault you will lose the inheritance I gave you." (Jeremiah 17:4b)
- "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." (James 4:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God respects his creation of us in his image, which includes genuine, albeit limited, freedom that we have allowed sin to misuse. In his monumental classic book, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, William L. Shirer documents well over 100 times where people could easily have stopped Adolph Hitler just by speaking up when he was beginning his rise in Germany.
- God's people must exercise our responsibility to oppose evil wherever and whenever we can.
- We need to remember: though we cannot see God, that does not mean he is not present and working in our midst.
- In this evil age, we must prepare our minds and hearts that we will be persecuted by those motivated by Satan and his demonic forces. But with God's help we will overcome evil and the evil forces. (Cf. John 16:25, 33; Romans 12:21; Ephesians 6:13; 1 John 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4; Revelation 3:12, 21; 5:5; 11:13; 17:14)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17]but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- It's important to recall that God created everything good; Adam and Eve at first lived in bliss without evil. It was only after they disobeyed and corrupted mankind's nature that human suffering began, an occurrence God had warned them would take place if they misused their freedom, that if they disobeyed the only prohibition he gave them (which actually enhanced their freedom), it would be tragic: they would experience evil and death.
- They ignored that rule, and the result is that we live for a time in an age where evil (which in the Bible includes all disobedience to God) is a stark reality for which God cannot be blamed.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17]but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- People refine the question in this or a similar form: "Why doesn't God eliminate evil and prevent these and other human sufferings?"
- We could begin our response by observing that God created people in his image, one aspect of which is freedom to choose.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17]but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When this freedom is misused by motives stemming from the corruption in someone's nature, by mistake, or by simply being in the wrong place at the wrong time in a world flawed by sin and evil, suffering often occurs.
- God could take away the freedom people have which could reduce if not eliminate evil deeds, but the result would be to turn us into puppet-like beings with little movement or speech capability, a different kind of suffering, for we would lose an important part of the essence of what makes us human, image bearers who reflect in microcosm some of the wonderful characteristics of the Creator.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Genesis 3:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Nevertheless, God is working out a plan that he implemented as soon as Adam and Eve sinned. (Genesis 3:15)

- He will one day eliminate all evil and suffering from the context in which we live. You may then wonder, "Why doesn't he complete his plan now?"
- Well, let's think about some of the implications if he did so.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Genesis 3:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- What if, during one of the horrific wars in centuries past, believers prayed, "Come, Lord Jesus!" and he did! What would be some of the implications of the Lord doing so then?
- One: We would not exist.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Genesis 3:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Possibly one reason God is delaying the end of this age is so more people can have the opportunity to experience life and the joy it brings, especially in his kingdom.
- We've previously seen that his essence is love, and he may want more people to receive that love as some human parents want more children.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'" (Genesis 3:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- A young dying soldier in the American Civil War in the mid-19th century showed how he personally answered the theodicy question by keeping his focus on the broad, including eternal, perspective as he suffered but did not blame God.
- On his death bed, John Moseley wrote to his mother, "I had hoped to have been spared; but a righteous God has ordered it otherwise, and I feel prepared to trust my case in his hands." (*Gettysburg*, Historical Times, Inc.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [9]The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:8-9)
- “‘And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? [8]I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’” (Luke 18:7-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In his second letter, the Apostle Peter adds another reason for God’s delay: to give people more of an opportunity to repent and be saved.
- We must broaden our worldview. Our time in this age is a small part of our eternal existence. Life in the presence of God now, in heaven, and in the new heaven and new earth is far more to be valued than life in the age of sin here on earth.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

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- “Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13 TNIV)
- “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.” (1 John 4:14. See also John 4:42.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Christians in other cultures as well weep when a loved one dies, but they also rejoice if their loved one is with the Lord, with no more suffering. I testify that I do too!
- Living with that perspective prepares us for when someone close to us dies; helps us cope with our (temporary) loss; and enables us to serve the Lord well for as long as we have until we can rejoin our loved one in and with our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found." (Psalm 37:10)
- "But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. [9]The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:8-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The Sovereign LORD is righteous and his purposes will prevail. He *will* bring those who do evil to justice *when the time is right in his sight*. The unrepentant wicked who will not change will be destroyed. (Psalm 37:10) "A little while" is one of the Bible's time-related terms that indicates the shortness of this age from the broader perspective of God's timing.
- Evil and the suffering it produces is a result of the human condition brought on by Adam and Eve's disobedience which corrupted human nature. Simply by living in this age people will be harmed by evil deeds and conditions not of their own doing or deserving (Luke 13:1-5; John 9:1-5), but God will provide all-sufficient help to overcome the adversities of life, small and huge, between now and the time Jesus returns to complete God's plan of redemption.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives;
  [39]The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
  [40]The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him." (Psalm 37:32, 39-40)
- "'As I [the LORD] was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5b,c; Hebrews 13:5)
- "'And surely I [Jesus] am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:20b)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The LORD will not forsake his people; he will help us. (Psalm 37:28-40)
- He makes us righteous in his sight (Romans 4, Galatians 3),
- gives us all we have that is good so we can give generously (37:21, Genesis 12:1-3, James 1:17),
- and prepares future and more extensive blessings for us and our children, including peace, wisdom, and salvation (37:9-40).

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

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- "'As I [the LORD] was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" (Joshua 1:5b,c)
- "'And surely I [Jesus] am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:20b)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- How does the LORD want his people to react to the evil in this age?
- He tells us we should trust him, avoid evil ourselves, and do what is good, confident that he will eliminate all evil at the right time. (37:3, 27)
- He wants us to be still and wait patiently for him to carry out his plan. We are to "refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil." (37:7-8) In times of trouble we'll find that God is a very present help (Psalm 46:1), and we'll experience that blessing by taking refuge in him. (37:40)
- Rather than unjustly criticizing God, we should thank him for his unspeakably wonderful provision for our redemption, at great cost to himself, and for not "washing his hands of us."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip.
  [39]The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
  [40]The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him." (Psalm 37:31, 39-40)
- "'Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. [8]Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.'" (Joshua 1:7-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- How do we reach the point in our lives where we can function with that degree of maturity (trusting God, waiting patiently for and taking refuge in him)?
- The Bible clearly specifies how:
  + through daily reading, reflecting on, and obeying God's Word (Psalm 37:31; Joshua 1:7-8),
  + prayer (Philippians 4:4-13),
  + desiring to be led by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-26),
  + and participating in the worship and work of the church, relating to fellow members to whom the Lord has given special gifts to help us "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7-13)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

- "This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth.
[16]When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me
[17]till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny." (Psalm 73:12,16-17)
- "[Jesus said] So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:2)
- "Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him. [11]Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!" (Psalm 32:10-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God works in our lives directly with us as individuals, but he also blesses us through other people, his church.
- It is often hard, even for believers, to observe the apparent prosperity of the wicked. The Psalmist, Asaph, confessed that such observations became very difficult for him, until he did something. "When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny." (Psalm 73:16, 17) Jesus added that unrepentant sinners "have received their reward in full." (Cf., e.g., Matthew 6:2; Romans 3:21-26) The theodicy question is answered! We also learn from Psalm 32:10-11 that those who want nothing to do with God but appear to prosper aren't really doing so well as they'd like us to think.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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- Regular participation in the corporate worship of God, hearing his Word truthfully proclaimed, explained, and applied, meets their deepest longings and needs, including helping God's believers understand and mature in Christ.
- Churches that do this grow; those that do not decline. (< Rev. John Stott and many others)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. [22]This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, [23]for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25]God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— [26]he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:21-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In the sanctuary, as the church throughout all ages has gathered in corporate worship, we have heard proclaimed by faithful teachers the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the culmination of God's plan of redemption.
- The apostle Paul summarizes and explains God's plan of redemption in Romans 3:21-26, where we see how he has demonstrated his justice and his love so perfectly in his redemption of us who believe at such a huge cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever!
- We will examine further this aspect of God's answer to the theodicy question in the section below on the doctrines of Christ, Christology, and salvation, Soteriology.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2]I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3]And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4]He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When we celebrate Christ's Resurrection in corporate worship, we again testify to the existence of God's plan to right all the wrongs that began with Adam and Eve's disobedience.
- We rejoice in God's love that is also just and righteous and receive renewed encouragement that the day is coming when we will dwell with God and "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Thanks be to God!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
[2]The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD—
[3]and he will delight in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;" (Isaiah 11:1-3 (Prophecy of Jesus' First Coming))

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- At Advent and Christmas, we celebrate the focal point of God's just resolution of our human plight in the life and work of the Messiah.
- Passages such as Isaiah 11:1-10, actually refer to both his first and his second advent (coming), the latter being the time where he will judge with righteousness and with justice and bring forth a new heaven and a new earth.
- This is an example of a style of writing the prophets often (and Jesus also) employed, which is called the principle of the prophetic perspective or "prophetic foreshortening." It is also commonly called the principle of near and far fulfillment.

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The principle of the prophetic perspective, or "prophetic foreshortening," refers to the prophets' often including in the same passage their predictions of the future events that will occur relatively soon and those that will occur far into the future, even in Jesus' Second Coming, without distinguishing which is which.
- God only gave his people what they needed to know at any particular point in time. Thus, it was not revealed until Jesus' first advent (coming) that the Messiah's coming that was predicted in the Old Testament, would be accomplished in two stages, two advents.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

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(Prophecy of Jesus' First Coming))

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Another example of prophetic foreshortening, employed by Jesus, is seen in Matthew 24:3-51 (also Mark 13:3-37 and Luke 21:5-36), where the Lord refers to events soon to come (e.g., the destruction of Jerusalem) and those that will not occur until his Second Coming without distinguishing which is which.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
6 The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.
7 The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8 The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
9 They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious." (Isaiah 11:4-10 (Prophecy of Jesus' Second Coming))

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

Passages such as Isaiah 11:1-10, actually refer to both Jesus' first and his second advent, the second (seen in 11:4-10) being the time when he will judge with righteousness and with justice and bring a new heaven and a new earth, where "the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together…[and where he] will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [will have] passed away." (v. 6, Revelation 21:4)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Righteous, Just: Even in Times of Trouble

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2]I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3]And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4]He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-4)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- In the meantime, between Jesus' first and second comings, "God is an ever-present help in trouble…" (Psalm 46:1; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) directly in the lives of those involved and through his church, the body of Christ. What good news!
- Christ's First Coming is the greatest demonstration of God's goodness and his true love which is just and righteous,
- and his Second Coming will eternally eliminate evil from the lives of his people.
- The theodicy question is not only answered; it is resolved. Thanks be to God! See Romans 3:21-26.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> and Faithful

- "O Sovereign LORD, you are God! Your words are trustworthy,…" (2 Samuel 7: 28)
- "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless." (2 Samuel 22:31)
- "Just and true (< *alēthinos*) are your ways, King of the nations!" (Revelation 15:3 NRSV)
- "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments." (Revelation 16:7)
- "We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true—even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (1 John 5:20)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- In 2 Samuel 7:28, the Hebrew word אֱמֶת (*ʾĕmet*), trustworthy, means faithfulness, firmness, valid, reliability, therefore true comes from the verb, אָמַן (*ʾāman*), meaning support or confirm.
- The Greek word ἀληθινός (*alēthinos*) translated true also means dependable, genuine, real.
- Note in the Revelation 16:7 text that these speaking are the martyrs, those killed in God's service. They're not angry at him, and they're not accusing him of any fault; they praised him!
- Truthfulness characterizes all aspects of God's very being. There is no deceit in him at all. Thus, his revelation is true, both in his Word and in its expression through his only begotten Son. The triune God is also trustworthy in his relationships with people. We can believe what he says!
- We should prepare to explain this truth.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Compare and Contrast God's Truth with Modernism and Postmodernism

Modernism

- Began in Enlightenment period after the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648); roots in Renaissance. Assumes that knowledge is accessible to the human mind, and is certain, objective, and good; truth limited to rational apprehension.
- Searches for method of demonstrating the essential correctness of philosophic, scientific, religious, moral, and political doctrines.
- Absolute faith in human rational capabilities: reason the criterion for assessing reality.
- Progress inevitable; science and education will free mankind from vulnerability to nature and social bondage.
- Suspicion of all beliefs which seem to curtail autonomy or are based on some external authority other than reason.

Postmodernism

- Began in 1970s; roots in latter 19th Century (Friedrich Nietzsche). Postmodernism marks end of a single and universal worldview: the one point of agreement of all scholars on what the term postmodern means.
- Truth not limited to rational apprehension. Reject assumption of autonomous and dispassionate, purely objective knower & intrinsic goodness of knowledge.
- Knowledge cannot be objective because universe not mechanistic; rejection of emphasis on rational discovery through scientific method and of modernist certainty in science.
- Structure inhibits meaning and freedom. Deconstructionist approach yields meaning: other valid paths to attaining truth exist including emotions and intuition; meaning emerges through interaction, thus many meanings possible.
- Postmodern ethos resists unified and universally valid explanations; no absolute truth possible. Truth relative to the community in which we participate.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> and Faithful

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'
"[33] They answered him, 'We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?'
"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.'" (John 8:31-36)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- Jesus taught and demonstrated that truth is knowable, absolute, and universal; he embodies it and proved his divinity and the rest of the truth by his resurrection from the dead as predicted.
- He chose to focus on the main point he was teaching in this discussion with the Jews (who believed him [8:31]), and he did not correct their error in 8:33. Not only were they themselves subject to Rome as they were speaking, but historically they were slaves under Egyptian pharaohs and Middle Eastern despots.
- Contrary to the modern and postmodern theorists, who have an unrealistic concept of human nature, not taking sin into account, Jesus is the only one who can provide true freedom, by freeing people from their sinfulness and sins and the implications of that bondage.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> and Faithful

- Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6)
- Further, Jesus added that “for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” (John 18:37)
- Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, “is the image of the invisible God…all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Colossians 1:15-17)
- "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” (Matthew 7:15, see also 16-23.)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- Jesus did not say he was a truth, part of the truth, knew the truth, or pointed to the truth. He simply and profoundly revealed that <u>he</u> <u>is</u> <u>the</u> truth.
- Christ is the basis of all truth. He is the standard, the benchmark, to determine the truth. Whenever we wonder what is true or right about a certain matter, we can and should look to Jesus’ life and teachings. We see truth embodied in Jesus Christ.
- The standard of Jesus Christ is also the way we tell who and what is true. Many false prophets exist in the world today, and some are in churches. Jesus told us this phenomenon would occur.
- In order to discern who is a true believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, ask the person to tell you what he or she thinks about Jesus. “Tell me about Jesus; who do you think he is?” Then compare and/or contrast what the person says by what God’s Word says Jesus is, and you’ll have your answer.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> and Faithful

"But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come." (John 16:13)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- Since God is true, we can have a relationship with him, and it can be profound and lasting. Careful research in the field of psychology demonstrates that basic trust (which is grounded in truth and trustworthiness) is the essential basis for a relationship.
- Joy emerges in our hearts as we consider and act on the ever-present help of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, whom the Father and the Son have sent to be with us. (John 14:16; 15:26) One of the functions of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus called "the Spirit of truth," is to guide us into all truth. (John 16:13)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> and Faithful

- "Surely you heard of him [Christ] and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (Ephesians 4:21-24)
- "…speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- In Ephesians 4:21-24, we read that in accord with the truth that is in Jesus we are to clothe ourselves in the new self, "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Our new being is to be like God, who is said to be true righteousness, justice, as well as holiness.
- Truthfulness characterizes all aspects of God's very being. There is no deceit in him at all. Thus, his revelation is true, both in his Word and in its expression through his only begotten Son. The triune God is also trustworthy in his relationships with people.
- God both enables and calls us to speak and act in truth.
- As we daily act in such truthfulness, do you think we will distinguish ourselves from the world? Will our behavior facilitate a witness to Christ?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is True and <u>Faithful</u>

- "Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands." (Deuteronomy 7:9)
- "…the LORD is the true God; he is the living God, the eternal King." (Jeremiah 10:10)
- "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)
- "[T]he Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one." (2 Thessalonians 3:3)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- In the Bible, God's truthfulness and faithfulness are linked. The word translated faithful in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, e.g., Deuteronomy 7:9, is again אָמַן (*ʾāman*) and means to endure, to be steadfast, dependable, true and trustworthy. It is the basis of the word Amen.
- The Old Testament reveals God as being truthful and faithful not just for a period of time but forever. (Jeremiah 10:10; cf. Psalm 146:6)
- In the New Testament Greek, the word faithfulness is derived from the verb πείθω (*peithō*) meaning to believe and its noun form πίστις (*pistis*) meaning faith, trust, faithfulness, reliability, solemn promise, oath, proof, pledge.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is True and <u>Faithful</u>

- "Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them-- the LORD, who remains faithful forever." (Psalm 146:5-6)
- "For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations." (Psalm 100:5)
- "…the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)
- "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood," (Revelation 1:5)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- As an attribute of God's being, his faithfulness is also eternal. (Psalm 146:6) He won't demonstrate faithfulness one day and then sometime in the future forget his covenantal commitment. We read in Psalm 100:5 that God's faithfulness continues throughout all generations.
- God's faithfulness is what led theologian Louis Berkhof to observe is "the ground of His people's confidence, the foundation of their hope, and the cause of their rejoicing." (*Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 69-70)
- As we trust and obey God, Satan is powerless to harm us, and because God is true and faithful, he strengthens and protects us from Satan.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is True and <u>Faithful</u>

- "…the word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does." (Psalm 33:4)
- "For the LORD loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off; the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever." (Psalm 37:28-29)
- "To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless," (Psalm 18:25)
- "All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant." (Psalm 25:10)
- "No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband," (1 Timothy 5:9; cf., Proverbs 31:10-31, esp. v. 26)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- When we walk daily with the Lord, in obedience to his Word, maturing in Christ-likeness, and remain faithful to the Lord, we will see his faithfulness to us. (Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Samuel 2:9; 2 Samuel 22:26; Psalm 18:25; 25:10)
- God's communicable attribute of faithfulness enables us to be faithful to him and to others, e.g., being faithful to our spouse and being faithful in our commitments to others. (Cf., Luke 12:42; 2 Chronicles 31:18-21; John 1:5)
- He has not promised to bless those who depart from him, are unfaithful, and unrighteous, but they do receive good from him, even if they neither recognize or thank him. (Matthew 5:45; 6:2,5)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>True</u> <u>and</u> <u>Faithful</u>

When Jesus returns, he will conduct the final judgment that will bring to completion God's plan of salvation and right all wrongs.

- "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

  "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31-34)

Meaning and More Practical Benefits

- Does that sound good? Can we count on that promise taking place? We're so used to sinful human beings making promises all the time, and then too many if not most times failing to keep those promises, that when people promise us something, we tend to not always believe them.
- BUT NOT SO WITH GOD. Because God is true and faithful we can have absolute assurance that God will fulfill all his promises which are still coming, e.g., his constant presence and help for any need we have; the Second Coming of Jesus; the righting of all wrongs; and the elimination of all evil, death, crying and pain in the new heaven and the new earth. (Revelation 21:3,4) We can count on Jesus' returning to bring to fulfillment his kingdom which he inaugurated at his First Coming (Luke 17:21).

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Sovereign

a. <u>God's Sovereign Will</u>

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted." (Job 42:2)

"When I act, who can reverse it?" (Isaiah 43:13)

b. <u>God's Sovereign Power</u>

+ "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" (Matthew 19:26)

+ "Christ…far above all rule and authority, power and dominion…And God placed all things under his feet..." (Ephesians 1:17-22a)

+ "[Jesus said] I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God's sovereignty involves two dimensions: his sovereign will and his sovereign power. The former is the exercise of God's authority to accomplish what pleases him, what he sees is best for all, and achieve his purposes. His sovereign power is his total and complete ability to produce what he wills without being thwarted by any being or circumstance in all creation, including artificial intelligence (AI). (Job 42:2) How very comforting! What God purposes and promises he provides. What God says, he can deliver. Talk about Biblical theology being practical!
- God is not dependent on anything; on the contrary, all God's creation is dependent on him. God can and does take care of us, including helping us overcome adversity, especially those who remain faithful to him. We don't have to worry. Believe that reality and sleep well!
- Due to the sovereignty of God, his believers do not need alcoholic beverages, opioid drugs, or other substance abuse to calm nerves and "get through" worrisome thoughts and experiences such as AI or a plane trip and times on the trip, e.g., excessive turbulence.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As a communicable characteristic, God has given humans a smaller and limited amount of sovereignty as part of creating us in his image, e.g., in his command that we subdue the earth and rule over the living creatures as stewards of God's creation. (Genesis 1:28-29)
- An important part of our stewardship includes being responsible. With any privilege comes responsibility; therefore, when we use our God-given ability to make something, such as in gain-of-function research, artificial intelligence, or anything else, God will hold us accountable for controlling what we have made so that it contributes positively to his creation and serves his purposes. What we produce must not in and of itself negatively affect God's creation.
- Compounding the challenge is the sinfulness of human nature, whereby something good is used for evil, which we'll examine in our study of Biblical anthropology.
- Yet, thanks be to God, he has revealed that he loves us, is sovereign, and everything is under his control.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits



Contrast the gods of other religions that are made in man's image and are not sovereign. For example, one of the ways the theology of Taoism impacts the culture of China is in architecture: Taoism asserts that architects should add an opening on the top of the buildings to help the gods get over the building and not become angry when hindered by the tall buildings. In China such construction is very common. The gods of the false religions are not sovereign, neither are they transcendent (they can't "look far down on the heavens and the earth" [Psalm 113]); in fact they can't even look (Isaiah 44), and thus they are not helpful, or loving and gracious, and they must be appeased, unlike the One true God.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- We see here an illustration of Isaiah's prophecy that there are "those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (5:20)
- "David praised the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly, saying,

  'Praise be to you, O LORD, God of our father Israel, from everlasting to everlasting.
  11 Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours.

  Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. 12 Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all. 13 Now, our God, we give you thanks, and praise your glorious name.'" (1 Chronicles 29:10-13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Why is it wrong to commit adultery? To engage in other types of sex outside of marriage? To steal? To lie?
- One answer offered is "Because all these acts hurt people, and that's bad." Yet, some object, "Why is that bad?" Who says so?!
- These and similar questions are being asked in our postmodern age which is inclined more than ever to challenge previously held values and redefine terms. Today many acts condemned in the Bible are being presented as not only tolerable but acceptable and even good. Their promoters try to justify and validate them by referring to them as "the new normal."
- Unless we can appeal to a higher authority, we have no way to effectively answer these questions or ultimately resolve the disputes.
- We have that higher authority: God, who is the creator and owner of everything in heaven and earth. Therefore, he decides what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and not acceptable.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

  + The Hebrew verb translated create has only one subject in the Bible: God. Further, the word create means to make out of nothing; God made it all. It's all his; he neither borrowed from nor owes anybody.

  + Man is never the subject of the verb create.

- God tells Job, "Everything under heaven and earth belongs to me." (41:11b)
- With the Holy Spirit's guidance David sings, "The earth is the LORD'S, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters." (Psalm 24:1-2)
- "In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands." (Hebrews 1:10) They thus belong to him.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Obviously we need to appeal to a higher authority, since most people in the United States believe that all truth is relative, i.e., that there is no universal standard for judging right and wrong, except that one, which contradicts their thesis. Even more disappointing is the finding that only 32% of adults who call themselves born-again Christians believe in moral absolutes, according to Barna Research; the figure is even lower for born again teenagers (nine percent).
- Good News! We do have a Higher Authority: God! Without an appeal to God anything we say can be dismissed by someone else who claims to have an opinion equal to or better than ours, a very common claim that often comes in the frequently quoted but errantly applied assertion in the U. S. Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal." They deceptively imply that *ipso facto* all these people's values are equal; they are not. The only way we can show the error of such flawed casuistry, is to appeal to a higher authority, and we have the best in God's Word.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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- “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.” (Hebrews 1:10) They thus belong to him.
- “Jesus…, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In his Word we see ample documentation that God is the owner of the universe, of all that is, ever was, and ever will be.
- On the human level, we see the same principle. If you make something it is yours; you own it.
- *With ownership comes privilege*. If you own a car, you can decide who will drive it and who won’t and whether or not you’ll allow smoking in your vehicle. In the house you own you have the right to decide who you allow to enter and what constitutes acceptable behavior under your roof. “My house, my rules” is a common cliché.
- If you own a business, you have the right to vet applicants and decide whom you will hire.
- Since God is the owner of the cosmos he can do whatever he wants with his creation. That’s perfectly logical. It follows and makes sense that God has the right to establish the standard for judging what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. It is his definition of good and evil that counts. He also has the right to vet whom he allows into his presence and under what conditions. (John 14:6)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- God told Moses to write, "If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket." (Deuteronomy 23:24)
  - + **How could God say that? Because he owns all the grapes. And everything else!** *This is one way he cares for his people's daily needs.*
- In response to God's graciousness, his people have always given back to him from their bounty. David declared why. "[W]ho am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." (1 Chronicles 29:14. See also 16.)
- "'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through him and to him are all things," Paul declared. "To him be the glory forever!" (Romans 11:35-36)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- At this point it is important to inform people about God's character, who he is and what he is like, for out of his character comes the standard to which we are being held. This is one of the reasons why this series, which is based on historic Christian systematic theology, and that theology itself, begins with the study of God's revelation as to who God is and what he is like.
- We can be eternally grateful that, as we've seen in this series, God's essence is love. Since his love is perfect, it includes holiness, righteousness, and justice, and he does not change, thus neither do his definitions. We do not have to live in anxiety that he will treat us unfairly, as do the followers of the demonic gods of other religions. (1 Corinthians 10:20-21; Isaiah 44:6; 45:21; John 8:44; 14:6)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- "'I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.'" (Exodus 6:7-8)
- "I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'" (Deuteronomy 9:26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God's love is always evident in his ownership, especially in his provision to redeem (Hebrew *ga-'al*, Greek *lutroo-*), a major motif or theme throughout the Bible, that is rooted in the understanding of purchase, to free by paying a ransom and buying back a person or thing and thus laying claim to the person or thing purchased. (Exodus 6:7-8; Deuteronomy 9:26) God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt as part of his plan to redeem all his people everywhere and throughout all time from slavery to sin and evil, which he did in and through Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." (Titus 2:14)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- "…the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands." (Deuteronomy 26:18)
- "You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own." (Leviticus 20:26)
- "…you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deuteronomy 7:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As we've just seen, God takes care of his creation that belongs to him, including his people whom he loves. In so doing, he perfectly models what we should do.
- Further, in that responsibility we see our raison d'etre, our purpose for being, and our mission. When he established his covenant with Abram, God explained that his people would be blessed to be a blessing. (Genesis 12:1-3)
- As we saw earlier in this series, holy means set apart, uncommon, pure. Since God's character is holy, he has thus chosen to **not** consider sex outside of marriage, stealing, and lying as good and acceptable behavior, as acts characteristic of his holy people.
- Instead, he views such acts as offensive, evil, harmful, and counterproductive to the well being of his people whom he loves and the accomplishment of his plan of redemption. (Ephesians 4:17-5:20)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

We must remember our identity: to Whom we belong (who we are and Whose we are), and our calling from God to be holy to him.

- "They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor." (Isaiah 61:3)
- "you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light…to abstain from sinful desires that war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:9, 11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As always, God is right! Just talk with someone who will honestly tell you what he or she has experienced as a victim of adultery by a spouse, the loss of a family heirloom or other valued item that has been stolen, or the devastating results of a lie.
- Here we have more work to do as a church; fewer acorns are maturing into oaks of righteousness. (Isaiah 61:3) In 2006 Barna research found that "[t]he notion of personal holiness has slipped out of the consciousness of the vast majority of Christians. While just 21% of adults consider themselves to be holy, by their own admission large numbers have no idea what 'holiness' means and only one out of every three (35%) believe that God expects people to become holy."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We can do this! God does not call us to an impossible task, and he is always present to help us! (Deuteronomy 31:6; Joshua 1:5; Matt. 28:20; Hebrews 13:5; cf. Isaiah 41:10 and many other passages!)
- We cannot influence people for Christ if we live our lives in the gutter. No one seeking to be saved is attracted to such a lifestyle. Neither are many others.
- Such behavior is indistinguishable from the world. Contrary to being separate, uncommon, and pure, such behavior fits in with the world, is all too common, and is very impure. **Do not be afraid to be different!** Let us make pleasing God our greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment. (Romans 12:1-2; Luke 6:22,26)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- Because God made them he owns the cattle on a thousand hills; "…the world is mine, and all that is in it," the Psalmist sang of God. (Psalm 50:10-12)
- Because God made us, "we are his" as he reveals in Psalm 100:3.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We belong to him, as does everything else. What great comfort this gives us! Sound social science research confirms what we intuitively sense, that belonging is one of the most important of human needs. No greater blessing exists than to know we belong to the Owner of the universe, and that he loves us.
- The next time you feel overwhelmed by a problem, meditate on these words from the catechism and most of all the Scripture texts upon which they are based. Resist the temptation to view your difficulty with tunnel vision. Put the situation in the fullest perspective: you are not in it alone.
- Remember that you belong to the One who has redeemed and lays claim to you.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is the Owner

- "for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations." (Psalm 22:28)
- "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:20-23)
- "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood," (Revelation 1:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Recall, as we've seen earlier in this series that you do not have a small God; he is immense, filling more than the universe; he is sovereign and almighty; and he loves you.
- He not only owns everything, but he rules what he owns. (Psalms 22:28, 66:1-9, 67:4; Ephesians 1:20-23; Revelation 1:5)
- Then begin to sense in a renewed way God's all-sufficient help and with it the surpassing peace and joy **he alone provides!**

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing? God is the Owner.

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. What can you say when someone tells you, “What’s wrong with adultery?”
2. The next time you hear someone say, “everybody’s equal,” what can you say to correct that misleading statement?
3. Social science research conducted by the Barna Group found that only 35% of adults who are Christians believe that God expects people to be holy, only 21% of adults consider themselves to be holy, and only nine percent of born again teenagers believe in moral absolutes. What implications and applications do you see in this situation?
4. Beginning with the understanding that we belong to God, how can we help these people, and all the rest of us, to mature in holiness to God and function according to his will as we read in 1 Peter 2:9-12 and elsewhere in the Bible in order to facilitate the accomplishment of his redemptive purposes most effectively?

Theology: The Doctrine of God

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)

Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Key Aspects of God's Other Work

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"…[God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,…" (Ephesians 1:9-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In the theological literature on the *decrees of God*, generally the word decree appears in the plural but scholars note there is actually one decree that appears in many particular applications.
- Louis Berkhof writes, "The decree of God is His eternal plan or purpose, in which He has foreordained all things that come to pass." Hence, in the Reformed tradition the decree means that God has from the beginning determined all that will take place in the future, either by his direction or, in the case of evil and sin, by allowing such to occur but under his control.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
[11] In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit," (Ephesians 1:3-13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- *Predestination* refers to God's purposes pertaining to his rational, moral, creatures, including all humans, individually and in groups. His predestination concerning the angels is somewhat different. The focus here is on humans. Predestination consists of two aspects: election and reprobation.
- *Election* may be defined as "the eternal act of God by which from eternity out of pure grace for Christ's sake He has decreed to bestow those blessings on the Christians which through His call they now enjoy—conversion, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith." (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 3)

  Election is one of what Biblical scholars refer to as a major motif or theme that occurs in many places throughout the whole Bible.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.
7The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.
10But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.
11Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.
12If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. 13 He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb…." (Deuteronomy 7:6-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

"In the OT the verb 'elect' (Heb. בָּחַר [*baḥar*]) refers only rarely to the election of a single individual to eternal salvation but usually to God's historical covenant action concerning the people of Israel. God chose this nation in order to establish his covenant with it, he elected it from among all the nations as his own peculiar property (Deut. 14:2). The prophets emphasize that this is an election of grace: It is in no way based on any human excellences of Israel (Amos 9:7; cf. Deut. 7:3-8), but at the same time it obligates the people to offer obedience to God inasmuch as it brings them within the sphere of God's holiness." (W. Joest [trans.], "Predestination" in *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)
- "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)
- "…God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- To understand the subject of predestination and its key component of election, as much as possible, one has to keep in mind the Old Testament basis of election, which shapes the content of the concept. We are elected to a function, not to a position of prestige, which point the Israelites failed to maintain.
- Their election became a status in their minds, not a function; they lost sight of their election being a calling to holiness to God to serve him in his redemptive purposes. (Genesis 12:1-3; cf. John 15:16.) *This distortion is still a danger for Christians today*.
- In the view herein presented, in every age a people whom God has elected is present so the church will always exist and continue its witness to reach out to those who are not in the elect and are not saved and also serve God in other ways. That plan, however, has as its focus the whole of humankind, (1 Timothy 2:4) not that all people will be saved, but so that the message will reach all people and provide the opportunity for them to be saved, to join the elect in God's covenant community, and join in the mission of the elect.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

The most difficult Biblical passages to interpret, on which the traditional Reformed doctrine of reprobation is based, include the following verses and Romans 11:7-10; 1 Peter 2:8.

- "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.
  [19]One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?' [20]But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?"' [21]Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?
  [22]What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction?" (Romans 9:18-22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Reprobation in Reformed theology typically refers to a decision by God to not elect some people as a punishment for their sinfulness. The fact that he has elected some implies that he has not elected others. In traditional Reformed theology this reprobation has usually been understood as one of the decrees of God whereby some sinners are not saved. The elect will sooner or later come to Christ and experience salvation, but the reprobate will never accept Christ and therefore are condemned.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written:

- "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear, to this very day."

And David says:

- "May their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them." (Romans 11:7-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for." (1 Peter 2:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Reprobation in Reformed theology typically refers to a decision by God to not elect some people as a punishment for their sinfulness. The fact that he has elected some implies that he has not elected others. In traditional Reformed theology this reprobation has usually been understood as one of the decrees of God whereby some sinners are not saved. The elect will sooner or later come to Christ and experience salvation, but the reprobate will never accept Christ and therefore are condemned.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The ways Christians have interpreted the preceding and additional Bible texts pertaining to predestination can seen as on a continuum of views positing an unnecessary dichotomy between God's sovereignty and human freedom, both of which are true but neither of which negate the other.

Views of God's Will and Human Freedom

Hyper-Calvinist	Calvinist	Some Lutheran Modified Calvinist	Arminian

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. [1 Timothy 1:18-20] I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4)
- "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- One of the greatest textual difficulties with the hyper-Calvinist and Calvinist views of predestination are the Biblical passages which state that God wants all people to be saved. Calvin and others interpret the context of 1 Timothy 2:4 as applying to classes of people, such as kings and magistrates, meaning that God wants people from all segments of society to be saved, not all persons. Calvin concludes, "By this Paul surely means only that God has not closed the way unto salvation to any order of men; rather, he has so poured out his mercy that he would have none without it." (*Institutes*, p. 984)
- Yet, that view seems forced when the context of the whole passage is carefully considered. Observe that the last sentences of the preceding chapter have been addressing individuals, specifically Timothy, but then also Hymenaeus and Alexander.
- The Greek where Paul and Peter address the doctrine election is even more compelling.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.
[19]One of you will say to me: 'Then why does God still blame us? For who resists his will?' [20]But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? 'Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "Why did you make me like this?"' [21]Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?
[22]What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? [23]What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects ["vessels" Greek, NASB] of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory— [24]even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:18-24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Speaking in verse 23 of "vessels of mercy, which [God] prepared beforehand for glory," (9:23 NASB) the Greek verb for "he prepared beforehand" (προητοίμασεν [*proētoimasen*]) is in the **active** voice clearly indicating that God is engaged in the selecting of these people for his purposes.
- In a very significant contrast, when we look at the Greek pertaining to the vessels of wrath having been prepared for destruction, (9:22 NASB) the verb Paul uses for "having been prepared" is (κατηρτισμένα [*katērtismena*]), and we see it is in the **passive** voice. Further, as Pieper clarifies, "there is no mention whatever of any 'doing' by God…Here, then, the Apostle clearly says that God endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, but does not say that He made them vessels of wrath." (Pieper, pp. 497-498.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath—prepared for destruction? [23]What if he did this to make the riches of his glory known to the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—even us, whom he also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles?" (Romans 9:22-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

We must also observe in the Romans 9:23 text, in the Greek word translated [in the NASB] "prepared beforehand" (*proētoimasen*) regarding the "vessels of mercy," that the prefix *pro*, meaning before, indicates that God's fitting the vessels of mercy for his purposes was done by him eons ago, "before the foundations of the world." (Ephesians 1:4) Pieper observes that "the *pro* is missing [in the Greek for "those fitted to destruction"]…Here, then, is taught an eternal preparation for glory or for salvation, but no eternal preparation for destruction." (Pieper, p. 498)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- God told Abram, "'In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.'" (Genesis 15:16)
- "Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden." (Romans 9:18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God in his love for those whom he has created is long-suffering, i.e., very patient. But his patience is limited. (Genesis 15:16)
- Youngblood and Kaiser observe, "Nine times in Exodus the hardening of the pharaoh's heart is ascribed to God…another nine times the pharaoh is said to have hardened his own heart…. The pharaoh alone was the agent of the hardening in each of the first five plagues. Not until the sixth plague did God confirm the pharaoh's willful action (see 9:12), as he had told Moses he would do (see similarly Romans 1:24-28)." (p. 92)
- God allows those who refuse to believe to persist in their obstinate disobedience until his purposes have been accomplished, and they have had their fair opportunity to respond in faith and obedience. Their hearts have become hardened. Why did God harden the heart of Pharaoh? In our limited and finite ability to understand, we cannot press beyond what we have been given, but we have been given enough to satisfy us. God has the right to do what he wills; God is good and perfect, as are all his ways; God is just and fair to all, e.g., he gave Pharaoh Moses, Aaron, and all the time he needed to do what was right in God's perfect sight; God in his love for all human beings always keeps in mind his ultimate purpose, to redeem his creation, and he will not allow the sin and evil of anyone to destroy the lives of those whom he loves and is saving.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "What then? What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened, as it is written: 'God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so they could not hear, to this very day.'" [Deuteronomy 29:4] (Romans 11:7-8)
- "Again, I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious." (Romans 11:11)
- "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again…I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" (Romans 11:22-23, 25-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When the Bible speaks of God hardening the hearts of people we need to keep in mind the above observations, including that the hardening has been done after sufficient time for repentance and obedience, and that the hardening is done to accomplish God's redemptive purposes for all people. Recall what Paul says in Romans 11.
- See also Hebrews 3:8 and 15. God warns humans, "do not harden your hearts," which implies those who hear have not already been predestined with hardened hearts.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

Compare 1 Peter 2:7-8:

"Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' [Psalm 118:22] and, 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' [Isaiah 8:14] They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for."

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Again the English verb in 1 Peter 2:8 does not disclose what the Greek verb reveals. The words "were destined for" translate the Greek word ἐτέθησαν, which is transliterated *etethēsan*. This Greek verb is in the **passive** voice, indicating together with the context that those who fall do so because they disobey the Word of God, specifically the Gospel of Christ Jesus, not that God actively predestined them to destruction.
- The outstanding Bible commentator, Lenski, further explains, "It is startling to read: 'for which they also were placed (set, appointed).' Calvinists explain this as an eternal decree of reprobation, all Scripture to the contrary notwithstanding. They place the action of the verb in the *voluntas antecedens* whereas it belongs in the *voluntas consequens*. The former does not take into account man's reaction to Christ and to the Word…." (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, p. 98.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' [8]and, 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for." (1 Peter 2:7-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Again, a very important part of verse eight that must be kept in mind is the statement, "They stumble because they disobey the message." Their disobedience is their own fault. To help us accurately interpret the text we need to remember the Greek term, *etethēsan* ("destined for"), is in the **passive** voice. Thus, as we found in our study of Romans 9:22, we cannot use this text as a proof that God has from eternity actively decreed that these people have been destined for reprobation.
- Thus, as some interpret this passage, Peter is likely saying that unbelief is destined to result in eternal destruction. (Donald W. Burdick and John Skilton, commentary on 1 Peter in *The NIV Study Bible*, p. 1890.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"'For many are called, but few *are* chosen.'" (Matthew 22:14 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Another text employing the passive voice that is unapparent in the English, but clarified in the Greek, supports rather than refutes the view of predestination and election herein presented. The text is Matthew 22:14. Lenski explains it well.
  - "Both κλητοί [called] and ἐκλεκτοί [chosen] are verbals and are equal to passive participles, the agent back of the passive idea being God: 'called by God,' 'elected by God.' Moreover, in both verbals the entire action is included, that of God's calling and that of God's electing."

R. C. H. Lenski, *Lenski New Testament Commentary* – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 859.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

"Both κλητοί [called] and ἐκλεκτοί [chosen] are verbals and are equal to passive participles, the agent back of the passive idea being God: 'called by God,' 'elected by God.' Moreover, in both verbals the entire action is included, that of God's calling and that of God's electing. This, too, is plain, that here the calling (καλεῖν) signifies the invitation of grace which may be accepted by means of the grace it contains, or which, in spite of that grace, may be rejected by man's vicious perversity. Hence 'many' are called ones, and far fewer are elected ones. As so often, the absence of the articles intends to stress the quality of the nouns. To be sure, the [preceding] parable [of the wedding banquet] shows us *who* the elect are, namely those who accept the call and the garment of Christ's righteousness; and thus also *who* the non-elect are, all those who obdurately reject the call either in violence, or by indifference, or by spurning Christ's righteousness. The first are those who never believed, the last those who pretended to believe. Among the latter those who secretly fall from faith, often also called the *Zeitglaeubigen*, are included. Therefore it is unwarranted to assert that this parable shows us *only who* the elect are. In the very word ἐκλεκτοί we have the whole divine act of election, even as we cannot have elect without their election. The parable reveals this great act of election. It shows us *how* some are chosen, *how* the rest could not be chosen."

R. C. H. Lenski, *Lenski New Testament Commentary* – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 859.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
  I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)
- "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)
- "…God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:3-4)
- The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

It is helpful to keep in mind the purpose of election, which is functional: to maintain the witness to God's plan of salvation in every age so that the church will always exist and according to its calling proclaim Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Especially in the light of the passages we've just studied, that some in every period of history will have been elected from before the world began does not imply that those who have not been elected "before the creation of the world" have been predestined to be doomed; it is not, therefore, necessary—or accurate—to interpret the Bible as teaching a double predestination. The elect are to reach out to the non-elect that those of the latter who respond in faith in Christ will be saved, as is God's desire. (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9) Here is another reason "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" the church. (Matthew 16:18)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

1. It takes little thought to be deeply moved when we consider that God has chosen us to be in his elect people, which election commissions us with his high and holy calling to partner with, serve, him in his plan of redemption of his creation! We, as were his original covenant people, the Old Testament Israelite church, are elected for a purpose, a function: to reach out to the world to introduce people to God and his love, to tell them who he is and what he is like and of his plans and purposes, including what he expects of people who would come into his presence. We have a great mission that gives our lives, and the lives of those we reach for Christ, great meaning and eternal significance!
2. We clearly sense the value we have in God's sight. His great love for us is supremely exhibited in his only-begotten Son's coming to sacrifice his life for us that we could have access to the presence of God and serve him forever!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

3. Being made in the image of God, and having a limited but genuine freedom, enables us to place great value on our lives but also gives us a great responsibility to exercise that freedom in accord with God's will. Recognizing that we are elect in a relationship with God who is sovereign gives us security. Human free will and God's sovereignty go perfectly together; they fit hand in glove. It is no stretch of the human intellect to envision God making his call so appealing to those whom he has elected, that they would willingly, and enthusiastically, accept it. Who has not heard, and even uttered the words him or herself, "That was an offer I just couldn't resist!"
4. Reflecting on the meaning of our election and the work to which God has called and is equipping us, our perspective is lifted from a focus on the here and now to include also the eternal perspective. How magnificently wonderful is our joy in knowing that this which we see all around us is not all there is to life!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

5. The Biblical doctrine of election, assures us of our salvation, since our salvation is clearly all in God's grace and none of it in our merit. Our belief in Christ assures us we are in the elect and that we are so solely by God's unmerited love of us; i.e., we have done nothing to earn our salvation, for God does not require us to do works to be saved. We are totally unable to earn our salvation; in fact, we daily increase our debt to God. Pieper has well explained the situation with respect to how this reality comforts us: "Man does not see the absolute necessity of *universal* grace [not to be confused with the unbiblical concept of universal salvation] so long as the terrors of conscience have not yet seized his heart. But when his conscience is truly terrified (feels the *terrors conscientiae*), he will find nothing consoling but the grace that avails without any limitation for all sinners…." (Pieper, p. 482)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

6. We do not have to worry about whether we are in the elect or are saved. We can have confidence that we are in the elect and are saved because of our faith in Jesus Christ. As Pieper has written, "With this Scriptural view of the mode of election, we look to Christ and the Gospel to determine whether we are elected, and we are happy to find that all our distress has vanished…. If a person asks: "Am I chosen to salvation?" he should in turn be asked: "Do you sincerely believe in the Gospel?" If the person says "Yes" we can say that he or she is in the elect. [Cf. Romans 10:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:3] For we can say, regarding what the Bible teaches concerning the elect, "from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:13) (Pieper, p. 476) We are in the elect either because God chose us "from the beginning" or because God worked through the original elect to reach and save us, thus bringing us into the elect and sharing the mission with them. It does not matter how or when we came into the elect, because with God there is "no favoritism." (Acts 10:34; Ephesians 6:9)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

7. Pieper in a solid gold footnote (always read footnotes!) quotes an author who, quoting another author, noticed a hugely comforting reality expressed in the Greek of Romans 8:28-30, especially in verses 29-30. "Paul shows *ex professo* [by profession] in Rom. 8:28-30, for the consolation of the Christians, that all elect are assured of eternal glory. The glorification (*edoxasen*, aorist [past tense]) is just as inseparably linked to eternal election as the call (*ekalesen*), and the justification (*edikaiōsen*). Stoekhardt quotes Weiss: 'To place the glorification on the same level of reliability with the *proegnō* [foreknew], *proōrise* [foreordained, predestined], *ekalese* [called], and *edikaiōsen* [justified], Paul chose the proleptic (anticipative) aorist.'" (Pieper, p. 479)

   What this means is that here we have in the Greek of the New Testament, God's Word declaring that the glorification of God's elect (which is yet to come for those of us still on earth in the first phase of our life) which will come in heaven, is as certain as those aspects of the life in Christ that his believers in him now already experience in their call and justification, which have already occurred! *Further, our glorification (expressed in the Greek as a future event that has already occurred) is put in the same terms as God's foreknowledge and foreordination that not only has already occurred but that occurred before the foundation of the world! Wow! How's that for assurance*?!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

8. Pieper quotes Luther's commentary on 1 Peter 1:2, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God," in which the great Reformation leader offers Biblical evidence of the supreme comfort that believers can have in Christ.

   "Therefore, **when your sins and unworthiness trouble you** and the thought comes to you that you might not be elected of God, also that the number of the elect is small and the company of the godless large, and you are terrified by the awful examples of divine wrath and judgment, then do not dispute long why God does this or that so, and not differently, when He could easily do so. Do not presume to explore the depths of divine foreknowledge with your reason, else you will certainly go astray and either sink into gloomy fatalism or turn epicurean. But **hold firmly to the promises of the Gospel which teach you that Christ, the Son of God, became incarnate to bless all people on earth, that is, to redeem them from sin and death, justify and save them; and that He did this according to the command and gracious will of God our heavenly Father, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life**, John 3:16. If you follow this counsel, namely, first of all acknowledge that you are by nature a child of wrath, worthy of eternal death and damnation, from which no creature, human or angelic, can save you, and **then grasp the promise of God** and believe that He is the merciful, truthful God, who from pure grace, without our work and merit, faithfully keeps what He has promised, and has sent Christ, His only Son, in order that He make satisfaction for your sins and give you His innocence and righteousness, finally to redeem you from all evil and from death; **then do not doubt that you belong to the company of the elect. If we consider election in this manner, even as Paul does, it is comforting beyond measure**." (Pieper, p. 484; emphasis in bold added by EDS)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

9. Jesus added these comforting words: “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

   The church is the key means through which God is accomplishing his redemptive purposes. Jesus revealed how the church also is able to comfort his believers and to give them assurance. He asked his first disciples, “what about you?...Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock [of Peter’s testimony that Jesus is the Messiah] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Matthew 16:15-18)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Practical Implications of the Doctrine of Election

10. For many further assurances that you are saved in Christ, read the first letter of John. For just one example, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands." (1 John 2:1-3)

    Is there anything more practical than having such assurance that you are in God's grip in Christ with the most important job in the world to do?! That you are intimately known by and on speaking terms with the Owner and Sovereign ruler of all creation?! That he has revealed that you are called to proclaim that this phase of life is very brief but an eternity of joy is just ahead for all who will come to the Lord on his terms?! Thanks be to the triune God: Father, only begotten Son Christ Jesus, and Holy Spirit, three in one!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

- "The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)
- "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)
- "From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. [27] God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:26–27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

The Bible does indicate that God also predestined when and where people should live in order to accomplish his purposes and bless them, as Paul explained to the Athens Areopagus, which Luke recorded in Acts 17:26-27. However, the text does not say that God has programmed how the people are to live there. Lenski has spoken well:

"God's hand has ever been and still is in history. Nations begin, rise to full development, finally decline. Historians trace out their courses, and thousands of natural causes are found to be at work. But these are but the surface. Underneath, over, within is the unseen Hand that guides and directs according to the supreme Will. We see the pattern from below, as it appears on the wrong side of the cloth; someday we shall see it as God weaves it, the right side, which is beautiful and perfect."

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 729.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

"Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, 'I will set up my camp in such and such a place.'
9The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: 'Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.' 10So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places.
11This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, 'Will you not tell me which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?'
12'None of us, my lord the king,' said one of his officers, 'but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.'
13'Go, find out where he is,' the king ordered, 'so I can send men and capture him.' The report came back: 'He is in Dothan.'
14Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.
15When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. 'Oh, my lord, what shall we do?' the servant asked.
16'Don't be afraid,' the prophet answered. 'Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.'
17And Elisha prayed, 'O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.
18As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, 'Strike these people with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.
19Elisha told them, 'This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria.
20After they entered the city, Elisha said, 'LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.' Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.
21When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, 'Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?'
22'Do not kill them,' he answered. 'Would you kill men you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.' 23So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory." (2 Kings 6:8-23)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

A missionary home in Michigan on furlough told one of his supporting churches that every two weeks in his work at an African field hospital he had to take a two-day trip by bicycle to a city for money and medical supplies. On one occasion he came upon a young man who had been seriously injured in a fight. While treating him for his injuries the missionary told the man the good news about Jesus Christ. Afterward he continued home without incident.

Two weeks later the man he had treated sought him out in the city. He told him that on his previous trip he and some friends had followed him into the jungle and planned to kill him and take his money and drugs. As they began to move into where he was camped for the night they saw that he was surrounded by 26 armed guards. The missionary laughed and said that he was all alone, but the young man insisted, “No sir, I was not the only person to see the guards. My five friends also saw them, and we all counted them. It was because of those armed guards that we were afraid and left you alone.”

In the telling of this experience the missionary discovered that on the very evening of the plot to kill him, members of his church were praying for his safety. This and other similar accounts of God’s care for his people parallel the awesome experience of Elisha in 2 Kings 6:8-23.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14)
- "To which of the angels did God ever say, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'?" (Hebrews 1:13)
- "He [Christ Jesus, vss. 13-14] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Contrary to what many believe, angels do exist. In Hebrews 1:14 we see that angels are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation."
- The word angel in both Old Testament Hebrew and New Testament Greek means messenger. Angels are not on the same level as God or any of the three persons of the Godhead; they're not divine. (Cf. Hebrews 1:13) They're beings God created who bring to humankind special messages from him and accomplish purposes he has for us. (Colossians 1:15-17, Hebrews 1 and 2)
- Thrones, powers, rulers, authorities are angels. Part of the Colossian heresy Paul is addressing is an unbiblical view of angels.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize. Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions." (Colossians 2:18)
- "Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.' [10]At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, 'Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'" (Revelation 19:9-10)
- "Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word." (Psalm 103:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We should believe the existence of, take seriously, respect, appreciate, and value, <u>but not worship</u>, angels. (Colossians 2:18-19; Revelation 19:9-10; cf. 22:8-9)
- We should not attribute to angels the glory that is due only to God, whom they are continually praising. (Psalm 103:20)
- To deny the existence and function of angels is to deny the providence of God.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Timothy 2:5)
- "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15)
- "Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying [λεγόντων (legōnton), saying not singing], 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.'" (Luke 2:13-14 TNIV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Angels are NOT mediators between humans and God. We have only one mediator, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God and Second Person of the Trinity, and Christ is all-sufficient. (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 9:15)
- We only read of angels speaking. Nevertheless, while the Bible nowhere states that angels sing, neither does it say they don't sing, but they didn't sing on this (Luke 2:13-14) and other occasions.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision, came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice." (Daniel 9:21)
- "Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people." (Revelation 14:6)
- "Praise the LORD, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word." (Psalm 103:20)
- "It was revealed to them [the prophets] that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." (1 Peter 1:12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Angels are limited with regard to space; they're not everywhere present. (Genesis 28:12, Daniel 9:21, Revelation 14:6)
- They're not all powerful. (Psalm 103:20)
- They're limited with regard to their knowledge. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover." (Exodus 25:20)
- "The cherubim had their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim faced each other, looking toward the cover." (Exodus 37:9)
- "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying." (Isaiah 6:1-2)
- "After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life." (Genesis 3:24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Some but not all angels are portrayed as having wings. Cherubim are seen with two wings. Seraphim, mentioned only in Isaiah 6:2, have six wings.
- Both cherubim and seraphim serve as attendants to God on his throne. "I looked, and I saw the likeness of a throne of sapphire above the expanse that was over the heads of the cherubim." (Ezekiel 10:1ff.; cf. 1:4ff.)
- Representations of the cherubim also appear in the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple. (Exodus 25:20; 37:9; 1 Kings 8:7; 2 Chronicles 5:9)
- Cherubim also serve as guards. (Genesis 3:24)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed." (Mark 16:5)
- "There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.
  "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'" (Matthew 28:2-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Angels normally lack bodily form and are usually invisible, except when taking on human appearance at times when bringing a communication from God or in accomplishing a task as those who protected the Michigan missionary. (Hebrews 1:14, Genesis 18:1-2, Mark 16:5, Matthew 28:2-7)
- Accordingly, angels are <u>not</u> humans or former humans. People do not become angels when they die, as many muse. Humans in heaven are, and when resurrected and living in the new heaven and the new earth will be, the same persons they were here on earth, only now perfected in Christ. (John 20:19—21:15; 1 Corinthians 15)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above.
[2]Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
[5]Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.
[13]Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens." (Psalm 148:1-2,5,13; Revelation 4 and 5)
- "The two men said to Lot, "Do you have anyone else here--sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here,
[13]because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the LORD against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it." (Genesis 19:12-13)
- "That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies!"
(2 Kings 19:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Angels do not appear regularly throughout the Biblical account of the history of salvation. Rather they arrive at strategic points and as ambassadors of God, speaking and acting in his name, not on their own, and the good angels never oppose or contradict his will.

- Angels praise the Lord. (Psalm 148:1-6, 13 [reasons for praising God]; Revelation 4 and 5)
- They administer justice for God in this world. (Genesis 19:12-25, 2 Kings 19:35, Acts 12:23, Revelation 12:7-12)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

- "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared." (Exodus 23:20)
- "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them." (Psalm 34:7)
- "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 18:10)
- "Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, 'Peter is at the door!'

  'You're out of your mind,' they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, 'It must be his angel.'" (Acts 12:13-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Angels function as guardians of believers. (Exodus 23:20, 2 Kings 6:8-23, Psalm 34:7, 91:11-12, Matthew 18:10) However, here as always in our interpretation of God's Word, we must be careful to not read into a text more than is there. We must also constantly guard against the thoroughly permeating individualism pervading U. S. culture that impacts our understanding.

- In Acts 12 the believers who were at Mary's house think Peter is in jail, so they don't believe Rhoda, the servant girl who says he is knocking at the door. In verse 15 they say, "It must be his angel." This passage does not necessarily teach that everyone has his or her own special guardian angel. Such a concept is possible but must be left an open question.
- As NT professor Bandstra has written, "remember that it is really *God's* care through the angel that gives us security." (69) Angels do not act on their own (Psalm 91:11-12); they aren't independent agents. They function under God's authority and command. (66) The angels are one of the means God uses to accomplish his purposes, including caring for his people. Andrew Bandstra, *In the Company of Angels: What the Bible Teaches What You Need to Know.*

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

Angels will also accompany the Lord when he returns.

- Jesus said, “the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.” (Matthew 16:27)
- The apostle Paul wrote, “the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God…And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When the time is right in God’s sight, Jesus will come again to earth; he will right all wrongs; and it will be a profoundly awesome event to experience!
- When we see figures of angels at the top of Christmas trees and elsewhere, let’s remember these Biblical teachings about the real and marvelous beings they symbolize. Let’s enjoy and be encouraged with experiences believers have with these wonderful agents of God’s providential care for us and countless others.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and the Good Angels

Let's express gratitude to God for the blessings he provides for us through his angels. Angels still function in the above and other ways we've considered, except for the first, as messengers. The Word and the Holy Spirit who dwells within believers in Christ are now God's primary forms of communication to us in addition to his general revelation through his creation. (E.g., Romans 1:16-20) Recall, e.g., that the angels who protected the missionary from Michigan did not bring a verbal message to him, but they surely demonstrated and powerfully pointed to God's providential care of his servant in Africa!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Theophanies

- "Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day. When he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing opposite him; and when he saw *them,* he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth, and said, 'My Lord, if now I have found favor in Your sight, please do not pass Your servant by…. (Genesis 18:1-3 NASB)
- "Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, 'Are you for us or for our enemies?' 'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, 'What message does my Lord have for his servant?'" (Joshua 5:13-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Angels are different from theophanies. A theophany, a visible manifestation of God himself,

- is identified as God (Genesis 18),
- receives worship (Joshua 5:14), and
- speaks with underived divine authority. While sometimes called "the angel of the LORD," (Judges 2:1-5) he speaks for God in the first person. (Cf. Genesis 16:10; Exodus 3:2,4; Judges 6:11-12).

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

- “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.” (Jude 1:6)
- “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;” (2 Peter 2:4)
- “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

In addition to the angels who obey God and accomplish his will for and through them, the Bible teaches that there are those who do evil. Holy and unholy angels are distinguished in Scripture. Satan and his demonic followers, also called the devil and devils, are fallen angels. (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4; Revelation 12:1-12) They include “the rulers, authorities, and powers” about which Paul writes in Ephesians 6:10-18, a vital text to read, examine, reflect on, pray about, and identify where each part links with our lives.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

In his excellent commentary on the Book of Revelation, *More than Conquerors*, William Hendriksen points out the significance of the second major division of the Bible's final book.

- He states that the theme of the first major division (chapters 1-11) is the victory of Christ and his church over the dragon and his followers and that this theme is continued in the second main division (chapters 12-22).
- He then explains that while the first part "pictures the outward struggle between the Church and the world, the second part of the book reveals the deeper background. We now see more clearly than in the preceding division that the conflict between the Church and the world is but the outward manifestation of the war between the Christ and Satan (the dragon)." (134) The first half of Revelation describes the evils God's people confront, which we see every day, and the second half reveals the essential invisible cause of those evils that truly exists but escapes the evening news.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

"'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!' 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek." (Mark 1:24-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Satan and the demons are real. They are personalities, not personifications of an impersonal evil force as even many theologians believe. When Jesus confronted the man who was possessed by an evil spirit, another Biblical term for a demon, in the synagogue of Capernaum, the spirit acted in certain ways and spoke to Jesus; Jesus commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man; and the spirit under Jesus' authority and power obeyed.
- This text, written in the literary genre of historical narrative, records Jesus talking to living beings. Satan has an intellect (2 Corinthians 11:3), emotions (Revelation 12:17), and a will (2 Timothy 2:26), as does his demonic cohort.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

- “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)
- “And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:14)
- Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him (John 8:31), “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Satan and the evil angels do exist, and they are not cute, as when some say of a child, “Isn’t he a cute little devil!” That expression is a contradiction in terms; the devil and the demons are not at all cute. They are engaged in a cosmic battle against God and his people, seeking to undermine, destroy, and kill what, including those whom, he has created.
- That activity does not fit any standard definition of cuteness. The Holy Spirit also alerts us through Paul’s writing that Satan sometimes disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and Jesus exposed him as actually being the father of lies and a murderer (John 8:44).

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

"Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.' Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.
[17]When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power." (Acts 19:13-20)

Meaning and Practical Results

- Reflect on this event in the light of the unwise and superficial secular thinking today. How many of the sons of Sceva would say that the demonic is only a personification of evil or that this evil spirit was a "cute little devil"?!
- One drachma was a silver coin, and in first century A.D. Ephesus it constituted about one day's wage. Fifty thousand drachmas likely would equal about 10,000 USD today, a huge amount of money in Asia at that time…and now at least for most people!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

"To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, [10]to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues." (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The Bible also teaches that believers in Christ have been given gifts to use in his service. (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12-14, Ephesians 4)
- Some, though not all of Christ's followers, have been given the gift called discernment, the ability to identify the presence of evil spirits and to distinguish between them and spirits from God. (1 Corinthians 12:10)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

- "'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!' 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek." (Mark 1:24-26)
- "Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." (Ephesians 6:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Demons still enter and possess some human beings. Demonic possession is distinguished from demonic influence. The former involves evil spirits actually entering and controlling human beings. True Christians, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (*op cit*.), including those in the process of growing from acorns to oaks of righteousness, are protected by the Holy Spirit from demon possession; demons cannot be in the presence of the Holy Spirit. However, we must "Put on the full armor of God so that [we] can take [our] stand against the devil's schemes." (Ephesians 6:11)
- Be alert to the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged, so as we are tempted and enticed to be drawn away from the things of God we will not do so; we will stand firm.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

- "'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!' 'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek." (Mark 1:24-26)
- "After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?'

  "He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'" (Mark 9:29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Demon possession is often seen in other cultures. Missionaries have had many experiences with this activity, and when I was teaching pastors' seminars on worship in Africa, I heard about it from those in attendance.
- Our conversation included what to do for demon possessed people at public worship services when a demon would act out, e.g., with uncontrolled shrieking, during worship. We discussed involving the congregation praying for the individual and, in the name of Jesus Christ, commanding the demon to come out of him or her. If that result doesn't occur immediately (cf. Mark 9:29), the possessed person is led to a room in the church building where some can help him or her while the rest of the congregation continues in worship.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

We haven't seen as much open demonic activity in this country until recent times, though it is occurring, as public school officials, police officers, and those with the gift of discernment (1 Corinthians 12:10c) testify. Research in the field of psychology reveals that in virtually all cases of multiple personalities, the afflicted person has been involved to some extent with the occult.

A minister with whom I served at another church encountered a young woman, who he perceived was possessed by an evil spirit. Praying over her in Jesus' name and commanding the spirit to leave her, he saw the same result as in the New Testament where such exorcisms occurred through the power of Christ: after causing her to writhe violently and shriek, it left her. See also Acts 8:7 ("With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many,"). For more on the demonic and Satanism, use the Search bar on this Website and on my academic Website.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

"Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved.'
She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the spirit left her.
When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities." (Acts 16:16-19)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Though demons are created beings and are not divine but are fallen angels who have become committed to evil, demons do have some abilities that humans do not have. At least one, and likely others, can predict the future, and one was so employed in Philippi in Macedonia, in what is northern Greece today.
- Evil spirits are still involved in fortune telling. Unless someone is certain he or she has the gift of exorcism, stay away!
- Yet, if a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ ever finds himself or herself in the presence of a demon, all he or she has to do is to say what Paul said, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you…" and Jesus' power will overcome the demon.
- Trust in and obey Jesus, and do not be afraid!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

"You…are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- While demon possession and demonic influence are serious matters, we need to keep a healthy balance in our perspective. As C.S. Lewis wrote in his classic work, *The Screwtape Letters*, "There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors…." (P. 3)
- The Gospel of Jesus Christ brings us good news. (1 John 4:4) We, who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, need not fear Satan and his followers; they are totally in Christ's control. And Christ loves us!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God and Satan are **not** peers; God is infinitely greater. Christianity is not a dualistic religion as many seem to think as they talk about God and Satan. Such people appear to believe that when things are going badly Satan has the upper hand but when things are going well God has the devil in a hammerlock. This concept is wrong; it is counter to what the Bible teaches. Satan and the demons are limited beings created by God; they are evil angels who have chosen to oppose him. God is peerless. Satan is a little peanut in contrast with God. If you wonder who a peer of Satan would be, think of another angel. Remember, God is sovereign and all powerful. We who are in Christ need not worry, but neither should we take the demonic lightly.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The failure of many Christians to understand and keep in mind the cosmic and spiritual warfare in which we are engaged has led not a few well meaning but misinformed persons to eliminate from the church's singing such important hymns as "Onward Christian soldiers," thinking they glorify war on the human plane. Far to the contrary, these hymns edify and encourage believers in our growth in Christ-likeness, our maturity in the faith, so we can be aware of the spiritual dangers and victorious over Satan and the demons and serve the Lord ever more effectively in the high and holy calling he has given and is equipping us to do. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Consider just the first two verses of this classic Christian hymn. Sing it!

Classic Christian Hymn: Onward Christian Soldiers

Lyrics (1865): Rev. Sabine Baring-Gould; Music (1871): Arthur Sullivan

First Verse and Chorus

- Onward Christian soldiers!
  Marching as to war,
  With the cross of Jesus
  Going on before.
  Christ, the royal Master,
  Leads against the foe;
  Forward into battle,
  See, His banners go!
- Onward, Christian soldiers!
  Marching as to war,
  With the cross of Jesus,
  Going on before.

Second Verse

- At the name of Jesus
  Satan's host doth flee;
  On then, Christian soldiers,
  On to victory!
  Hell's foundations quiver
  At the shout of praise:
  Brothers, lift your voices,
  Loud your anthems raise!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

We should not have a cavalier and lackadaisical attitude about the devil and his demon followers; we should never play in their territory, e.g., consulting mediums or psychics, necromancy, false religions, Yoga (a part of Hinduism), horoscopes, Ouija boards and the like. (Leviticus 19:31; 2 Kings 21:6; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14) As C. S. Lewis also said, the devil is like a dog on a leash. Christ has conquered him in his obedience on the cross and in his Resurrection. However, within the radius of that leash unnecessary harm can come by disobeying God's will. Theologian G. W. Bromiley has rightly written, "These angels and their leader [Satan] were defeated at the cross (Colossians 2:15) and will finally be brought to condemnation (Matthew 25:41)" when the time is right in God's sight.

Pertaining to Yoga, people will say to you, "Oh, we don't get into the Hinduism part, we just do the exercises." Say to them, "Then why do you call it Yoga, which informed people know is Hindu." Furthermore, they are actually being taught dangerous Hindu thought without realizing it. For example, when they are instructed to clear and empty their minds and repeatedly recite "Ohm," this is the exact opposite of what God's Word tells us to do. We are to "be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) Further, remember what Jesus said about an empty mind. (Matthew 12:43-45) God's will is that we study his Word and obey it. As he says through James, "the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25) See also Ezra 7:10 and Nehemiah 8:13. There are many other methods of physical exercise that are more spiritually healthy.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God versus the Evil Angels

- "They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear." (Deuteronomy 32:17)
- "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons." (Psalm 106:37)
- "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk." (Revelation 9:20)
- "…the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's Table and the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:20-21; cf. Isaiah 44:6; 45:21; John 8:44; 14:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Satan and the demons are behind all other religions. We must never let political correctness trump Biblical correctness. As all enemies do, Satan and his ilk are trying to undermine their Opponent; they are trying to draw people away from God, destroy people he loves, and detract from his glory. We must never fail to perceive the demonic influence that is always portrayed in the Bible as influencing people away from God and obedience to him, including worshiping any other being than the triune God who has revealed himself in Holy Scripture.
- Missionaries report that Hindus and Buddhists also sacrifice buffaloes, chickens, and goats in order to please their gods and goddesses, not realizing that they are offering these sacrifices to demons.
- Furthermore, pagans have the burden of trying to save themselves, from which burden Christ has blessedly relieved his followers. Thanks be to our triune God! It is no wonder that I hear people in other countries express such joy and gratitude to God and to the missionaries he has sent to give them this Good News in Christ!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- At Halloween our children have some useful opportunities to learn about and highlight their holiness to God, as they engage the surrounding culture. The Bible teaches that God's people are holy to him, i.e., set apart and distinguished from the world, to serve him. In October they can demonstrate those differences in their choices regarding what to do and not do in school and community Halloween events.
- Many stores offer costumes of Satan, demons, witches, and other evil characters opposed to God, his Word, and his will. As the children consider costumes, a teachable moment occurs to talk and help them think about these important subjects. **Questions are always effective learning tools.**
  + You might ask children considering costumes from the dark side, "Why would you want to dress like an enemy of God?" Then explain why.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Let's keep learning to nurture our growth in Christ-likeness as we mature into "oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor." (Isaiah 61:3) Let's also remember who we are, why we are here, our calling, and how we are to prepare for and function in that high and holy calling from God.

"It was he [Christ (4:7)] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)
- "The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai:
'Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.'
3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.
4 Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up." (Jonah 1:1-4)
- "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require [*including what is his will*] of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)
- "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4; cf., Proverbs 16:3)
- "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another." (Romans 1:24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Intelligent, reasonable, and wise employees try to please the owner of the company where they work. They know it will go better for them if they obey the owner's rules and try hard to determine and do the owner's will in all matters.
- The same is true for us. It goes better for us when we discern God's will and do it.
- The Bible reveals three main aspects of God's will:

  1. His *directive* will. (See, e.g., Genesis 1:3 and Jonah.)
  2. His *transactional* will. (Cf., e.g., Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 37:4; Proverbs 16:3)
  3. His *permissive* will. (Cf., e.g., Romans 1:24)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

The Bible reveals three main aspects of God's will:

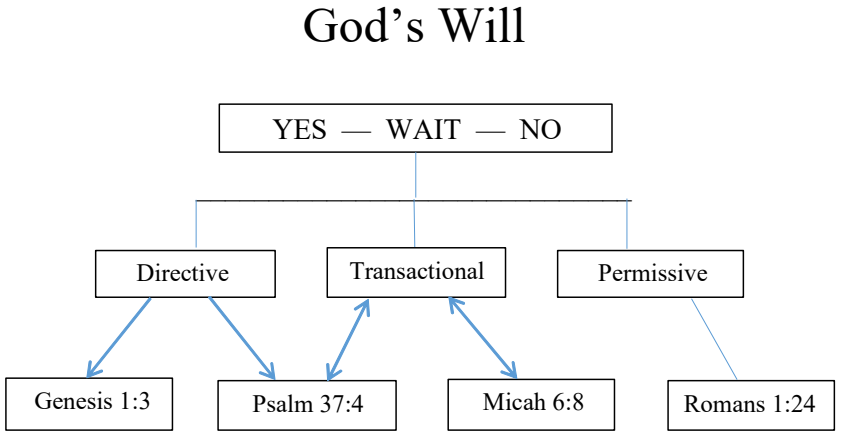
1. His *directive* will: God reveals his will by making a declarative statement, whereby he directs that something occur or that someone does something or refrains from doing something.
2. His *transactional* will: God interacts with someone indicating how the person can find God's will in a matter.
3. His *permissive* will: God allows people to function in certain ways, even ways in opposition to his laws, but then the disobedient people will have to endure the results of their disobedience.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light." (Genesis 1:3)
- "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require [*including what is his will*] of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)
- "Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4; cf., Proverbs 16:3)
- "Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another." (Romans 1:24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Cf. Matthew 15:18-19; Mark 7:21-23.
- "Who can say, 'I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9)
- "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death." (Proverbs 14:12 TNIV)
- "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require [*including what is his will*] of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)
- "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." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Contrary to the preponderance of "advice" coming from the media and many other sources urging people to "follow their hearts," the Bible's much more realistic description of human nature to its core and the hope God's Word offers is infinitely more helpful.
- Does all this mean that we should never consider our hearts, specifically our feelings, about what we would like to do?
- Of course not, but *feelings follow and are subjected to* other entities, including *God's Word*, the *Holy Spirit's guidance*, *admonition* from carefully selected church members, and *cognitively guided self-control*. (Micah 6:8, Galatians 5:22-23)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.
[3]It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit." (1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Volumes have been written on the subject of God's will; we can only here highlight helpful and key aspects.
- Much more can be said regarding Biblical guidelines for discerning God's will in a particular matter, but in summary, when we want to know if doing something is in accord with his will, or is pleasing to God (1 Thessalonians 4:1-3), we ***start with whether the Bible deals with this subject***.
- ***If so, obey the text.*** For example, if one is struggling with the temptation to have an affair, he or she doesn't have to read any farther than the commandment, "You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), to know God's will; it is clear and unmistakable. That person has his or her answer.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Thoroughgoing postmodernists will argue for the validity of "nuances" and accuse us of being too simplistic and outdated. They are only trying to rationalize their way out of obedience to God's Word and will.
- Do not follow them; oppose them, speaking the truth in love. Urge them to follow Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)
- With prayer communicate God's Word as much as they will listen.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require [*including what is his will*] of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)
- "Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you." (Deuteronomy 16:20)
- "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." (Galatians 5:22-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Now, what about those questions that come before us where the Bible does not speak specifically? When we start by asking for God's help directly in prayer, his Spirit guides us, including by illuminating applicable Scriptural principles. We begin our search for God's will with a cognitive process.
- Start with prayer and Micah 6:8. For example, let's say you're considering four new job possibilities (A, B, C, & D). Subject each to these three aspects of God's will. Would it be just? For example, would doing any of them harm someone else, such as negatively affecting your relationship with your spouse, or require you to function unjustly, contrary to what the Bible teaches, including acting with insufficient mercy or kindness (RSV) toward others? Would the job you're considering co-opt your ability to function in humility before the Lord in all you do?
- Does your spouse agree? If not, and if you've done enough communicating about it, it is most likely not God's will for you, at least not now; God is not in the business of destroying marriages. To the contrary, his will is for you to have a strong marriage.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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- "Take delight [Hebrew: pleasure] in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4 NRSV; cf., Proverbs 16:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In this manner one or two of these four job possibilities may not pass muster on the Micah 6:8 test and can be eliminated, e.g., B and C. You can then consider that any of the ones remaining, i.e., A or D in this case, are within God's will for you.
- Does his Word offer guidance as to his will regarding the remaining options? Yes. Here is where the regenerated heart comes in. Now we can allow our feelings to influence our decision-making. Consider Psalm 37:4. Therefore, of the remaining options that pass the Micah 6:8 test, which of them would you most like to do; which would you enjoy most? That is God's will for you.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalm 37:4), but in doing so, the Lord will never contradict what he has said in his Word. I've known people to pray for something God clearly condemns in the Bible, as if they're hoping he'll say, "Well, all right, but just this one time!" It doesn't work that way. As we've seen, God is holy, holy, holy. He is not only displeased by sin, he is offended by it; it is contrary to his character and his will.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "God also said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. [16]I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.'

  [17]Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, 'Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?' [18]And Abraham said to God, 'If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!' [19]Then God said, 'Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. [20]And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. [21]But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.'" (Genesis 17:15-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When We Are to <u>WAIT</u>?

- When God does not right away say YES to what we ask of him, and we honestly sense that what we're asking of him is not contrary to his Word, and thus apparently not contrary to his will, we find that we're thereby in the WAIT mode; what do we do? Many in the Bible had this experience. Let's look at one such instance with Abraham and Sarah.
- Here we see that we need to confidently believe God can do what we're asking him to do. Have real faith. Of course, we need to keep in mind that for reasons he may know in his omniscience that surpasses our understanding (Isaiah 55:8-9), what we are asking may turn out to not be good for us, ultimately putting us in the NO category of God's will. Nevertheless, we must always believe God can do whatever is in his will to do.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

"Then the LORD said, 'I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.' Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.
[11]Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.
[12]So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, 'After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?'
[13]Then the LORD said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh and say, "Will I really have a child, now that I am old?"
[14]Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.'
[15]Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, 'I did not laugh.' But he said, 'Yes, you did laugh.'" (Genesis 18:10-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When We Are to WAIT?

- We must always remember that God can do whatever we ask him that is in his will to do; nothing is too hard for him. He is never trying to figure out how to do something.
- As Sarah discovered, and as we found in our study of God's Word in the section on God's attribute of being omniscient, all knowing, he knows what we are thinking. (Cf. Psalm 51:6; 139:1-18) It does no good and much harm to lie.
- We must also understand that while God has his reasons for causing us to wait, his delay in giving us what we are asking is not to give us time to talk him into something. He knows all the rationale, including the best rationale.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. [2]Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. [3]Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. [4]When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. [5]Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

  [6]Sarah said, 'God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.' [7]And she added, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.'" (Genesis 21:1-7)
- "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When We Are to <u>WAIT</u>?

- While God does not always give his reasons for causing us to wait, we can think of some values for waiting.
- He may be delaying in order to help us see how much we really want what we are asking him to do.
- The delay may be more for our good and for what we need, for he already knows everything.
- We need to keep praying, asking God to grant our request; don't just pray a short while and then give up. I remember praying fervently every day for over two years for the girl I loved to say yes to my request that she marry me. God did not pressure her, and she did.
- On another matter I prayed every day for many years, before God gave me what I requested.
- The delay may be also to give others involved the time they need to mature or make other changes.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. [7]When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. [8]So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. [9]During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' [10]After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them." (Acts 16:6–10)
- "They arrived at Ephesus…. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. [20]When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. [21]But as he left, he promised, 'I will come back if it is God's will.' Then he set sail from Ephesus." (Acts 18:19–21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When We Are to <u>WAIT</u>?

- When a door leading to what we want to do is now closed, that doesn't mean God won't open it later, as he did with Paul and his companions.
- While we're waiting for God to open a door, he may have other plans for how we can best serve him, e.g., by helping someone else who has a more pressing need at that time, such as the people in Macedonia, whose needs were more urgent and whom the Lord led Paul and the others to help at that time. Thus, though Paul wasn't able to go to Asia at this point in his second missionary journey, he was able to do so later (Acts 18:19) and on his next, his third, missionary journey (Acts 19), where he was able to establish a strong church in Ephesus, the leading commercial city of Asia Minor and capital of the Roman province of Asia.
- As you pray and wait for God to answer, ask him, "What would you have me do while I wait?" If needed, ask him also for patience until you know his will.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. [8]Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. [9]But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. [10]That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)
- "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When God's Answer is NO?

- When we have done all we can and we still have a problem that occurs and won't go away, it helps to view the situation as God's gentle reminder that we need him; that he is the source of our greatest help and hope!
- When a prayer request is delayed or negated, resulting in an answer of NO, let us remember how the apostle Paul dealt with such a matter. He began his reasoning with the correct assumption, that God is perfect, including all his ways, and he makes no mistakes. He then looked for the good that is in God's answer, and he found it. We can too, because God only does what is good and best for us and for all others involved. Sometimes it takes a while to see the ultimate good in our answer of No. We can even thank him!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When God's Answer is <u>NO</u>?

- We see in God's Word that he does not always give an answer for what he does or doesn't do. We, like Paul, are OK with that, for we know that we likely wouldn't understand even if he told us (again, Isaiah 55:8-9; cf. Job 38-42), much like children don't understand their parents' reasoning.
- Whatever God's reason, we know it is good, so we just trust him to either give to us what we request when the time is right in his sight, or if developments do not result in what is needed for this request to turn out well for all involved, including ourselves, we accept his NO answer and thank God for doing perfectly. (Ephesians 5:20, James 1:17)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When God's Answer is NO?

- The preceding approach to discerning God's will gives us much comfort.
- My dear colleague and friend at Christ Church of Oak Brook, Dr. Arthur DeKruyter, testified to that experience. One afternoon, I asked him if he were all set for the inter-national trip on which he was scheduled to leave the next day. He said yes but that he still hadn't received his visa, so the possibility existed that he might not be going. I asked him if he were feeling concerned about that situation. "Not at all," he replied. "If it is God's will that I go," he continued, "the visa will be here on time." Later that afternoon, the visa arrived.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

What about When God's Answer is NO?

- This approach to discerning God's will, relieves us of stress, anxiety, depression, the top problems research reveals people struggle with, and gives us much comfort.
- It also gives others much comfort when we do so, for walking according to God's will keeps us from being manipulative and controlling; functioning in accord with this principle makes us nicer people to be around.
- People growing in Christ-likeness, maturing in the sanctification process that we'll study in the section on Soteriology, should be nice people. They are also the ones to look for when seeking a marriage partner.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

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(1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; cf., Colossians 1:9-10; John 5:30)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- It's not difficult to comprehend how unbelievers without the new nature from, and internal guidance of, the Holy Spirit can err in their understanding of God, in particular regarding his holiness and pleasing him.
- However, many who claim to be Christians are ignorant of, and even rebellious against, God's holiness and its implications for discerning and obeying his will.
- Sometime ago I heard of a man and a woman, both married to someone else, who were engaging in an affair. They would meet in a motel room for their trysts, and before they would disobey God's commandment to not commit adultery, they would sit on the bed and have devotions! Such defiant disobedience is disgusting, detestable, and highly offensive to God! It is **rebellion against** his will!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:2)
- Peter, quoting Psalm 34:15 and 16, writes, "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:12)
- Jesus said, "I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name." (John 15:16)
- "The prayer of a righteous person accomplishes much." (James 5:16, Greek, EDS translation; cf. KJV)
- "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." (Romans 10:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- There is no place in the Bible that gives this couple any assurance those prayers were well received.
- It is true that we all sin and fall short of the glory of God (1 Kings 8:46; Proverbs 20:9; Romans 3:23), and yet God hears our prayers in Christ (James 5:16; Proverbs 15:29).
- The issue here is conscious, intentional, and habitual disobedience—clearly displeasing to God and not in his will. He has not promised to hear those prayers of disobedience and rebellion; furthermore, he will not honor them. (Isaiah 59:2)
- This is not to say the couple cannot be forgiven or saved (the former if they are immature Christians mired in an elementary stage of sanctification; the latter if they're pagans, wolves in sheep's clothing, [Matthew 7:15-23]); but the Bible is clear that God expects a change of heart, true repentance, and a commitment to obey with concomitant actions before he considers us truly repentant and doing his will. (Hebrews 5:7-9)
- *Repentance involves not only sincere regret for the sin but also discontinuing that sinful behavior and committing to obedience to God's will that shows forth in a track record over time.*

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Hebrews 13:4)
- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21)
- "The prayer of a righteous person accomplishes much." (James 5:16, Greek, EDS translation; cf. KJV. See also Proverbs 15:29.)
- "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." (Romans 10:9)
- "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)
- "[50]And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.
[51]And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split." (Matthew 27:50-51)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Also, when someone says, "I've tried prayer, and it doesn't work," ask him or her, "To whom were you praying? Were you praying to the triune God in Christ Jesus' name, and do you believe that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead? (Romans 10:9; John 14:6) To a limited extent, we have similar experiences in our human relationships here on earth: If someone calls you John and your name is Jim, you are likely not to answer. When you pray to some other entity who is not God, why would God answer you, especially since you are not addressing him and thereby not doing so in a righteous relationship with him according to his will? See James 5:16." Here again is why we start our reasoning with theology, understanding who God is.
- To be heard by God who is holy, holy, holy, as well as being all love, we must come to him in and through Christ Jesus, who is the only way to the Father. (John 14:6) This reality was powerfully demonstrated when Jesus died for us: at that very instant, the veil of the temple that separated people from where God dwelled here on earth, was torn asunder, permitting access to God through Christ Jesus. (Matthew 27:50-51) For more: Biblical Significance of Easter…PPT.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- Jehoshaphat, standing before the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem at the temple said, "O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend?" (2 Chronicles 20:7)
- "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend." (James 2:23)
- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; see also 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Many years ago, we saw an excessive overemphasis on God's justice, focusing on his judgment. Likely due in part to a pendulum swing away from that distortion of grace, we now see an overemphasis on a partial understanding of his love. Many view God as their "best friend," but not their Lord, who has a will for them and to whom they are accountable for adhering to his will. Such an out of balance perspective issues forth in much behavior that, most euphemistically expressed, is not pleasing to God and could never be ed consistent with, much less expressive of, his will.
- Truly God is our friend. (2 Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23) He is even our best friend. But when we so focus on that aspect of our relationship with him to the exclusion of the rest of what his Word teaches about who God is, what he is like, what he is doing, and our relationship with him and his will for us, as we've been examining in this series, our ship goes off keel and runs aground. This loss of perspective is counterproductive to helping us discern his will for our lives, including in specific matters.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.'" (Leviticus 19:17)
- "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend." (James 2:23)
- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We need to also keep in mind another crucial reality concerning friendship and its implications. That reality pertains to the validity of what our friends have to say about what we should do in certain situations, and especially when it involves God's will for us: *Our friends too often don't oppose us when they sense we really want to do something, and especially when we need correction.*
- ***True friends**, who love the Lord, care for our well-being, and are not worried about whether we'll continue to like them, **need to speak up when they see their friend about to head into sin or already sinning.*** (Cf. Leviticus 19:17)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.'" (Leviticus 19:17)
- "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses." (Proverbs 27:6)
- "He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue." (Proverbs 28:23)
- "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. [2]Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- When we have a question as to what is God's will in a particular matter, which the Bible has not addressed specify, we should seek out at least one mature, wise, believer with whom we can discuss this question—***one who has the strength to tell us the truth, even if we don't want to hear it***. Remaining doubts can be resolved by checking with two or three such people. These individuals are truly our best friends. (Proverbs 27:6; 28:23; Leviticus 19:17b; Galatians 6:1-2)
- *We all know those who will tell us what we want to hear on any occasion, but that is not helpful for truly trying to discern and do God's will.* Remember the disaster that befell King Rehoboam when he consulted the wrong people and followed their unwise advice instead of the wisdom of the elders he also consulted. (1 Kings 12)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

<u>Listen to your spouse!</u>

- Here is another way your wife or husband can be especially helpful to you in discerning and doing God's will. Our spouse is our most helpful human resource for receiving corrective feedback, because marriage, love, and commitment assure us that we personally are not being rejected, just a sinful idea we are considering, or already, doing.
- Here's another reason for marrying only a fellow Christian. He or she also has the Lord's best interests in his or her mind and heart, which of course are, or should be, ours as well.
- If you think God is calling you to ministry of any kind, it is especially important your spouse agrees. God is not in the business of breaking up marriages—just the opposite (Malachi 2:16); he will not tell you one thing and your spouse the opposite. For more on calling and calling to ministry, see the Soteriology and Ecclesiology sections.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.'" (Leviticus 19:17)
- "He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue." (Proverbs 28:23)
- "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1-2)
- "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. [2]Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Today some church elder boards are reluctant to discipline members, some of whom are their friends, which reluctance is disastrous for those who need such admonition and which negatively affects them, their families, the Lord himself, his church, and society (which is also his as is the whole world which he loves and for which he cares [John 3:16, cf. Jeremiah 29:1-7]).
- Truly, we are forgiven by and live in God's grace. But grace is not a license to cavalierly and habitually disobey God's commands; such actions are clearly contrary to God's pleasure, yet because he is sovereign, he will still accomplish his purposes. (Cf. Romans 6:1-2)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Discerning God's Will

- "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.'" (Leviticus 19:17)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Many times our forbearers offered insights that we do well to heed. In 1919 John Glover Monsma in his book, *What Calvinism Has Done for America*, wrote, "The more man knows concerning God and His works, the better he will understand the divine will, and the better able he will be to live a life that glorifies his Maker." (6) We need to keep learning from his Word, and from historic Christian theology that is based on and congruent with his Word, more and more who God is and what he is like, including what he has done, what he is doing, what his plans are for us, and what his calling of us involves.
- The church is the primary means through whom God is working to accomplish his redemptive purposes and is especially helpful in discerning the will of God. He not only helps us directly through the Holy Spirit and his Word but also indirectly through others. Involving others, he primarily uses fellow believers whom the Bible calls the body of Christ (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:27) to guide us.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Think of a matter you have emerging in your life, now or coming soon, in which you should ask God to guide you in order to discern and do his will. Use the Biblical guidelines above to help you in your decision-making.
2. Which fellow believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ has the strength and maturity to tell you whether what you plan to do is, or is not, consistent with God's Word and in accord with God's will?
3. What can you do to obtain the most helpful corrective feedback from your spouse?
4. What can you do to give corrective feedback to your spouse and maximize the likelihood he or she will receive it well, including acting on it according to God's will?
5. Would you, or someone in your group, like to enlist the group's help in discerning God's will concerning a question you or he or she is considering?
6. Is there an issue in your church, community, state, or the nation that your group would like to discuss, using the Biblical guidelines above to discern God's will concerning that matter?
7. Discuss one of the problems a reader has sent to an advice columnist in today's newspaper. What would you, or your group, advise the person God's will is in that particular situation? Would God be pleased with the advice of the columnist?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "remember the LORD your God, for it is he who *gives you the ability to produce* wealth, *and so confirms his covenant*, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today." (Deuteronomy 8:18 [*italics mine*])
- "…Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. [15]We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. [16]O LORD our God, as for all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name, it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you." (1 Chronicles 29:14-16)
- "[e]very good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We thus see in God's Word that it is he who is perfectly caring for us. All the good we have is from God our Father; it has not come by chance or any other form of "luck."
- Though they don't see it, due to being blinded by the devil (2 Corinthians 4:4) and having a veil over their minds and hearts that is only taken away by Christ (2 Corinthians 3:14-15), nonbelievers in Christ also receive their well-being from the Father.
- Jesus said, "He [the Father] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45) In Christian theology this benevolence is called common grace, the unmerited favor that the Father gives to all people, often through the Holy Spirit, contrasted with special grace, the unmerited favor that the Father gives in and through Christ.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "'If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.'" (Matthew 6:30-34)
- "He [the Son] is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:17)
- "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In historic Christian theology these and other teachings of the Bible are part of what is referred to as God's providence, his active and continuous caring and providing for his people and all else he has created. His providence involves at least two distinct features.
- First, he preserves his creation, continually upholding it to maintain it. (Matthew 6:30-34; Colossians 1:17; 1 Peter 5:7)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "for dominion belongs to the LORD and he rules over the nations." (Psalm 22:28)
- "The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)
- "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)
- "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:29-31)
- **"**for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Second, he governs his creation, directing and controlling it so that the freedom he has given the beings he has made must function within his predetermined limits. Nothing takes place apart from his will, either his permitting or directing certain phenomena or events to take place, but he will not allow the evil propelled by sin to destroy his plans. (Psalm 22:28; l03:19; Proverbs 16:9; Matthew 10:29-31; Philippians 2:13)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today." (Deuteronomy 8:18)
- "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)
- "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 21:1)
- "Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." (Proverbs 14:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- He guides his creation through the natural laws he has established and in other ways to bless and to ensure the accomplishment of his purposes.
- Sometimes he intervenes through miracles which he makes occur directly or by using natural phenomena at the needed time. (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 104:20-31; Proverbs 16:9, 21:1; Acts 14:17; Exodus14:21-22; Matthew 28:5-7; Acts 3:1-10; Romans 8:28)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left." (Exodus 14:21-22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing? His Providence

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. He made the wheels of their chariots come off so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen--the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. (Deuteronomy 14:13-14; 21-31)

QUESTION: What can you say to the highly educated people in our time, who lack knowledge and especially wisdom, how the ancient Egyptians could perceive the LORD and his help for his people, but that they can't see him today?! What are some implications for us and our witness to them?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing? His Providence

- “You bring darkness, it becomes night, and all the beasts of the forest prowl.
  21 The lions roar for their prey and seek their food from God.
  22 The sun rises, and they steal away; they return and lie down in their dens.
  23 Then man goes out to his work, to his labor until evening.
  24 How many are your works, O LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
  25 There is the sea, vast and spacious, teeming with creatures beyond number-- living things both large and small.
  26 There the ships go to and fro, and the leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.
  27 These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time.
  28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things.
  29 When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust.
  30 When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.
  31 May the glory of the LORD endure forever; may the LORD rejoice in his works—
  32 he who looks at the earth, and it trembles, who touches the mountains, and they smoke.
  33 I will sing to the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
  34 May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the LORD.
  35 But may sinners vanish from the earth and the wicked be no more. Praise the LORD, O my soul. Praise the LORD.” (Psalm 104:20-35)

QUESTIONS: Though God cannot be thwarted (Isaiah 14:27; Job 42:2), since he is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), won’t thanking the Father contribute to his rejoicing in his works more than referring to them as coming from “luck” or “being lucky?” Does attributing something good to “luck,” not detract from the LORD’s praise? Is not taking away from God’s praise precisely what the Devil is constantly trying to do?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'" (Matthew 28:5-7)
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- He guides his creation through the natural laws he has established and in other ways to bless and to ensure the accomplishment of his purposes.
- Sometimes he intervenes through miracles which he makes occur directly or by using natural phenomena at the needed time. (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 104:20-31; Proverbs 16:9, 21:1; Acts 14:17; Exodus14:21-22; Matthew 28:5-7; Acts 3:1-10; Romans 8:28)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, 'Look at us!' So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.
- "Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." (Acts 3:6-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- He guides his creation through the natural laws he has established and in other ways to bless and to ensure the accomplishment of his purposes.
- Sometimes he intervenes through miracles which he makes occur directly or by using natural phenomena at the needed time. (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 104:20-31; Proverbs 16:9, 21:1; Acts 14:17; Exodus14:21-22; Matthew 28:5-7; Acts 3:1-10; Romans 8:28)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- David sang, "I was young and now am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed." (Psalm 37:25)
- In Psalm 84:11 we also read, "the LORD bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless."
- See also such texts as Psalm 104:14-15, 27 (TNIV); 107:9; 111:5; 136:25; and 145:15. God also feeds the animals; see e.g., Psalm 146:7.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Throughout the Bible believers remember God feeding his people manna and quail on the Exodus.
- When God's people are hungry he feeds them. He has done this miraculously as on the Exodus but usually since Bible times by notifying the church of such needs. Individual churches, such as with World Renew, formerly the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, and Lutheran World Relief, and many Christian parachurch organizations, such as Samaritan's Purse, World Vision, Luke Society, MAP International (Medical Assistance Programs), AMFA (Affordable Medicines for Africa) Foundation, and International Aid provide food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other life-sustaining supplies as part of God's provision for all people in need.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.

"This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

[8]Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law." (Romans 13:1-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- While not overtly being done in God's name, governments supply food and other necessities when people encounter disaster. Government is part of God's provision for stability and order in this age where sin has caused such a negative effect on his creation. (Romans 13:1-7) While not nearly as effective as church organizations due to secular systemic evil, governmental agencies are still helpful. The Holy Spirit restrains the extent of evil, and God works through government organizations as part of his means of caring for his world while he is completing his redemptive process in his work in and through Jesus Christ to renew his creation.
- "The law" in 13:8 refers to the Mosaic law God gave his people, not governmental law. Verse 8 continues the reference to and application of God's providential care for his world ("fellowman" > ἕτερον *heteron*, other, not just fellow Christians), referring here to God's providence through his people, not the government.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Many years ago a work-related challenging period occurred for my family and me, and yet not unlike many have experienced and much more so. Nevertheless, we gladly testify that God's help is all-sufficient and enough, sometimes experienced immediately and sometimes after a while. Right from the beginning of the challenge God's involvement was so evident I opened up a document on my computer's desktop that I entitled, "Evidences of God's Providence."
- It was a working document on which I recorded specific related developments and their timing as they unceasingly occurred, to the degree that no reasonable person could conclude that they were due to coincidence or chance. In rapid succession over several weeks I listed more than 50! I then stopped counting but not marveling. This list is a striking illustration of Romans 8:28.
- Needless to say, as you've already been expecting to read, God brought that challenging period to a close in a way that our whole family saw was good, even very good.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)
- "[e]very good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God cares and provides for us in countless ways every day, most of which we are not even aware of! Consider just a few.

- He has directed drunk drivers to select an alternate route from the one we and our family were using, thus sparing us a tragic automobile crash.
- He has caused an airline mechanic to notice a vital repair that was required in order for our plane to fly safely.
- He led us to a home that was built by a contractor who did his work well and didn't "cut corners," failing to include necessary lumber and other materials in order to pocket the saved money or materials for himself.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

By keeping James 1:17 daily in mind most times throughout the day when something good occurs I find myself saying in thought or somewhat audibly, "Thank you, most holy and most gracious Father!" and many times just "Thank you dear Father!"

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Keeping aware of God's providence gives us a viewpoint that protects us from a pall of pessimism counterproductive to our well-being which would negatively affect others and their service for God.
- Think about it! A worldview of being affected by luck and chance first reveals an inaccurate view of God and his involvement in our lives, which results in many people we influence developing a worldview that fosters a feeling of being caught up in fate, a negative perspective that feeds a victim mentality and with no way out! Such a view, if taken seriously, followed to its logical though unsound (due to being based on faulty assumptions) conclusion, and acted on, leads to fatalistic discouragement, depression, and despair…and worse!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

In the light of these realities how can any Christian use the word luck?

- Again, think about it. ***Words are loaded with meaning and powerfully impact our communication***. God's calling to us who follow Christ is to be his witnesses; what kind of a witness for our triune God is that?
- Is not referring to something as luck actually attributing what is good to chance rather than being a "good and perfect gift…from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows?" Indeed, this quote from James 1:17 indicates that each good and perfect gift is from God, either ***directly*** or ***indirectly***.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)
- "[e]very good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

When God gives us a gift ***directly***, he alone gives us these gifts, e.g., a good idea, without using any other means through whom or through which to transmit them.

- Not infrequently I pray for God's wisdom and direction to help me answer a question for which I do not have an answer. Often the answer comes to me even before I've finished articulating the question in my prayer! I know the answer has come from God, because (1) I asked him for it; (2) the answer is good, in accord with James 1:17; (3) it's consistent with his Word, the Bible; and (4) it typically involves thoughts I've either not had previously or of which I've not been recently thinking.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

Indirectly, God gives us good gifts through others and through instrumentalities, such as

- medications that either heal or help us cope with illness;
- knowledge, skills, health, strength, and additional blessings he has given us that enable us to do something we and others value;
- the help we receive from fellow believers and other humans, whose motivation to do so is from God;
- NONE OF THIS IS FROM LUCK!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

Consider another dimension of this issue.

- Eliminating the word luck from our perspective and speech enables us to see more of God's blessings. The mentality shaped by the idea that good things come from happenstance (note the derivation of the root hap, chance) is on a collision course with Scripture, as we've observed above. *By freeing ourselves from the premise that chance occurrences, e.g., "lucky breaks," account for the benefits we receive, we can much more easily see the many good things each day that come from God's loving hand.*
- The word "happy" does not occur in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments. It only occurs in the inadequate translation of some original words in some English versions.
- Give careful thought to the implications of not saying, "Happy Birthday." By using other words, e.g., "I wish you a blessed birthday, knowing that you are a special and intentional gift from God (and not an accident that occurred by 'chance')," can you see what a birthday blessing and gift you are giving to this person, how you've enriched his or her identify? Consider also the implications for the tragedies of the abortion issue.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Singing "Blessed (or Joyful or Joy filled) birthday" instead of "Happy Birthday" (both having the same number of syllables) is especially significant. People ask you, "Why?" Then you can tell them important, helpful, and vital information about God! Also, happy is temporary; joy is forever! Reasonable people will view you as especially thoughtful with much wisdom.
- Satan opposes God at every point, and the devil's objective is to try to remove as much glory from God as he can and to turn as many people's perspective away from God and God's work as possible.
  - Can you think of any more effective way to accomplish this objective than to instill in human minds, even the minds of God's redeemed, the concept of luck with its unbiblical denotation and connotation of something good occurring apart from God?
  - God has called us to be his witnesses. How do we witness effectively to the triune God, who is the giver of "every good and perfect gift," if we fail to mention the key dimensions of his very character? ***To whom then are we witnessing?***

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

The concept of luck is a demonically designed attempt to take away credit where credit is due.

- Not only is it for the purpose of trying to take away from God, detracting from his glory,
- but it takes away from human beings' share in the blessings God gives to people, such as the ability (e.g., skills, knowledge, gifts, wisdom) to accomplish objectives, tasks, and work. *How can one take pleasure in what he or she has achieved, and even consider it an accomplishment, if it is referred to as just "luck" or the result of "luck?"*

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

The concept of luck thus mitigates people's motivation, and it also misleads them concerning a sense of responsibility.

- If what we produce is just "luck," our motivation to set goals and reach them reduces accordingly.
- Furthermore, in a luck-saturated mentality, if people set goals and don't reach them, does not the idea of "luck" tempt them to avoid assuming responsibility for their lack of success? Have you not heard such excuses as "I guess I wasn't as lucky as he [or she] was?" How many fess up and admit to improper preparation? Not a few take the next step and conclude there are things they just aren't responsible for, because they aren't "lucky" enough. No room exists for such thinking in a Christian's sense of calling from God to serve him.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

Columnist George Will quotes Indiana University president and former Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels.

- "Once, after his wrong-field bloop double had scored a winning run, [Hall of Fame baseball player Eddie] Murray was yelled at by an opposing fan who shouted, 'You must be the luckiest hitter in baseball.' To which Murray politely replied, 'You must not watch batting practice.'"
- [Will also observes] "Progressives understand that their program for a government-centered society becomes more plausible the more people believe that work—individual striving—is unavailing. Government grows as fatalism grows, and fatalism grows as progressivism inculcates in people the demoralizing—make that de-moralizing—belief that they are victims of circumstances."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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- "[e]very good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)
- "…now the prince of this world will be driven out. [32]But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." (John 12:31-32; cf. Genesis 3:15. Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, separating humans from God and introducing disharmony through all God's creation, God implemented his plan of redemption in Christ Jesus. God always remembers and is working out his plan, so all who believe in and follow Jesus can be saved.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Many others say, "I don't see how God has helped *me*; he hasn't done anything for me that I can see. I've achieved all this through hard work and good luck, being at the right place at the right time, and having an extensive network; I know a lot of people." It doesn't take much thought to perceive that those who constantly talk about being lucky fail to see God's hand in all their well-being. Such talk shapes their worldview, limits the light that provides understanding, and eclipses their perspective. Indeed, God the Father, the giver of every good and perfect gift, has been invisibly working in their lives to bless them and they've missed him!
- How sad, especially when His own covenant people use the language and thought forms of the culture which is heavily influenced by the "prince of this world," as Jesus called Satan. (John 12:31; 16:11)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As for me I do not want to play into the devil's hand; I don't want to participate in his scheme to take glory from God. Rather, I want to glorify God in all that I do and facilitate the accomplishment of his purposes. Therefore, I refuse to use the word luck.
- I've found it very easy to not use the word luck or its derivatives; will you join me and help others to do so, especially those in the body of Christ, the church? Let us make pleasing, honoring, and glorifying God our greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said,

'You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!'" (John 8:31, 44-45)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- We see Satan's involvement in human affairs and his influential part in the human condition already early in the Old Testament beginning in Genesis 3.
- Yet it's Jesus who most clearly exposes the devil as "the father of lies." (John 8:44-45) As such he deceives people, and one of his greatest deceptions is to depict himself as having the power to oppose God effectively, when in fact he can only do what God allows him to do.
- As we've discussed earlier in this series, the Bible, God's revealed and holy Word, discloses that Satan is no equal to God, who is peerless, and that Satan is only an angel who has fallen. (Luke 10:18) Satan is like a peanut contrasted with God. If you are looking for a peer of Satan, consider the other fallen angels, the demons, he leads. Contrast them with the righteous angels, including Michael and Gabriel, who point to and work for the triune God who has revealed all these realties in his Word, the holy Bible. Moreover, in and through Jesus Christ God, who is sovereign, has defeated the devil and his followers. (Revelation 20)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Thus, we see that the words we use communicate significantly. We, especially those of us called to be holy to God in Christ Jesus, must exercise care in the choice of the words we use.

- We are called to be the people through whom the Holy Spirit will work to accomplish the redemptive purposes of the triune God. Let us be ever more conscious of this essential dimension of our identity, of who we are, and of Whose we are in our language and in all else we do.
- Good News: We are not bound by our culture. Moreover, our mission is to transform our culture, to be models to whom others look, not to be followers of those in our culture, most of whom do not know Christ.
- The tense of the Greek verb translated <u>be transformed</u> clearly indicates <u>a command</u> that is to have an ongoing application in the lifestyle of those who believe in and follow Christ. *One very significant way to model a Christ-like manner in our terminology in our witness to him is to exercise more conscious care in the choice of our words, i.e., in what we say and don't say.*

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

How can we help people to avoid this term, "luck," and in so doing possibly segue into a good witness for Christ?

- When someone wishes us "Good luck!" we can also say "Thanks, I know what you mean, and I appreciate your well wishes very much, but I don't believe in luck—everything good comes from God." Whenever I say that I don't believe in luck, invariably the other person says, "I don't either."
- When someone says, "Luckily, I (found this great deal, etc.)" How about asking, "Would you like a better term than luck, which doesn't exist? How about "Providentially, I found this great deal, etc.).
- We can proactively, and with a glad grin, teach this point, e.g., when at a "potluck" dinner we can say, "In the light of the Biblical teaching on God's Providence (e.g., James 1:17), that everything good comes from God the Father, I prefer to call this 'Pot-Providence')."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
  "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:9-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

How can we help people to avoid this term and in so doing segue into a good witness for Christ?

- Of course, your relationship with the other person, how well you know him or her, and for how long you've known him or her, are indicators as to what you can say that will be most useful.
- As in all effective communication, strive for the healthy balance between sounding so strange, i.e., weird, that the other person writes you off on the one hand and ignoring God's call to be his witness in Christ on the other hand. Nevertheless, it is clear that morally and as Christ's witnesses we are to be "aliens and strangers in the world" (1 Peter 2:11), meaning our behavior and our words must glorify God and contrast with evil. God didn't place us where we are at this point in time to just talk about work, weather, and fun; he's given us a high and holy calling, and we are to respond by shaping our lives faithfully and accordingly. See 1 Peter 2:9-12 and 3:15.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As we proceed through each day with the growing awareness that everything we value, enjoy, cherish, and count as good has come from our loving Father in heaven, who is himself our greatest blessing and does not change, we'll recognize more and more of his work in our lives. We'll marvel and rejoice in his constant love for us, including its breadth and depth.
- Does all this surprise you? Of course not. God takes care of, provides for, his people. Thus, you'll find yourself thanking him throughout the day for the good things as they occur and that you now more clearly perceive as coming from him, directly, or indirectly via others through whom he is working to bless us.
- That understanding and thanksgiving is transformative.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Consciously connecting what you see as good with God's providential blessings for you will cast a new light on your disappointments, discouragements, discomforts, and difficulties. Some will actually disappear and others diminish due to seeing them now in their proper perspective, i.e., within the control of God who is sovereign, good, and all-capable, who loves you, and who is working out all matters for your good and for the accomplishment of his purposes.
- Those that do not disappear, you'll see as manageable and not destructive. Gratitude, joy, encouragement, and hope will replace anxiety, worry, dread, pessimism, fear, and the sense of being overwhelmed by life as you more and more observe God's constant presence and countless expressions of his Providential love for you every day.
- What great peace and joy we have not having to hope for "luck!"

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Providence

One way God has provided to help us keep him in view is to remember what James wrote,

- "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.' [14]Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. [15]Instead, *you ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.'" (James 4:13–15 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

When significant problems occur in our lives, tunnel vision typically forms, and we only see the problem.

- It helps greatly to keep a whole-life perspective and view the problem in its proper context, whereby we also see God's willingness to help. We need to keep the broad view, including the present moment in an eternal perspective.
- One day I was mentioning this reality to one of my wife's brothers, and I said, "We have to keep God in the picture." He replied, "Yes, and he's not only in the picture, ***but he's holding the picture!***"

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

John Newton, one of England's extraordinary pastors, wrote to and of his deep love for his wife, Mary. While on an extended voyage at sea, when he was captain of a ship before becoming a minister, he penned, "You will not be displeased with me for saying, that though you are dearer to me than the aggregate of all earthly comforts, I wish to limit my passion within those bounds which God has appointed. Our love to each other ought to lead us to love him supremely, who is the author and source of all the good we possess or hope for. It is to him we owe that happiness in a marriage state which so many seek in vain, some of whom set out with such hopes and prospects, that their disappointments can be deduced for no other cause, than having placed that high regard on a creature which is only due to the Creator. He therefore withholds his blessing (without which no union can subsist) and their expectations, of course, end in indifference…." He clearly perceived the need to keep the gift in proper perspective, thereby honoring the Giver and more fully appreciating the gift. Having such a perspective on life and the Biblical view of who God is and what he is like, and who humans are and what human nature is like, reduces the likelihood of and protects us from devastating disappointments.

When Mary died, John Newton said in his sermon at her funeral: "I considered her as a loan, which He who lent her to me, had a right to resume whenever He pleased; and that as I had deserved to forfeit her every day, from the first; it became me, rather to be thankful that she was spared to me so long…." Perceiving all of life in the light of God's providential care of his creation, and of himself and his wife in particular, Newton was well positioned and prepared for the struggles of life he encountered, including the loss of his dear wife. We, too, live within this Providence. Thanks be to God!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

When my precious wife of 48 1/2 years died, I, who throughout our marriage always had that same Biblical and theological perspective as John Newton articulated, have been thereby greatly comforted, strengthened, and enabled to come through this most difficult experience for me as well as I could have hoped. God blessed me, the rest of our family, and a multitude of others in countless ways through her. I can clearly see limitless evidences of God's Providential care just in preparing her and me for her death; upholding her and me, and the rest of our family, through it; and caring for me and for the rest of our family as well as Carol's other loved ones while we are apart from her presence.

Oh what a wonderful wife God gave me; luck had nothing to do with my finding her and her becoming my wife. I couldn't have asked God for a more magnificent wife than Carol, whom he gave to me in gracious response to my numerous and fervent prayers. Even now, many years since she died, I still have times of sadness each day. When those times come, I obey God's Word and thank God in and for everything: for my cherished Carol; for the 53 years we knew, had a special relationship with, and enjoyed each other, especially for the almost five decades as husband and wife; and even for taking her to be with him where she no longer has the struggle with the debilitating disease that afflicted her. She belongs to him, as do I, the rest of our family, and all others in Christ. He has the right to bless her as she needs in his all-surpassing love…for her and for me. Shortly before she died, she told me, and a friend who was visiting with her, that she wanted to go home to be with the Lord; two weeks later God granted her request. Even in sad times, I can thank God for these realities, for all the treasured moments we had together, and for the supreme joy that she is having in God's eternal presence and service and that in and through Christ Jesus we will be together again—next time forever—and my spirit soars! Thanks be *to God*!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing? His Providence

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Though God cannot be thwarted (Isaiah 14:27; Job 42:2), since he is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17), won't thanking the Father add to his rejoicing in his works much more than referring to them as coming from "luck" or "being lucky?"
2. Does attributing something good to "luck" or "being lucky" not detract from the Father's glory?
3. Is not taking away from God's glory precisely what the Devil is constantly trying to do?
4. Is there a disconnect between praising God and then later attributing anything good to "luck?" Can we add to our praise of God by thanking him for the good in our lives and avoiding use of the word "luck" and its derivatives?
5. Referring to Deuteronomy 14:25, what can you say to the highly educated people in our time, who lack knowledge and especially wisdom, how the ancient Egyptians could perceive the LORD and his help for his people, but that they can't see him today?! What are some implications for us and our witness to them?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God…." (Deuteronomy 28:58)
- "We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence." (Psalm 90:7-8; cf. 11-17)
- "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)
- "You will say then, 'Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.' Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

  "Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again." (Romans 11:19-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Some say, "But the biblical concept of fearing God simply means to have awe for and to revere God." They should check even the English dictionary for the meaning of both of those words, the root of which primarily involves fear. In the Bible's original Hebrew and Greek, the words translated fear with respect to God literally mean fear. (Hebrew: יִרְא [*yārēʾ*] and Greek: φόβος [*phobos*]) See the passages in the left column and related passages throughout the Bible that confirm this understanding.
- In Hebrews 10:31, "dreadful" is the NIV translation of φοβερός (*phoberos*), a derivative of *phobos,* meaning also fearful, terrible (NASB, "terrifying"), frightful. The context clearly indicates this dread is due to deliberately keeping on sinning. (10:26)
- How do we understand this aspect of our relationship with God, who in his Word is revealed as love to the core of his being? (1 John 4:8)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Consider also the source of respect. Is there not typically at least a tinge of fear (of consequences), whether admitted or not, if someone disregards, and especially disobeys, one who is in a superior position? How long is the tenure in an organization of an employee who does not respect the one(s) to whom he or she is accountable, including having a healthy sense of fear of consequences for disobedience or even failing to meet agreed upon standards and conditions of employment (e.g., production deadlines)?
- Who are you more inclined to obey? An authority who has a reputation as being "a soft touch" or one who though nice will exact justice swiftly?
- Compare the covenant stipulations in God's covenant with his people (e.g., Deuteronomy 28). Notice that the Hebrew word for "revere" and "awesome" in verse 58 is יִרְא (*yārēʾ*], be afraid, i.e., as the context reveals, of disobeying God. God is no one to "mess around with," and he does not take disobedience lightly, which as we've seen in earlier essays, is referred to as no less than rebellion.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD." (Exodus 14:10)
- "And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant." (Exodus 14:31)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In Moses' account of the Israelites' flight from Egypt in Exodus 14, he says the Israelites looked up as Pharaoh and his army approached, and they were in great fear (v. 10 RSV; terrified, NIV). ***<u>This was not just a reverent respect!</u>***
- After they were safely across the Red Sea and saw the Egyptians lying dead, which they recognized as due to the mighty power of the LORD, "the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him." (v. 31) Significantly, Moses uses the most common Hebrew word for fear, יָרֵא (*yārēʾ*) be afraid, both in verse 10 to describe their visceral, abject, terror as they sensed they were about to be vanquished and in verse 31 to indicate the fear they felt toward the LORD.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "'I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.

  'For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end.'" (Daniel 6:26)
- "Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'" (Mark 5:33-34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Many Bible passages link fear and trembling, thus indicating a real fear, not just a respectful awe. The link is explicit with respect to God and our salvation in several texts. (Cf. e.g., Daniel 6:26 NASB)
- Mark records the incident where the woman with a 12-year hemorrhage reaches out in faith that just touching Jesus' garment will make her well. Jesus, perceiving that power had gone out from him looked for the person who touched him. The woman, knowing what had occurred, approached him and fell at his feet; Mark records (in the original Greek) that she was "fearing (φοβηθεῖσα [*phobetheisa*]) and trembling (τρέμουσα [*tremousa*])." (5:33) Jesus then said to her "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." (v. 34) Counterintuitively in much human thinking, yet her faithful fear resulted in peace.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- Paul writes to the Philippians, "my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear (φόβου [*phobou*]) and trembling (τρόμου *[tromou*]) [2:12] for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life…." (vss. 12-16a) Cf. 2 Corinthians 7:15.
- "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." (Ephesians 6:5-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The apostle goes on to explain that such a mentality and spiritual orientation will help keep them on the same page with God's will, "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life…." (vss. 13-16a)
- One more indication that these Greek words are to be interpreted literally in these passages is seen by comparing them with the effect accompanying slaves' obedience of their earthly masters, which Paul said should be done with "fear (φόβου [*phobou*]) and trembling (τρόμου [*tromou*])." (Ephesians 6:5) The apostle said that they should treat their masters this way "not only to win their favor when their eye is on [them], but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from [their] heart." (6:6) He then explained that in so doing they would present a fine witness for Christ. (6:7-8)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- Some say that those who fear God do so because of his almighty power. However, if they understand God as being love to the core of his being, as he truly is, why would they have any fear? Wouldn't they conclude he will always use his power for their protection and other benevolent acts? No.
- There is more to it than that. I submit it is not primarily his almighty power that is the key reason people fear God, but that they, especially his covenant people, know he is holy, and they are not—indeed that he is holy, holy, holy—and that he will not accept sin, a fatal flaw in human nature since the fall of Adam and Eve. Everyone has guilt, and knows it, whether he or she admits it or not. Accordingly, in the Bible the word fear is ***not*** used to describe a human being's affect toward God ***until after*** that fall as described in Genesis 3. Yet fear is the first emotion Scripture records Adam feeling after he and Eve had sinned against God. (v 10) The healthy fear of God in his Word guides us to remember our accountability to him who knows best and always does perfectly, to obey his Word, to repent and ask forgiveness when we fail him, and to recommit to obeying him and doing rightly in his sight, as we head into the future.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What does it mean to fear God?

- God is never a cosmic curmudgeon or a killjoy; neither is he ever arbitrary. He hates and judges sin, because it always harms people he loves. Sin offends God's holiness, indeed because he is holy, holy, holy, but also because he loves the people he has created, and he knows sin is never good; he loves those victimized by sin, their own and others'.
- In our time and culture, we encounter a milieu of political, social, and theological correctness fraught with spiritual danger. It is not politically correct to fear anything or anyone, and if someone speaks out against a politically sacrosanct ideology, person, or group, for example, the unbiblical practices of homosexuality, Islam, or illegal immigrants who have committed crimes, he or she is accused of being homophobic, Islamophobic, or xenophobic. We should keep in mind that these accusations are examples of the logical fallacy called *argumentum ad hominem* (literally, argument directed toward the man), where the attempt is to discredit the person instead of addressing the validity of his or her argument and its rationale. Further, the accusations are not only illogical but part of the spiritual warfare in which we are engaged. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20) The goal of these opponents pertaining to Christians, is to shut us up and hinder our witness for Christ and the truth of the Gospel. With the knowledge of what they are doing, and with God's help, we are equipped to withstand their attacks and do so by "speaking the truth in love." (Ephesians 4:15)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

"Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth." (Psalm 96:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "Worship the LORD…tremble…." Both verbs are imperatives, commands, and we're to do so "in the splendor of his holiness [and] tremble before him." The Hebrew word translated tremble also means to writhe and to be in pain (typically referring to labor pains, analogizing the seriousness of sin). In the light of God's holiness, sin regularly causes much pain, for believers and unbelievers,* **but God's forgiveness in worship with the church relieves that pain for those who repent, believe in, and follow Jesus Christ.**
- What a stark contrast to the politically correct and seeker constrained expressions that omit any reference to this Biblical teaching, with the result that many enter the sanctuary of God who is holy, holy, holy with the cavalier idea that they're paying respects to their Divine Buddy, getting another good mark in the ledger of life, and that he should be glad they showed up! The first worshipers long for the opportunity to hear God's assurance of pardon following the prayer of confession; the latter are mystified by such a practice and often turned off. No wonder many worship services today omit the prayer of confession and the accompanying and blessed words of assurance. Be careful: We must not take God for granted!

*Unbelievers, and immature believers, try to relieve this pain by many forms of denial and escape, e.g., abusing alcohol, loud music, opioids, sex, overworking, sports, but when the temporary euphoria wears off, the problem returns and remains.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy…." (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- "Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons." (1 Corinthians 10:19-21)
- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world…." (Romans 12:2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Another aspect of political correctness—which is distracting leaders and others from God's Word, and motivating decisions that are contrary to his Word and will in too many churches today—is especially dangerous: the aversion to offending anyone.
- Yet the cross is offensive and even foolish to the world that is perishing (Galatians 5:11 and 1 Corinthians 1:23), but Christ is the power and wisdom of God. *We are called to speak up for Christ and proclaim him as the only way, truth, and life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him. (John 14:6) Our calling and our desire is to please the triune God, not the world, and to proclaim Christ, crucified, risen, reigning, and ruling*.
- If we truly love and care for people, as Christ has commanded, we must courageously preach and teach Christ as the only way to salvation. To be sure we are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), but we must speak the truth: Contrary to deceptive political correctness, *all other religions are wrong **and dangerous**, especially but not only, spiritually; they lead to death. There are no other gods in the presence of the one true God*. (Exodus 20:3)
- We are called to be holy to God. Remember holy means uncommon, pure, and separated to God. We are not to conform to the world. (Romans 12:2) ***Conforming to God brings life; conforming to the world brings death***.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what is he doing; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth." (Psalm 96:9)
- "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'
"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." (1 Peter 1:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Those who do not have the new nature, provided by the Holy Spirit (see Soteriology), try to psychologize away or ignore their fear and guilt. *Those who have the new birth and the faith in Jesus Christ it provides thank God for their fear, the periodic reemergence of which reminds them of who they are, of their sin, and of his grace, which informs their understanding as well as their choices to obey and leads them into uncommon joy*.
- Of course such a concept of fearing God, or fearing anyone, is repugnant to most people today. Commenting on those who try to mitigate the onerous connotation of fear by explaining that fear simply means respect, Ellen Davis of Yale Divinity School has written in her book, *Getting Involved with God*, "in avoiding the word 'fear,' translators are taking the edge off the point that the biblical writers are making. The writers are speaking first of all of our proper gut response to God." (102)
- However, while respect is an aspect of the major word for fear in the Old and the New Testaments, both the Hebrew of the OT and the Greek of the NT have other words that mean respect. *Fear of God issues forth in respect that obeys his Word and his will*.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

"If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid." (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Though speaking on the human level, the concept of fear connected with consequences is clearly evident in the commandment pertaining to a rebellious son in Deuteronomy 21:18-21. The law addresses a painful situation where a stubborn and rebellious son refuses to obey his father and mother and even to listen to them when they discipline him.
- All the Israelites will hear of this stark punishment and be afraid. Afraid of what? Certainly the children will fear the same consequences will occur to them if they engage in similar rebellion. With that healthy fear in the back of their minds, do you think their decision-making and behavior was affected…in the right direction?
- My behavior as a child was definitely influenced in the direction of choosing to do what was good rather than what was evil with the knowledge of what my dad would do if I did the latter.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 NASB)
- "My son, do not despise the LORD'S discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." (Proverbs 3:11-12)
- "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (Hebrews 12:10)
- Fearing God helps us obey; as Moses told the Israelites, "the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (Exodus 20:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- I never doubted the love of my outstanding earthly father; his cherishing of me was beyond question and reinforced in countless ways throughout our life together. Nevertheless, when as a child I transgressed my limits, his discipline was swift, fair, and sometimes painful: emotionally and, on a few occasions, physically as his belt crossed my bottom. That administration of corporal punishment occurred very few times, but just enough times and with sufficient strength for me to fear a recurrence should I disobey, a healthy fear that guided me in deciding whether I should or should not do something and kept me from making extremely regrettable choices. Having experienced that reaction to my transgression, I lived in constant awareness of his love that included a real fear of what would occur should I step out of line. That genuine fear of fair consequences kept me out of much trouble, for which I am eternally grateful to my dad and to our Father in heaven who provided the model he followed. (Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15; Hebrews 12:5-11)
- Another example of the filial fear of God (filial > father-child relationship) is fear of disappointing our heavenly Father and our earthly father out of love.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:11-12)
- "the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." (Psalm 147:11)
- "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Psalm 130:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

God's Word links a healthy fear of him, and of other authority figures (cf. Romans 13:1-7) including parents, to obedience, which God requires of his people, not to earn salvation, as other religions teach, but as our *grateful and loving response* to him for saving us and which gives evidence of the genuineness of our faith. (Cf., e.g., 1 John 2:3-6) The fear of the Lord is thus seen in actions. "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." (Proverbs 3:7-8; See also 8:13.) As one writer has said, "In my discovery of the Savior who is also my Judge, I discover several reasons to obey him. Fear is one of these."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.
[8]This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." (Proverbs 3:7-8)
- "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." (Proverbs 8:13)
- [Jesus said] "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:10-11)
- "[t]hey who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." (John 14:21 NRSV; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The healthy fear of God involves the consequences of sin, what God will do in his just and righteous judgment of sin that offends him so greatly. Sin is a grievous offense to God who is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy and all love. How could God be just and righteous, overlook sin that harms people he loves who bear his image, and do nothing about it?
- The fear of the Lord is thus seen in actions, God's and ours. (Proverbs 3:7-8; 8:13.)
- Fear not only involves God's love, but also the joy he gives in obedience to his will, as our Lord Jesus said in John 15:10-11.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.
  [8]This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones." (Proverbs 3:7-8)
- "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." (Proverbs 8:13)
- [Jesus said] "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:10-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

We've been reflecting on a healthy fear of God. Such a fear keeps us from the careless attitude of many today who glibly speak God's name in vain and ignore him and his will. This holy fear merges with other motivators to guide us to obedience which honors God who is most holy and enables us to accomplish the purposes to which he has called us and that give meaning and significance to our lives.

- An analogy psychologist Dr. James Dobson used to illustrate another concept helps here as well. Compare the fear one experiences when being stopped by a police officer after exceeding the speed limit. In response to a very polite question, "May I see your driver's license please?" trembling fingers extract the plastic card from his or her wallet. The fear is not of the officer him or herself (he or she hasn't harmed or even threatened the driver), but of what that officer can do that is very painful (give a ticket which results in a significant fine and possibly other painful punishments [e.g., loss of license]), which possibilities cause fear. This fear, as all other fears, doesn't remain at this height, but its underlying existence in our day-to-day driving motivates us to keep within the prescribed limits, much more so than would be the case if the police officer had no authority to *do* anything if we disobey the law.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)
- "The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people. He said:
  12'Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it.
  13The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread,
  14and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.
  15Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken, they will be snared and captured."
  16Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples.
  17I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob. I will put my trust in him. (Isaiah 8:11-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The thought of what God, who is holy, holy, holy, will do to those who disregard his will, as those against whom Isaiah was prophesying (8:13), causes in the wise person a fear which is healthy.
- We, however, do not live in morbid terror or dread of God, especially because of our security in Christ, but our fear of his actions, were we to disregard and disobey his will, leads to wisdom, better behavior, well-being, and thanksgiving, not only in the USA in November but everywhere. (Proverbs 9:10)
- I shudder to think of the result of God's righteous judgment on what I deserve were it not for Christ, but that thought of Christ and being credited with his righteousness brings me instant calm and eternal gratitude to God whose true love is also just. (See also Isaiah 8:11-17, esp. v. 13.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'" (Exodus 20:20)
- "To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech." (Proverbs 8:13)
- "Rulers persecute me without cause, but my heart trembles at your word." (Psalm 119:161)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Fearing God helps us obey. As Moses told the Israelites, "the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (Exodus 20:20) Notice that the Hebrew word fear in the term fear of God is the same Hebrew word as being afraid, both aspects of which appear in this same verse. "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid, [< יָרֵא (*yārēʾ*)] God has come to test you, so that the fear [יִרְאָה *yirʾāh* < יָרֵא (*yārēʾ*)] of God will be with you to keep you from sinning.'" Again, we see here not a morbid dread but a healthy fear of the consequences of disobeying, i.e., rebelling against God—a very dangerous decision and unwise act. Fearing God involves hating evil, which brings blessing! (Ecclesiastes 8:13)

In his interpretation of Psalm 119:161, John Calvin comments that the Psalmist, confronted with the unjust persecution of government officials [שָׂרִים (*śārîm)*], the fear [פָּחַד (*pāchadh*), verb, to tremble, to be afraid] of God's Word, constrains one's self to attempt nothing which is unlawful and not to "attempt to rival their wicked practices, by repelling craft with craft and violence with violence." (*Commentary on Psalms*, Volume 5) Cf. 2 Chronicles 20:29.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth." (Psalm 96:9)
- "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'
"Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear." (1 Peter 1:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The response of a sinful human being to God's holiness is true fear, a genuine concern for well being, recognizing his or her guilt and unworthiness to be in the presence of God.
- When I think about it, if it were not for being in Christ, the least one of my many sins would be enough to cast me far from the presence of God, who is most holy, forever…a fearsome thought!
- Again, the original Greek word translated fear is φόβος (*phobos*). The NIV, as the NRSV, includes the concept of reverence, but they wisely translate *phobos* to include the very real aspect of fear, but not dread (because of our redemption in Christ as the verses that follow remind us), as a guiding principle for remembering to live as people called to be holy to God who is holy, holy, holy (most holy).
- A key part of his holiness is his wrath toward sin. Sin and evil offend God who is holy, holy, holy. People today are worried about offending someone or being offended; we should be most concerned about offending God! Another reason he hates sin and evil is because of his great love for his people who are hurt by sin and evil.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Psalm 130:4)
- "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 NASB)
- "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world." (1 John 2:2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "The consistent Bible view is that the sin of man has incurred the wrath of God. That wrath is averted only by Christ's atoning offering. From this standpoint his saving work is properly called propitiation." (Leon Morris)
- We should never lose sight of the Biblical teaching that the core of God's being is his great love. (1 John 4:8) Nevertheless, that great love is most meaningful when we also keep in mind his divine wrath against the sin and evil that spurns and ignores his holiness. The realization of God's forgiveness in the light of a true fear of God's wrath against sin, motivates the fear יָרֵא (*yārēʾ*, verb, be afraid) in the sense of awe and respect, as seen, e.g., in Psalm 130:4. Morris' observation that "God himself provides the means of removing his own wrath" is true, *but, we must promptly proclaim, it is only efficacious and effective for those who confess Christ*. And that is a fearsome thought for those outside of Christ, *which also strongly motivates us to reach out to them in love with the unmitigated Gospel of our Lord and Savior.*

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say,* of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26 NASB)
- "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 NASB)
- "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world." (1 John 2:2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

New Testament scholar, Leon Morris, in an article on "Propitiation" observed that the Greek word, ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion*), most accurately translated propitiation, the means of removing divine wrath. Dr. Morris writes that the wrath of God is referred to 585 times throughout the Old Testament. He then says,

- While God's wrath is not mentioned as frequently in the NT as the Old, it is there. Man's sin receives its due reward, not because of some impersonal retribution, but because God's wrath is directed against it (Rom. 1:18, 24, 26, 28). The whole of the argument of the opening part of Romans is that all men, Gentiles and Jews alike, are sinners, and that they come under the wrath and the condemnation of God. When Paul turns to salvation, he thinks of Christ's death as *hilasterion* (Rom. 3:25), the means of removing the divine wrath. The paradox of the OT is repeated in the New that God himself provides the means of removing his own wrath. The love of the Father is shown in that he "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (I John 4:10). The purpose of Christ's becoming "a merciful and faithful high priest" was "to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17). His propitiation is adequate for all (I John 2:2) but is efficacious for those who believe in and follow him.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?' that is, 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?'" (Matthew 27:46, Greek, NASB, KJV, ESV)
- "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, *'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'*—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'" (Mark 15:34)
- "Jesus said, 'It is finished.'" (John 19:30)
- "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 NASB)
- "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world." (1 John 2:2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

When Jesus took on our sinfulness and sins, as he died for us, God's wrath was propitiated, which we painfully sense in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. Propitiation is a better translation than atonement, which doesn't as well convey God's wrath against sin. As R.C.H. Lenski comments, "All that we are able to say is that only thus, by actually forsaking Jesus, could the full price of our redemption be paid.

"To be forsaken of God is undoubtedly to taste his wrath. Jesus endured the full penalty for our sins when God turned from him for three hours while Jesus hung on the cross. During those hours the penalty was paid to the uttermost farthing; and after that had been done, God again turned to Jesus. The forsaking is often combined with the death, yet the two are quite distinct. The forsaking had been completed before the death set in. When Jesus died he placed his soul into the hands of his Father and thus was certainly not forsaken. But while they are distinct, the forsaking and the death are closely connected. The death was the penalty for the sins of the world, and thus in connection with it this forsaking of the dying Savior was necessary. After this had been endured, Jesus could cry, 'It is finished!' and then yield his soul into his Father's hands." (*Lenski New Testament Commentary - The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, p. 1121)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, *I say,* of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26 NASB)
- "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10 NASB)
- "and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world." (1 John 2:2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- *Think about what that propitiation in love meant to God.* What great and unfathomable love he and his only begotten Son demonstrated, as the Father and the Holy Spirit had to watch the ugly and extremely painful agony inflicted on the Son, our Lord Jesus!
- However, does not the Bible teach that "God is love," as we saw in an earlier part in this series, and that "perfect love drives out fear?" (1 John 4:8,18) True.
- Nevertheless, as we also noted, true love is just and righteous. *Since* God loves us, to preserve his integrity and his love for the oppressed, and as part of his caring, he will discipline those he loves and judge everyone. "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." (Proverbs 3:11-12) The writer of Hebrews adds that "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (12:10)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:11-12)
- "the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." (Psalm 147:11)
- "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Psalm 130:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The link of the fear of God with his love is seen throughout the Bible. Another of the texts which makes this connection is Psalm 103:11-12. Consider also Psalm 147:11.
- The Bible also links the fear of God with his forgiveness, an aspect of his love, as we see in Psalm 130:3-4. Our consciousness of being forgiven motivates our fear of, and love for, God, which fear John Stek in his commentary in the *NIV Study Bible* interprets as meaning "[h]onored, worshiped, trusted and served as the one true God. If God were not forgiving, people could only flee from him in terror."

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:17-18)
- "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God," (Colossians 1:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Christians who are maturing in their development from acorn to oak keep in mind who they are and Whose they are. They also clearly distinguish between the perfect character of God, who is most holy, and their own character which is unfit for his fellowship. When that distinction is made in the growing awareness of the magnitude of God's love to them, an eternal gratitude motivates a desire to obey, to do his will.
- Such a perspective should guide our decision-making. When we reflect on what to do in a matter, and we think of what others will say, that's important to an extent (e.g., Romans 12:17-18), but infinitely more important, and the question we should ask above all others, is "What does God think? What is his opinion?" God's opinion overrides all others…by far! Infinitely so!!

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:30)
- "Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD." (Leviticus 26:2)
- "Your testimonies are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore." (Psalm 93:5 [NASB])

Meaning and Practical Benefits

What do you think God is telling us when he repeats the same verse just seven chapters later in Leviticus? Maybe that this concept, obeying his Sabbath command, is very important to him? (How many times have you who are a parent said to your children, "How many times have I told you….?!")

- In the Leviticus passages the Hebrew verb translated "have reverence for" is *tîra'û*, which literally means "you will fear." This fear is a healthy respect in awe of God rather than an abject dread of him. Though God has revealed that the core of his being is love (1 John 4:8), and he discloses that love on every page of the Bible, nevertheless he is also holy, holy, holy, that is separate, pure, and uncommon. He does not permit evil in his presence, and he will judge it. This awareness should motivate great reverence and respect for God and his sanctuary, and a healthy fear of the consequences of disobeying God helps activate that reverence in his sanctuary and in his people's daily walk with him in his service.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "[26]If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, [27]but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. [28]Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. [29]How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? [30]For we know him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' [31]It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:26-31)
- "[9]Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders [10]nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- As mentioned in the beginning of this section, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews uses a very strong word in 10:26-31 that refers to a very real fear that will come upon those who deliberately continue to disobey God. In 10:31, "dreadful" is the NIV translation of φοβερός (*phoberos*), a derivative of *phobos,* meaning also fearful, terrible (NASB, "terrifying"), frightful. That's more than just respect or reverent awe.
- In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, the original Greek word translated "wicked" means "unrighteous," that is, those who have not been credited with the merits of Christ's righteousness. The following behaviors are habitual, as part of a lifestyle of continuous disobedience; they display evidence that the person has not had the new birth, the new nature, and identified with Christ. Thus, they are not children of God and will not inherit the kingdom of God, unless they repent, seek forgiveness in Christ, stop doing these sins, and obey the Lord, sincerely seeking to do his will and following him.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

What Does It Mean to Fear God?

- "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." (Proverbs 9:10)
- Fearing God helps us obey; as Moses told the Israelites, "the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." (Exodus 20:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Maybe the reality revealed in Proverbs 9:10 explains the widespread lack of both fear and wisdom in our time.
- It is difficult to maintain balance in all aspects of life. We tend toward one side and then the other, underemphasizing the side not accentuated at the time. Many decades ago the pendulum swung toward focusing on God's judgment. Then people saw the need to emphasize his grace, especially his love, where we are now but losing sight of God's judgment on sin and his refusal to allow it in his presence much less to coexist with it; such people lose a healthy sense of fear that leads them to the obedience God requires. To be sure God's essence is love (1 John 4:8), but *precisely because he is loving from the core of his being, he is also just and will judge the sin which offends him due to his holiness and the hurt sin does to the people he loves. His justice is an aspect of and flows from his love*.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

We need to be careful in teaching the Biblical concept of fearing God, whether we are teaching a class or teaching a neighbor. Many people have a distorted view of God; we need to help them bring their understanding of God closer to that which he has revealed in his Word and not add to their confusion. Consider the context in which you are teaching. Specifically, what is the background of your class, or the person with whom you are speaking, concerning their/his/or her understanding of who God is, what he is like, and what he is doing?

- Are they people, usually older and/or from a conservative church background, who remember being taught in childhood that God is a strict judge who easily sends people to hell?
- Or, are they people who have grown up with the idea, a reaction to the older teaching, that God is their best friend and that he just sits back in his rocker, smiles at everything and "wouldn't hurt a flea?" This perspective is the more prevalent view today and the reason for the approach taken in this part of our study.
- Or, are they somewhere in between these two views?

If you have people in the first group in your class, be sensitive that their background and the previous learning they've developed from it may mentally shape what you are saying to understand something you are not intending to say. Take time to explain and discuss this important Biblical theme of fearing God. Help people to mentally process this concept correctly. Taking time for discussion will help you discern where people are in their thinking, so you can correct misunderstanding and help them rightly understand what God's Word is truly saying.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Presbyterian Pastor and Fuller Theological Seminary Adjunct Professor, William Eisenhower, has well written, “We have to conclude that while an unfiltered experience is terrifying, it also brings an unshakable reassurance. We are unsettled from our false securities, but then resettled in the true security of God’s love. Perfect love does indeed cast out fear. Yet the implication is that those who have never trembled from head to toe will never know God’s perfect love.”

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

For Further Reflection and Discussion

1. How would you answer the question before us: “What does it mean to fear God?”
2. Explain how a healthy fear of God is consistent with, and draws us closer to, his love.
3. How does a healthy fear of God help us live in holiness to him?
4. What is the difference between fearing God and dreading him?
5. As parents and grandparents, how can we teach our children what it means to fear God?
6. Who would you rather have for a next-door neighbor? One who believes that while the core of God’s being is love, that love issues forth in a holy and just wrath against sin that hurts people he loves and is grievously offensive to him **or** one who sees God as being the great grandfather in the sky who sits back on his rocker watching what is going on, just loving everybody and never holding anyone accountable for what they do? Why did you make the choice you did? Which neighbor would be more inclined to care about what is important to you?

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

For Further Reflection and Discussion

7. If people properly understood what the Bible means when it says we should fear God, what difference would that mean in the following contexts?
   a. In our family?
   b. In our church?
   c. At school?
   d. At work?
   e. In our society?
   f. Elsewhere in the world?
8. For pastors and other worship leaders:
   a. What can we do to facilitate worshipers' proper attitude when they enter the sanctuary of God who is holy, holy, holy?
   b. What difference will it make to the worshipers, already during the worship service, and in their daily lives, if they come into God's sanctuary with the conscious awareness they are in the presence of God who is most holy rather than if they come in thinking they're in a nice big room and wondering who else showed up and, if they think of God at all, that he's "all love and wouldn't hurt a flea?"

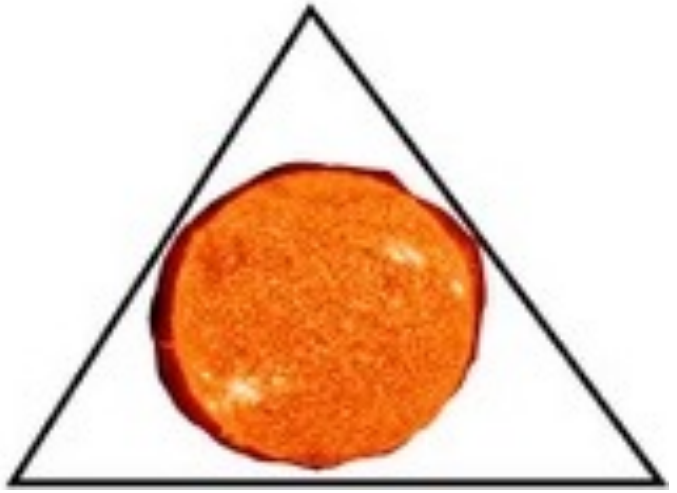
Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Identify and explain as many characteristics of the sun as you can that point to characteristics of God.

   If time permits: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think. If not mentioned, add that the sun shines 24/7/365-6; it constantly reminds us that God doesn't sleep and is everywhere present: Just as light shines even at night, including reflected off the moon to us, God's light constantly shines on and in us. How do our lives reflect God's light?

2. In the light of what we've been studying about God, explain how you would correct someone who says, "Well, I believe that everyone worships the same god." (One way I have done this is to say, "Wait a minute! Remember what you were going to tell me; I want to hear the rest of what you want to say, but we have to talk about your last comment. First, no one who strongly believes in his or her religion would ever agree with what you just said. It is clear in the literature of the other religions that their religion's view of the highest being is contrary to the Bible, and some, e.g., the Qur'an, specifically say so."



Second, the triune God who has revealed himself in the Bible, is not only very different from all the false gods, but the Second Person in the Trinity, Jesus Christ, said that no one comes to the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, except through him, i.e., Jesus. See John 14:6. It helps to then cite reasons the Bible is true. To do so, see the above Prolegomena section.)

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

For more on any subject in this section on theology, see my essays on that subject on the Christian Theology page of my Web site at http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/theology/. Click on the link, Who is God, and what is he like? (Theology) and then on the title of the essay, e.g., Part I: What is the Trinity?, or Part 19: Who is God? His Works– Predestination and Election, or Part 23: Who is God? Discerning God's Will. On that same page, see also the presentation, Great Questions Series: Who Is God and What Is He Like?

Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Remember where Anthropology fits within systematic theology.

Review the logic of the loci in the next slide.

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

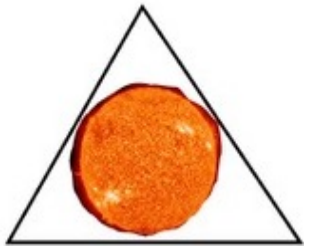
1. **Theology**: Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
2. **Anthropology**: God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
3. **Christology**: Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
4. **Soteriology**: This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
5. **Ecclesiology**: This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
6. **Eschatology**: When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming: Consummation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we really like in God's sight; and what are we doing?

Anthropology is a study of all the Bible teaches about mankind, including who we are and what we are like, that God created human beings in his image (and what that means) and that the first humans were made good, but that they disobeyed God, ignoring his warning of what would occur if they did not obey, resulting in a total corruption of human nature issuing in a disastrously destructive four-fold disharmony: between oneself and God; within oneself; with and among other human beings; and throughout God's creation, such that all creation groans as in travail. (Romans 8:22) Thus, sinful mankind is separated from God who is most holy. Also, contrary to every other religion, no solely human being is capable of earning his or her way into God's presence (salvation); rather, we daily increase our debt to God. Yet, because God is also love to the core of his being, (1 John 4:8) he is unwilling to destroy the crown of his creation. How does he bring people into his holy presence without compromising his integrity or being unrighteous? We see how in our study of Christology and Soteriology. Anthropology comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of mankind: who we are, how we began, and what has changed since that time.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we really like in God's sight; and what are we doing?

- God created mankind in his image and perfect.
- But humans sinned against God, disobeying his Word and his will.
- The disobedience, sin, corrupted human nature and puts a barrier between human beings and God.
- Unchanged we are unfit for, and unable to have, fellowship with God.





Anthropology: The Doctrine of Mankind

Who are we; what are we truly like?

We are made in the image of God;
we bear his communicable attributes in microcosm.

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
[27]So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
[28]God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase [Hebrew: multiply] in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:26-28)
- "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'… [20] So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. [21] So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. [22] Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. [23] The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man.' [24] For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh." (Genesis 2:18, 19-24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Where did human beings come from?
   a. The origin of mankind is in the counsel of God.
   b. Mankind is an immediate creation of God, not development over eons.
   c. Man was created perfect and at first lived in perfect harmony with God.

2. The nature of man taught in God's Word is significantly different from what is taught in secular philosophy.
   a. Man's nature is a dichotomy—body and soul.
   b. Note our special assignment, God's words here are <u>commands</u>. "Be fruitful [פְּרוּ (*pĕrû*)]," is an imperative verb conjugation, as are the following: multiply, fill, subdue, rule.

Original Hebrew of Genesis 1:1

1 .1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

hāʾāreṣ	*wĕʾēt*	*haššāmayim*	*ēt*	*ʾĕlōhîm*	*bārāʾ*	*bĕrēʾšît*
the earth	and	the heavens	*	God	created	In the beginning

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* A primary particle indicating the accusative case (grammatical case that marks the direct objective of the verb) in Hebrew and is not translated.

The Hebrew text, not the transliteration or the translation, is from The Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

1. a. 1) The origin of mankind is in the counsel of God.

   We read in Genesis 2:18 that "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" The original Hebrew word for suitable is כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (*kĕnegdô*), like his counterpart; literally, like his corresponding opposite. Woman was formed by God to be Man's Counterpart. Neither is complete without the other. They fulfill each other, especially in Christ Jesus.

   She is of his substance and is his corresponding opposite, his helper for God's purposes. They are equally loved and valued by God but have different purposes and different abilities in order to accomplish those purposes.

   The woman completes the man, supplying what he lacks, and he completes her, supplying what she needs. The relationship is fullest and in its most profound manifestation in the one flesh relationship provided by marriage. However, all humans find in the opposite sex a fulfillment and joy in experiencing and appreciating what the other contributes to human relationships. And, to those faithful to him, who do not marry, God gives gifts to accomplish his calling for them.

   Women and men find their dignity, value, and worth in the Biblical truth that each bears the image of God. When that truth is ignored, women are harmed emotionally, physically, spiritually and unnecessarily by following the demon-driven directive of secular culture that women's worth is in being able to do all that men can do, an unjust, unfair, and harmful lie that is seen clearly, for just one example, when biological males play in girls' and women's sports.

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

1. a. 1) The origin of mankind is in the counsel of God.

   Dr. Michelle Cretella, President of the American College of Pediatricians, cites sound science demonstrating that there are only two sexes, as revealed in the Bible. (Genesis 1-2). She further states that "There are 6,500 genetic differences between men and women."*

   Biologist Dr. Colin Wright explains: "The nature of biological sex…is connected to the distinct type of gametes (sex cells) that an organism produces…males are the sex that produce small gametes (sperm) and females produce large gametes (ova). There are no intermediate gametes, which is why there is no spectrum of sex. Biological sex in humans is a binary system."** Very importantly, males are born with the XY chromosome and females with the XX chromosome, and no amount of hormones, surgeries, or other medical interventions can ever eliminate or change those chromosomes. This reality, combined with sin, is causing the abuse of girls and women in female restrooms and locker rooms.

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* https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/dr-michelle-cretella-on-transgender-ideology (Accessed 7/15/21). ** Mary Rice Hasson, "'It Isn't Hate to Speak the Truth': J.K. Rowling Takes a Stand against Gender Ideology, and We Should Stand with Her," *Our Sunday Visitor*, June 15, 2020 https://eppc.org/publications/it-isnt-hate-to-speak-the-truth-j-k-rowling-takes-a-stand-against-gender-ideology-and-we-should-stand-with-her/ (Accessed 7/7/20)

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Let's reflect on and discuss the vast implications of this reality of being made in the image of God:

1. How does it make you feel to think of yourself and your *self worth* if you were an accident of nature that impersonally evolved out of a cosmic soup ***or*** if you have been the intention of a loving Creator who had you specifically in mind from the very beginning and built into you aspects of his image, who loves and values you, and who has a purpose for you in his plans for eternity?
2. Identify at least one implication of the *responsibility* we have as bearers of God's image for our calling as Christians to bring the light of his Word to our society and the rest of the world in such matters as the following: abortion, caring for others, homosexuality, (even physician-assisted) suicide, who decides on who receives healthcare and genetic engineering?
3. Contrast the huge differences between viewing a human baby at any stage in the womb according to the Biblical teaching that the child bears the image of God and the unbiblical view that "it" is not worthy of being born and can be aborted at any stage if the mother doesn't want "it." Consider the outcomes of the confusion that exists where laws permit aborting a child who bears the image of God at any stage while other laws in the same jurisdiction prohibit killing a baby turtle and can result in heavy fines and significant jail time for terminating the life of the animal.

Depending on time: (1) If time is short, ask the participants to discuss these questions, one at a time, with the person sitting next to them (in dyads); then after one minute ask for a few volunteers to share one comment that came out of their discussion. (2) If you have more time , ask the group to divide into groups of four. Ask each small group to appoint the person whose birthday is closest to today to record the points his or her group makes.. After three or four minutes, ask the recorders to report to the whole group one of the comments their group made. After each reporter has shared one of his or her group's comments, go back to the first recorder and ask if his or her group had anything else to say. Continue as long as time allows to include as many of the small group's thoughts as possible. Add any that were not mentioned that you, as the leader, would like to mention.

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
28 God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"
(Genesis 1:26-28)

In his famous painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, Michelangelo portrays the perfect relationship that man had at first with God, when God created him; nothing separated us from God.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

The two terms, soul and spirit, are used interchangeably in the Bible. The Bible refers to death as giving up the soul and giving up the spirit.

- "It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin." (Genesis 35:18 NASB; cf. 1 Kings 17:21 KJV)
- "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." (Psalm 103:1)
- "Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last." (Luke 23:46; cf. Acts 7:59)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. The nature of man taught in God's Word is significantly different from what is taught in secular philosophy.
   a. Man's nature is essentially a unified dichotomy—body and soul.
      1) Soul and spirit are two terms that are typically used interchangeably. They denote the spiritual dimension of the human being from two points of view. Theologian Louis Berkhof explains the differences well. (122)
      2) Spirit is "the principle of life and action which controls the body."
      3) Soul is "the personal subject which thinks and feels and wills, and in some cases the seat of the affections." As David refers to his soul in Psalm 103, "all my inmost being."

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

Most commonly in the Bible, the human being is referred to as being composed of two parts, body and soul or body and spirit.

- "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." (Psalm 103:1)
- "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28; cf. 6:25)
- "hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 5:5; cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. The nature of man taught in God's Word is significantly different from what is taught in secular philosophy.
   a. Man's nature is essentially a <u>unified dichotomy</u>—body and soul.
      1) Soul and spirit are two terms that are typically used interchangeably. They denote the spiritual dimension of the human being from two points of view. Theologian Louis Berkhof explains the differences well. (122)
      2) Spirit is "the principle of life and action which controls the body."
      3) Soul is "the personal subject which thinks and feels and wills, and in some cases the seat of the affections." As David refers to his soul in Psalm 103, "all my inmost being."

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

The Bible uses the two terms, soul and spirit, interchangeably. The Bible refers to the dead in some cases as "souls" and in some cases as "spirits."

a. As souls

- "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." (Psalm 103:1)
- "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

b. As spirits

- "to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect," (Hebrews 12:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

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- "Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name." (Psalm 103:1)
- "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)
- "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. The nature of man taught in God's Word is significantly different from what is taught in secular philosophy.
   a. Man's nature is essentially a <u>unified</u> <u>dichotomy</u>—body and soul.
      4) Yet R. C. H. Lenski also notes that while spirit and soul are not a duality and cannot be divided, they can be distinguished. In his commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:23, he writes, "Man's material part can be separated from his immaterial part, but the immaterial part cannot be divided; it is not a duality of spirit and soul. Where, as here, spirit and soul are distinguished, the spirit designates our immaterial part as it is related to God, as being capable of receiving the operations of the Spirit of God and of his Word; while soul (ψυχή) designates this same immaterial part in its function of animating the body and also as receiving impressions from the body it animates. Death is described as the spirit's leaving the body and as the soul's leaving, for it is the sundering of the immaterial from the material." (Lenski, p. 367)

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

The ψυχή, as distinguished from the πνεῦμα, is the life which the spirit gives to the body as long as the two are connected; hence the ψυχή is the seat of the thoughts, emotions, feelings, desires, volitions, and actions pertaining to our earthly and bodily existence; the πνεῦμα, which is the source of the ψυχή, is the immaterial part of our being that was created and breathed into us by the breath of God and is, therefore, the real seat of all his gracious operations in regenerating and renewing us.

In the unregenerate the *psyche* rules and the *pneuma* is enslaved; in the regenerate this is reversed, the *pneuma* is enthroned.

R.C.H. Lenski, *Lenski New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of The Epistle to the Hebrews and The Epistle of James,* p. 142.

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)
  - אָדָם (*ʾādām*) man, humankind, Adam
  - אֲדָמָה (*ʾădāmâ*), ground
- "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." (Isaiah 43:7)
- "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)
- "hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 5:5)
- "the dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God…" Ecclesiastes 12:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. The nature of man taught in God's Word is significantly different from what is taught in secular philosophy.
   a. Man's nature is a <u>unified</u> <u>dichotomy</u>—body and soul.
   b. Note our special assignment in the text which follows. (Genesis 1:26-28) God's words are <u>commands</u> to do certain work. "Be fruitful [פְּרוּ (*pĕrû*)]" is an imperative verb conjugation, as are the following: multiply, fill, subdue, rule. Note the implications for such secular ideas as over-population and population control.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
  [27]So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
  [28]God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:26-28)
- "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another." (1 Corinthians 15:39)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
   a. When our concept of our identity includes being made in the image of God, we view ourselves as infinitely superior and of far more worth and dignity than the animals and all other creatures over which God has commanded us to rule.
   b. Sadly, many people who live (i.e., merely exist) apart from God, and who do not see themselves as bearing God's image, are confused by sin and evil.
      1) Thus, they do not view themselves as any more important than the animals, and some see themselves as of no more worth than trees and other aspects of God's creation. Such a perspective and its related effects is a major cause of the depression we see so many people struggling with today.
      2) They do not sense, understand, or act on the implications of the responsibility they have to do all they can to bring God's Word into the public square on the moral and other issues of the day.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

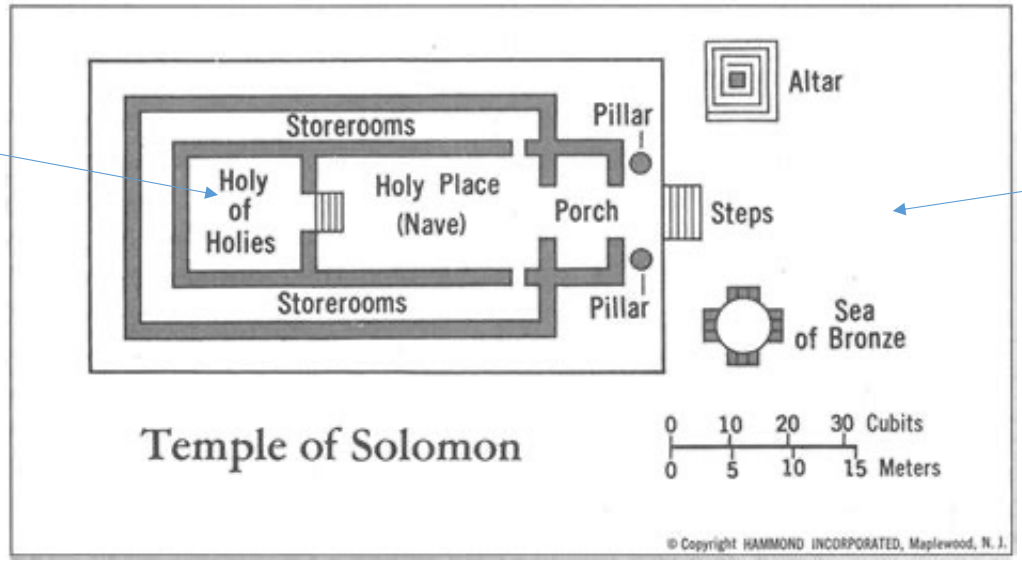
- "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
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- "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another." (1 Corinthians 15:39)
- "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God." (1 Corinthians 6:19 [*context is singular, referring to individual believers in Christ*])

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
   c. As a pastoral candidate wrote in his credo, "The image of God in people is the foundation of who we are and what we do." Further, since we bear the image of God, and the Holy Spirit dwells within us who believe in Jesus Christ, this is the essence of our identity. Also, we are not to see ourselves as in the same classification as the animals and other aspects of God's creation. We should not accept the designation of secular science that humans are in "the animal kingdom." In stewardship we rule over "the animal kingdom." Animals are **not** our peers; neither are we only "a higher form of animal." Animals do not bear the image of God—not even close. (Cf. Job 39:13-17, esp. v. 17)
   d. There is now a "human extinction movement," which rejects human rule over nature and calls our God-created rule hateful, one branch of which wants annihilation of humanity as a just punishment for destroying the earth. The other branch, transhumanists, expects humans to improve to an advanced cybernetic and immortal form and thus transcend *Homo sapiens*. Behind it all is Satanic rejection and rebellion against God and his plan and purposes, and thus Satan is against us.

Temple Built by Solomon
Schematic

naos



hieron

https://duckduckgo.com/?q=solomon%27s+temple+layout&t=chromentp&iax=images&ia=images (Accessed 01/23/2023)

Our Identity: “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.” You belong to God.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- [19] **Or do you not know that your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have from God?** We now see fully what Paul meant when he wrote a moment ago: “The body for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.”

Our humble, earthly body is nothing less than “a sanctuary of the Spirit,” and Paul writes “Holy Spirit,” for because of its very name “a sanctuary” is holy. He uses ναός [*naos*], the inner sanctuary itself, not ἱερόν [*hieron*],…the outer temple courts. The genitive “of the Holy Spirit” denotes possession…so that this body actually becomes his sanctuary.

In the second place Paul adds the relative clause: “whom you have from God,”…by attraction to the genitive [indicating possession] antecedent. We are the Spirit’s, and he is ours, a blessed mutuality but one that is “from God,” a most gracious gift to us. The moment we hold this fact beside the other that fornication desecrates our body as does no other sinful act, the true character of this vicious sin becomes clear to us.

Our Identity: "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." You belong to God.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

[20] …**You are not your own**, you do not belong to your own selves. As the Spirit's sanctuary we belong wholly to him, and that certainly includes also our body, so that this body itself can be called his sanctuary. To this is added the positive: **for you were bought with a price.** The positive is linked to the negative by making it the proof (γάρ [*gar*], for) for the negative. Effect and cause are thus combined: our having been bought (cause) results in our no longer being our own (effect).

The aorist [past tense] "were bought" is historical and reports the fact: God bought us when on Calvary he paid the blood of his own Son as the price, Acts 20:28.

The genitive [indicates possession] of price, τιμῆς [*timēs*],…suggests the idea of a great price.…In the present connection the great fact of our purchase establishes that we, including our body, no longer belong to our own selves, no longer dare desecrate our body with fornication, but must ever glorify God in our body.

Paul adds the capstone to the positive part of his presentation. **By all means, then, glorify God in your body!**...The thought cannot be carried higher than this admonition to glorify God in our body. To be sure, that includes also the sanctification of our body. But "God" and not "our body" is the ultimate consideration.

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 269–271.

Our Identity: "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit." You belong to God.

Consider the profound and extensive implications and applications of the Biblical revelation that believers in and followers of the/our triune God belong to him.

- Much sound social science research reveals that the need to belong is one of mankind's top needs. We not only belong to the owner and ruler of the cosmos, but those who become his children through faith in Christ Jesus, can have a relationship with him, directly and indirectly through his church, the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

- Thus, we are never alone. We thereby are able to avoid one of the top mental health struggles humans have: loneliness.

A Very Important Aspect of Learning

In all of life, and especially in the most important matters of life and eternity, look for relationships, implications and applications. For example, when considering the Bible's teaching about God being holy, indeed that he is most holy, in Hebrew terminology, holy, holy, holy, look for what that means in many related aspects of life. Ask, "What does God's being most holy mean for how I treat other people (beginning with my spouse) whom he also loves and who bear his image?"

To help us make those connections, most of the PowerPoint slides in this course will have two columns:

Doctrinal Subject	**Meaning and Practical Benefits**
Biblical basis, texts	Implications and applications

As you read and study, think about connections and inferences. This course is designed to help us do so.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

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- "All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another." (1 Corinthians 15:39)

The impact of sin and evil in the world has caused human confusion, resulting in a reversal of the divine order in Genesis 1:26-28, e.g., in the advertisement at the right, a dehumanizing of human beings. Pagan people, historically misled by the same Satan who led Adam and Eve astray, have no understanding of the uniqueness of humans bearing the image of God and being far superior to animals. Another example is the belief of American Indians who have "always deemed [bison] as a relative." How dishonoring to God, and demeaning to humans! Such a concept of human identity is counterproductive to human mental and spiritual health and well being. No wonder many today sense themselves as "nothing special" and "worthless."*

*"Bison Spread as Native American tribes reclaim stewardship," by Matthew Brown, Loveland *Reporter Herald*, 11/22/2022, p. A3.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



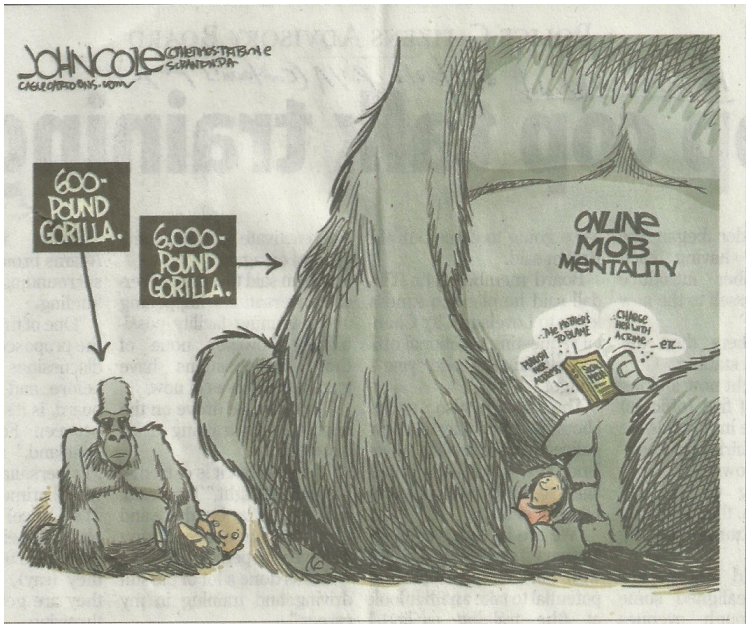
Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

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Countless and continuous other examples exist of the human confusion the impact sin and evil in the world has caused, resulting in a reversal of God's order in Genesis 1:26-28, e.g., the large number of people who complained after the decision by the Cincinnati Zoo to euthanize a male silverback gorilla which was threatening the life of a three-year old boy.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

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Countless and continuous other examples exist of the human confusion the impact sin and evil in the world has caused, resulting in a reversal of God's order in Genesis 1:26-28, e.g., the account in the panel to the right where a TV program depicted the contemporary non-Christian value that even a tree is more important than the life of a human being.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

"Help! Help!" The shrill cries of panic pierced my attention's focus on what I was doing and drew me into our family room where I viewed a segment of a Saturday morning cartoon that one of the younger members of our family was watching. A canoe with people in it was being swept unalterably toward a cataract where they would perish if nothing were done. Seeing their plight, a man on the river's bank began chopping down a tree that would stop the canoe, when somebody yelled at him, "You can't do that! That tree is a living being!!"

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. What does it mean to be made in the image of God?
   e. The Hispanic dog expert (in the TV show, "The Dog Whisperer") shows that problems with dogs occur when the dogs perceive that they are our peers. The problem is easily resolved by teaching the dog that its owner is in authority and is not a peer.
   f. Remember, the Hebrew verb, "rule," in Genesis 1:28 is in the imperative mood, a command, as are the other four verbs in that verse: "be fruitful," "multiply," "fill," and "subdue."

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image **Meaning and Practical Benefits**

- "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15 NASB)

The original Hebrew verb translated "keep" is שָׁמַר (*shāmar*), *which means to observe, to guard, to keep, to care for (NIV). Thus the "rule" God gave human beings in creating us, is to involve a stewardship of his (God's) creation.*

Following the fall, and the corruption that came with sin and evil, the world has been in bondage to decay and groaning as in the travail of childbirth, due to Adam's sin and the misuse of God's creation. (Genesis 3:17; Romans 8:21-22; cf. Deuteronomy 24:4, et al. "do not bring sin upon the land….")



For Reflection and/or Discussion:

Since God has given his command to be productive in work, and since part of God's image that he has built into humans involves a genuine, albeit limited, free will (see below), which governmental policy will give people more fulfillment, material well being, and joy: handouts whether they work or not, or a policy that promotes the availability of jobs for all who can work? Moreover, which policy will be more pleasing to God?

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. a. Sin caused death and disharmony between oneself and God.

   1) "And the Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17]but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)

   2) "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden." (Genesis 3:8)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive; it has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony

   a. between oneself and God

   b. within human relationships

   c. within oneself

   d. throughout all creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. a. Sin caused death and disharmony between oneself and God.

3) "…be ready by the third day, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. Put limits for the people around the mountain and tell them, 'Be careful that you do not go up the mountain or touch the foot of it. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 19:11-12)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive; it has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony

a. between oneself and God

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Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

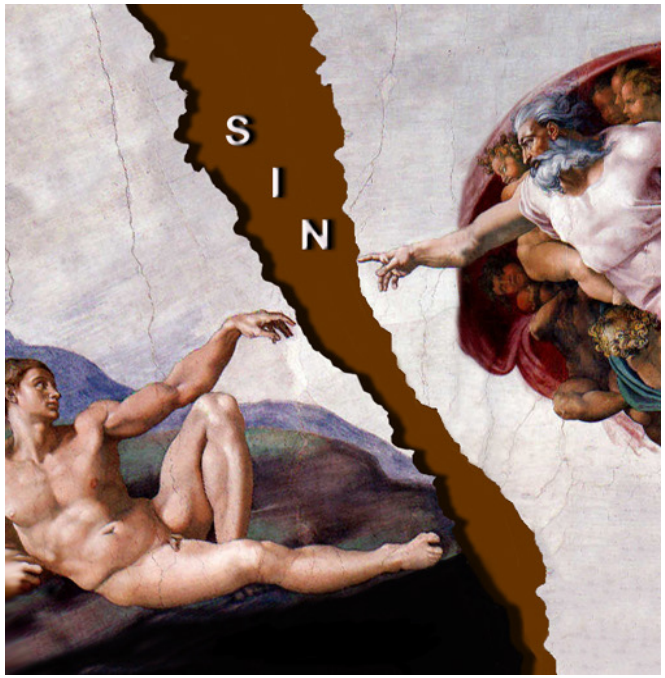
4) Adam's sin caused death and disharmony throughout all creation, beginning between humans and God, who is holy, holy, holy as well as all love. (Genesis 3:17; Isaiah 6:3) Thus, sin is extremely serious; indeed, it is inexcusable, but it is not unforgivable, thanks be to our most holy yet also all-loving triune God, who has provided the only way for that forgiveness: by being credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith in him, thus reconciling us with God, which is the main focus of the Bible (Romans 4:16-25; John 14:6) and historic Christian theology.

   + "…in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

     "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:20-23)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. a. Death and disharmony between man and God



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. a. Sin caused death and disharmony between oneself and God.

5) "When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing." (Hebrews 9:6-8)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive and has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony

a. between oneself and God

b. within human relationships

c. within oneself

d. throughout all creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. b. Sin caused death and disharmony within human relationships.

+ Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:8)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive and has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony

a. between oneself and God

b. within human relationships

c. within oneself

d. throughout all creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. c. Sin caused death and disharmony within oneself.

   1) "Hannah responded, "No, sir. I'm not drunk. I'm depressed. I'm pouring out my heart to the LORD." (1 Samuel 1:15 GW)

   2) "His wife Jezebel came to him and said, 'Why are you so depressed that you will not eat?'" (1 Kings 21:5 NRSV)

   3) Consider the top four mental health problems people currently report:
      - Stress
      - Anxiety
      - Depression
      - Loneliness

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive and has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony

   a. between oneself and God

   b. within human relationships

   c. within oneself

   d. throughout all creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. d. Sin caused death and disharmony throughout all creation.

1) "'Cursed is the ground because of you….It will produce thorns and thistles…." (Genesis 3:17-18)
2) "'…we have disregarded the commands you gave through your servants the prophets when you said: "The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other."'" (Ezra 9:10-11)
3) "…in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:20-23) See also Hosea 4:1-3.

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

4. Sin is enormously destructive and has caused death and a four-fold cosmic disharmony
   a. between oneself and God
   b. within human relationships
   c. within oneself
   d. throughout all creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind—Made in God's Image: Including God's Communicable Characteristics in Microcosm for Us

5. Since all people are made in the image of God, whether they believe it or not, out of respect for God's image in them, we should treat them with respect.
   + "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect," (1 Peter 3:15)

For reflection or discussion:

Will we be more likely to reach someone for Christ if we treat him or her with respect? (Cf. 1 Peter 2:12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. When Adam and Eve sinned, and human nature was corrupted, the impact on the image of God in us was severe.
   a. All but three of the aspects of God's image in us, his communicable attributes, which he has in macrocosm, that he built into us in microcosm, are corrupted, but not lost.
   b. Three of the aspects of God's image are lost, but restored through regeneration (the new birth) and faith in Jesus Christ: true knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

For an explanation of each of the characteristics see the corresponding essay on my Website, www.fromacorntooak12com.

Characteristics of Mankind—Made in God's Image: Including God's Communicable Characteristics in Microcosm for Us

- A living being, spirit, personal and relational
- Holy
- Perfect and good
- Love, grace, mercy, patience (longsuffering)
- Knowledge
- Wisdom
- Righteous, just
- True, faithful
- Sovereign
- Power
- Freedom within limits

Characteristics of Mankind—Made in God's Image: Common Terms in Theology

6. a. Comprehensive Sense (Natural):
   Obscured but Not Lost by Sin
   1) A spiritual being
   2) Immortal
   3) Capacity for love, fellowship
   4) Moral
   5) Rational
   6) Dominion over lower creation
   7) Freedom within limits

Here we have one of the Biblical bases for respecting and loving all human beings: every human being bears the image of God. We cannot "look down our noses" at, mistreat, hate, or be unloving toward any other human being—that person bears God's image! (Cf. James 3:9-10) Yet that does not mean we agree with what someone else says and does.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

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Characteristics of Mankind—Made in God's Image: Common Terms in Theology

6. b. Restricted Sense (Moral):
   Lost by Sin *but Restored in Christ*
   1) True knowledge (John 8:31-32; 14:6-7)
   2) Righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21)
   3) Holiness (1 Peter 2:5,9)

Here we have one of the Biblical bases for respecting and loving all human beings: every human being bears the image of God. We cannot mistreat, hate, or be unloving toward any other human being—that person bears God's image! (Cf. James 3:9-10) Yet that does not mean we agree with what someone else says and does, but this perspective helps us speak the truth in love more effectively.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "What is man that You take thought of him,
  And the son of man that You care for him?
  [5]Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
  And You crown him with glory and majesty!
  [6]You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
  You have put all things under his feet," (Psalm 8:4-6 NASB)
- "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

6. c. Most of the image of God that all humans bear remains, but it has been damaged, impaired, and corrupted by sin.
   1) Perfect though limited in creation, these communicable characteristics humans bear are now flawed by sin.
   2) Yet God reveals through David in Psalm 8 what a lofty place in the universe man has due to God's creation of us with such "glory and honor." (8:5)
   3) Therefore, we treat all people with dignity and respect, especially those in Christ.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "What is man that You take thought of him,
  And the son of man that You care for him?
  5Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!
  6You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet," (Psalm 8:4-6 NASB)
- "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

6. c. Most of the image of God that all humans bear remains, but it has been damaged, impaired, and corrupted by sin.
   4) These, and the other related Bible passages we've examined, support a strong view of the value of human life and the basis for the church maintaining God's will to care for his children in Christ when they become ill, disabled, poor, or old and no longer able to care for themselves. This application extends also to our Christian witness in the world, including opposing that devaluing of the worth of human life to the willingness of many to who advocate for elders to voluntarily (and some insist involuntarily) commit suicide to relieve the younger generations of that "burden." Such advocates include Yale economics professor, Yusuke Narita, who builds his thinking on the pagan precepts of Japanese anthropology and practices; *NewsWeek Japan*, columnist Masato Fujisaki; and others worldwide.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Fujisaki writes that Narita's comments represent "a growing trend of thought in Japan. 'More and more people have a desire to cut off those who may be a burden or a burden to them….'" ("Is Mandatory Mass Suicide for the Elderly the Future?" by Michael Haynes, April 4, 2023, TRADITION, FAMILY, AND PROPERTY)

Haynes observes, "Dr. Narita's arguments strike as particularly egregious. In advocating for his elders to commit suicide to somehow make life easier for the younger generations, he demonstrates a total rejection of any value or dignity of human life. His arguments work from the premise that life is a commodity with no worth of its own and no importance greater than any other item which can be purchased and later disregarded."

Haynes discloses that the progressive dimension of sin "should not be surprising in light of the widespread devotion that modern society now has for abortion, which is the murder of the unborn. In fact, the promotion of euthanasia appears as the logical consequence of this abortion promotion, since by disregarding the value of unborn, 'unseen' human life, it is only a matter of time before society begs to lose respect for those who are born and can be seen."

Where God's revelation is not proclaimed, with the resultant decline of the value of human life, and followed by so much advocacy of euthanasia occurring throughout the world, many point out another progression of this demonic thinking. They observe that once governments establish the "right to die," it is only a matter of time, which has already arrived, that the "right to die" becomes, in the minds of many, the "duty to die."

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Such anti-God thinking and advocacy must be opposed by believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), and explaining about God (see above, Theology), who is the owner of all his creation, who has built into humans his very image, which gives us dignity, honor, and value far above all else under God, as he revealed through David: "what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? [5]You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor…." (Psalm 8:4–5) Humans do not have the authority to take their own lives, much less pressure others to do so; we live to serve God until he decides our life here is complete.

Furthermore, what do we say to people who wonder whether a quadriplegic, who can only lay in bed and not move, has value or anything to contribute to others? As I've always taught, "Since the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (James 5:16), I would much rather have one righteous Christian quadriplegic praying for me than a million unrighteous people, whose iniquities have separated them from God, 'so that he will not hear [them].'" (Isaiah 59:2, *et al*.) Yes, especially in this and in other ways, such people not only have great worth, value, and dignity but are able to make a huge contribution in this world today, a contribution that will continue forever! (See also Eschatology.)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Therefore, we are called to oppose such anti-God thinking and advocacy. How do we do this opposition in accord with God's will in order to please him and be effective? We must do so in both word and in deed. Words without deeds are disobedient to God and empty. Deeds without words fail to point, much less witness effectively, to Christ Jesus.

A good example of such words and deeds is in the numerous historic Christian missions that go all the way through the history of the church. Examples abound. Consider, e.g., Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who cared for those in India who are tossed aside, horribly mistreated, and abandoned, and whose followers are still caring for them in Christ. Consider also the many other outstanding Christian missions, such as Samaritan's Purse. This organization travels to the most troubled areas of the world bringing with them state-of-the-art field hospitals, from areas torn apart by tornadoes to war zones, helping everyone, Christians and non-Christians, with physicians, nurses, and other highly trained and well-equipped medical personnel, construction workers rebuilding homes, and helpers providing food, water, clothing, and caring in many other ways—all in the name of Jesus Christ—and doing so together with the body of Christ, his church.

Why? Because Jesus called them to care for people whom God loves, who bear his image, and who he wants in his kingdom. Since they are valuable to him, they are valuable to us.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

"The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

'For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?'

But we have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:10b-16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

6. d. Many examples can be given of how the image of God that all humans bear remains, but it has been damaged, impaired, and corrupted by sin. One such example is seen in the wisdom of God that he has in macrocosm, and is infinitely superior to our human wisdom, the capacity for which God has given us in microcosm but which has been damaged, impaired, and corrupted by sin. Perfect though limited in creation, it is now flawed. But in Christ the wisdom God built into humans in creation, when he made us in his image, is restored in Jesus and operational through the Holy Spirit, though still limited and flawed due to sin.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

For Reflection and Discussion

What implications and applications do you see for the Biblical teaching that we humans bear the image of God? Include the following:

a. For shaping an unshakable personal sense of self-worth, value, dignity, and respectability

b. For preventing psychologically rooted depression

c. For parenting

d. For education

e. For sensing, understanding, and acting on our calling and responsibility to bring the light of God's Word to inform the discussions in the public forum on the moral and other issues in our society and elsewhere in the world

f. For how to help all people, in the church and in the outside world, to recognize and avoid using euphemisms to redefine, ignore, and escape responsibility for sin and evil, e.g., referring to homosexuals as "gay" (which careful science reveals they are not; see Chapter Two of my book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality: Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love*), and such other deceptive euphemisms as "undocumented person" for a illegal alien; D & C (dilation and curettage) of a fetus or embryo instead of premeditated murder of a human being (who's life, careful science confirms, begins at conception); and "wardrobe malfunction" for failing to cover parts of the human body in public that should only be seen in private by one's spouse. (See Isaiah 5:20.) Mention other examples of euphemisms you've heard.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

For Reflection and Discussion

What implications and applications do you see for the Biblical teaching that we humans bear the image of God? Include the following:

g. For how to help all people, in the church and in the outside world, to understand and develop a realistic plan for addressing evil in all its manifestations and protecting people from it, such as the secular attempt in education, the media, and government to attribute mass shootings and other violence to mental illness rather than to its basic cause, sin and demonic evil. Not only God's special revelation but also his general revelation, including careful science, provide information that enables us to make this explanation. In addition to the Scriptures in this section, notice also such science as Tom Knighton reports in the following article, "Mental Illness Not As Tied to Mass Shootings as Some Think" (https://bearingarms.com/tomknighton/2021/07/09/mental-illness-2-n47548 [Accessed 7/10/2021]).

   "In contrast to public opinion, research findings indicate that people with mental illness have a risk factor of being violent themselves on par with the general population. While Jeffrey Swanson, a professor in psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University School of Medicine and well-known researcher in the field of mental illness and gun violence, found low rates of gun violence associated with all mental illness, psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have the lowest rates. In reality, mental illness is a poor predictor of violence."

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Romans 11:36)
- "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:11)
- "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:8; cf. Galatians 5:22-23)
- [Jesus said] "by their fruits you will know them." (Matthew 7:20; Greek, EDS translation)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

7. Mankind is not an accident; God had and has a purpose for us.
   a. The primary purpose of mankind is to glorify God.
   b. Accordingly, in order to glorify God we need to do the following:
      1) We need to live as children of the Creator in obedience to his will. Doing so pleases God, just as our children please us when they do what we require of them.
      2) We are to serve God and our fellow human beings as he has taught us in his Word, e.g., bearing fruit, including the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
3"You shall have no other gods before me.
4"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them;
7"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
8"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
12"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.
13"You shall not murder.
14"You shall not commit adultery.
15"You shall not steal.
16"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
17"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:1-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

8. Because God loves us, he has given mankind laws, rules, according to which we must live in order to please him, who is also most holy, and to have the best life possible, individually and corporately, in this sinful age. Together with God's other help, the laws provide a restraint on sin and evil. Consider how painful life would be if people were allowed to do these sins, and how bad it is when they do disobey these commandments. We will be held accountable for disobeying God's laws.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

(Compare rules wise parents make to protect their children.) Exodus 20:1-2, which are called the preface of the Ten Commandments, clearly place the laws in the context and expression of God's love. He is **not** a killjoy; he knows obeying these laws will give us lives with much joy, and that disregard for these laws and righteousness will result in lives of sadness.

a. Some of the ordinances exist with, are based on, and are implicit within the creative activity of God.
   1) Human beings are to work and be productive.
   2) Marriage and family are the basis and *sine qua non* of a healthy and productive human society.
   3) People are to work six days a week and then rest for physical health and strength, and also worship for spiritual health and strength in order to glorify God and accomplish his purposes.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "But when they said, 'Give us a king to lead us,' this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the LORD. And the LORD told him: 'Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.'" (1 Samuel 8:6-7)
- "…be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite." (Deuteronomy 17:15)
- "'Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood—I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.'" (Leviticus 17:10-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

8. God has given mankind laws, rules according to which we must live in order to please him and ourselves.
   b. God's kingdom is his rule in his people's hearts and minds. In Israel's history, his rule was as a theocracy. At first, he ruled through those he chose directly, such as Moses, Joshua, and the judges. (Cf. Judges 8:23) Then, in accommodation to his people's request, he allowed them to have a human king, but the king was to be responsive to God's rule through him. In the OT, God thus gave three types of laws that were to guide Israel to accomplish its mission under God's theocracy.
      1) **Civil laws** were given for the period of time in the Old Testament that God related to Israel as their king in a theocracy. God accommodated to Israel's plea for a human king. (1 Samuel 8:6-7; Deuteronomy 17:15ff.)
      2) **Ceremonial laws** were established for religious purposes that pointed to and were fulfilled in Christ. (Leviticus 17:10-11)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy."'" (Leviticus 19:1-2)
- "'Do not steal. "'Do not lie. "'Do not deceive one another.'" (Leviticus 19:11)
- "'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah…[33]'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the LORD. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. [34]…'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

8. God has given mankind laws according to which we must live in order to please him and ourselves.
   b. His laws are inscribed in Scripture.
      3) **Moral laws** God gave to his people, e.g., the Ten Commandments, are based on God's character, given out of his love, and help his people to be holy to him, witness for him effectively, and accomplish his redemptive purposes. Much pain is avoided when the moral laws are followed carefully each day.
      4) The church in Jesus Christ, composed of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ and do God's will (e.g., Matthew 7:21, John 14:21, Ephesians 2:8-10), is NT Israel, the visible manifestation of God's new covenant, which is in and through Jesus Christ. (Cf. Matthew 16:19; Luke 1:30-33; Romans 14:17; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 1:12-13; Hebrews 7; Revelation 1:4-6). The Greek word for new, in the term new covenant, is καινός (*kainos*, which means new in nature or quality, i.e., renewed, significantly different from, but having continuity with, the covenant with Abraham, which is eternal [Genesis 17:7]), not νέος (*neos*, new in time or origin, i.e., brand new). For more information, see the following sections, in particular Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD," (Psalm 101:1)
- "The LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy."'" (Leviticus 19:1-2)
- "You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:13, 14)
- "'Do not steal. "'Do not lie. "'Do not deceive one another.'" (Leviticus 19:11)

Though these values that are upheld worldwide, are violated worldwide, doing so does not verify the violations. Claiming so commits the naturalistic fallacy, the illogical attempt to reason from is to ought. Non-Christians also know that just because something is, does not mean it ought to be. Logic, reason, is another of God's communicable attributes that, in a limited but genuine way, are part of God's image in human beings.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

8. God has given mankind rules according to which we must live in order to please him and ourselves.
   c. From God's image built into all humans, and from his moral law, everyone has an inclination to intuitively know that some behaviors are right and others are wrong. This inclination is called the natural moral law.
      1) For example, sound science informs non-Christians as well as Christians that abortion kills a developing human being with its own DNA from conception, and is wrong, whether they admit it or not. Those who do it feel significant, even great guilt, which is a major reason for the mental health crisis and rising rates of sadness, anxiety, depression, suicide, substance abuse, and much more, especially for those who do not believe in Jesus Christ, who can't experience the relief of his love and forgiveness that only he makes possible.
      2) God's communicable characteristics of holiness (Leviticus 19:2) and love and justice (Psalm 101:1) are built into us in a limited but real way.
      3) Therefore, while murder and adultery are done globally, they are globally viewed as wrong.
      4) Thus, we can argue on Biblical and philosophical grounds for functioning morally.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.
[10]As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;
[11]there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.
[12]All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."
[13]"Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."
[14]"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
[15]"Their feet are swift to shed blood;
[16]ruin and misery mark their ways,
[17]and the way of peace they do not know."
[18]"There is no fear of God before their eyes."
[19]Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.
[20]Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin. (Romans 3:9-20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

9. Many alternative secular analyses of man's main problem are offered.
   a. Some say man's basic problem is psychological, e.g., complexes, phobias, neuroses, psychoses, and other maladjustments.
      * The cure they offer: psychotherapy, medication, adjustment.
   b. Others say man's core problem is sociological, e.g., corruption, segregation, war, collective guilt.
      * Their counsel for cure: environmental control.
   c. Still others say it is biological, e.g., instincts, appetites, impulses, urges, self-gratification sexual satisfaction.
      * Their recommended cure: Genetic engineering, a highly controversial alternative in secular society as well as being unbiblical.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

9. Many alternative secular analyses of man's core problem are offered:
   d. Some say it is <u>mental</u>, i.e., error, ignorance, negativism, wrong or inadequate philosophy.
      * Their cure: Education.
   e. Others say it is <u>political</u>, e.g., rights to private property.
      * Their proposed cure: More laws, regulations, and government control.
   f. Still others say it is <u>imaginary</u>, pure idealism.
      * They maintain the cure is: Freedom, license to do what one pleases, "rights."

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Like Adam, they have broken the covenant—they were unfaithful to me there." (Hosea 6:7)
- Cf. Romans 5:12-21; 9-11.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. We can't blame others.

    To help understand God's loving relationship with the humans who bear his image, some theologians, building upon the major Biblical theme of the covenant, see in Scripture what they call a covenant of works with Adam, before God created Eve. Though the word covenant is not present in the first three chapters of Genesis, like other theological constructs, e.g., the Trinity, the idea is there and therefore we are duty bound to teach the concept.

    While this construct is a reasonable and helpful understanding, we need to distinguish the contrast between that which is Biblically evident and that which contains unwarranted and Biblically unsupported speculation. For example, pertaining to the latter, some of these theologians hold that God's covenant with Adam contained a probationary period which, if he, as the covenant head of humanity passed successfully, would mean that man would not be able to sin but would be confirmed in righteousness; however, that lacks Biblical evidence.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Like Adam, they have broken the covenant (בְּרִית (*berît*)—they were unfaithful to me there." (Hosea 6:7)
- Cf. Romans 5:12-21; 9-11.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of and stemming from what Adam and Eve did.
    a. Before the entrance of sin and corruption in the world, God established with man a covenantal relationship, called by some a covenant of works, a theological term not appearing in the Bible but based on Hosea 6:7 and largely in accord with what Biblical scholars call the major motif of covenant throughout the whole Bible.

       Though the concept of the covenant of works in some theologians' thinking contains some flaws, they are not all wrong. When we separate out the flaws, as we've just mentioned in the previous slide, we see important and helpful Biblical information, which follows here.

       A covenant (בְּרִית [*berît*]) is a relationship between two parties. In the covenants God made with his people, the parties are not equal. God tells us how the relationship will be and what he expects of us. It is not a democratic process. Neither does he ask our opinion of how it should work; the whole creation was created by and belongs to him, and he knows best!

       The covenant of works is seen as containing a promise; a condition; a penalty for breaking the covenant; and a sacrament, the tree of life, a sign and seal of life and membership in the covenant.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?
God's Covenants

Throughout the whole of God's Word, which presents and teaches about his perfect creation, its corruption by human disobedience and sin, and his plan of redemption and restoration in Jesus Christ, he reveals his plan as including two essentially distinct covenants with human beings: the covenant of works, preliminary to and preparatory for, the covenant of grace. Since all creation belongs to God, who is love to the core of his being and most holy, just, perfect, all knowing and wise, he is unwilling to destroy human beings who bear his image and whom he loves; therefore, he has established these covenants to implement his plan of salvation.

The covenants are made according to God's sovereign will, without our flawed human input; he knows best. We are not on his level. As Gleason Archer, the outstanding Professor of Biblical Languages at Fuller Theological Seminary has well written, humans "may accept or reject but cannot alter" these covenants. Archer adds, "[God's] motive in adopting [his people] as his own covenant children is stated to be 'lovingkindness' or 'covenant love' (*hesed*), a term with which *berîth* [covenant] is often associated (cf. Deut. 7:9; I Kings 8:23; Dan. 9:4)…This presents a remarkable contrast to the motivation attributed by the heathen Semites to their gods, who were uniformly depicted as entering into covenant-relations with their devotees for the purpose of extracting service and nourishment from their altars." This contrast is not surprising, for the false gods are the work of Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44), and who has always been self-serving and opposed to the one true, loving, triune, God.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?
God's Covenants

In addition to specific elements of both covenants, which will be discussed in subsequent slides, other key elements of the covenants include the requirement that human beings function in faith and obedience to God in accord with his will as stipulated in the covenant. Archer explains "(a) that the promises made by [the LORD] in the covenant of grace represent decrees which he surely will bring to pass, when conditions are ripe for their fulfilment [e.g., Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:8]; (b) that the personal benefit—and especially the spiritual and eternal benefit—of the divine promise will accrue only to those individuals of the covenant people of God who manifest a true and living faith (demonstrated by a godly life). [Ex. 19:5; Matthew 7:15-23; Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:14-26]"

A brief description of the covenant of works has been well stated by Scottish Minister George Norman MacLeod Collins. "The *parties* to the former covenant were God and Adam. The *promise* of the covenant was life. The *proviso* was perfect obedience by Adam [of only one command]. And the *penalty* of failure was death. To save man from the penalty of his disobedience, a second covenant, made from all eternity, came into operation, namely, the covenant of grace. Throughout the OT period there were successive proclamations of this covenant. We find it in the *protoevangelium* [> Greek: *protos*, first + *evangelion*, Gospel, good news; meaning the first announcement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ] of Gen. 3:15. Certain of its provisions were later revealed to Noah (Gen. 9). It was then established with Abraham (Gen. 12), and with his descendants after him, thus becoming a national covenant."

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing? God's Covenants

Collins continues: "Although in the NT this covenant is described as *new*, such passages as Rom. 4 and Gal. 3 show that it is essentially one with the covenant under which believers lived in OT times. Salvation was shown to be of grace and not of merit, for the OT sacrifices were prefigurative of the atoning death of Christ. But although the same covenant, it is described as a *better* covenant under the NT…, because it is now administered not by Moses, a servant, but by Christ the Son (Heb. 3:5,6).

"The covenant of grace is treated under two aspects. The first is a Godward aspect, under which it is sometimes called the covenant of redemption. The *parties*, under this aspect, are God and Christ; the *proviso* is the Son's perfect obedience even to his suffering the penalty of man's disobedience, namely, death; and the *promise* is the salvation of all believers. The second is a manward aspect, in which the *parties* are God and the believer; the *promise* eternal life; and the *proviso* faith in Jesus Christ as the only "work" required of the believer (John 6:29) [yet which faith is to be demonstrated as genuine by works (cf. 1 Peter 1:7) done out of gratitude for salvation, not at all to earn it, as indicated by the Bible references and Archer in the previous slide and elsewhere in this PPT]."

When Adam broke the covenant of works, he, and of course Eve, were expelled from the Garden of Eden, God's perfect creation, the perfection of which they corrupted and disharmonized. In their disobedience of the one command God gave them, they experienced spiritual death, separation from God, and eventually physical death.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing? God's Covenants

No longer worthy to inhabit the Garden of Eden, God expelled Adam and Eve. When he did so, he said, Adam "must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." (Genesis 3:22) What God means is explained well by the great Dutch Reformed theologian, Wilhelmus à Brakel, ca. 1700, "after Adam had lost [his] life, the Lord no longer wanted him to be a partaker of this [sacrament, this sign and] seal of eternal life….there was no inherent power in this tree to restore the spiritual life and communion with God which had been lost….this is a rebuking and reprimanding manner of speech….God did not want [Adam] to abuse the sacrament since he had forfeited…eternal life. It was the Lord's will that [Adam] being lost in himself, would put all his hope in the seed of the woman, which was promised to him immediately after the fall." (362-363) Here we have an early basis for church discipline (*op cit.*), cf. Paul's direction to the church at Corinth. (1 Corinthians 5:5)

Is the covenant of works still in effect? Yes. As à Brakel writes, "…this covenant remains in full force, obligating the entire human race (that is, all who have not been translated into the covenant of grace) to obedience and subjecting men to punishment, since the fulfillment of the promise continues to be contingent upon obedience [cf. Romans 2:12-16]….However, when God permits man to exit this covenant of works and enter into the covenant of grace, he is no longer under obligation to that covenant." (375-376)

God's Covenants

This last comment of à Brakel needs clarification. He speaks correctly when he answers the question, "Is the covenant of works still in effect? Yes." As à Brakel writes, "…this covenant remains in full force, obligating the entire human race (that is, all who have not been translated into the covenant of grace) to obedience and subjecting men to punishment, since the fulfillment of the promise continues to be contingent upon obedience [cf. Romans 2:12-16]….However, when God permits man to exit this covenant of works and enter into the covenant of grace, he is no longer under obligation to that covenant." (375-376) This last statement should be seen in the light of Matthew 5:17-20.

Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law [including Genesis 1:1—3:14, the covenant of works which thus remains in effect] or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18]I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. [19]Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20]For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20)

While we who believe in and follow Christ Jesus are now in the covenant of grace, we are all required to continue to obey God and do good works. **However, we are saved by Christ Jesus' works, not our own works.** Cf. John 6:28-29, "[The crowd] asked him [Jesus], 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" By faith in Christ, we are credited with his righteousness. (Romans 4) See also James 2:26 and Matthew 7:21ff., 12:36, Romans 14:12, Hebrews 4:13, 1 Peter 4:5.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing? God's Covenants

We are all to continue to obey God and do good works. However, for us in Christ Jesus, we are saved by his works, not our own works. Cf. John 6:28-29, "[The crowd] asked him [Jesus], 'What must we do to do the works God requires?' Jesus answered, 'The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.'" Through this faith in Christ, we are credited with his righteousness. (Romans 4)

We are to do God's will, not just think about it, agree that it's important, or try to squeeze doing so into our busy schedules when we have time, feel like it, or want to impress someone. Notice what Jesus had to say about hypocrites (Matthew 7:15ff; 23). Faith without behavioral manifestation demonstrating genuineness is empty hypocrisy, and God will have none of it; indeed, "faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26; cf. 1 John 2:3-6; 1 Peter 1:7)

- Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

We are going to be called to account before God.

- "…I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken." (Matthew 12:36)
- "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:13)
- "So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—[13]for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. [14]Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

[15]But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! [16]Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. [17]For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

[18]Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. [19]For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

[20]The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, [21]so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:12-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The first step in God's loving plan of redemption, which in God's omniscience he foreknew what Adam and Eve would do: God established the Covenant of Works with Adam, before God created Eve.
    a. Before the entrance of sin and corruption in the world, God established with man a covenant of works, which involved a promise, a condition, a penalty for breaking the covenant, and a sacrament.

        + Louis Berkhof writes well: "The parallel which Paul draws between Adam and Christ in Rom. 5:12-21, in connection with the imputation of sin on the one hand and the imputation of righteousness on the other hand, can only be explained on the assumption that Adam, like Christ, was the head of a covenant. If we share in the righteousness of Christ, because He is our representative, then it follows that we share in the guilt of Adam for the same reason." (131)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—[13]for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. [14]Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come.

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Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Like Adam, they have broken the covenant—they were unfaithful to me there." (Hosea 6:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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    a. The covenant of works contained five main elements:
        1) The parties are the triune God and Adam as representative of the human race.
        2) The promise is that God will bless Adam with perfect life, including life without death (what believers in Christ, the Second and Last Adam, receive).

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world.
    a. The covenant of works contained five main parts:
        3) The stipulation is perfect obedience to only one law: Adam could eat of any tree in the Garden of Eden except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
        4) The penalty was what Adam would receive if he disobeyed. Specifically, the penalty would consist of death in the fullest sense: physical, spiritual, and eternal, including separation from God forever. Providentially, Jesus, the last Adam, kept that and the other covenant.
        5) A sacrament, the tree of life, a sign and seal of life and membership in the covenant. As à Brakel states, if there are no sacraments, "then it is not a covenant, for God has never established a covenant without seals." (Vol. 1, p. 460)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The first step in God's loving plan of redemption, which in God's omniscience he foreknew what Adam and Eve would do: God established the Covenant of Works with Adam, before God made Eve.
    b. It is important to understand the essential character of sin.
        1) Sin is a specific type of evil. Sin is not a synonym for evil. While all sin is evil, not all evil is sin. For example, sickness is an evil, but obviously it is not a sin to be sick.
        2) Sin is always related to God and his will; essentially sin is disobedience to and not conforming with the will of God.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)
- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The first step in God's loving plan of redemption, which in God's omniscience he foreknew what Adam and Eve would do: God established the Covenant of Works with Adam, before God made Eve.
    b. It is important to understand the essential character of sin.
        3) In order to understand sin, we need to distinguish between **original** and **actual** sin.
            a) **Original** sin refers to the *state and condition* in which all humans are born as a result of our relationship with Adam and his fall. Berkhof calls original sin "the inward root of all the actual sins that define the life" of human beings. That definition is changed for those who have the new life in Christ. (See e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:17.)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned…." (Romans 5:12)
- "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." (Romans 5:18)
- "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, [2]in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3]All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. [4]But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, [5]made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) a) 1- **Original** sin consists of both imputed guilt and inherent pollution. (W. à Brakel)

a- **Original** sin essentially makes the sinner guilty of transgressing God's covenant, of the command, of violating God's will, whereby the sinner deserves God's punishment for such disobedience. (Romans 5:12,18-19; Ephesians 2:3)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

The Imputation to Us of Adam's Sin and the Imputation to Us of Christ's Righteousness

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Wilhelmus à Brakel well explains the Biblical concept of imputation. "The relationship with Adam consists in this, that the human nature of the human race, at that moment solely existing in Adam, was created as being in *the covenant of works*…Upon Adam's breach of the covenant, the human nature in its totality, that is the entire human race, broke the covenant. It is therefore righteous that this nature of the human race is rendered guilty, and that every human being, every person, by virtue of having this same nature, has the covenant breach imputed to him, and is deemed worthy of condemnation. From this it is clear that only Adam's breach of covenant and not his subsequent sins are imputed to his descendants. This is not merely because they are partakers of the same nature but because they were created in the covenant of works in Adam and have broken it in him." For a clear Biblical basis of this understanding see, e.g., Romans 5:12-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:22.

W. à Brakel also answers a common question: "*How is original sin transmitted from Adam to his descendants?*" In sum, he states, "My answer is: First, why do we need to know how sin is transmitted, since Scripture and experience confirm so clearly that such is the case?" He also cites some of the many other questions that lie beyond human understanding. He explains, "From the very first moment of the soul's existence, a man exists—a man who is guilty of the covenant breach in Adam. From this it is clear how the imputation of guilt is is transmitted to descendants."

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat of it," 'Cursed is the ground because of you [Hebrew: 2nd person male singular];…'" (Genesis 3:17) [People are wrong who want to blame women. Eve did sin, and God punished her as well as Adam, but God holds Adam responsible.]
- "Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt." (Leviticus 19:17b)
- "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned…" (Romans 5:12)
- "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b.3)a)1-a- **Original** sin makes the sinner guilty of transgressing God's command, of violating God's will, whereby the sinner deserves God's punishment for such disobedience. (Romans 5:12; 8:5-8)
    1] Consider the meaning of Adam's name, אָדָם (*adam*), the Hebrew generic word for mankind. (Another Hebrew word, אִישׁ (*ʾîsh*, means an individual man and אִשָּׁה [*ʾishshāh*] means an individual woman.) Very significantly, while Adam is an individual person, he is not only an individual; his very name indicates that he represents humankind. Indeed, he is the progenitor of all human beings and the one God holds accountable for his and Eve's disobedience that resulted in the death (including corruption) God warned him, even before Eve was made, would occur if he disobeyed. (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:17-19) Further, Eve ate first, but Adam could and should have stopped her. (Note the principle in Leviticus 19:17b)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned…" (Romans 5:12)
- "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)
- "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him." (Proverbs 13:24)
- "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." (Proverbs 19:18)
- "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death." (Proverbs 23:14)
- See also Proverbs 29:15,17.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b.3)a)1-a- **Original** sin makes the sinner guilty of transgressing God's command, of violating God's will, whereby the sinner deserves God's punishment for such disobedience. (Romans 5:12; 8:5-8)

2] Again, an analogy on the human level is helpful. Some in unwise pseudosophistication reject the concept of punishment, but as we see how unruly, disruptive, out of control, harmful to themselves as well as to others, and even dangerous, children become when their human parents fail to punish their wrongdoing, God not only has the right to punish those who disobey his will, and offend his most holy being, but he blesses everyone when he does so, not only now but forever. Can you imagine an eternity living with out of control sinful people doing whatever they want with impunity? Contrast Hebrews 12:6.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

- “The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.” (Proverbs 29:15)
- “Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.” (Proverbs 29:17)
- “And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, [6]because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’ [7]Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? [8]If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. [9]Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! [10]Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. [11]No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5. Notice the implications of this text for when human life begins, specifically support for the pro-life view that it's at conception.)
- "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) a) 1- b- The guilt of sin pollutes the sinner, whereby he or she experiences an *inherent corruption that contaminates his or her whole being*. All human beings carry Adam's guilt and are born with a nature that is corrupt. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 8:5-8)
    1} Can you now understand how a little child is not "completely innocent" and why this sweet child can so willfully disobey you with defiance (e.g., throwing the sandwich you have just told him or her to eat on the floor)?
    2} This understanding should also help keep you from thinking you are a bad parent when such disobedience occurs. Yet such acts should receive appropriate discipline. (Hebrews 12:6ff. [preceding slide])

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin." (Romans 7:15-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b.3)a)1-b- The guilt of sin <u>pollutes</u> the sinner, whereby he or she experiences an *inherent corruption that contaminates his or her whole being*. All human beings carry Adam's guilt and are born with a nature that is corrupt. (Psalm 51:5; Romans 8:5-8; Galatians 5:17)

3} This pollution has two dimensions.

a} <u>Our human nature is totally depraved</u>. Total depravity (cf. Ephesians 2:12) refers to our inherent corruption extending to every part of our nature. As Prof. Suzanne McDonald has has well-explained, this teaching means that no part of us is unaffected by sin, which means no one could make a move toward God without the personal gift and work of the Spirit." This is why we observe God initiating both covenants out of his great love for us. A covenant relationship with God is His idea and desire, not originally man's.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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3} This pollution has two dimensions.
b} <u>The sinful human nature is totally unable on its own to change its primary preference for sin.</u> Even the acts which in the limited sight of other humans are perceived as being good, they are radically defective in God's sight, since they are not motivated by love for God or for doing his will.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) a) 1- b- The guilt of sin <u>pollutes</u> the sinner, whereby he or she experiences an *inherent corruption that contaminates his or her whole being*.
3} This pollution has two dimensions.

b} The sinful human nature is totally unable on its own to not sin. Since the fall of Adam and Eve we have lost the freedom to always avoid sinning, and we are not by ourselves able to lead lives fit for fellowship with God who is most holy. Salvation cannot be earned, contrary to the teaching of all other religions. <u>We can avoid certain sins at certain times, and even some sins all the time, but not all sins all the time</u>.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) a) 1- b- The guilt of sin <u>pollutes</u> the sinner, whereby he or she experiences an *inherent corruption that contaminates his or her whole being*.

3} This pollution has two dimensions.

b} Further, even the new nature of those of us who are regenerated still struggles with remnants of the old nature (e.g., Romans 7:13-24) which entices us to sin, which we freely choose. Thus, we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God; we commit sins. (Romans 3:23) Thus, we are accountable for the misuse of our freedom when we do commit a sin. Such sinning not only offends the person(s) against whom it is done, but far more it offends God, who is most holy and who loves also the one(s) we've hurt with the sin.

2- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: What practical implications and applications do you notice? [Add any on the next slide not mentioned in the discussion.]

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: What practical implications and applications do you notice? Add any of these:

a- Maintaining this realistic perspective protects God's people from harm due to placing trust in others that is unwarranted, such as the abuses many young women suffer by allowing themselves to be alone or even enter a relationship with a man who misleads them into thinking he is a nice person.

b- One effective way to challenge unrealistic anthropologies is to raise questions, e.g., if one views mankind as essentially good, then why do doors have locks? Why is there increasing identity theft, cybercrime, and mass murder? Why do roofers require such a large down payment?

c- This perspective helps us understand and avoid being depressed by the horrible and uninvited thoughts that we immediately reject but that our sinful nature causes to periodically erupt in our minds and temporarily trouble our hearts.

d- We are motivated to join with other believers to mature in Christ. (Ephesians 4:7-16)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." (Romans 7:18)
- "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. [7]For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places…." (Matthew 24:6-7)
- "When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. [8]For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs. (Mark 13:7-8 NRSV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: What practical implications and applications do you notice? Add any of these:

e- Maintaining the Biblical revelation about the essential sinfulness of post-fall human nature, in particular Jesus' teaching on "wars and rumors of wars" and that "nation will rise against nation" which will occur throughout this present age, consider the realistic helpfulness of this revelation for nations. The unrealistic "peace not war" efforts to reduce military preparedness is dangerous and subjects the nation to being conquered and subjected to all kinds of evil that the conquering nation(s) would want to perpetrate upon the conquered country. Of course, the most important resource for any nation is the extension and nurture of the Kingdom of God, as more and more people are regenerated and transformed in Christ which enables them to be heard by God (2 Samuel 24:25; James 5:16), yet God expects us to use the wisdom he has given to protect ourselves, nationally as well as individually.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5)
- "there is no one who does not sin." (1 Kings 8:46)
- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,…" (Romans 3:23; cf. Proverbs 20:9; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:18-19; Mark 7:21-23)
- "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." (Romans 7:18)
- "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." (Romans 8:5-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: What practical implications and applications do you notice? Add this if not thought of or mentioned:

f- Maintaining this realistic Biblical perspective protects the whole society, including God's people, from harm due to an unrealistic anthropology. Since police are sinners too, monitor and correct problems, but don't eliminate the department.



Cartoon source: Loveland *Reporter-Herald*, 6/12/20, p. 4A

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: What practical implications and applications of this Biblical anthropology do you notice? Add the following if not mentioned.

g- The Biblical anthropology protects believers from simplistic, unrealistic, misleading, and harmful worldviews that lead people to think that they can find and have perfection if they just find the "right" people, e.g., divorce, change churches, change jobs, pass the right laws, or move to a new community. Since all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and have a sinful nature, essentially all people do in such changes is to exchange one set of problems for another.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) In order to understand sin, we need to distinguish, and understand the connection, between **original** and **actual** sin. Original sin produces actual sins.
    b) **Actual** sin refers not only to the outward acts contrary to God's will that result from original sin. Actual sins also include thoughts and predilections, tendencies, that are willed, wished, and nurtured that are contrary to God's will and flow from original sin.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- And God spoke all these words: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.
  3"You shall have no other gods before me.
  4"You shall not make for yourself an idol…;
  7"You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God….
  8"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.
  12"Honor your father and your mother….
  13"You shall not murder.
  14"You shall not commit adultery.
  15"You shall not steal.
  16"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
  17"You shall not covet…anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:1-17)
- Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (James 4:17)
- Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Romans 1:32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) b) Concerning **actual** sin, we also need to distinguish between acts of **commission** and acts of **omission**.
    1- Sins of **commission** refer to the outward acts as well as thoughts, predilections, and tendencies that are willingly done contrary to God's will as discussed above. Sins of commission involve at least two types:
    a- Sins actively done by oneself, e.g., by breaking one of the 10 Commands.
    b- Guilt by approval of sins done by others (e.g., Leviticus 19:17b; Luke 11:48; Romans 1:32). One example is someone who claims to be personally against abortion but fails to speak against it.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

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  14"You shall not commit adultery.
  15"You shall not steal.
  16"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
  17"You shall not covet…anything that belongs to your neighbor." (Exodus 20:1-17)
- [Jesus said] "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)
- Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins. (James 4:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 3) b) Concerning **actual** sin, we also need to distinguish between acts of **commission** and acts of **omission**.
    2- Sins of **omission** are those acts that we do when we consciously fail to do what we know we should do. (See e.g., James 4:17; Matthew 25:44-46.)
    3- <u>REFLECT AND/OR DISCUSS</u>: Cite examples of both sins of commission and sins of sins omission.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)
- “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9; cf. Matthew 15:18-19; Mark 7:21-23)
- “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)
- “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4)
- “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)
- “[6]Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. [7]You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.’” (John 3:6-7)
- "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. b. 4) Sin’s seat is located in the heart.

1- We often hear people (not only in the world, but sadly, too many in the church) say, “Follow your heart.” To which I reply, “You mean that organ in my body that God revealed to the prophet Jeremiah as being deceitful above all things and beyond cure? You want me to follow **that**?!” Doing so is a dangerous practice which has gotten many people into much and serious trouble! Instead, follow Jesus Christ!

2- There is a place in the Bible for the heart, helping to discern God’s will in decision-making, but it is the regenerated heart (John 3:6,7,16; Proverbs 4:23; Psalm 37:4) and only **after** careful prayerful cognitive reflection has been engaged, including with God’s Word and the Holy Spirit operating directly in one’s life and, as needed, in and through the church. (Micah 6:8)

See also Theology: Discerning God’s Will.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. [8]Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” (Genesis 3:7-8)
- “So the LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, ‘Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.
  [15]And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.’” (Genesis 3:14-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

10. The Biblical explanation for the core of man’s problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God and sin’s resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God’s warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The first step in God’s plan of redemption, which in God’s omniscience he foreknew what Adam and Eve would do: God established the Covenant of Works with Adam, before God created Eve.
    c. We also see God’s holiness and love, his grace immediately after Adam’s fall.
        1) Recognizing their corruption in contrast to his holiness, Adam and Eve hid from God. (Genesis 3:8)
        2) But God chose not to destroy Adam and Eve or prohibit them from an eternal relationship with him. In fact, to save man from the penalty of his sinful disobedience, God inaugurated with Adam, the representative of mankind, a covenant of grace. God immediately pronounced what in theology is called the protoevangelium, the first announcement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (Genesis 3:15) an advance organizer for the rest of what he would reveal throughout the Bible, his plan of redemption for his creation.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

11. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The next step in God's plan of redemption: The Covenant of Grace.
    a. For those who do not accept the righteousness offered in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone fulfilled all the law, all the demands of the covenant of works and the covenant of grace with Abraham (in the Law and the Prophets), the stipulation of the requirement for perfect obedience that they cannot meet in the Old Testament covenants still stands, and that will be the standard of their judgment. (Matthew 5:17-18)
    b. For those of us who are in Christ Jesus, the covenant of works and the Abrahamic covenant has been replaced by the new covenant of grace in Him. Jesus has fulfilled all the law, the civil, ceremonial, and moral laws. Yet, we are to keep the moral laws, not to for merit but to honor God's most holy being; to maintain our holiness and mental, emotional, social, and spiritual health; and to draw all people to God and his kingdom.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Genesis 17:4-7)
- "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'
  Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" (Matthew 26:26-28)
- You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

11. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The next step in God's plan of redemption: The Covenant of Grace.
    c. Since Adam failed to keep the covenant of works God established with him, God, out of his love and righteousness, immediately inaugurated a covenant of grace with him (Genesis 3:15), established it with Noah (Genesis 9:9), and implemented it with Abraham. Periodically throughout the Old Testament, the covenant of grace was renewed with additions by God, and it was ultimately renewed in its final form and continues for believers in and followers of Jesus Christ.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind

Made in God's Image

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- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

11. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's main problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is <u>not</u> the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The next step in God's plan of redemption: The Covenant of Grace.
    d. Throughout the Old Testament, the covenant of grace with Abraham was renewed periodically, including with Moses, with additions (e.g., the Ten Commandments). To help his people understand, God used a suzerain-vassal type of covenant, common in the Near East, and with which they were familiar. It contained three main parts: an historical prologue, stipulations, and ratification.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them…." (Deuteronomy 1:3ff.)
- "This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt…" (Deuteronomy 4:44-45)
- "If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:" (Deuteronomy 28:1-2ff.)
- "However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:" (Deuteronomy 28:15ff.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

11. The Biblical explanation for the core of man's problem is sin: disobedience, rebellion against God, and sin's resulting corruption, the essence of what Adam and Eve did. The Bible is clear: God is not the author of sin and evil; man, disregarding God's warning, giving into temptation, and disobeying God, has brought sin and evil into the world. The next step in God's plan of redemption: The Covenant of Grace.
    d. As did the suzerain-vassal covenant, the covenant of grace with Abraham, renewed with Moses, contained three main parts, which can be seen in the outline of the Book of Deuteronomy.
        1- An historical prologue (Cf., Deuteronomy 1:3-4:43)
        2- Stipulations (Cf., Deuteronomy 4:44-26:19) including reference to the sacraments
        3- Ratification: curses that will occur for failing to keep the covenant and blessings that will follow obedience. (Cf., Deuteronomy chapters 27-30)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

In addition to what has been said in the preceding slides, à Brakel adds, "although the administration of the covenant [of grace] was very different in both testaments, this covenant, as far as essence is concerned, existed as well in the Old Testament…." (451) The new covenant of grace, which God foretold through the prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34), is expressed in the Septuagint, the OT Greek translation of this passage, and in the NT, with a very significant Greek word for new. The word καινός (*kainos*) means new in nature or quality (i.e., renewed), not new in time or origin that is designated by another Greek word also translated new, νέος (*neos,* i.e., brand new). This very important word, *kainos,* indicates continuity with the covenant of grace in the OT but with the additional, vital, and crucial dimensions the new covenant contains in Christ, e.g., his priesthood being from the tribe of Judah with all its implications. (See, e.g., Hebrews 6:17-10:39.) See also other references herein to the new covenant in Christ.

W. à Brakel offers (450-451) further wise applications. "…rejoice and delight yourself in being a partaker of all these benefits and over the steadfastness of this covenant, even though you do not enjoy as much of this as you desire. One day you shall enjoy all this in full measure.…reflect upon God as He presently is in this covenant, and transact with Him…pray in faith for the enjoyment of these benefits, expect them with patience, and rely in all things on Him, trusting that He will make all things well.

"Thirdly, walk worthy of the gospel, as is fitting for one who is a partaker of this covenant. Do not be influenced by your former friends, the world and all that is to be found in it. Deny your fleshly lusts, be heavenly minded, let your conversation be in heaven, and let your light shine among men in order that they may perceive that a more excellent spirit is in you than in them. Strive for humility and meekness; strive to love your enemies; behave yourself wisely in the pathway of uprightness, and be holy as He is holy who has received you into His covenant.

"Fourthly, walk in love and peace with other partakers of the covenant. Let the world observe that you are one in heart and soul, and may your example stir up all other partakers of the covenant, so that the mutual love of many may kindle a fire which may ignite those who are without.

"Fifthly, magnify God concerning this great work. Be diligent…that…your tongue may be loosened.…'Praise the LORD, call upon His name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that His Name is exalted.'…(Isa.12:4-6)"

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning [*chātāʾ*].'" (Exodus 20:20)
- "Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: 'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled [*pāshaʿ*] against me.'" (Isaiah 1:2)
- "The next day he went out and saw two Hebrews fighting. He asked the one in the wrong [*rāshāʿ*], 'Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?'" (Exodus 2:13)
- "Then Abimelech said, 'What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt [*ʾāshām*] upon us.'" (Genesis 26:10)
- "For I told him that I would [*ʿāwōn*] judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them." (1 Samuel 3:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        1) Some Old Testament Words: Many Hebrew terms denote sin and evil, here are the basic words.
            a) *chātāʾ*—lose the path, miss the mark
            b) *pāshaʿ*—rebel, transgress
            c) *rāshāʿ*—wickedness with moral guilt
            d) *ʾāshām*—guilt
            e) *ʿāwōn*—iniquity, guilt, sin

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "And these also stagger [*shāghāh*] from wine and reel from beer: Priests and prophets stagger from beer and are befuddled with wine; they reel from beer, they stagger when seeing visions, they stumble when rendering decisions." (Isaiah 28:7)
- "'but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [*raʿ*], for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:17)
- "*It shall be* for the priests who are sanctified of the sons of Zadok, who have kept My charge, who did not go astray [*tāʿāh*] when the sons of Israel went astray [*tāʿāh*] as the Levites went astray [*tāʿāh*]." (Ezekiel 48:11 NASB)
- "'Vanity [*hevel*] of vanities [*hevel*],' says the Preacher, 'Vanity [*hevel*] of vanities [*hevel*]! All is vanity [*hevel*].'" (Ecclesiastes 1:2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        1) Some Old Testament Words: Many Hebrew terms denote sin and evil, here are the basic words.
            f) *shāghāh*—to err, to stray
            g) *raʿ*—*bad*, evil, anything harmful
            h) *tāʿāh*—to wander away, to go astray (indicates the error is always deliberate, not accidental)
            i) *hevel*—breath, vanity, worthlessness
        2) New Testament words have similar meanings.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil [*kakos*]. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;" (Romans 13:3 NASB)
- "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil [*ponēros*] and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45)
- "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness [*asebeia*] and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness," (Romans 1:18)
- "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty [*enochos*] of breaking all of it." (James 2:10)
- "Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins [*hamartēma*] a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins [*porneuō*] sexually sins [*hamartanō*] against his own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        2) The New Testament uses 13 main word to describe sin.
            a) *kakos*—Bad, evil (mostly moral evil), wicked, worthless, depraved
            b) *ponēros*—Painful, serious, grievous, bad, wicked, evil (moral evil with only two exceptions), depraved
            c) *asebeia*—impiety, godlessness, wickedness
            d) *enochos*—Guilty, in danger of judgment, liable
            e) *hamartēma*—(noun) sin, a sinful deed, act of disobedience *hamartanō—(verb)* To sin, to err, to miss a mark. Any departure from righteousness; the most inclusive word for sin.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "Do you not know that the wicked [*adikos*] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders" (1 Corinthians 6:9)
- "We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers [*anomos*] and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers," (1 Timothy 1:9)
- "But if you show favoritism, you sin [*hamartēma*] and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers [*parabatēs*]. (James 2:9)
- "For you were like sheep going astray [*planaō*], but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (1 Peter 2:25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        2) The New Testament uses 13 main words to describe sin.
            f) *adikos*—unjust, unrighteous
            g) *anomos*—Lawless, godless, without law, criminal; sometimes translated iniquity.
            h) *parabatēs*—Transgressor, violator, sinner (usually refers to a transgression of the Mosaic Law, and always to some specific law)
            i) *planaō*—Lead astray, mislead, deceive, seduce; go astray, be deluded, err, deceive oneself, sin. Always means culpable error or being deceived (except possibly in James 5:19).

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "I do not want you to be unaware [*agnoeō*], brothers, that I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles." (Romans 1:13)
- "Since they did not know [*agnoeō*] the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:3)
- "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance [*agnoeō*] that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts." (Ephesians 4:18)
- "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin [*paraptōma*], you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)
- "The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. [2] Such teachings come through hypocritical [*hupokrisis*] liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron." (1 Timothy 4:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        2) The New Testament uses 13 main words to describe sin.
            j) *agnoeō*—not to know, be ignorant, not to understand, ignored, disregarded. Sometimes used in cases of innocent ignorance (e.g., Romans 1:13) and sometimes in cases of culpable ignorance (e.g., Romans 10:3; Ephesians 4:18)
            k) *paraptōma*—misdeed, trespass, fault. Usually a deliberate trespass or transgression.
            l) *hupokrisis*—hypocrisy, pretense, insincerity

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Fallen Man Made in God's Image

- "if they fall away [*parapiptō*], to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." (Hebrews 6:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. Scriptural Description of Sin
    a. Biblical words
        2) The New Testament uses 13 main words to describe sin.
            m) *parapiptō*—fall beside, fall away, commit apostasy. Implies a deliberate turning away in apostasy.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

"And [the LORD God] said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'
12 The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'
13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate.'" (Genesis 3:11-13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. The Scriptural explanation of sin is more described than defined.
    b. We see three components in the nature of sin.
        1) The <u>conceptual</u> part involves distortion or denial of the truth and disobedience to God's will.
            a) Humans yet today still do such distortion and denial and will for the rest of this age.
            b) What contemporary examples come to mind?

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "the face of the LORD is against those who do evil, to cut off the memory of them from the earth." (Psalm 34:16) See also Psalm 51:1-4; Matthew 13:41-42; 25:46; Colossians 3:25.
- "Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field.' And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:8)
- "He [Aaron] is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task." (Leviticus 16:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

12. The Scriptural explanation of sin is more described than defined.
    b. We see three components in the nature of sin.
        2) The relational component contains two aspects:
            a) man is separated from God; (Psalm 34:16)
            b) man is separated from man. (Genesis 4:8)
        3) The moral aspect of sin is much more than evil, error, sickness, or stupidity; it's rooted in the totally depraved human nature and includes rebellion against God's will. (Leviticus 16:21)

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.'" (Leviticus 19:2)
- "He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- "Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism." (Colossians 3:25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

13. The results of human sin are seen in God's reaction and in man's condition.
    a. God's reaction comes from his most holy character and his love.
        1) Seated in his holiness, justice, integrity (Leviticus 19:2; Deuteronomy 32:4)
        2) Uncompromising judgment (Romans 6:23; Colossians 3:25)
        3) God's standard of judgment is a criterion reference, not a norm reference. God doesn't "grade on the curve."
        4) His criterion is his Word based on his being Holy, Holy, Holy and on his love.
    b. Man's condition

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)
- "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12)
- "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out." (Romans 7:18)
- "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." (Romans 8:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

13. The results of human sin are seen in God's reaction and in man's condition.
    b. Man's condition is now 180° different from the way he was when God created him.
        1) Man has failed to accomplish God's purpose for him.
        2) Chaos, confusion, corruption, unhappiness, fear, and death have replaced the bliss in which he existed in the Garden of Eden.
        3) He now needs military and police, locks on homes, and payment in full or a down payment is required before work begins due to lack of trust.
        4) Sin dehumanizes man. Examples include homosexuality and other sexual confusion regarding humans' vital and vast distinction from the animals.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

- "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened." (Romans 1:21)
- "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—" (Romans 5:12)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

13. The results of human sin are seen in God's reaction and in man's condition.
    b. Man's condition is now 180° different from the way he was when God created him.
        5) Our Biblical Anthropology, informs, explains why, and reminds us to take precautions concerning our home and property and personal safety.
            a) Remove everything valuable from our car when it goes to a repair shop, especially when it will be out of our sight. We have no way to be sure of the honesty of the auto repair workers, even if we know and trust the owner. Also, we should never leave keys in the car anywhere and never leave the house without locking the doors and windows and turning on the security system if available.
            b) Always be alert to our surroundings, even in any store, and carry a defense mechanism.
            c) Take other safety precautions seriously.

Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Other Characteristics of Mankind

- God created human beings male and female.
- The sinful human nature leads people to commit sins, acts of disobedience to God that gravely harm themselves and others.
- One current example and major issue today is LGBTQ+, one aspect of which is transgenderism (*sic*), which like all sins is progressive. Many transgender, more accurately transsexual, people, especially those who go to the extent of having surgery, deeply regret having done so. Some even go farther. The photos on the right are of "Sally," who was born male and still has, and always will have, the male XY chromosomes despite surgeries and female hormone treatments.
- Source of the photos: http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/TS-II.html

Practical Aspects of the Doctrine







Anthropology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The Doctrine of Mankind

Practical Aspects of the Doctrine

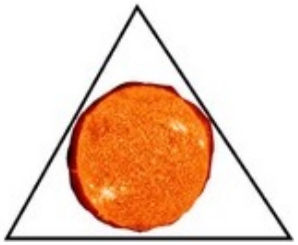
- The progressive aspect of sin, especially sexual sin, is seen in this illustration of transgenderism, more scientifically accurately, transsexualism. (See LGBTQ+ papers on the Current Issues page of the From Acorn to Oak 12, and Academia, Websites.) Dissatisfied with his attempt to transition from male to "female," he tried to become an animal, not insignificantly a reptile; he not only dishonored God, he dehumanized himself. Tragically, he's not alone. Called "Furries," many children are identifying as animals. Some public schools have litter boxes for students who identify as cats! Now that this is becoming public, media outlets are portraying it as a myth or a hoax. Not so as anecdotal reports have evidenced. Yet, hope exists if they'll change, believe in, and follow Jesus Christ, who is the truth, who does set those free from their bondage to sin and evil. (John 8:32; 14:6)
- Photo source: http://www.nationalreview.com/article/433724



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Identify and explain at least two ways it helps you in daily life to understand and function more realistically, including safely and effectively, pertaining to the Biblical revelation of human nature.
   - If no one mentions it, include the reality that while needed, politicians, laws, and regulations are not going to produce the lasting change any country most needs. The only hope of our country, and of all the other countries in the world, is for the extension and nurture of God's Kingdom throughout the country and throughout the world. Extension means the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by evangelism and Christian witness through which the Holy Spirit changes human hearts and minds (regeneration, new birth [see below, Soteriology]). Nurture refers to the sanctification, the growth in Christlikeness of the regenerated believers in Christ. What does this imply for us?



2. List at least three more implications of the Biblical doctrine of the image of God in mankind. Include the following: implications for
   a. Parenting (E.g., what practical differences should it make to teach your child(ren) the Biblical doctrine of the image of God?)
   b. Racial and other human relations (E.g., since every human is created in the image of God, how can we mistreat someone who bears God's image?)



[If time: Start in groups of four, preferably the same ones you were in before, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Christology: The Doctrine of Christ

Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like;
what has he done; and what is he doing?

Remember where Christology fits within systematic theology.

Review the logic of the loci in the next slides.

The Integration of the Six Loci of Historic Christian Systematic Theology

The Logic of the System and a Summary of the Six Main Doctrines of the Bible

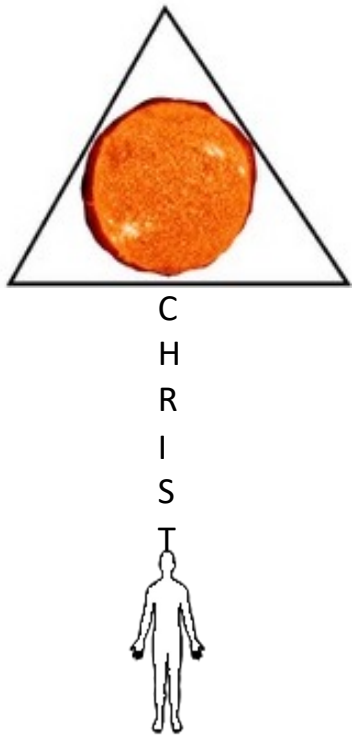
1. **Theology**: Everything starts with God. Essential aspects of God include his triune being; that he is creator; owner; most holy, righteous, and just, such that nothing unholy ever enters his presence; steadfast love to the core of his being; and for his being completely perfect in every way.
2. **Anthropology**: God created humans perfect, even to a limited extent in his image, but the first ones disobeyed God; this sin, which has resulted in cosmic disharmony, so corrupted themselves and their posterity that we cannot come into God's presence and have eternal life without his help. In love, God gave his law to teach his will, his plan of restoration, and to restrain sin to prevent chaos in the now sinful and evil world. What's his plan?
3. **Christology**: Since God is love, he is unwilling to destroy sinful humans who bear his image, but to preserve his holiness, righteousness, and justice, he instituted his plan to have one perfect human being represent all others, fulfill all the law, and credit that righteousness to all people who believe in and follow him. To accomplish God's perfect will for human beings, that one righteous human also had to be divine; the only One who could fulfill all God's law is his only begotten Son, the Redeemer, Savior, and Lord Jesus Christ, who did so in his First Coming to earth in his life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. The whole Bible focuses on Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus, and only Jesus (John 14:6), makes salvation, living forever in the presence of God, possible. How?
4. **Soteriology**: This explanation of salvation explains how the Third Person of the triune God, the Holy Spirit, applies the redemption and salvation Christ has provided to all individuals who believe in and follow Jesus.
5. **Ecclesiology**: This doctrine explains how God calls out, sets apart, brings together, and equips those whom he has redeemed in a new (i.e., renewed) covenant, the church, all those from every race and nation, to work together to most effectively bring to and implement the Good News of salvation throughout the whole world.
6. **Eschatology**: When the time is right in God's sight, he will bring the present age to a conclusion and restore his original plan in a new (i. e., renewed) heaven and new (renewed) earth. How he has already begun to do so, is seen in what the Bible reveals about the Last Things, or The End Times, including what occurs when we die and what occurs at the end of history, when Christ Jesus returns in his Second Coming: Consummation.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christology shows how the whole Bible is God's progressive plan of saving sinful human beings, made very good and in God's very image but who are now unworthy to be in his presence, and how that plan points to and is fulfilled in Christ Jesus of heaven and Nazareth. Christology engages all God's Word teaches about who Jesus Christ is (e.g., the only-begotten Son of the Father, thus the Second Person of the triune God, that he has two natures, being 100% human and at the same time 100% divine, thus with pure love coming from the core of his being); what he is like (e.g., that he did not sin and kept the entire law of God perfectly and that he loves and died for all people, but that his death is efficacious only for those who truly believe in him); what he came to do (e.g., how he is God's only provision for reconnecting humans with God who is most holy, that his righteousness is credited to those who believe in and follow him); that he was resurrected from the dead, giving assurance of our resurrection; that he now reigns; and that he is coming again to complete God's plan of redemption in him for all creation. In Christ we see how greatly God desires to be involved in our lives, because he loves us. In Christ God has provided the only means for our experiencing his most holy presence, while maintaining his righteousness and justice, which he provided at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! Christ's sovereign power is sufficient to transform the life of any sinner; Christ's sovereign power can pull any human being out of any condition. Christ Jesus has defeated Satan and bound him so he is powerless to stop the spread of the Gospel through all nations and to all people, whom God wills to be in his Kingdom. Christ Jesus is Lord over all. Salvation is available to all who believe in and follow Jesus Christ. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Christology. Since the whole Bible is about God's creation and plan of redemption in Christ, each of the other loci of systematic theology also include information about Jesus Christ. In your study of Christ, be sure to see those sections as well.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

- Because of God's great love for the humans who bear his image, he did not want to destroy them/us.
- But because he is holy, holy, holy and just, he will not compromise his integrity and bring harm to people he loves by allowing unrepentant and unchanged sinful people to come into his presence and live with him and those redeemed in Christ.
- So at great cost to himself, he sent his only begotten Son to accept the punishment due to us for our sinfulness. (John 3:16)
- By Holy Spirit-generated faith in Jesus Christ (see the Soteriology section), we are credited with Christ's righteousness, and the barrier of sin that separated us from God has been removed. (Romans 4)
- The human logo clothed in white symbolizes God's cleansing of his faithful followers in Christ (Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18; Revelation 3:4-6; 7:13-17).

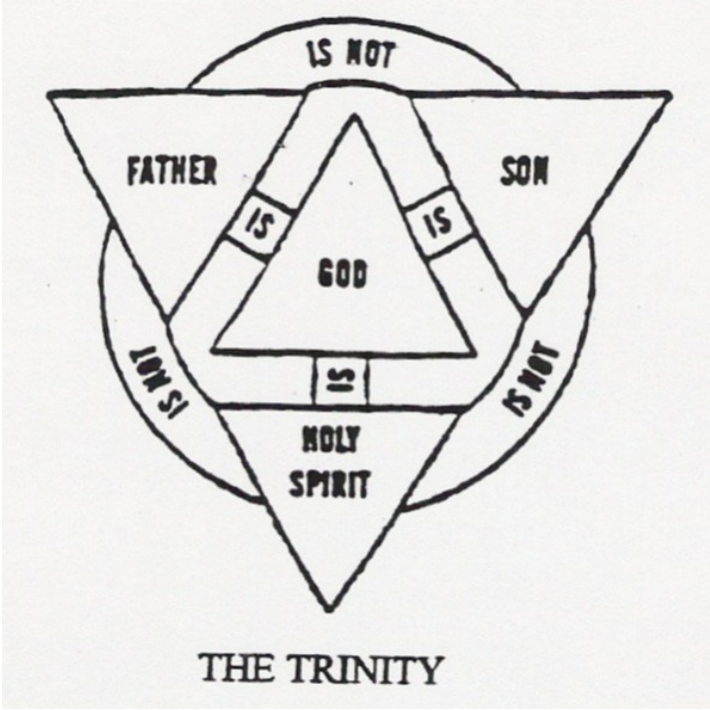


Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

- In addition to symbols from the natural order, that God has built into his creation to point to him (Romans 1:20), humans have made graphic symbols to try to visualize and understand the Biblical revelation of God as being three distinct Persons who share one substance, one essence.
- Here is one ancient symbol, referred to as the shield of the Holy Trinity, that has been found in medieval stained glass. The words, usually in Latin, read logically in any direction.

The Shield of the Holy Trinity

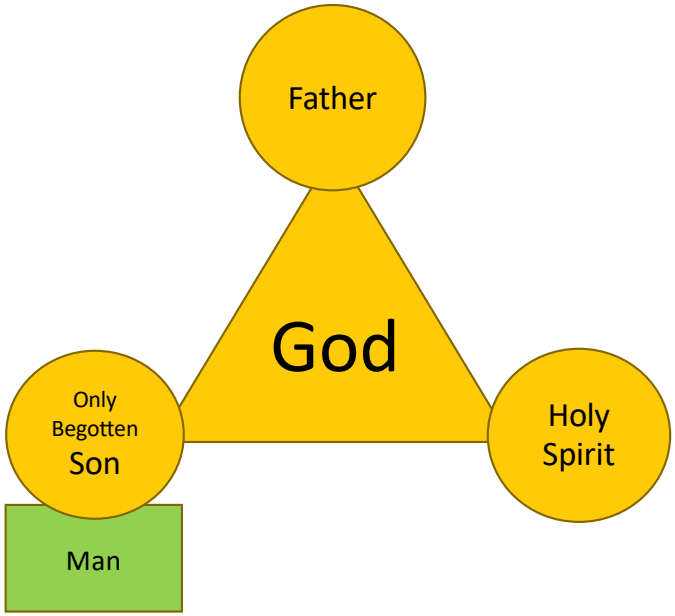


Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me [Christ], because the LORD has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor…." (Isaiah 61:1-2; See also Daniel 7:13)
- "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. [17]The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
[18] 'The Spirit [Holy Spirit] of the Lord [Father] is on me [Christ], because he has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,
[19]to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'
[20]Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, [21]and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Luke 4:16-21)
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,…" (Matthew 28:19)
- "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- Father: He is the Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; James 1:17) and Giver of "Every good and perfect gift" of all we value and enjoy. (James 1:17)
- Only begotten Son Jesus Christ: He reconciles us with the Father. All things were created through him, by him, and for him, and in him they hold together. As Lord over all we need not fear the world going out of control. (Psalm 8:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 1:3,8; 2:6-8; 5:5 (Greek, NASB); Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; 2 Peter 1:1; Romans 3:21-26)
- Holy Spirit: He applies Christ's redemption to us, gives us saving faith, guides us into all truth, and helps us. (1 Corinthians 12:3; John 16:13) He also regenerates us, i.e., gives us new birth (e.g., John 3:1-8), sanctification (e.g., Galatians 6:7-8), and gifts to serve (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- For more of the practical implications and applications of the doctrine of the Trinity, see the sections on Theology, Christology, and Soteriology/Pneumatology.
- For more on the Trinity specifically, see my essay, "Who is God, and what is he like? Part 1: What is the Trinity?" https://fromacorntooak12.com/who-is-God/ and "Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Divine and Human, as Revealed in John 3:16 and Hebrews 1:3".

Original Hebrew of Deuteronomy 6:4 (Cf. Mark 12:29)

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד׃

ʾeḥād	*yehwāh*	*ʾĕlōhênû*	*yehwāh*	yiśrāʾēl	*šĕmaʿ*
one	Yahweh (LORD)	our God	Yahweh (LORD)	Israel	hear

יְהוָה (*yehwāh*), Yahweh, the LORD < אֶהְיֶה (*ʾehyeh*), I AM < הָיָה (*hāyāh*), to be

- "God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.' " (Exodus 3:14)
- "'I tell you the truth,' Jesus answered, 'before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58) The Jews to whom he was speaking, clearly understood that Jesus was identifying himself with God; that is why they picked up stones to kill him. (8:59)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)
- "Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ." (Matthew 16:20; cf., also Daniel 9:25-27.)
- "And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.'" (Matthew 13:57)
- "…the angel said to them…'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.'" (Luke 2:10a,11)
- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35)
- "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus' names are significant.
   a. Jesus means Savior.
   b. The Hebrew word Messiah means Anointed One. Messiah in Greek is Christ.
   c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus' divinity.

Anointing in the Bible

1) **<u>Anoint</u>** (Hebrew: מָשַׁח [*māšaḥ*] and Greek: χρίω [*chriō*] < Χριστός [*Christos*], Christ, anointed), **<u>Anointed One</u>**. The Hebrew: מָשִׁיחַ (*māšîaḥ* < Messiah) and Greek: Χριστός (*Christos* < Christ) are translated "anointed one" in English.

   a) To anoint refers to rubbing someone or something with a liquid usually oil to accomplish a purpose. The purpose is typically for setting apart, healing (James 5:14), or caring for one who is about to die (John 12:1-8) or has died (Mark 16:1).

   b) In the Bible, pertaining to setting apart, a key aspect of holiness, anointing refers to an authorized applying of oil, typically olive oil, as a sign of an official appointment to an office with an accompanying indication of God's presence and power upon the one being anointed.

Anointing in the Bible

2) In the Bible, this term, anointed one, is a designation that is applied to people who have been called to one of three specific functions, all being forerunners of and pointing to Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One (Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke 4:18-19; Acts 10:38), the greatest high priest, prophet, and king, who fulfills all God's plan of redemption for his whole creation.

   a. Priest (Exodus 30:30) and the high priest (Leviticus 4:3; 6:22; Hebrews 8:1-10:18)

   b. King (1 Samuel 16:12-13; 24:6; 26:11; 2 Samuel 22:51; Psalm 2:2; Matthew 27:11; John 18:37; Acts 2:29-36).

   c. Prophet (1 Kings 19:16; 1 Chronicles 16:22; Psalm 105:15; Matthew 13:57-58; 21:11; Luke 24:19; John 6:14; Acts 3:17-24)

For further information on these Biblical functions see *Bible Digest* (PowerPoint program) and *Bible Digest Notebook* on the Christian Education page of the Website, From Acorn to Oak 12.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35)
- "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made." (John 1:3)
- "yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. (1 Corinthians 8:6)
- "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. [3]The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:2-3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus' names are significant; they tell us who he is, his identity.
   c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus' divinity.
      1) All things were created by the Father through Christ Jesus; by him, and for him, and in him they all hold together.
      2) Since Jesus Christ is Lord over all, we need not fear the world going out of control. (Ephesians 1:18-23)
      3) Jesus reconciles us with the Father and implements the Father's justice. (Romans 3:21-26)
      4) Here and below, we see how Jesus' question, "Who do [people…] you say I am?" (Matthew 16:13,15) is and always will be relevant and necessary.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)
- "Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ." (Matthew 16:20; cf., also Daniel 9:25-27.)
- "And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, 'Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.'" (Matthew 13:57)
- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35)
- "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:40)
- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2]He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1-2; cf. 17:24)
- See also Revelation 1:8; 21:1; and 22:13. (R. C. H. Lenski, *et al*.: All three passages are spoken by Christ Jesus about himself.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

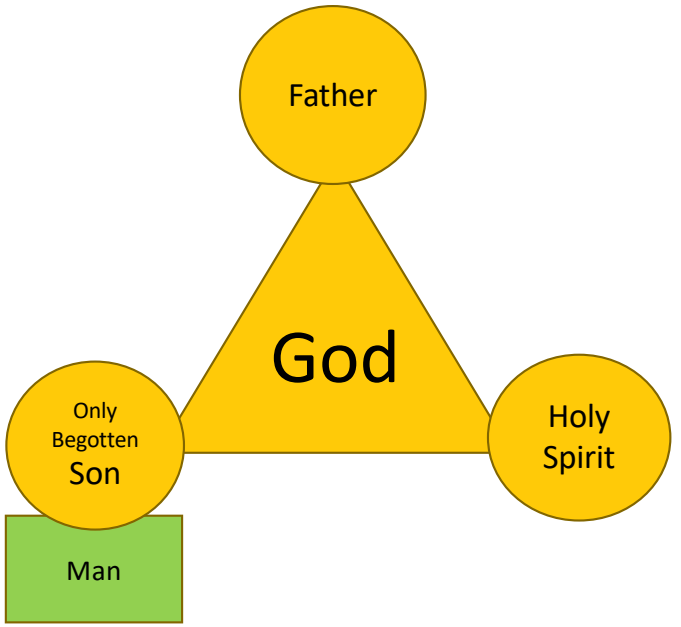
1. Jesus' names are significant.
   a. Jesus means Savior.
   b. The Hebrew word Messiah means Anointed One. Messiah in Greek is Christ.
   c. Son of God (Luke 1:35) signifies Jesus' divinity. Only begotten Son (*op cit.*) especially clearly designates Jesus' divinity. (John 1:14; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9)
   d. Son of man (Daniel 7:13; Matthew 12:40) signifies Jesus' human nature.
   e. Thus, Christ Jesus is the Second Person of the triune God, the Trinity.
   f. The Word (John 1:1ff.) With Lenski, "…we may define the Logos-title: the Logos [Word] is the final and absolute revelation of God, embodied in God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization." (P. 30) John 1:1ff. Is another strong statement of Jesus' divinity. John 1:14 refers to Jesus' also being human: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35)
- "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened [22]and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.'" (Luke 3:21-22)
- "But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26)
- "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." (Eph. 1:17)
- "For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit." (Ephesians 2:18; Hebrews 6:19-20)
- "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, [2]who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance." (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Original Hebrew of Genesis 1:1

1.1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ׃

hāʾāreṣ	*wĕʾēt*	*haššāmayim*	*ēt*	*ʾĕlōhîm*	*bārāʾ*	*bĕrēʾšît*
the earth	and	the heavens	*	God	created	In the beginning

_____

* A primary particle indicating the accusative case (grammatical case that marks the direct objective of the verb) in Hebrew and is not translated.

The Hebrew text, not the transliteration or the translation, is from The Lexham Hebrew Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012)

Original Hebrew of Genesis 1:3

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר וַיְהִי־אוֹר׃ 3

ʾôr-wayhî	*ʾôr*	*yĕhî*	*ĕlōhîm*	*wayyōʾmer*
.light there was and	light	let there be	God	and He said*

*** As seen in Genesis 1:3, the Word of God, from the beginning and throughout the whole Bible, reveals the existence and power of God's Word. Very importantly, the Word is, points to, and becomes flesh in Jesus Christ. See the accompanying explanation of and commentary on John 1:1. Cf. Psalm 33:6,9.**

The Hebrew text, not the transliteration or the translation, is from K. Elliger, W. Rudolph, and Gérard E. Weil, Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2003), Genesis 1:3.

Note the Parallel with Genesis 1:1 in the Original Greek of John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (the)* God, and God was the Word.

ἦν (*ēn*) – The parts of the Greek verb reveal very important information to enable us to understand God's Word.

- Indicative Mood: Denotes an act or state as an objective fact.
- Imperfect Tense: Denotes continued action in past time. NOT one and done.
- Active Voice: Represents the subject of the verb as doing the acting, not acted upon.

πρὸς (*pros*, with) denotes reciprocity.

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* In the original Greek syntax, the definite article, "the," when occurring with God, is not translated.

Complete Biblical Library Interlinear Bible: New Testament (Bellingham, WA: WORDsearch, 2013), John 1:1.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (the)* God, and God was the Word.

Even the earliest readers of John must have recognized "the resemblance between the first phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ, "in the beginning," and that with which Moses begins Genesis. This parallel with Moses was, no doubt, intentional on John's part…in John's first sentence the emphasis is on this phrase "in the beginning" and not on the subject "the Word." This means that John is not answering the question, "*Who* was in the beginning?" to which the answer would naturally be, "God"; but the question, "*Since when* was the Logos?" the answer to which is, "Since all eternity." This is why John has the verb ἦν, "was," the durative imperfect, which reaches back indefinitely beyond the instant of the beginning. [How exciting to know this reality! Think of the implications! Start with Jesus.]

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* In the original Greek syntax, the definite article, "the," when occurring with God, is not translated.

R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), pp. 25-27.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

We, of course, must say that the idea of eternity excludes all notions of tense, present, past, and future; for eternity is not time, even vast time, in any sense but the absolute opposite of time—timelessness. Thus, strictly speaking, there is nothing prior to "the beginning," and no duration or durative tense in eternity. In other words, human language has no forms of expression that fit the conditions of the eternal world. Our minds are chained to the concepts of time. Of necessity, then, when anything in eternity is presented to us, it must be by such imperfect means as our minds and our language afford. That is why the durative idea in the imperfect tense ἦν is superior to the punctiliar aoristic [past tense] idea: In the beginning the Logos…"was" in eternal existence. All else had a beginning, "became," ἐγένετο, was created; not the Logos. This—may we call it—timeless ἦν in John's first sentence utterly refutes the doctrine of Arius [as does the Nicene Creed], which he summed up in the formula: ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, "there was (a time) when he (the Son) was not." The eternity of the Logos is co-equal with that of the Father.

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R. C. H. Lenski, pp. 27–28.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

"…we may define the Logos-title: the Logos is the final and absolute revelation of God, embodied in God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Christ is the Logos because in him all the purposes, plans, and promises of God are brought to a final focus and an absolute realization.…The Logos is, indeed, spoken, but he also speaks."*

[John 1:1ff. Is another strong statement of Jesus' divinity. John 1:14 refers to Jesus' also being human: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." Thus, in the same chapter we observe God's revelation that his only begotten Son is both fully divine and fully human.]

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*R. C. H. Lenski, p. 30.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

This opens up the wealth of the Old Testament references to the Logos. "And God *said*, Let there be light," Gen. 1:[3]. "And God *said*, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness," Gen. 1:26. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by *the word of God,"* Heb. 11:3. "*By the word of the Lord* were the heavens made…. For he *spake*, and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast," Ps. 33:6 and 9. "He sent his word," Ps. 107:20; 147:15….In these words and commands the Son stands revealed in his omnipotent and creative power, even as John says in v. 3: "All things were made by him." This active, omnipotent revelation "in the beginning" reveals him as the Logos from all eternity, one with the Father and the Spirit and yet another, namely the Son.

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R. C. H. Lenski, p. 31.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

…"Logos" is a *personal* name, the name of him "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," Micah 5:2. And so we define once more, in the words of Besser, "The Word is the living God as he reveals himself, Isa. 8:22; Heb. 1:1, 2."

…the Son is "the brightness of his (the Father's) glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. 1:3. Only of Jesus as the Logos is the word true, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John 16:9; and that other word, "I and my Father are one," John 10:30. (Cf. Deuteronomy 6:4)

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R. C. H. Lenski, p. 31-32.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.
ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.
In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

And the Word was with God, πρὸς τὸν θεόν. Here we note the first Hebrew trait in John's Greek, a simple coordination with καί, "and," followed in a moment by a second. The three coordinate statements in v. 1 stand side by side, and each of the three repeats the mighty subject, "the Word." Three times, too, John writes the identical verb ἦν, its sense being as constant as that of the subject: the Logos "was" in all eternity, "was" in an unchanging, timeless existence. In the first statement the phrase "in the beginning" is placed forward for emphasis; in the second statement the phrase "with God" is placed at the end for [how the Greek indicates] emphasis.

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R. C. H. Lenski, p. 32.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

In the Greek Θεός [God] may or may not have the article, for the word is much like a proper noun, and in the Greek this may be articulated, a usage which the English does not have. Cases in which the presence or the absence of the article bears a significance we shall note as we proceed. The preposition πρός, as distinct from ἐν, παρά, and σύν, is of the greatest importance. R. [A. T. Robertson] 623 attempts to render its literal force by translating: "face to face with God." He adds 625 that πρός is employed "for living relationship, intimate converse," which well describes its use in this case. The idea is that of presence and communion with a strong note of reciprocity. The Logos [Word], then, is not an attribute inhering in God, or a power emanating from him, but a person in the presence of God and turned in loving, inseparable communion toward God, and God turned equally toward him. He was another and yet not other than God. This preposition πρός sheds light on Gen. 1:26, "Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness."

R. C. H. Lenski, pp. 32-33.

R. C. H. Lenski Commentary on John 1:1

Ἐν ἀρχῃ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

ēn archē ēn ho logos, kai ho logos ēn pros ton theon, kai theos ēn ho logos.

In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was the Word.

Now comes the third statement: **And the Word was God.** In English we place the predicate last, while in the Greek it is placed first in order to receive the fullest emphasis. Here Θεός must omit the article thus making sure that we read it as the predicate and not as the subject, R. 791. " 'The Word was with God.' This sounds, speaking according to our reason, as though the Word was something different from God. So he turns about, closes the circle, and says, 'And God was the Word.' " Luther. *God* is the Word, God himself, fully, completely, without diminution, in very essence. What the first statement necessarily involves when it declares that already in the beginning the Word was; what the second statement clearly involves when it declares the eternal reciprocal relation between the Word and God—that is declared with simple directness in the third statement when the Word is pronounced God with no modifier making a subtraction or limitation. And now all is clear; we now see how this Word who is God "was in the beginning," and how this Word who is God was in eternal reciprocal relation with God. This clarity is made perfect when the three ἦν are seen to be eternal, shutting out absolutely a past that in any way is limited. The Logos is one of the three divine persons of the eternal Godhead.

R. C. H. Lenski, p. 33.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners," (Isaiah 61:1)
- "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed," (Luke 4:18)
- "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)
- "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, [33]and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end." (Luke 1:32-33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Jesus' names are significant.
   g. He has three official titles—three main functions.
      1) **Prophet** (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19) refers to his speaking the Word and will of God about our redemption in the two modes prophets did.
         a) Forthtelling, i.e., pointing out wrongdoing and
         b) Foretelling, i.e., predicting the coming judgment on the wrongdoing. (Deut. 18:15-22)
      2) **Priest** (Hebrews 3:1; 4:4; 10; John 1:29) refers to his offering the perfect once for all sacrifice of his body for our sins (Hebrews 9:12,28) and his continually interceding for us with the Father (e.g., John 17; Romans 8:34).
      3) **King** (Luke 1:32-33; Isaiah 9:7; 44:6) refers to his ruling all things (1 Corinthians 15:27), by his Word and Spirit, including in the minds and hearts of all who believe in and follow him, as well as defending and sustaining us in our redemption.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)
- "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20)
- "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:28)
- "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)
- "'Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. [11]Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.'" (John 14:10-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
   a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6) See also Soteriology, mystical union, the spiritual union with Christ.
   b. Jesus came to give his life, to die for us. (Mark 10:45)
   c. Jesus came to reveal the Father and reconcile humans with God. (John 14:10-11)
   d. Jesus came to redeem us, to take our sin upon himself. (Hebrews 2:16-18; 1 Peter 2:24) Redemption involves paying a ransom; (Mark 10:45) Jesus paid for us with his life with huge pain and suffering.
   e. Jesus came to be the one mediator between God and humans. (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6, 9:15)
   f. Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. [17]For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. [18]Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:16-18)
- "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:29)
- "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)
- "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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f. Jesus also came to be a model for us to follow. (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6]who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time." (1 Timothy 2:5-6)
- "But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [human priests] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises." (Hebrews 8:6)
- "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant [the first covenant of grace with Abraham, renewed with Moses]." (Hebrews 9:15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6)
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Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

…Christ as the "Mediator" of the better testament [covenant] which is now called "new," [καινός (*kainos*), i.e., new in nature or in quality], namely the old Abrahamitic testament in the newness which Christ gave it. The abolished testament, which is here [also 8:6] called "the first," is that which was brought down from the Mount by Moses 430 years after Abraham; under this Mosaic testament Israel failed to inherit. This testament promised Canaan, but Israel lost it forever because of transgressions. In what way Christ is the "Mediator" of this renewed Abrahamitic and thus "new" testament, which is so much better than the one Moses brought, is stated in the genitive [case] absolute: "a death having occurred for ransoming from the transgressions at the time of the first testament." Christ's *death* made him "Mediator of a new testament." The mediation consisted in this, that his death put the testament in force; it was the medium for that. After he had died, the testamentary inheritance could be paid out to the heirs. The genitive absolute has causal force: "since his death occurred" (historical aorist [tense]).

This was not an ordinary death as we have seen in connection with v. 12 and elsewhere in this epistle. Christ did not merely die of this or of that, in an ordinary way. This was an expiatory death for the object (εἰς [for]) of ransoming (ἀπολύτρωσις [*apolutrōsis*, redemption]) from the transgressions (objective genitive) at the time (ἐπί [under], temporal, B.-P. 447, item 2) of the first testament. We have the same objective genitive in καθαρισμὸν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, "cleansing *from* the sins" (1:3). On ransoming note what is said about λύτρωσις [*lutrōsis*, redemption] in v. 12.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

Christ's death put the testament in force because his death paid the full and complete ransom. It canceled even all the sins that had been committed by Israel in the past, the very sins which lost Israel the Mosaic testamentary promises and its land of Canaan. These old transgressions, which accumulated throughout the entire period of the Mosaic testament, are mentioned because the two testaments and the two kinds of death and of blood are contrasted. There is no thought of limiting the sins for which Christ died. The writer is addressing former Jews and is indicating to them what the Mosaic testament failed to accomplish for them, and what the new testament and its Mediator did accomplish for them.

Much of the exposition of 8:6–13 applies also here, in particular what we have said on v. 12, as to how during the period of the old testament the true believers were saved from their sins. The Old Testament believers were saved by means of the Abrahamitic testament and by means of all that was typical of Christ in the Mosaic testament; but, of course, only on the strength of this death of Christ, which had to occur in the fulness of time as it did occur. The Mosaic testament and all its law came in "because of transgression" (Gal. 3:19) in order the more to drive Israel to the promise that had been given to Abraham in the testament and had been conserved in all the types of Christ in the ceremonial features of the Mosaic testament.

The entire past, the entire present, the entire future thus rest on the death that occurred on Calvary, on the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. 13:8. The Messiah who died is the absolute necessity no matter in which direction we look. Without him as "Mediator of a new testament" all that God gave to Abraham and then to Moses and Israel would be a hollow mockery. Without him there would be no "eternal inheritance," no people called to receive it. Absolutely everything hinges on this Mediator and the mediation of his bloody, sacrificial, expiatory death. [Expiation = extinguishing guilt]

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Christ is the mediator of the new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15, R. C. H. Lenski Commentary

"Because of this is he Mediator, etc., that they who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance," may indeed and in fact receive it (not "might," A. V.). The aorist [tense] denotes actuality and does not refer to a certain time; it applies to all time. The perfect tense οἱ κεκλημένοι [*ohi keklēmenoi*], "those having been called," denotes state, an enduring condition and no more. It, too, applies to all time; it should not be dated in the past and referred only to the Israelites who were called during past ages. Nor does the writer intend to say that those who were called in *past* ages shall *now* receive the eternal inheritance; that they have been dead for a long time and have been without the inheritance during that entire time. The tenses will not permit this interpretation.

"The promise of the eternal inheritance" is the actual fulfillment, the substance promised. The genitive [case] is appositional: the inheritance is the thing promised, i.e., "the good things" mentioned in v. 11. The writer uses "eternal" three times and in a way that is marked: "*eternal* ransoming" obtained by Christ (v. 12), "by means of (his) *eternal* spirit" (v. 14), we are to receive "the promise of the *eternal* inheritance." This is intentional on the part of the writer and should not be regarded as an accidental use of the same word "eternal."

The call is always extended by God's gospel grace, and throughout the epistles, whether it is expressed by a noun, a verb, a participle, or a verbal adjective, the writers invariably have in mind the successful [effectual] call. The perfect participle here describes the called as being in an enduring state. They are the heirs named in the testament. Whether they lived in the past, are living now, or shall live in future ages is not indicated by the tense. One by one, as they leave this life, they receive the eternal inheritance of which the call makes them the heirs. In this life they have the earnest or pledge of their inheritance, namely the Holy Spirit of the promise (Eph. 1:13, 14), and thus taste of the powers of the world to come already in this life (Heb. 6:5), and then, if they remain true to their call by faith, at death receive the inheritance in heaven. Note how "testament" and "inheritance" correspond. [See also the sections on "Calling" and "Perseverance of the saints" in the doctrine of Soteriology.]

Lenski, R. C. H. (1938). The interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (pp. 302–305). Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)
- "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." (John 13:15)
- "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We must remember the purpose of his coming.
   a. Jesus came to provide eternal life. (John 10:28; John 14:6)
   b. Jesus came to give his life; to die for us. (Mark 10:45)
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Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)
- "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)
- "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke 1:35)
- "Jesus the Son of God…who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin." (Hebrews 4:14-15; cf., 7:27; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 3:5)
- "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!
  [15]For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:14-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. Understand and explain these aspects of Jesus' Birth.
   a. Jesus was born of a virgin who was made to conceive by the Holy Spirit so he would be both human and divine. (Luke 1:35; 24:52; Matthew 2:11; 14:33; 28:9; John 9:38; 2 Peter 1:1)
   b. The Second Person of the Trinity was incarnated, i.e., he took on a human body and human spirit, while retaining his divinity. (Cf. above graphic.)
   c. Jesus' birth is characterized by humility, which is seen
      1) in the circumstances of his birth to humble parents in an unprivileged and disrespected locale, rather than in a royal setting;
      2) by coming into a world of sin; and
      3) by taking on our human nature, especially the body of which was (and still is) devalued, e.g., by those espousing a Gnostic philosophy and related worldviews. (See above, Anthropology.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. Understand and explain these aspects of Jesus' Birth.
   d. Though Jesus was made fully human in order to be able to fulfill God's law for us in our stead, since we are unable to do so, the Holy Spirit and Christ's divinity enabled Jesus to be and remain a sinless human, which he had to be in order to make a vicarious reparation, expiation (overcoming of evil and extinguishing of guilt), and restitution for us, ransoming, redeeming, us from our sins. Cf. Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 5:12-21; John 11:50-52.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.
  [9]For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, [10]and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." (Colossians 2:8-10; cf. John 17:24)
- "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, [29]because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:28-29)
- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25]God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [NASB, KJV: propitiation] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished– [26]he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. Jesus Has Two Natures, Divine and Human. As a linguist, I don't like to use the word nature with God or divine, since the root of nature is from the Latin, *natus*, to be born, and God was never born, he has always existed (e.g., Psalm 90:2). Yet as a theologian, I use the word nature, since it is used in the theological literature to refer both to Jesus' divine and human being, and since in common usage, people do not think of the word nature as referring to being born but rather to one's, especially here, Jesus', essential being. Nevertheless, it's an important distinction to make.
   a. Divine—Christ's divine nature enabled and guided him to overcome temptation and not sin. See more also in the section on Jesus' human nature.
      1) His divinity preserves his human perfection, which is required for him to make propitiation, atonement, satisfaction for our sins.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

  For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” (Colossians 2:8-10)
- “When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (Matthew 7:28-29)
- “Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’” (John 8:58 NASB)
- “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (John 17:5)
- “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.” (John 14:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. Jesus Has Two Natures, Divine and Human.
   a. Explain these aspects of his divine nature.
      2) Jesus’ divinity is clearly indicated in his miracles and in what he said in John 8:58 and in 17:5,24.
      3) Jesus demonstrated a unique authority readily perceived by the people who observed him.
         a) His authority came directly from his divine being (as the Second Person of the triune God).
         b) My authority as a teacher of God’s Word is derived from
            1- the Lord (his call) and
            2- the church
               a- who verified the call,
               b- who ordained me,
               c- and to whom I’m accountable (more about this in part five—the fifth of the six loci—on the church).

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

John 3:16

Οὕτως	γὰρ	ἠγάπησεν	ὁ	θεὸς	τὸν	κόσμον,	ὥστε	τὸν	υἱὸν	τὸν	μονογενῆ	ἔδωκεν,
Houtōs	*gar*	*ēgapēsen*	*ho*	*theos*	*ton*	*kosmon*	*hōste*	*ton*	*huion*	*ton*	*monogenē*	*edōken,*
thus	For	loved	[the]*	God	the	world,	that	the	Son	the	only begotten	he gave

ἵνα	πᾶς	ὁ	πιστεύων	εἰς	αὐτὸν	μὴ	ἀπόληται,	ἀλλ’	ἔχῃ	ζωὴν	αἰώνιον.	
hina	*pas*	*ho*	*pisteuōn*	*eis*	*auton*	*mē*	*apolētai,*	*all’*	*echē*	*zōēn*	*aiōnion.*	
that	everyone	the	believing	in	him	not	may perish,	but	may have	life	eternal.	
		[who believes]										

* In Greek grammar in such contexts, the definite article is not translated into English, but consider the implications of the Greek text. We do only have one real, true, and authentic God.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life," (John 3:16, NASB)
- '"You are my Son, today I have begotten you";…' (Hebrews 5:5 Greek, NRSV; Psalm 2:7 Hebrew, LXX [Greek translation], NRSV)
- "'And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.'" (John 17:5; cf. v. 24)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4) In John 3:16, the term "only begotten" translates the Greek word, μονογενής (*monogenēs*), meaning the only one of the same essence as God, clearly indicating Jesus Christ's divinity.
   a) That there is only one God, is also communicated by the Greek of this and many other passages by the inclusion of the definite article, which sadly is not typically translated in English versions: the God gave his only begotten Son.
   b) Biblical scholars are not all in agreement as to the proper translation of *monogenēs*, but having studied the different viewpoints, I opt for the traditional "only begotten." To avoid unnecessary technicality and to maintain the purpose of this overview of systematic theology, I refer any who wish for more information to consult the excellent commentary by the outstanding Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski on John 3:16 and the related passages.

Understanding Bible Translation

This information about John 3:16 is an illustration of the philosophy and practice of Bible translation of which all people need to to be aware. Bible translators try very hard to produce a version of the Bible in a given language that readers can understand in their own vernacular. However, in so doing, they occasionally choose words in the contemporary language that do not communicate the totality of what God is saying in that text, such as "only Son" or even "one and only Son" for *monogenēs*, only begotten.

Translators must keep in mind that in that work they are translators not teachers. God has given them the gift of learning the original languages of the Bible, and he has called them to translate his Word into a particular contemporary language. He has given to others the gift of teaching (Ephesians 4:11ff.). It is the teachers' responsibility to explain the meaning of the Scripture texts. Recall the account of the Apostle Philip and the Ethiopian official. "[29]The Spirit told Philip, 'Go to that chariot and stay near it.' [30]Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' Philip asked. [31]'How can I,' he said, 'unless someone explains it to me?' So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.... [35]Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus." (Acts 8:29-31,35; cf. Nehemiah 8:8,12)

Some translators may also have the gift of teaching, but when they are doing their translating, they should not try to teach within their translation of the text. Furthermore, translators have no authority to change the words the Holy Spirit gave to the prophets and apostles to write, e.g., in John 3:16. Translators translate; teachers teach. Included in that teaching is what the words mean and their implications and applications.

Understanding Bible Translation

Basically, translators have two main philosophical orientations to their work. One is a literal word-for-word approach, as much as possible, such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB) and the King James Bible (KJV). The other orientation is referred to as dynamic equivalency, or the attempt to choose several words in contemporary colloquial terms to convey the original Bible words.

So, what does this mean for individual reading of the Bible when one has no teacher sitting beside him or her? This is why it is important for readers to use at least two translations of the Bible in order to understand God's Word.

(1) Choose a version of the Bible that is easy to read, possibly one of the dynamic equivalency versions, such as the NIV. (2) Choose a version that has been translated in a literal manner that accurately conveys the exact meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek word (e.g., *monogenēs*, only begotten). Use the literal translation to obtain a more accurate rendering and understanding of a specific text.

A good commentary is also very helpful. One-volume commentaries on the whole Bible, and commentaries on specific books of the Bible, are valuable. Some study Bibles, which contain the whole Bible and explanatory footnotes, such as the *NIV Study Bible*, offer much commentary on most of the verses in each chapter. Be careful in selecting such teaching aids—not all commentators are theologically and Biblically sound. Those mentioned herein are trustworthy.

It is especially important to regularly attend God's corporate worship with a church congregation that faithfully proclaims and expounds his Word. Also participate in the church's learning opportunities, e.g., classes, seminars, and Bible study groups. (Cf. Hebrews 10:25; Ephesians 4:11-17; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Nehemiah 8:1-18, esp. 8,12.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life," (John 3:16, NASB)
- '"You are my Son, today I have begotten you";…' (Hebrews 5:5 Greek, NRSV; Psalm 2:7 Hebrew, LXX [Greek translation], NRSV)
- "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. [25]God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement [NASB, KJV: propitiation] through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished– [26]he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:23-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5) The Greek word κόσμος (*kosmos*), especially in John, means the world in its present fallen state, not just the beautiful aspects of the universe. Thus, God is revealing that he loves his creation so much that he wants to redeem it, and in the process obliterate all its sinfulness and evil. In order to do so and yet maintain his justice, he sends his only begotten Son to make the redemption and at such great cost to himself: What supreme love! Again, we see the answer to the theodicy question.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:15-17)
- "'Now if his offering is a sacrifice of peace offerings, if he is going to offer out of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without defect before the LORD." (Leviticus 3:1 NASB)
- "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." (Leviticus 17:11)
- "Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17 NASB; cf. Romans 9:5)
- "God made him [Christ, v. 20] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (Cf. Hebrews 4:15; 9:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

b. <u>Human</u>—Jesus' human nature enables him to represent us.
   1) His humanity is necessary, for it was humans who disobeyed and sinned against God's command and will, not animals. Thus, a human must make reparation for human sin, but it can only be a perfect human, one without defect, in order to qualify us for being in God's most holy presence.
   2) Animal sacrifice in the Old Testament was a temporary teaching aid to help God's people understand the concept of vicarious, or substitutionary, atonement, a perfect one without defect, dying in the place of another to provide propitiation, reconciliation with God who is Most Holy and will not allow sin in his presence, in preparation for the coming of the promised Anointed One, the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, whose sacrifice would be "once for all." (Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 5:12-21; Hebrews 7:27; 9:26-27)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Over the centuries, Christian theologians have considered the question, “Could Jesus have sinned?” We read in Hebrews 2:17 that Jesus had to be made like us in all things, so that he might represent us and make propitiation for our sins, which means that his human nature, as ours, bears the image of God, including a genuine freedom (*op cit*.) that includes the ability and the responsibility to choose to obey God’s will. R. C. Sproul answers the question well (accessed 08/23/2022) and explains more.

“I believe that since Jesus was fully human, it was possible for him to sin. Obviously, the divine nature cannot sin. But if Christ's divine nature prevented him from sinning, in what sense did he obey the law of God as the second Adam? At his birth, Jesus' human nature was exactly the same as Adam's before the fall, with respect to his moral *capabilities*. [Emphasis mine.] Jesus had what Augustine called the posse peccare and the posse non peccare, that is, the ability to sin and the ability not to sin. Adam sinned; Jesus did not. Satan did everything in his power to corrupt Jesus and tempt him to sin. That would have been an exercise in futility had he been trying to tempt a divine person to sin. Satan was not trying to get God to sin. He was trying to get the human nature of Christ to sin, so that he would not be qualified to be the Savior.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

“At the same time, Christ was uniquely sanctified and ministered to by the Holy Spirit. In order to sin, a person must have a desire for sin. But Jesus' human nature throughout his life was marked by a zeal for righteousness. ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me’ (John 4:34), he said. As long as Jesus had no desire to sin, he would not sin. I may be wrong, but I think it is wrong to believe that Christ's divine nature made it impossible for his human nature to sin. If that were the case, the temptation, the tests, and his assuming of the responsibility of the first Adam would have all been charades. This position protects the integrity of the authenticity of the human nature because it was the human nature that carried out the mission of the second Adam on our behalf. It was the human nature uniquely anointed beyond measure by the Holy Spirit.”

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation (χαρακτήρ, *charaktēr,* reproduction, exact likeness) of his being (ὑποστάσεως < ὑποστασις, *hupostasis,* substance, underlying essence), sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." (Hebrews 1:3)
- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1)
- "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9)
- "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17; cf. Romans 9:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

c. Jesus' divine and human natures are distinct but united.
   1) The two natures, human and divine, of Jesus Christ are an essential unity, as are the three Persons of the Trinity. See also the discussion of the hypostatic union in the earlier section on Theology.
   2) The Greek word, *hupostasis*, in Hebrews 1:3 also means actual being, reality, subsistence, substantial nature.
   3) Jesus' divinity is also seen in John 1:1; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3 and in other texts of the Bible.

The Unity of the Person of Christ, Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 184-185

Louis Berkhof has well explained this central doctrine of historic Christian theology. Consider this excerpt.

"While the Church has maintained the doctrine of the two natures of Christ from the days of the Council of Chalcedon [451 A.D.], it at the same time asserted the existence of these two natures in one person.

1. STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TWO NATURES IN ONE PERSON. There is but one person in the Mediator, and that person is the unchangeable Son of God. In the incarnation He did not change into a human person, nor did He adopt a human person; He simply assumed a human nature, which did not develop into an independent personality, but became personal in the person of the Son of God. The one divine person, who possessed a divine nature from eternity, assumed a human nature and now has both. After this assumption of a human nature the person of the Mediator is not divine only but divine-human; He is now the God-man. He is a single individual, but possesses all the essential qualities of both the human and the divine nature. While He has but a single self-consciousness, He has both a divine and a human consciousness, as well as a divine and a human will, [both always in perfect harmony].
2. SCRIPTURE PROOF FOR THE UNITY OF THE PERSON IN CHRIST. If there were a dual personality in Christ, we would naturally expect to find some traces of it in the Bible; but there is not a single trace of it. It is always the same person who speaks, whether the consciousness that finds utterance be human or divine, cf. John 10:30; 17:5 as compared with Matt. 27:46, John 19:28. There is no interchange of "I" and "thou" between the human and the divine natures, such as there is between the persons in the Trinity (cf. John 17:23). Human attributes and actions are sometimes ascribed to the person designated by a divine title, Acts 20:28; I Cor. 2:8; Col. 1:13, 14. On the other hand divine attributes and actions are ascribed to the person designated by a human title, John 3:13; 6:62; Rom. 9:5." For more: Ecclesiology, The Lord's Supper.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)
- "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Philippians 2:5-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. Christ Experienced Two States, Humiliation and Exaltation. This doctrine was developed in the 17th century. The Humiliation of Christ consists in his putting aside (but not that he ceased to have or that he gave up) his divine attributes and majesty in which he is the sovereign ruler of the universe (in the sense that is in the Greek, he did not consider his equality with God a prize for display), and in his taking on human nature in the form of a servant, becoming subject to the demands and curse of the law.
   a. His humiliation began with his birth.
      1) In leaving his heavenly glory, he began the painful work necessary to redeem us human beings whom he loves and who bear his image.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him." (John 1:11)
- "'But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." (Matthew 26:56)
- "When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. [13]Then Pilate asked him, 'Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?' [14]But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor." (Matthew 27:12-14)
- "The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. [60]But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward." (Matthew 26:59-60a)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The Humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo.
   2) Christ's suffering is an essential part of his humiliation.
      a) He was rejected by his people. (E.g., John 1:11)
      b) He was rejected by his disciples. (E.g., Matthew 26:56)
      c) He silently bore reproach and rejected defense. (E.g., Matthew 27:12-14)
      d) He experienced illegal condemnation and sentencing. (E.g., Matthew 26:59-60a)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. [21]But they kept shouting, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' [22]For the third time he spoke to them: 'Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.' [23]But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. [24]So Pilate decided to grant their demand. [25]He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will." (Luke 23:20-25)
- "[Pilate] had Jesus flogged….Then …. [28]They stripped him…, [29]and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. 'Hail, king of the Jews!' they said. [30]They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. [31]After they had mocked him,…they led him away to crucify him." (Matthew 27:26-31)
- "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit." (Matthew 27:50)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

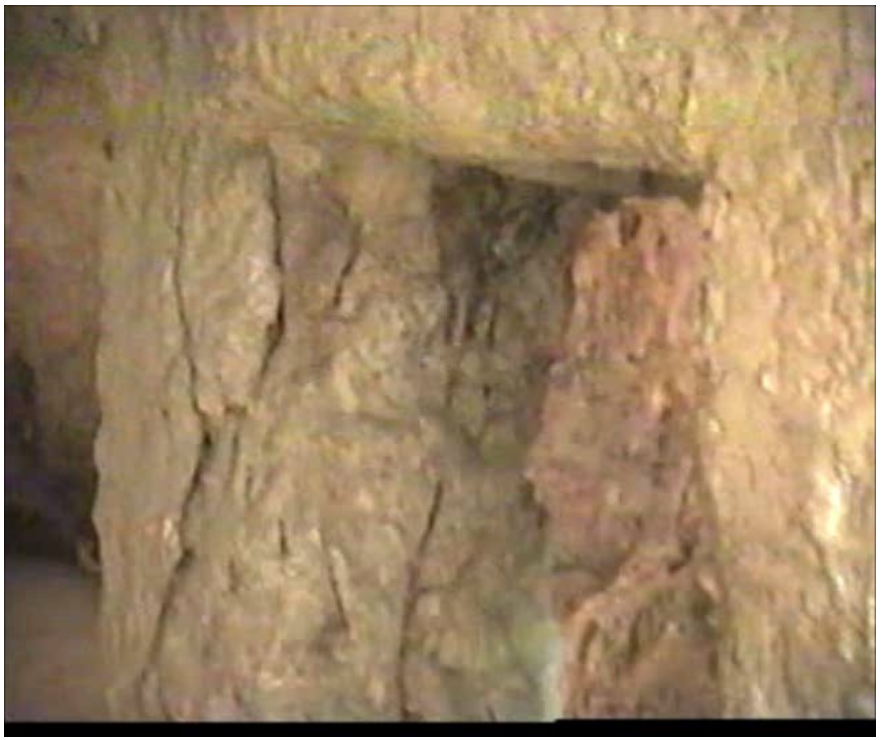
5. a. The Humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo.
   2) Christ's suffering is an essential part of his humiliation.
      d) He experienced illegal condemnation and sentencing. (E.g., Luke 23:20-25; Matthew 27:19-26)
      e) Jesus' suffered greatly in his death in the severity of flogging, repeatedly striking the crown of thorns on his head, in his being mocked, and in his excruciating crucifixion. (E.g., Mark 15:16-20; Matthew 27:11-26; 50)

Christology: Jesus' Suffering in Our Place

Excavations at the site of the house of the high priest, Caiaphas, now located under the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu (Cock-Crow), show some of what Jewish flogging involved. But Jesus was flogged much more viciously by the Romans. (Mark 15:15)

Click here to see video:

https://youtu.be/LIZc3GmFX8Q



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "[Abraham's] faith was made complete by what he did…a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone…As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:22, 24,26) Cf. Matthew 7:15-23; John 14:21; 15:9-10; 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)
- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)
- "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.'" (Galatians 3:13)
- "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)
- "who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father," (Galatians 1:4)
- "so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo for us.
   3) The Death of Jesus: Sufficient for all, but not efficient for all—efficient only for true believers in and doers of his commands. The true faith which saves issues forth in good deeds, fruitfulness. God's Word condemns hypocrisy. (Cf. e.g., Matthew 15:1-11; 23)
   4) Sin brings the curse of God upon humans. (Romans 6:23)
   5) Christ took the curse of the punishment due to our sin upon himself—substituting himself for us. (Matthew 27:46; cf. curses in the third, ratification, section of the old covenant in Anthropology.)
   6) Christ is the Great High Priest.
      a) As priest he was the offeror of the great sacrifice for our sins.
      b) As priest he was the offering; he offered himself on the cross as the perfect sacrifice.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)
- "As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. (Matthew 27:57-61)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. a. The humiliation of Christ was necessary for him to undergo for us.
   7) Jesus' burial was also a necessary part of his humiliation.
      a) This testimony affirms his death and the accomplishment of the work he came to do.
      b) If Jesus did not die on the cross, as some assert, then we would still be contaminated with the guilt of our sins and would not have salvation.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'" (Matthew 28:5-7)
- "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

[The empty tomb is the chief answer for the rival hypotheses to the Biblical account of Jesus' Resurrection. (Matthew 27:57-28:15)]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.
      a) Jesus' resurrection is visible evidence that:
         1- He defeated death. (John 11:25-27; Ephesians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58)
         2- He defeated Satan. (E.g., Luke 10:18-19)
      b) Jesus is the first human ever resurrected. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Pictured below is a first century A. D. tomb outside Megiddo.



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life." (Matthew 16:21)
- "Consider Abraham: 'He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' [7]Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. [8]The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' [9]So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith. [10]All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.' [11]Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.' [12]The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, 'The man who does these things will live by them.' [13]Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' [14]He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." (Galatians 3:6–14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
    1) Jesus' <u>Resurrection</u> is the seal of his work.
        b) Jesus is the first human being ever resurrected. (1 Corinthians 15:20) Others, e.g., Lazarus (John 11:1-44; see esp. 23-27), have been raised from the dead, but they were not resurrected; i.e., they still had their earthly bodies, not resurrection bodies, and they later died at the end of their lives.
        c) Humans who believe in Christ are free from the curse of the Law. (Galatians 3:1-14)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "The angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: "He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him." Now I have told you.'" (Matthew 28:5-7)
- "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

[No one could find Jesus' dead body after Sunday morning when he was resurrected. And, you can be sure they tried! (See Matthew 28:11-15.)]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.
      d) We are justified by our faith in Christ. (Romans 4:23-25; 5:1)
      e) Our view of life is changed. (Romans 12:1-5)
      f) Our basis for hope: Christ Jesus is the first resurrection person and the first fruits of the resurrection in which all believers will share. (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-58)

Recall the overall theme of the Bible: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation in and through Jesus Christ.

Anthropology: Who are we, and what are we really like in God's sight?

Creation

Characteristics of Mankind Made in God's Image

"Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'
[27]So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
[28]God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" (Genesis 1:26-28)

As we considered earlier in this course, four overarching themes throughout the Bible are: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. The six loci of historic Christian systematic theology further explain those four themes. In his famous classic painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome, Michelangelo portrays the perfect relationship that man had with God at first, when God created him. Nothing separated the first two humans from God.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Anthropology: Who are we; what are we like; and what are we doing?

Fall

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

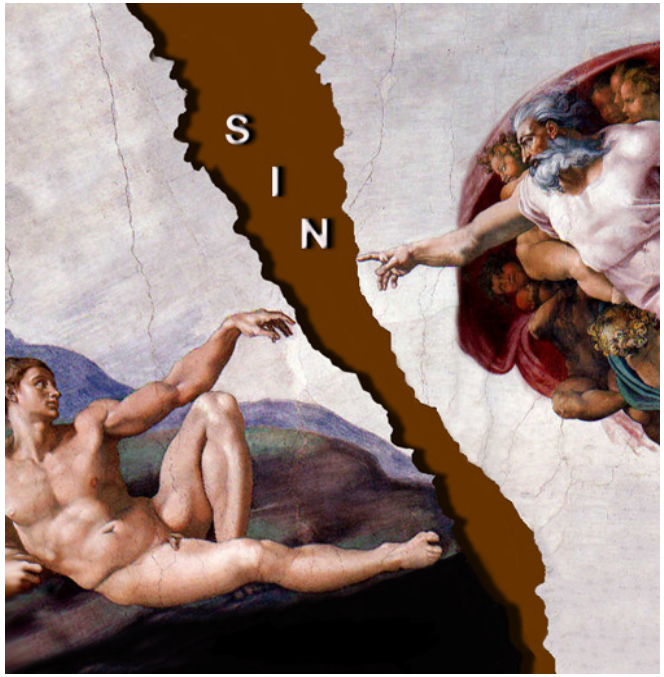
4. Adam's sin caused death and disharmony throughout all creation, beginning between humans and God. (Genesis 3:17) Thus, sin is extremely serious; indeed, it is inexcusable, but it is not unforgivable, thanks be to our most holy yet also all-loving triune God, who has provided the only way for that forgiveness: by being credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ through faith in him, thus reconciling us with God, which is the main focus of the Bible (Romans 4:16-25; John 14:6) and Christian theology.

+ "…in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

  "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." (Romans 8:20-23)

The Impact of Sin on God's Creation

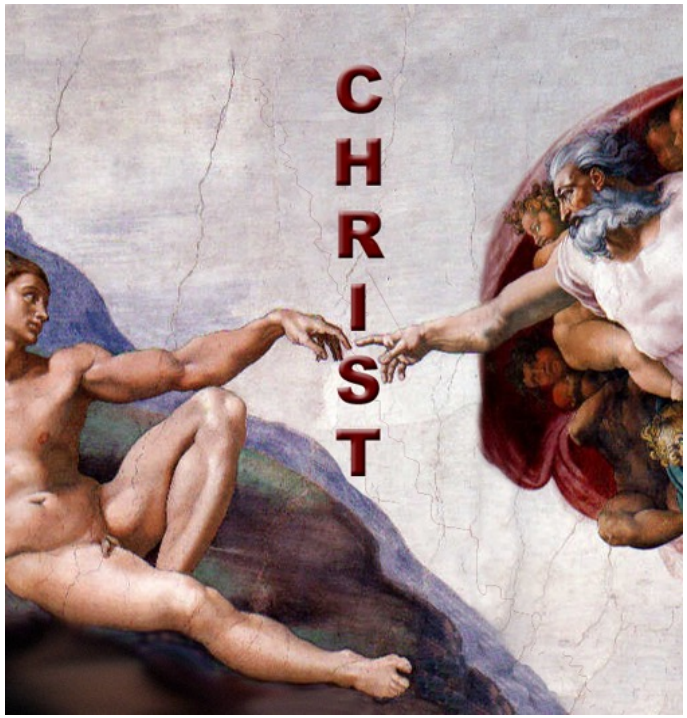
4. a. Death and disharmony between man and God



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



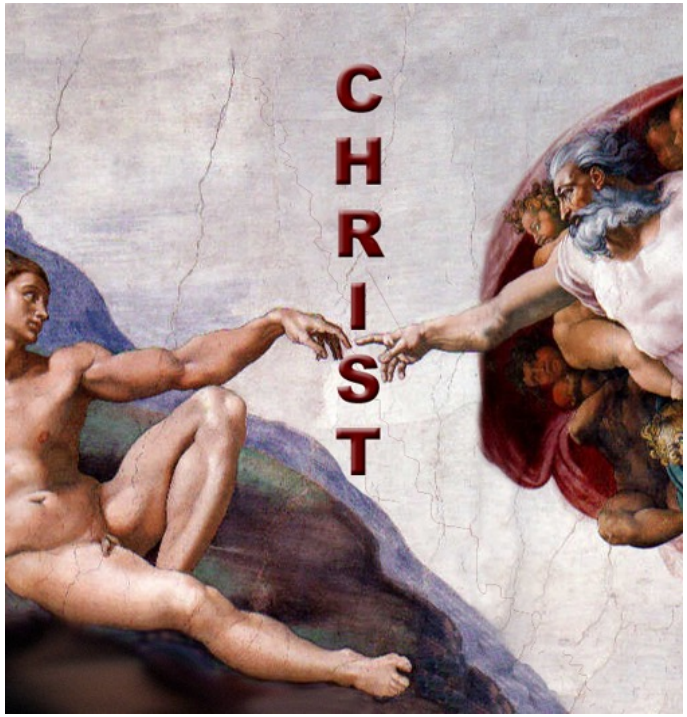
Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.
      g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.
         1- "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. [51]At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." (Matthew 27:50-51)
         2- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2]through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." (Romans 5:1-2)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.
      g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.
         3- Cleansed by Christ, human beings who believe in and follow him, now have access to fellowship with God, as Adam and Eve enjoyed before they sinned, after which they had to leave the presence of God (Genesis 3:23; cf. Exodus 24:1-2; 26:33; Leviticus 16:1-2; Hebrews 6:19-20; 9:6-8; 10:19-25; Ephesians 3:12), who is not only love but who is also holy, holy, holy and who will not allow sin and evil in his presence.
         4- "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new [καινός (*kainos*), i.e., new in nature or in quality] creation; the old has gone, the new has come! [18]All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: [19]that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:17–19)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ



Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.

1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.

g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.

5- This great reality results in the bursting forth of exceeding joy from the hearts and minds of those who believe in and follow their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This joy has recurred throughout the history of the church and issued forth in many ways, including in the writing of inspiring hymns with their profound theology, such as these stirring hymns: "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today," "The Day of Resurrection," and "Low In the Grave He Lay," (also titled, "Christ Arose"). Some of the newer songs also portray this joy, and the profundity of its reality, such as "Because He Lives." For a special blessing sing along as you listen to the lyrics, rejoice with the music, and ponder the magnificent reality!

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

- "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5)
- "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" (Hebrews 13:5; cf. Isaiah 41:10)
- "'…surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:20)
- "[Jesus said] 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.'" (John 16:33)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   1) Jesus' Resurrection is the seal of his work.
      g) People in Christ are at peace with God, the necessary basis of our most complete, true, and fulfilling peace.
         5- This great reality, expressed so beautifully and powerfully in the great hymns, e.g., "Because He Lives," that "because he [Jesus Christ] lives," those of us who believe in and follow him "can face tomorrow," this great reality is implemented by the related reality that Jesus is not only in heaven but is here with us in his spirit, in and through the Holy Spirit and corporately in his body, the church. As the Scriptures in the left column state, and also many other Bible texts, the Lord, with his love and all-sufficient care is constantly with us and fully able and willing to help us in all the ways we need between now and the time he brings us home, when the time is right in his sight. See also Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

Redemption

The Saving Work of Jesus Christ

"For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, [19]in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, [20]who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. [21]And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, [22]who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him." (1 Peter 3:18–22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' exaltation includes five key aspects.

2) Jesus victoriously descended into hell. With his spirit and his resurrected body reunited very early on the third day of his death, Jesus' next act in his state of exaltation and glorification was his glorious and immediate descent into hell, where he proclaimed the accomplishment of God's redemptive purposes, specifically the Lord's victory over Satan, the demons, and over all those who have disbelieved and disobeyed the triune God, for example those in Noah's time, and the final judgment to come. The risen and reigning Lord also affirmed his faithful and obedient followers, such as Noah. All of this is to encourage and assure us, when we are persecuted for Christ's sake. As Lenski has explained, "Noah and his family are saved; we, too, are 'saved by the resurrection of Christ,' by this exaltation of Christ at God's right hand." (For more on Jesus' preaching to the spirits in prison, see "Easter—Biblical Meaning of Easter Signs and Symbols: Commentary on the PowerPoint slides.")

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- "[4]On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. [5]For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'…

  "'[8]But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'

  "[9]After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight." (Acts 1:4-5; 8-9)
- "Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life— is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us." (Romans 8:34)
- "[24]but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. [25]Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them." (Hebrews 7:24-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   3) His ascension back to heaven occurred 40 days after his Resurrection. (Acts 1:3)
      a) He is preparing a place for us. (John 14:2)
      b) Our faith in him, the genuineness of which is confirmed by living for and daily striving to obey him (out of love and gratitude, not for merit), enables us to join him in heaven. (John 14:1-3,21; Romans 6:17; 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:57-58; Ephesians 2:8-10; 5:5; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 Pet. 1:7)
      c) Jesus intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:24-25)
      d) He rules the world in the interest of his church. (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:13-23)
      e) Ascended to the Father, Jesus and the Father both send the Holy Spirit to us. (John 14:26; 15:26; Luke 24:49)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- "The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. [31]God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel." (Acts 5:30-31)
- "which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21]far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22]And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, [23]which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:20-23)
- "who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." (1 Peter 3:22)
- "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   4) Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God, a figure in Scripture symbolizing power, and here also glory. Berkhof identifies the following attendant blessings that ensue.
      a) Seated with the Father and having all power, being almighty, means that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly the Pantokrator (Greek: Ruler over All [see below]) of the universe and of the church.
      b) He rules and protects his church and governs what occurs throughout the cosmos. The gates of hell will not overcome the church. (Matt. 16:18)
      c) He presents his completed sacrifice to the Father, making it effective by implementing its benefits for all who believe, including by continuing intercession for us.
      d) He continues to teach his people through the Holy Spirit and by his work in and through his heavenly and earthly servants.

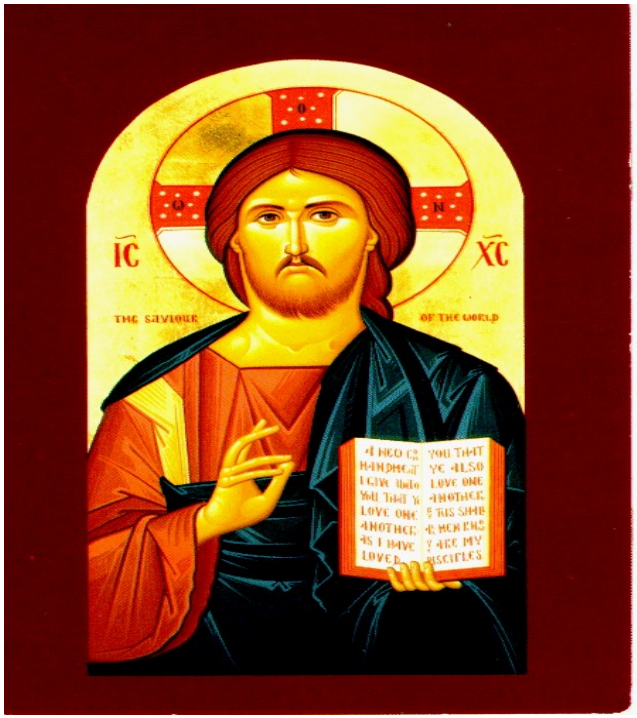
Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing? Pantokrator

The Saving Work of Christ

- "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty [παντοκράτωρ (*pantokratōr*)].'" (Revelation 1:8)
- "…and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, [21]far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. [22]And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, [23]which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:19-23)
- "who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him." (1 Peter 3:22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus' Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   4) Jesus is now <u>seated at the right hand of God</u>, the right hand being a figure in Scripture symbolizing power, and here also glory. See the next slide for an explanation of this icon.



Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing? Pantokrator

The Greek word παντοκράτωρ (*pantokratōr*) means almighty, omnipotent. It comes from two Greek words, πᾶν (*pan*), meaning all, whole, every, each, everyone, everything and κράτος (*kratos*) strength, power, might, force, dominion, authority, rule, sovereignty. The word is used by Jesus to refer to himself in Revelation 1:8, and it is used to describe him in other Bible passages as well. The letters, IC and XC, to the left and right as one faces the icon of Jesus, are the first and last letters in the Greek spelling of his name, Jesus (IC) and Christ (XC). The letters thereby further indicate who the icon represents: Jesus Christ. His great power is also symbolized in his right hand, a Biblical symbol of power (most people being right-handed thus recognize the meaning). The first two fingers represent Jesus Christ as the second person of the Trinity, and the two fingers and thumb touching represent the whole Godhead, the Trinity. This icon of Christ Jesus, which appears in the dome over the sanctuary of the Eastern Orthodox churches, provides further beautiful symbolism pointing to the powerful teaching of God's Word, which the Lord is holding and which points to and in essence is he himself. (John 1:1ff.) The dome, representing heaven, indicates that the congregation is worshiping not only with the rest of the global church militant (e.g., Ephesians 6:10-18; *op cit.* below, Ecclesiology) but also with the whole church triumphant who are with Christ Jesus, indeed with the triune God. (Revelation 4-5) We worship the Lord, under whom God has placed everything else. (Ephesians 1:19-23 et al.)

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done? and what is he doing?

The Saving Work of Christ

- "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. [32]All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33]He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. [34]"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31-34)
- "'Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, [23]that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father…. [24]"'I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life…. [27]And [the Father] has given [the Son] authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.'" (John 5:22-27)
- See also Acts 10:42; 17:31; Matthew 19:28; Luke 3:17; Romans 2:16; 14:9; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; James 5:9, 1 John 2:1.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

5. b. Jesus Christ's Exaltation Includes Five Key Aspects.
   5) Christ's exaltation will be seen in his physical and visible return to earth in his Second Coming in his function as Judge. (Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7. See more below in Eschatology.)
      a) Jesus' Second Coming is not to be confused with his coming with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (where he was in a spiritual and invisible form).
      b) Jesus will judge the world and bring to completion and perfection the salvation of those of us who belong to him.
      c) By God's grace, Jesus is both our judge (John 5:22-27) and our defense attorney, who is the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 2:1-2)
      d) In so doing, all will see the complete victory of Christ's redemptive work and his glorious exaltation.

Reflect/Discuss: How Would You Answer Jesus' Question to His Disciples: "Who Do You Say that I Am?" (Matthew 16:15)

This is the key question of life and eternity, which we should also ask of family members and others. The answer should include, but not limited to, the following:

- *Jesus is the Second Person of the triune God, the only begotten Son of God.* (John 3:16)
- *He is fully divine, being of one substance with the Father.* (John 3:16; 10:30)
- *He is fully human but perfect and sinless, and he suffered and died in our place.* (Matthew 1:18-25; 27:19-66; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14-15; 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19)
- *He physically rose from the dead.* (Luke 24:36-53; 1 Corinthians 15)
- *He ascended to heaven*. (Acts 1:11)
- *Jesus is Lord over all*. (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22)
- *He is coming again.* (John 21:22-23; Matthew 24:30-31; 25:31-46; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We will study this subject below in Eschatology.

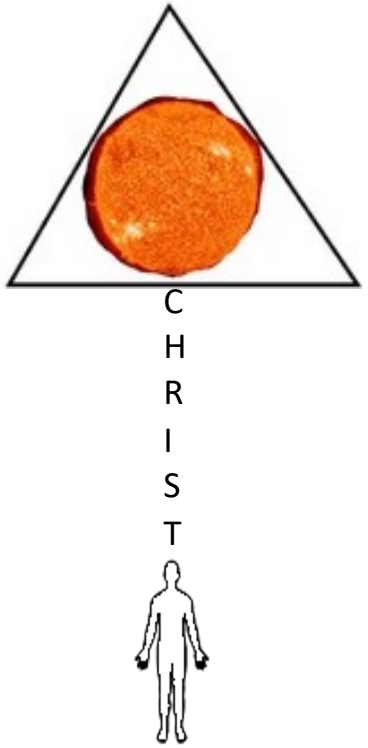
How Would You Answer Jesus' Question to His Disciples: "Who Do You Say that I Am?" (Matthew 16:15)

- Both the modernist and postmodernist are interested in Jesus. Ask them to tell you if they know about Jesus and, if so, what do they think about him? (Jesus' question to his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" is still the key question to ask people today and always. [Matthew 16:13]) In the ensuing discussion be sure to point out that, Jesus, who was born through the virgin, Mary, and whose legal father was Joseph, later said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) He did not say he was a truth, part of the truth, knew the truth, or pointed to the truth. He simply revealed that he is the truth! Further, he added that "for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." (John 18:37)
- Christ is also the basis of all truth. The second person of the Trinity, "is the image of the invisible God…all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15-17) He is the standard, the criterion, the benchmark, to determine the truth. Whenever we wonder what is true or right about a certain matter, we can and should look to Jesus' life and teaching.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

Identify and explain how it helps you in your daily life to know, and to know about, Jesus Christ and what he has done, is doing, and will do? (See also Eschatology.)



[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

also called

Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

and

The Application of Redemption

Who is the Holy Spirit, and what does he do?

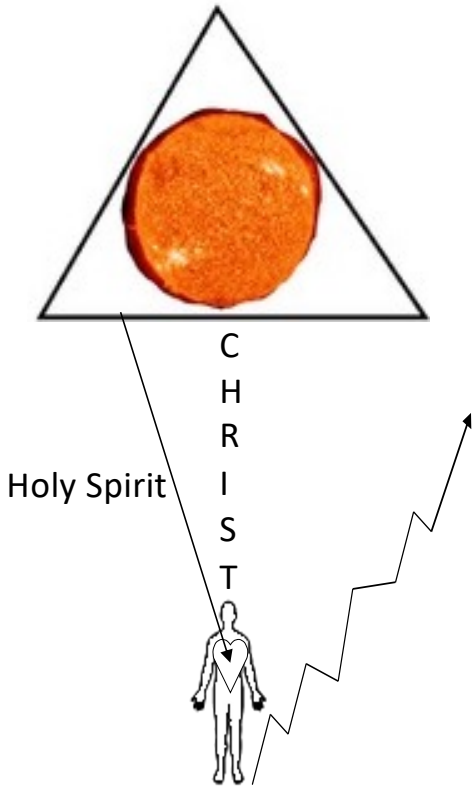
How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied?

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Soteriology is a study of all the Bible teaches about how the redemption Christ provides, is applied to, and becomes operational in human beings. Soteriology explains the process of salvation (< Greek, σώζω [*sōzō*] → save), including the application of Christ's work in the lives of individual people by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the triune God (e.g., providing the regeneration, new birth in Christ that brings a human being out of spiritual death into eternal life and helping the believer grow in sanctification, i.e., becoming holy and maturing in Christ-likeness), and the Spirit's provision of specific gifts for and fruit of ministry that glorifies God and accomplishes his purposes. Part of what this means for those who've been struggling with sin is that they have a new nature; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17) including a new identity and freedom in the power of the risen and reigning Christ! This doesn't mean for any of us that we instantly become all we should be; sanctification is a life-long development in Christ-likeness. Belief in Christ Jesus as our Savior and Lord places us in a new position, holy to God, but we need to develop in that holy state in cooperation with the Holy Spirit in a life-long maturation process in Christ. Is it easy? Not always. Is it possible? Yes with God's help! He helps us directly through his Holy Spirit, who intercedes for us with God the Father, and also through his church. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Soteriology. Since the Holy Spirit is actively involved in the other loci of systematic theology be sure to see those sections as well, in particular the section in Theology pertaining to the Trinity.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

- This fourth doctrine, the fourth main theme in God's plan of redemption, taught in the Bible is called by three different terms:
  1. Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation
  2. Pneumatology, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the triune God
  3. The application of Christ's redemption
- All three terms are accurate, for all describe the work of the Holy Spirit, the main agent in the process of making Christ's redemptive work operative in the lives of human beings. Thus, the human figure in the graphic is now white, cleansed by Jesus' shed blood applied to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Now begins the work of sanctification, pictured by the onward and upward, but jagged, not smooth, line.

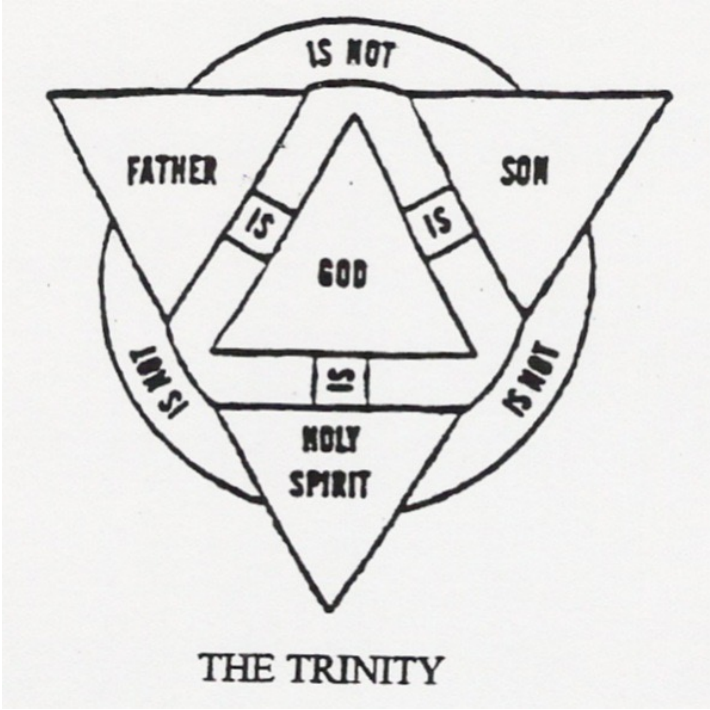


Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is <u>Triune</u>

- In addition to symbols from the natural order, that God has built into his creation to point to him (Romans 1:20), humans have made graphic symbols to try to visualize and understand the Biblical revelation of God as being three distinct Persons who share one substance, one essence.
- Here is one ancient symbol, referred to as the shield of the Holy Trinity, that has been found in medieval stained glass. The words, usually in Latin, read logically in any direction.

The Shield of the Holy Trinity



Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God Is Triune

- Father: He is the Creator (Deuteronomy 32:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 1:2; James 1:17) and Giver of "Every good and perfect gift" of all we value and enjoy. (James 1:17)
- Only begotten Son Jesus Christ: He reconciles us with the Father. All things were created through him, by him, and for him, and in him they hold together. As Lord over all we need not fear the world going out of control. (Psalm 8:6; John 1:3; Hebrews 2:6-8; 5:5 (Greek, NASB); Ephesians 1:18-23; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Romans 3:21-26)
- Holy Spirit: He applies Christ's redemption to us, gives us saving faith, guides us into all truth, and helps us. (1 Corinthians 12:3; John 16:13) He also regenerates us, i.e., gives us new birth (e.g., John 3:1-8), sanctification (e.g., Galatians 6:7-8), and gifts to serve (e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:4ff.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

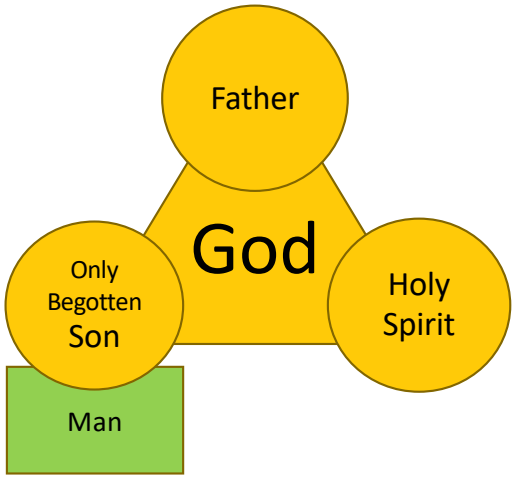
- For more of the practical implications and applications of the doctrine of the Trinity, see the sections on Theology, Christology, and Pneumatology/Soteriology.
- For more on the Trinity specifically, see my essay, "Who is God, and what is he like? Part 1: What is the Trinity?" https://fromacorntooak12.com/who-is-God/.

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; and what is he doing?

Characteristics of Jesus Christ

- "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me [Christ], because the LORD has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor…." (Isaiah 61:1-2; See also Daniel 7:13)
- "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. [17]The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:
[18] 'The Spirit [Holy Spirit] of the Lord [Father] is on me [Christ], because he has anointed me [Christ] to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,
[19]to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'
[20]Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, [21]and he began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'" (Luke 4:16-21)
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,…" (Matthew 28:19)
- "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Many texts in the Bible refer to all three persons in the Trinity in the same verse or passage.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

He dispenses…

Grace

Soteriology, our salvation, is all about God's grace to us in Jesus Christ.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

- This subject is all about God's grace to us in Jesus Christ.
- Grace is most parsimoniously defined as unmerited favor. Not only have we done nothing to earn his favor, we couldn't and wouldn't. We wouldn't even be motivated to do so, i.e., be receptive to opening the door to Him who "stand[s] at the door and knock[s]." (Revelation 3:20)
- The very faith that saves us, our faith wherein God credits us with Christ's righteousness, is a gift from him through the Holy Spirit. (John 6:44; 1 Corinthians 12:3)
- Even the good works he expects and requires of us, are enabled by his grace; thus we are saved **for** good works, **not by** good works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology

- The focus of the doctrine of soteriology is God's ***special grace***, the unmerited favor of God in the Holy Spirit's application of the work of Jesus Christ to individuals, wherein they are enabled to have saving faith and become believers in the Lord. Since the Holy Spirit is the key agent in the application of the work of Christ in the salvation of human beings, this doctrine is often also referred to as pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit.
- Yet, since the Holy Spirit is often the Person of the Trinity through whom God the Father grants blessings to unbelievers, even to those who will not come to faith and be saved, a prefatory observation on God's ***common grace***, the unmerited favor of God to all people, believers and unbelievers (cf. e.g., Matthew 5:44-45; 6:2,5,16), should be made and remembered.
- God blesses all people, throughout their whole lives, even those who neither acknowledge God nor their blessings from God. In order to teach and to witness most effectively, we need to be able to recognize and explain God's common grace to all human beings.

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

- "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)
- [6]"Scripture says: 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'… [13]Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." [14]Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. [15]Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." [16]But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil." (James 4:6; 13-16)
- Jesus said, "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full." (Matthew 6:2)
- See also Luke 12:16–20.

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

1. God's ***common grace***, his unmerited favor that he gives to all people, the righteous and the unrighteous, functions through the light of his general revelation in nature that enlightens everyone and serves to guide the conscience of the unbeliever. (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20)

   Even the good that unbelievers do is more about God than them. All that is good about them is from God, whether they acknowledge that reality or not. Everything good is from God. (James 1:17) If it's good, it's from God.

   Think about it. When someone says "I built all this myself," we can lovingly ask, "That's very nice, and who gave you the brain to do so? Going back farther, of all the countless eggs in your biological mother and the sperm in your father, who guided the two together to form you? As with all of us, if another sperm fertilized another egg, we wouldn't even exist." How do we know it wasn't by "chance?" See, e.g., the Bible texts in the left column.

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

- "For the invisible things of him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead [Greek: θειότης (*theiotēs*), Divinity];…" (Romans 1:20 KJV)
- "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [2]Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [3]For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. [4]For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." (Romans 13:1-4)

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

1. God's ***common grace***, his unmerited favor that he gives to all people, the righteous and the unrighteous, functions through the light of his general revelation in nature that enlightens everyone and serves to guide the conscience of the unbeliever. (Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:20)

   a. God's common grace functions through governments that constrain evil and promote good order and decency. (Romans 13:1-4)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

- "Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. [2]The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. [3]When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, [4]Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. [5]From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field." (Genesis 39:1-5)
- Cf. Proverbs 8; 12:7-8; 13:20-25; 16:7; 20:11; 21:15; 1 Peter 2:12.

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

b. God's common grace functions through public opinion that accords with God's will. "The light of God that shines in nature, especially when reinforced by the light of special revelation, results in the formation of a public opinion that is in harmony with the law of God; and this has a tremendous influence on the conduct of men who are very sensitive to the judgment of public opinion." (Louis Berkhof, 227) Thus, we're speaking here of public opinion that parallels God's Word and will, not the elements of so-called political correctness that is popular but contains and promotes ideology that is contrary to the Bible.

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

- "Wicked men are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous stands firm.
[8]A man is praised according to his wisdom, but men with warped minds are despised." (Proverbs 12:7-8)
- "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [2]Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [3]For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. [4]For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. [5]Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience." (Romans 13:1-5)

Means by Which God's Common Grace Functions

c. God's common grace functions through the punishment and rewards he dispenses. God has built into life here on earth a system of justice whereby he punishes people's evil and rewards those who do what is good. Berkhof observes, "The punishments have a deterring effect, and the rewards serve as incentives. Thus whatever there is of moral goodness in the world is greatly encouraged." (227)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

"As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. [13]Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. [14]But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. [15]You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. [16]In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.'" (Genesis 15:12-16)

Effects of God's Common Grace

d. God's common grace is seen in the prolonging of human lives in order to provide sufficient time to repent. Both the Greek and Hebrew words for patience mean longsuffering. How wonderfully merciful God is to patiently give so much time for sinful people and nations to repent (in the Bible meaning not only to feel sorry for but to cease doing, ***and*** turn away from, that which is evil).
   - REFLECT AND DISCUSS: With whom, and how, can we show more grace and patience? (E.g., with spouse, children, coworkers, neighbors?)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

- "Then God said to him in the dream, 'Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her.'" (Genesis 20:6)
- "You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, [7]yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me." (Genesis 31:6-7)
- "Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. [2]Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. [3]For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. [4]For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer." (Romans 13:1-4)

Effects of God's Common Grace

e. God's common grace also restrains sin in the lives of people individually and corporately.

1) As Berkhof says, "The element of corruption that entered the life of the human race is not permitted, for the present, to accomplish its disintegrating work." (227)
2) This is one reason why there will be much "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in hell. The Holy Spirit won't be there. Those who have chosen to reject God—who is all love and most holy—and have nothing to do with him will be given their desire in the final judgment. See more below in Eschatology.

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

- "The LORD said to Jehu, 'Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.'" (2 Kings 10:30)
- "Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him." (2 Kings 12:2)
- "And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that." (Luke 6:33)
- "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law," (Romans 2:14)

Effects of God's Common Grace

f. God's common grace to all people permits a sense of truth and its desirability, morality, and religion. Berkhof writes, "In virtue of common grace man still has some sense of the true, the good, and the beautiful, appreciates these in a measure, and reveals a desire for truth, for external morality, and even for certain forms of religion." (228)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

"(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, [15]since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)" (Romans 2:14-15)

Effects of God's Common Grace

g. The common grace God gives to all people permits a degree of civil righteousness. "Common grace enables man to perform what is generally called civil righteousness or natural good, works that are outwardly in harmony with the law of God, though entirely destitute of any real spiritual quality." (228)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

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- "The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. [15]The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. [16]You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. " (Psalm 145:9, 15-16)
- "But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45]that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44-45)

Effects of God's Common Grace

h. Undeserved natural blessings occur due to God's common grace to all people. Berkhof writes, "To common grace man further owes all the natural blessings which he receives in the present life. Though he has forfeited all, he receives abundant tokens of the goodness of God from day to day." (228)

Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

- "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. [36]Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36)
- "In the past, he let all nations go their own way. [17]Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." (Acts 14:16-17)

Effects of God's Common Grace

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Preface to Soteriology/Pneumatology: Common Grace

Effects of God's Common Grace

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- "…your Father who is in heaven…causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45 NASB)
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Effects of God's Common Grace

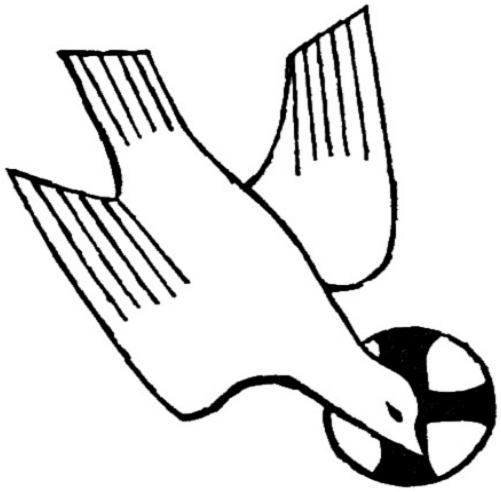
i. At the same time, we must be very careful to not misapply the Biblically-based, though relatively new, theological concept of common grace. Rightly used, this doctrine helps us understand and explain applications of God's love, patience, and other work in his world. The doctrine provides a bridge for the church to help secular people understand God's involvement in human life and in his creation. Yet, some modern theologians have overemphasized common grace so much that worldliness has impacted the church in the process, including the failure to focus on the far greater Biblical teaching on and importance of God's special grace in Jesus Christ. The same mistake is occurring with an overemphasis by some theologians on general revelation to the detriment of the Bible's main teaching concerning God's special revelation in Christ Jesus.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "'Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.'" (Isaiah 42:1)
- "Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. [14]But John tried to deter him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?' [15]Jesus replied, 'Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.' Then John consented. [16]As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. [17]And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits



The dove represents the Holy Spirit. The trefoil orb indicates the Holy Spirit is part of the triune God. (Cf. Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 3:16-17)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"If you love me, you will obey what I command. [16]And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor [*paraklētos*], to be with you forever— [17]the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's ***special grace*** in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, who is the key agent in the application to us of Jesus' redemption.
   a. Several English words translate the Greek word referring to the Holy Spirit, *Paraclete* (< παράκλητος [*paraklētos*], one called or sent for to assist another < παρά [*para*], by, by the side of + καλέω [*kaleō*], call— the Holy Spirit is **not** a lesser being than Christ Jesus or the Father).
      1) Advocate
      2) Comforter
      3) Counselor
      4) Helper

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. (Genesis 1:1-2)
- "When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing." (Hebrews 9:6-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's ***special grace*** in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, who is the key agent in the application to us of Jesus' redemption.
   b. In soteriology we see the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      1) The Holy Spirit has always been at work; he did not first appear at Pentecost in the New Testament.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." (John 16:12-15)
- "For there will be a time when people will not bear with sound doctrine; but according to their own lusts will accumulate teachers, tickling their ears." (2 Timothy 4:3, Greek. Sound familiar?)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. The Holy Spirit works in the life of individuals.
      2) The major function of the Holy Spirit is to point to Christ, which is why the church for 1900 years did not write or speak much, did not emphasize, the work of the Holy Spirit.
      3) An overemphasis on the Holy Spirit can and does take away from Christ and the main teaching of the Bible, which is ironic because the Holy Spirit's primary work is to reveal Christ, make faith in him possible, and apply Christ's work in and through his believers.
      4) Focusing more on feelings than facts, pleasure over principle, they want their ears tickled.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)
- "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." (Psalm 104:30)
- "like cattle that go down to the plain, they were given rest by the Spirit of the LORD. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name." (Isaiah 63:14)
- "'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'" (Haggai 2:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We here see the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      5) He specially inspired those who wrote the Word of God and protected them from sin, including error, as they wrote, so with confidence we have in the Bible the true Word of God. (2 Samuel 23:2; Nehemiah 9:30; Isaiah 59:21; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16)
      6) He brings into effect God's purposes in creation. (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30; Job 33:4)
      7) He brings into effect God's purposes in redemption. (Isaiah 32:15; 44:3; 63:11, 14; Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19; Haggai 2:5)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)
- "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." (Psalm 104:30)
- "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb." (Psalm 139:13)
- "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We here see the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      8) He equips his servants for their God-given tasks. (Exodus 31:3; Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 10:6; 16:13; Isaiah 11:2)
      9) He directs the ministries of his prophets. (1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Isaiah 48:16; Ezekiel 2:2; 3:14)
      10) He is the Giver of life to live by God's will. (Jeremiah 24:7; Ezekiel 11:19; 18:31; 36:26-27; Psalms 104:30; 139:13; John 3:5-6)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!" (Hebrews 9:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We here see the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      11) Relationship with Christ (John 3:5-6; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Hebrews 9:14)
      12) The Holy Spirit works in the life of the Christian.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. [29]For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. [30]And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:28-30)
- "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB)
- "…everything should be done in a fitting [εὐσχημόνως (*euschēmonōs* < εὐ {*eu*, well, rightly, good} + σχῆμα {*schema*, form})] and orderly [τάξις (*taxis*, orderly manner)] way." (1 Corinthians 14:40) One more text revealing God values order.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an *order of salvation*, also called by a Latin term, *ordo salutis*. This is not necessarily the same exact order in which the Spirit works in all people, but it is generally the process of the Spirit. Notice the logic in the process. The Biblical basis of the order is seen in Romans 8:28-30. The order is as follows.
            1- **Predestination and** its components, including **election** have been presented in *Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology*. The following slides review essential aspects of predestination and election for our study of Soteriology. See related sections of *Essential Christianity* for more information.

The Order of Salvation (*Ordo Salutis*)

Component	Who Acts	Key Bible Texts
1. Predestination, Election	God	Romans 9:18-24
2. Calling	God	1 Corinthians 1:9
3. Regeneration	God	John 3:3-8
4. Conversion	God	Acts 2:38
5. Faith	God and Man	1 Corinthians 12:3
6. Justification	God	Romans 5:1
7. Sanctification	God and Man	Philippians 2:12-13
8. Assurance of Salvation	God and Man	2 Thessalonians 3:3–5
9. Glorification	God	Romans 8:28-30

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
[11]In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit," (Ephesians 1:3-13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- *Predestination* refers to God's purposes pertaining to his rational, moral, creatures, including all humans, individually and in groups. His predestination concerning the angels is somewhat different. The focus here is on humans. Predestination consists of two aspects: election and reprobation.
- *Election* may be defined as "the eternal act of God by which from eternity out of pure grace for Christ's sake He has decreed to bestow those blessings on the Christians which through His call they now enjoy—conversion, justification, sanctification, and preservation in faith." (Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. 3)

  Election is one of what Biblical scholars refer to as a major motif or theme that occurs in many places throughout the whole Bible.

Theology: Who is God; what is he like; what has he done; and what is he doing?

God's Election and Predestination

"'For many are called, but few *are* chosen.'" (Matthew 22:14 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- Another text employing the passive voice that is unapparent in the English, but clarified in the Greek, supports rather than refutes the view of predestination and election herein presented. The text is Matthew 22:14. Lenski explains it well.
  - "Both κλητοί [called] and ἐκλεκτοί [chosen] are verbals and are equal to passive participles, the agent back of the passive idea being God: 'called by God,' 'elected by God.' Moreover, in both verbals the entire action is included, that of God's calling and that of God's electing."

R. C. H. Lenski, *Lenski New Testament Commentary* – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, p. 859.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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- "God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity .

b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.

12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.

a) Theologians see an order of salvation, also called by a Latin term, *ordo salutis*. This is not necessarily the same exact order in which the Spirit works in all people, but it is generally the process of the Spirit. Notice the logic in the process. The Biblical basis of the order is seen in Romans 8:28-30. The order is as follows.

2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers. See also e.g., Luke 5:32; John 7:37; Romans 1:6, and 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19)
- How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching [< κηρύσσω (*kērussō*), also tell, declare] to them? [15]And how can they preach unless they are sent? (Romans 10:14–15)
- "But since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, [25]since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, [26]I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you" (Proverbs 1:24-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers.
            a- External calling—is the presentation and offer of salvation in Christ alone to all who hear from every nation, tribe, people, and language (Revelation 7:9) together with an urgent exhortation of the need to repent and believe in Jesus Christ as one's only Savior and Lord by faith alone in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. All Christians are to *kērussō*, not just pastors, especially in conversations.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24]but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)
- "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)
- "'For many are called, but few *are* chosen.'" (Matthew 22:14 NASB See the section on predestination and election in the doctrine of theology above for an explanation of this text.)
- "…Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:15)
- "…no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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            2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers.
            a- External calling
            b- Internal or effectual calling—is the same word heard in the external call from God but that is made effective for salvation in the hearts and minds of some through the operation of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit of God operates through the preaching of the Word by making its persuasions effective, so that man listens to the voice of his God." (Berkhof, p. 235)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24]but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)
- "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2)
- know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." (3:19)
- "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)
- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he [generic: includes her] is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers.
            b- ***We need to know Christ, that is, to have a relationship with him, not just know about him, which involves the sincere and ongoing desire and goal to please our Lord (2 Corinthians 5:9), listen to his Word, obey him (John 14:21), talk with (pray to) him, and tell (make him known to) others.*** **This is who we are, our identity and our calling, our vocation (*op cit*.). Obeying Jesus greatly strengthens our witness for him and draws people to Christ and his church.**

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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- "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)
- "'For many are called, but few *are* chosen.'" (Matthew 22:14 NASB See the section on predestination and election in the doctrine of theology above for an explanation of this text.)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.

12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.

a) Theologians see an order of salvation.

2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers.

c- Calling to serve—God calls the church and individuals within the church to serve him, both in the church and in the world. We'll reflect on this aspect of God's calling when we examine the fifth of the loci, the doctrine of the church, ecclesiology. As we saw in the beginning of our study, the root word for church means to call out (ἐκ, [*ek*] + καλέω [*kaleō*] > ἐκκλησία [*ekklēsia*] = those who are called out) to serve God.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24]but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Corinthians 1:23-24)
- "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48)
- "'For many are called, but few *are* chosen.'" (Matthew 22:14 NASB See the section on predestination and election in the doctrine of theology above for an explanation of this text.)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**—God's gracious invitation to sinners to accept the salvation that Christ Jesus alone provides and offers.
            c- Calling to serve—In historic Christian theology, calling is also referred to as vocation
            < Latin *vocare* (*vocāre*), to call.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; [17] but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)
- "In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" (John 3:3)
- "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6)
- "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." (Romans 8:9-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth:
               a- We are not Christ-like by nature. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, all human beings are sinners by nature, (cf. Psalm 51:1-5; Romans 3:23) and to come into the presence of God, who is Most Holy, Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
               b- Berkhof defines regeneration as "that act of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy." (236)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Regeneration (< Latin: *re-* [again, anew] + *generare* [to beget]

God warned Adam that if he ate any fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. When he and Eve ate fruit from that tree they died, first in the corruption of their nature which separated them from God who is holy, holy, holy and later physically.

Jesus said, we must be born again (< Greek: γεννάω [*gennaō*, to beget, give birth to] + ἄνωθεν [*anōthen*, again], John 3:3ff., *et al*.), i.e., be regenerated, by the Holy Spirit. Jesus also said that he came that we might have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10) Paul explains that in Christ Jesus we have a new self that is alive and being renewed in Christ. (Colossians 3:10) The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, reveals the new self as νέος (*neos*), new in time or in origin, i.e., brand new in the sense of no longer being spiritually dead but born again and truly alive in the fullest sense. At the same time Paul quickly adds that this new self, καινός (*kainos*), i.e., new in nature or in quality, is being renewed, maturing in Christ. We have the same body and brain, but spiritually, in Christ, we are new and in a brand new (*neos*) relationship with the triune God and are a new (*kainos*) self. (Ephesians 4:24ff.; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

Physically, in many ways we may look as we did before being born again, living in and for Christ and dying to sin, but there is more and more evidence, as we mature in Christ, that manifests our new (*neos*) birth, which is seen in our putting to death sin and evil and choosing to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9), a maturing that makes us daily renewed (*kainos*). (Colossians 3:1-17)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Regeneration (< Latin: *re-* [again, anew] + *generare* [to beget])

Here is a testimony of what regeneration looks like in one's life. This anecdote is from a Roman Catholic ministry, Tradition, Family, Property (TFP): "…every day, TFP Student Action reaches more students with the truth. This anecdote also illustrates the doctrine of sanctification; we'll return to it in that section.

And God moves them.

For example, this message arrived from Colton, a young man in Washington State:

'When I first came upon one of TFP Student Action's videos, I would 'hate watch' it, which means I would watch it just to make fun of it or leave hateful comments.

'But as I watched, I saw the true colors of the [opposition], and I saw them for who they truly are: intolerant, closed-minded, ignorant, and hypocritical people. By viewing your content, I converted from loosely being Christian to being a devout Catholic and started attending church every Sunday. I became happier, better dressed, and more polite.

'These young men at TFP are the definition of America and true American values. I think that on that fateful day when I first clicked on a TFP video, it was God trying to herd me back to his flock of lambs.

'I am eternally in the debt of TFP, as they saved my soul from eternal damnation in Hell.'

Thank God."

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. [20]Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:13)
- “One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.“ (Acts 16:14)
- “It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.” (Romans 9:16)
- “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God’s special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            c- Regeneration is totally the work of God; humans do not cooperate. The Bible teaches that regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit apart from man’s cooperation, for unregenerate man is oriented away from God.
            d- Arminians disagree and wrongly teach that man does cooperate with God in regenerating himself.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new [LXX: < καινός (*kainos*)] spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:13)
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         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            e- The essential nature of regeneration can be described in the following ways.
            1] It is a profound and fundamental change in a person’s soul. As Berkhof says, God implants the principle of the new spiritual life in man, in a radical change of the governing disposition of the soul” that affects the person’s whole being. (236)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"'…I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you
from all the countries and bring you back into your
own land. [25]I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you
will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities
and from all your idols. [26]I will give you a new [LXX: <
kainos] heart and put a new [LXX: < *kainos*)] spirit [LXX:
πνεῦμα (*pneuma*)] in you; I will remove from you your
heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. [27]And I will
put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my
decrees and be careful to keep my laws. [28]You will live
in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my
people, and I will be your God. [29]I will save you from all
your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it
plentiful and will not bring famine upon you…[31]Then
you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds,
and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and
detestable practices. [32]…Be ashamed and disgraced for
your conduct, O house of Israel!
[33]"'…the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you
from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the
ruins will be rebuilt….[35][all] will say, "This land that was
laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the
cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed,
are now fortified and inhabited." [36]…I the LORD have
spoken, and I will do it.' (Ezekiel 36:24–36)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
               e- The essential nature of regeneration can be described in the following ways.
                  1] The LORD revealed through Ezekiel the profound and fundamental change in a person's soul, the *kainos* heart and spirit, that the LORD would do, yet in part in the OT, e.g., bringing the exiles back to the land he gave them (Ezekiel 36:24); in further part in the Messiah's (Christ's) first coming and his and the Father's sending the Holy Spirit (cf., 36:25-27); and to be consummated in his second coming (cf. 36:35).

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"'…I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. [25]I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. [26]I will give you a new [LXX: < *kainos*] heart and put a new [LXX: < *kainos*)] spirit [LXX: πνεῦμα (*pneuma*)] in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. [27]And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. [28]You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. [29]I will save you from all your uncleanness. I will call for the grain and make it plentiful and will not bring famine upon you…[31]Then you will remember your evil ways and wicked deeds, and you will loathe yourselves for your sins and detestable practices. [32]…Be ashamed and disgraced for your conduct, O house of Israel!
[33]"'…the Sovereign LORD says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt….[35][all] will say, "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited." [36]…I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it.' (Ezekiel 36:24–36)

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            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            e- The essential nature of regeneration can be described in the following ways.
            1] This revelation through Ezekiel is an example of the hermeneutical (*op cit*. Essential Christianity) principle known as near and far fulfillment, where a prophecy is implemented partially in a short time, typically in the lifetime of the first hearers, but completely fulfilled at a point far in the future (e.g., Galatians 4:4) and sometimes not until Jesus returns in the last Day.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new [LXX: < καινός (*kainos*)] spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new [< Greek: καινός (*kainos*)] creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)
- "children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:13)
- "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." (Romans 9:16)
- "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

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         a) Theologians see an order of salvation.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            e- The essential nature of regeneration can be described in the following ways.
            2] Regeneration is likely to be an instantaneous change, rather than one which is a gradual and lengthy process as in progressive sanctification or sanctification in the narrow sense. (See more in the discussion below on sanctification.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new [LXX: < καινός (*kainos*)] spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. 20Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new [< Greek: καινός (*kainos*)] creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)
- "children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:13)
- "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." (Romans 9:16)
- "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         a) Theologians see an order of salvation in the Bible.
            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            e- The essential nature of regeneration can be described in the following ways.
            3] Since regeneration is the internal work of God, it occurs internally, and it is observed only in its effects, except where regeneration occurs together with conversion.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “I will give them an undivided heart and put a new [LXX: < καινός (*kainos*)] spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. [20]Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.” (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. [17]Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new [< Greek: καινός (*kainos*)] creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)
- “children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:13)
- “It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.” (Romans 9:16)
- “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)
- I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)3- God’s special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to through the work of the Holy Spirit.

e- The essential nature of regeneration involves transformation from spiritual death to spiritual life.

4] The reference in Ezekiel and in 2 Corinthians to the new heart and the new creation as being καινός (*kainos*) new, indicates the believer in Christ is a new person in the most important sense: being spiritually renewed, not a totally different person. The believer’s very being, soul, is renewed in the vital transformation of his or her mind and heart, to now exist with God, who now dwells with the believer as in God’s original creation of Adam and Eve before they sinned and died spiritually, separating themselves from God. Sometimes a person will unwittingly say to another, “Get a life!” Well, in an infinitely greater sense, that is what God does for one who believes in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and Lord, moving from spiritual death to becoming spiritually alive in Christ through the operation of the Holy Spirit within the believer.

This dwelling is referred to theologically as the mystical union with Christ. Herein is another way Jesus fulfills his promise to be with us always. (Romans 8:9-10; Galatians 2:20; Matthew 28:20)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" (John 3:3)
- "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, [5]he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:4-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.
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            2- **Calling**
            3- **Regeneration**—The New Birth: We are not Christ-like by nature. Jesus said we need to be born again with a new nature.
            f- Some Christian denominations (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and many Lutherans) interpret passages such as Titus 3:5 as teaching baptismal regeneration, i.e., that not only spiritual renewal but also forgiveness of sins occurs at baptism. See more below in the section on baptism in the doctrine of Ecclesiology.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Berkhof insightfully observes the following relationship between calling and regeneration:

"The external call in the preaching of the Word, except in the case of [young (EDS addition)] children, precedes or coincides with the operation of the Holy Spirit in the production of the new life. Then by a creative act God generates the new life, changing the inner disposition of the soul. This is regeneration in the restricted sense of the word. In it the spiritual ear is implanted which enables man to hear the call of God to the salvation of his soul. Having received the spiritual ear, the call of God is now brought home effectively to the heart, so that man hears and obeys. [Compare the research on the three domains of human learning, on my Website at Curriculum Development and Lesson Planning: For Teachers & for Teachers of Teachers, pp. 7-14.] This effectual calling, finally, secures the first holy exercises of the new disposition that is born in the soul. The new life begins to manifest itself and issues in the new birth. This is regeneration in the broader sense and marks the point at which regeneration passes into conversion." (237)

For more on the effectual calling, see also the commentary by R. C. H. Lenski on Hebrews 9:15 in the Christology section.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "'Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.'" (Job 42:6)
- "Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?'" (Ezekiel 33:11)
- "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)
- "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)

4- **Conversion**. Since unregenerate man is turned away from God, he needs to be converted, i.e., turned around toward God. (Conversion < Latin: *convertere* [turn around] < *con* [against] + *vertere* [to turn])

a- Thus, with proper etymology, the Biblical and English words meaning to convert all involve the concept of turning around.

1] The Old Testament uses two words, emphasizing two aspects of conversion,

a] נָחַם (*nācham*), repentance typically involving a change of plan and action (Job 42:6)

b] שׁוּב (*shûv*), a turning about, especially with a return after a departure. (Ezekiel 33:11)

2] The New Testament uses two main words for conversion.

a] μετάνοια (*metanoia*), repentance, turning away from (Acts 2:38; 17:30)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)
- “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)
- **“**Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,” (2 Timothy 2:25)
- “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,” (Acts 3:19)
- “The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4- **Conversion**. Since unregenerate man is turned away from God, he needs to be converted, i.e., turned around toward God.

a- Hence, with proper etymology, the Biblical and English words meaning to convert, all involve the concept of turning around.

2] The New Testament uses two main words for conversion.

a] μετάνοια (*metanoia*), repentance turning away from, primarily one’s changing mentally and morally. (Acts 2:38; 11:18; 17:30; 2 Timothy 2:25) This word emphasizes repentance.

b] ἐπιστρέφω (*epistrephō*) turn, turn back, return, turning to God. (Acts 3:19; 11:21) This word always contains the two elements of conversion: repentance and faith (see below).

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)
- “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)
- **“**Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,” (2 Timothy 2:25)
- “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,” (Acts 3:19)
- “The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-a-

3] Thus, Berkhof refers to true conversion as “but the outward expression of the work of regeneration, or the accompanying change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner,” (242-243) and he defines conversion as “that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated, in their conscious life, to turn to Him in faith and repentance.” (*Summary*, 131)

b- Key characteristics of conversion include the following.

1] God works, and man cooperates (in contrast to regeneration where only God is active; man is passive). (Acts 2:38; 17:30)

2] The change is conscious, rather than subconscious as in regeneration.

3] The change is immediate, as in regeneration, not a process as in sanctification.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)
- “for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)
- **“**Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,” (2 Timothy 2:25)
- “When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, ‘So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life.’” (Acts 11:18)
- “The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-a-3] Thus, Berkhof refers to true conversion as “but the outward expression of the work of regeneration, or the accompanying change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner,” (242-243) and he defines conversion as “that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated, in their conscious life, to turn to Him in faith and repentance.” (*Summary*, 131)

b- Key characteristics of conversion include these that follow.

4] Conversion is not a legal act of God like justification, but a moral or re-creative act like regeneration; it does not alter the state of man (like justification) but his condition. (Berkhof, 245)

5] The conversion that follows regeneration occurs as a result of the work of God. Jesus said, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44; Cf. Philippians 2:13)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)
- "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:13)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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b- Key characteristics of conversion include these that follow.

6] Conversion involves both putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature. The person consciously rejects the old sinful life and turns to a life in communion with and devoted to God. (245)

7] Conversion, as regeneration, is not repeated. As Berkhof explains, conversion "is but the initial outward manifestation, in the conscious life of man, of the change wrought in regeneration." (243)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)
- "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)
- "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." (Romans 3:20)
- "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," (Acts 3:19)
- "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-

c- Conversion involves two elements: faith and repentance. We'll consider the last one first. We'll reflect on faith in the next aspect of the *ordo salutis*.

1] Repentance reflects on the past; faith on the future. Berkhof defines repentance as "that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin." (*Summary*, 132)

a] Characteristics of repentance include:

1} an intellectual element whereby, primarily due to reflection on God's law, one consciously views his or her past life as a sinner, including personal defilement, guilt, and total inability to become right with God by him or herself;

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "Now I rejoice [literal Greek], not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. [10]Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:9-10 [7:9-10 show sorrow and repentance are not synonyms. Repentance includes behavior change. Also, Greek: χαίρω (*chairō*), rejoice {"happy" not in the Greek, cf. NASB and KJV}])
- "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord," (Acts 3:19)
- "The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord." (Acts 11:21)
- "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)
- "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-

c- Conversion involves two elements: faith and repentance. We'll consider the last one first. We'll reflect on faith in the next aspect of the *ordo salutis*.

1] Repentance reflects on the past; faith on the future. Berkhof defines repentance as "that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin." (*Summary*, 132)

a] Characteristics of repentance include:

2} an emotional element involving a sincere sense of sorrow for sinning against God who is all love and most holy; and

3} a volitional element involving one's will to change, including away from sin, to seek God's forgiveness and to try to please God always.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)
- “In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)
- "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24]leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)
- "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16]But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' [17]If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-

c- Conversion involves two elements: faith and repentance. We’ll consider the last one first. We’ll reflect on faith in the next aspect of the *ordo salutis*.

1] Repentance reflects on the past; faith on the future. Berkhof defines repentance as “that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin.” (*Summary*, 132)

b] Acts of repentance, *metanoia*, turning away from (Acts 2:38; 17:30) include:

1} Confession of sin;

2} Contrition, i.e., <u>sincere</u> <u>sorrow</u>, for sin;

3} Commitment to not do the sin again; and

4} Restitution (Matthew 5:23ff., 18:15ff.) when needed.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)4-

c- Conversion involves two elements: faith and repentance. We considered the last one first. We reflect on faith in the next aspect of the *ordo salutis*.

1] Repentance reflects on the past; faith on the future. Berkhof defines repentance as “that change wrought in the conscious life of the sinner by which he turns away from sin.” (*Summary*, 132)

2] Faith has a future perspective. Berkhof defines true saving faith as “a certain conviction, wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the gospel, and a hearty reliance on the promises of God in Christ.” (250)

+ We now turn to this next aspect of the Holy Spirit’s work in the order of salvation.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. [20]Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God." (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- "In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" (John 3:3)
- "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6)
- "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness." (Romans 8:9-10)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

NOTE: Be certain to include God's Word in your answers. This is not an exhaustive list; what other questions should be added?

1. In the light of our study of regeneration, the new birth, and conversion, what very practical and helpful implications can you identify?
2. What implications of these doctrines come to mind for hiring people for your business, especially those who will become leaders, e.g., foreman, department chair, executive? How will a Christian judge function differently from a pagan?

[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)
- "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)
- "That 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. [10]For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. [11]As the Scripture says, 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'" (Romans 10:9-11)
- "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3) [If you so believe in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit lives in you. (1 Corinthians 6:19; cf. 15-17) Think about and meditate on that great reality!]
- "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
      a- The author of faith is God through his Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)
      b- The basis of faith is Jesus' resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:14) See also the Timothy Keller quote below.
      c- The means of faith is the operation of the Holy Spirit on human hearts and minds who hear the Word of God proclaimed. (1 Corinthians 12:3; Romans 10:4,9-11,13-14; Revelation 3:20) But some will refuse to believe: some for a while, and some will never believe. (Romans 10:16-21) As we saw above in the Theology section, God is patient, but he doesn't force people to believe.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- “Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. [25]So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.’
[26]A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’
[27]Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’
[28]Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’
[29]Then Jesus told him, ‘Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.’
[30]Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. [31]But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:24-31)
- “For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
d- Three main elements of faith are evident.
1] HEAD: Knowledge of God and his promises, including the Resurrection of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, is essential, e.g., Romans 10:9. A sinful person with this knowledge, even though limited, understands the basic truths of the Gospel of Christ that with the Holy Spirit’s help resonate in the heart of the sinner who believes.

- In his book, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, Timothy Keller asserts, “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn’t rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said? The issue on which everything hangs is not whether or not you like his teaching but whether or not he rose from the dead.” (P. 202)

Sound reasons for believing Jesus rose from the dead exist. See the Prolegomena section above, at the beginning of this PPT Program.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)

5- **Faith** (John 6:40)

d- Three main elements of faith are observed.

2] <u>HEART</u>: Reflection on this knowledge, produces an emotional element that emerges as a result of the conviction of the huge importance of faith in Christ Jesus, which Berkhof describes as gripping one's soul; which Arthur DeKruyter refers to as confidence in God and his promises, resulting in assent; and which I also sense as a daily desire motivated by love to express gratitude to God for our redemption in Jesus Christ at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! Other motives for doing works are joy and gladness. If at first those feelings are not manifest or experienced, keep doing the works, while thinking about all you count as good. Think about where all that good ultimately comes from. Over time, the joy and other feelings will arise.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
d- Three main elements of faith are identified.
3] HANDS: A volitional element constitutes the third component of faith. This part comprises the will which sets the direction of one's orientation to life, involving his or her desire to please and to obey God. It involves a personal trust in Christ Jesus as one's Savior and Lord and, Berkhof writes, "a surrender of the soul as guilty and defiled to Christ, and a reception and appropriation of Him as the source of pardon and spiritual life. It naturally carries with it a certain feeling of safety and security, of gratitude and joy. Faith, which is in itself certainty, tends to awaken a sense of security and a feeling of assurance in the soul." (252) These emotions that accompany our cognition and motivate our actions, indicate that the these three elements of faith are not discrete categories but are interrelated on a continuum comprising our whole being in relationship with God forever!

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1**)**
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(**Ephesians 2:8-10**)**
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17**)**
- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," **(**Romans 5:1**)**
- "…being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" (Romans 3:24-25 NASB. See also 3:22-23.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
e- The object of saving faith can be seen in a general sense and in a specific sense.
1] In general, saving faith involves believing in the whole of God's revelation as disclosed in the Bible. Also included is that which can be deduced from God's Word by accurate and necessary inference from the Bible, such as the doctrine of God as triune, the words triune and Trinity not appearing in the Bible, but the revelation that God subsists as three personal distinct beings who share one substance, one essence, is revealed throughout both testaments. (Genesis 1:26; Isaiah 61:1; Matthew 28:19; 1 Peter 1:2. See the section above on Theology.)

+ The focus of the whole Bible is on the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the meaning of what he did.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Good Friday is called Great Friday in the Eastern Orthodox tradition because of the difficulty of seeing the good in Good Friday. However, the incalculable goodness is strikingly evident when thinking about what occurred on Good Friday. In the light of God being most holy (i.e., holy, holy, holy as he reveals in Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8), God's love, the core of his being (1 John 4:8) from which all his other multitudinous blessings flow, is plainly evident and clearly observable. Without the death of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, no one would have forgiveness of his or her sinfulness and sins; no forgiveness would be possible. There was, still is, and forever will be no other way for the sufficient satisfaction of Divine justice, and therefore no relationship with God was, is, or forever will be available apart from faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus himself said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) God does not change; he is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17) "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)

Believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, because of him, are able and prefer to focus on the positive rather than the negative. As noted above, the mighty act of love that Jesus did in his suffering in our place, thus making atonement or propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:25; 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-18; Hebrews 2:9,17), powerfully demonstrates that God brings good out of evil, and at great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! "Propitiation" comes from the Greek verb, **ἱλάσκομαι**, *hilaskomai,* which means propitiate. What does propitiate mean? (In addition to the following, review the information in the Theology section above pertaining to the fear of God.)

"'To propitiate God' (to find His favor and thus avert His wrath) is to reestablish the communion with God which was shattered because of sin. According to the Bible this can only take place through propitiation. Such a condition is realized through the substitutionary punishment of a sacrifice. The atonement is effected when an innocent life is given in exchange for a guilty life; it redeems that which is otherwise condemned. The innocent life is offered (sacrificed) on behalf of the one deserving punishment. As a consequence of the sacrifice the guilty party is freed from guilt since payment has been made to God by the offering. The sinful acts are not nullified (expiated); rather, God's wrath is executed upon the substitute." (WORDsearch, The Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary – Zeta-Kappa)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Here is a good starting place in our witness for Jesus Christ. All other religions who believe in a god, and/or other higher beings such as ancestors, are trying to propitiate that god and/or those other beings, that is to avert his, her, or their wrath. *A **huge** difference between all other religions and Christianity, is that all other religions are autosoteristic,* that is, literally self-saving; they are prescriptions for how humans earn their salvation by following a set of rules prescribed by that religion as to how to avert the wrath of their god or goddess, and/or other beings, and earn their own salvation.

In Biblical Christianity, God, out of his own great and steadfast love, takes the initiative and lovingly and justly propitiates his own wrath against sin and evil in the sacrifice of his innocent and perfect only begotten Son, the benefits of which come to us by our faith, not by doing works to try to earn salvation. Works are an essential part of our faith in Christ Jesus, but they are an effect, ***not*** the cause, of our salvation. As Christians, our motivation to do good works is to express thanksgiving to God for what he has done for us; to show the genuineness of our faith in Christ and the triune God which saves us; to obey God whom we love (cf. e.g., John 14:21; 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.); to experience the health, joy, freedom from bondage to the yoke of the Old Testament law (cf. Galatians 5), and other well-being that doing God's will provides; and to be effective in our witness for Christ, indeed for the/our triune God. See, e.g., "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—[9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10) Pertaining to health in obeying God, consider if all people would obey the 10 Commandments, they would never experience the 50 sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) that are morphing, growing in number, and some of which are uncurable and deadly.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Thus, since all other religions are autosoteristic, a good starting point for a witness to someone who is in another religion, is to ask these questions:

- "How do you feel about having to earn your own salvation?"
- "What occurs when you fail to live up to your own goals, much less your religion's?"
- "What do you do with your guilt?"
- Then ask, "How would you like to have complete peace of mind and heart and be relieved of the burden of appeasing your god's wrath and of trying to earn your own salvation?"

Gladly tell this person about the one true God, including his only begotten Son, Jesus, and what he has done for you and all who will believe in and follow him.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

See these and many other related Scriptures texts:

- “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;” (Romans 3:23-25 NASB)
- “And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation. [12]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—” (Romans 5:11-12 NASB)
- “For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. [17]Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” (Hebrews 2:16-17 NASB)
- “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [18]Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, [19]namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19 NASB)

This reconciliation with our just and loving God gives us great relief from the burden of our sin, sins, and guilt. Thanks be to God! And that is good, indeed very, very GOOD!

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

<u>See also these texts pertaining to faith and assurance in God's Word:</u>

- "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." (John 5:24; cf. 6:40)
- "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, [11]and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10-11)
- "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. [10]This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."…"[18]Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. [19]This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence" (1 John 3:9,10,18,19)
- "therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure." (Thessalonians 1:4)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (John 1:45)
- "That 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." (Romans 10:9)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(**Ephesians 2:8-10**)**
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17**)**
- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," **(**Romans 5:1**)**
- "…being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" (Romans 3:24-25 NASB. See also 3:22-23.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
      e- The object of saving faith can be seen in a general sense and in a specific sense.
      2] Saving faith in the more specific sense involves more than the necessary intellectual agreement with the whole Bible as God's Word. Such intellectual agreement is not the specific act of faith that justifies one in God's sight and directly saves him or her. The whole Bible points to Christ Jesus, and the object of saving faith is Jesus Christ. (Recall St. Augustine: "The new is in the old concealed; the old is in the new revealed.") The NT completes, it does not delete, the OT. Specifically, saving faith comes, and matures, as the believer, enabled by the Holy Spirit, accepts the doctrines concerning Christ (for example Romans 10:9 and John 14:6) and his work and God's promises that motivate trust in Christ Jesus. "Briefly stated, the object of saving faith is Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation in Him. The special act of saving faith consists in receiving Christ and resting on Him as He is presented in the gospel, John 3:15,16,18; 6:40." (Berkhof, 253)

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- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1**)**
- "In him [Christ Jesus our Lord, v. 11] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (Ephesians 3:12)
- "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12 KJV)
- **"**let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22)
- "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end," (Hebrews 6:11 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
      f- The assurance of faith is a gift of God that believers can have. Berkhof observes, "…true faith, including, as it does, trust in God , naturally carries with it a sense of safety and security, though this may vary in degree. The assurance which is included in faith is not always a conscious possession, however, since the Christian does not always live the full-orbed life of faith and consequently is not at all times aware of the riches of the life of faith. He is often swayed by doubts and uncertainties, and is therefore urged to cultivate assurance…. Assurance can be cultivated by prayer, by meditating on the promises of God and by the development of a truly Christian life in which the fruits of the Spirit become evident." (254)
      (See also John 6:40; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 1 John 3:9, 10, 18, 19; Romans 5:1 and 3:22-25 NASB.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1**)**
- "In him [Christ Jesus our Lord, v. 11] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence." (Ephesians 3:12)
- "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." (2 Timothy 1:12 KJV)
- "And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end," (Hebrews 6:11 NASB)
- "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope." (1 Thess. 4:13)
- "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." (1 Peter 1:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
g- The Biblical definition of faith, which includes its accompanying assurance and our hope, is clear, e.g., in the book of Hebrews, especially in the original Greek, cf. 1:3; 11:1, that the hope we have is assured (ὑπόστασις [*hupostasis*], substance, underlying essence, assurance, confidence). See also the other uses of *hupostasis*, in the Bible referred to herein.
1] This assurance is accompanied by being certain (Greek: ἔλεγχος [*elenchos*], proof, evident demonstration, evidence [KJV], conviction [NASB]), in which the Holy Spirit enables believers to use their heads (e.g., in knowing and understanding God's Word, in particular the record of the 500+ who witnessed Jesus' Resurrection appearances), hearts (openness and receptivity to believe), and hands (responding to their faith with hope and gladly telling others).
2] Hope in Christ is not wishful thinking that is quickly lost when hard times occur. Our hope in Christ is a realized expectation, a present reality, that we will experience in full in the next, the eternal, phase of life.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1**)**
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(**Ephesians 2:8-10**)**
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17**)**
- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," **(**Romans 5:1**)**
- "…being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" (Romans 3:24-25 NASB. See also 3:22-23.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

NOTE: Be certain to include God's Word in your answers. This is not an exhaustive list; what other questions should be added?

1. In the light of our study of the assurance of faith, what can you say to help people who worry about whether they have saving faith?
2. What can you say to a person who says, "Faith is all that you have to have; it doesn't really matter what you believe, just that you have faith and you'll be fine?"
3. What are the implications for elections? How will a Christian function in office differently from a pagan? Why do you think John Jay, the first Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, made this statement? "It is the duty—as well as the privilege and interest—of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." (Barton, p. 21)

[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- [Jesus said] "…by their fruit you will recognize them. [21]'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.'" (Matthew 7:20-21)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—[9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(**Ephesians 2:8-10**)**
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17; cf., 1 John 2:3-6**)**
- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," **(**Romans 5:1**)**
- "…being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" (Romans 3:24-25 NASB. See also 3:22-23.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
      h- The requirement of faith: works (Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:17; Matthew 7; Luke 3:8; Hebrews 5:7-9; Revelation 20:12) Without works, faith is only empty and ineffective words, one reason some people don't receive that for which they pray; God has not promised to reward disobedience, as the couple above who would have devotions before committing adultery. Works don't save us but give evidence of the genuineness of our true faith that saves. (Cf. Matthew 11:19) Works are what we are saved to do.
      1] Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) Professor of the History of Christianity, Lyle D. Bierma, writes, "Our works do not merit salvation, but they are expressions of gratitude to God for our salvation…. Good works are not the basis of our salvation but its fruit." (CTS *Forum*, Spring 2017, p. 11)
      2] CTS Professor of New Testament, Jeffrey A. D. Weima, states that "Works may not be a *condition* of being justified, but they are a consequence of being justified." (CTS *Forum*, Spring 2017, p. 5)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)
- "Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus be cursed,' and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit. " (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, [24]but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Romans 4:23-24)
- "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1**)**
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17**)**
- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," **(**Romans 5:1**)**
- "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." (Romans 10:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40) Thus, we see faith in the Biblical sense is *no leap of faith*; it is based on a rational use of the reasoning God has given us humans as part of his image in which he created us, enabled by his Holy Spirit to think rightly. (1 Corinthians 12:3)
   6- **Justification** is by faith in Christ, the genuineness of which is seen by willing obedience to God, including doing what is good. (Romans 5:1; 10:4; 1 John 2:3-6)
      a- Definition: A legal, judicial, forensic, act of God, whereby he declares the sinner innocent, righteous in God's sight, on the basis of the believer's faith in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1) It is done once for all; it doesn't need to be repeated. It affects the ***state*** of the sinner with respect to his or her relationship with God, ***not*** his or her ***condition*** (as in conversion).

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

For Reflection and Discussion

Think about that last section: Justification is a judicial act of God…in which He declares each believer righteous in His sight, crediting him or her with Christ Jesus' righteousness by his or her faith in Jesus…done once for all…and affects the ***state*** of his or her relationship with God.

1. Assured of forever being in a ***state*** of righteousness with God in Christ, what can you say to internal misgivings and/or external suggestions that you aren't worthy to be related to or heard by God?
2. How does knowing that you live with God in a ***state*** of righteousness, credited with Jesus' righteousness, make you feel?
3. What will you say to yourself the next time you are plagued with guilt for something you've asked forgiveness for, even long ago? (Don't forget to thank God!)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)
- "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.'" (Romans 4:3; cf. 4:9)
- "The words 'it was credited to him' were written not for him alone, [24]but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead." (Romans 4:23-24)
- "…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. [10]For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." (Romans 10:9-10)
- "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes." (Romans 10:4)
- "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." **(**James 2:17**)**

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   5- **Faith** (John 6:40)
   6- **Justification** is by faith in Christ, the genuineness of which is seen by willing obedience to God, including doing what is good. (Romans 5:1; 10:4; 1 John 2:3-6; 1 Peter 1:7)
   b- The Biblical words mean both justice and righteousness.
      1] צֶדֶק (*tsedheq*), righteousness, justice (Genesis 15:6)
      2] δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosunē*), righteousness, equity, justice (Romans 1:17; 4:3)
      3] The words refer to God as Judge declaring human beings righteous, just by faith in Him. As Berkhof clarifies, "in Scripture 'to justify' does not mean to *make* but to *declare* righteous." (256)

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- "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," (Romans 5:1)
- "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." (Galatians 2:16)
- "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification** means that God looks at me as justified, i.e., "Just-if-I'd" never sinned, due to being credited with the righteousness of Christ.
   c- Characteristics of justification include the following.
      1] God's declaration forgives us, removes our guilt, and restores (rights as heirs) to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their only Savior and Lord.
      2] Justification is an objective act related to <u>state</u> of the sinner, <u>not</u> to his or her <u>condition</u>.
      3] Justification is a single final act of God; it is not a continuous process in the believer as in progressive sanctification.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- "…justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; [25]whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation [b]in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;" (Romans 3:24-25)
- "since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith." (Romans 3:30)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—[9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
d- The only means of justification is by faith in Jesus Christ as one's only Savior and Lord. (Romans 3:25,28,30; Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9) This reality does not at all mean works are unimportant—far to the contrary, as we saw in our previous discussion of faith! We are ***not*** saved ***by*** good works ***but for*** good works. (Ephesians 2:8-10)
+ Illustrate with a coin. Justification is heads, and works is tails. But if one reverses the matter in his or her thinking, and makes works heads and faith tails, then one has the unbiblical concept of works righteousness. Biblically, works follows faith and shows the faith is real and bearing the fruit the Lord requires. (Matthew 7:20)

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- "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." (Galatians 2:16)
- "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:9)
- What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? [2]By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Romans 6:1-2) [Good works must follow saving faith, but the desire and the doing are from God's grace.]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
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         + Illustrate with a coin. Justification is heads, and works is tails. But if one reverses the matter in his or her thinking, and makes works heads and faith tails, then one has the unbiblical concept of works righteousness. Works follows faith and shows the faith is real and bearing the fruit the Lord requires. (Matthew 7:20)

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- "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, [23]for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24]and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:22-24)
- "He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification." (Romans 4:25)
- "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Romans 5:9)
- "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19 [See also vss. 17-18.])
- "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification**/Justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
   e- The ground of justification is seen only in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ that is credited, or imputed, to those who believe in him. Christ has done what we ourselves could never do. This faith, recognition, acknowledgement, and testimony is the firm foundation of our justification.

   + Notice what this reality means! It is the basis of our confidence in our justification, indeed our salvation, if and when we are ever tempted to doubt our salvation. The assurance we have that we are justified and saved is not in ourselves but in Christ Jesus!

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- "'Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. [39]Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.'" (Acts 13:38-39)
- "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," (Romans 8:1)
- "that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- "and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
   f- The elements of justification include a negative dimension and a positive dimension, yet both are good news!
   1] The negative element, concerning one's sin, involves the forgiveness of sins on the basis of the righteousness of Jesus Christ that has been credited to him or her who believes in Christ.

   On the next slide, Berkhof explains well the very practical and eternal blessings God grants to us in forgiving our sins when he justifies us in Christ.

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Berkhof offers comforting commentary on the forgiveness of sins in justification. Notice again the hugely practical application of this rich historic Christian theology!

The pardon granted in justification applies to all sins, past, present, and future, and therefore includes the removal of all guilt and of every penalty. This follows from the fact that justification does not admit of repetition, and from such passages as Rom. 5:21; 8:1, 32-34; Heb. 10:14;* Ps. 103:12; Isa. 44:22… It may seem to be contradicted by the fact that Christ taught His disciples to pray for the forgiveness of sins, and that Bible saints are often found pleading for pardon and obtaining it, Matt. 6 :12; Ps. 32:5; 51:1-4; 130:3,4. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the sins of believers in themselves still constitute guilt (though it is already covered), and as such call for confession; that the consciousness of guilt still remains and naturally urges the believer to confess his sin and to seek the comforting assurance of forgiveness; and that the consciousness of pardon, which is repeatedly obscured by sin, is again quickened and strengthened by confession and prayer, and by a renewed exercise of faith. (257-258)

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*"…because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." (Hebrews 10:14)

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"**…because by one sacrifice he has made perfect** [τετελείωκεν (*teteleiōken* < τελειόω {*teleioō,* complete, "to perfect a person, advance a person to a completeness of its kind, which needs no further provision,"* consummate (*op cit.*)} < τέλος (*telos*), end, termination, conclusion, culmination, fulfillment, consummation, a state, such as being complete, perfect, total.**) All this pertaining to the definition of the verb is reinforced by its being in the indicative mood (an assertion of an objective fact, rather than a wish or a command), perfect tense (expressing durative, continuous, action), and active voice (emphasizing and reinforcing that it is Jesus doing the acting).] **forever those who are being made holy** [ἁγιαζομένους (*hagiazomenous* < ἁγιάζω {*hagiazō*, sanctify, set apart} < ἅγιος (*hagios*, holy; set apart, separate from common use; pure; saint) Again, the definition of the verb is reinforced by its being in the present tense and the middle voice (denoting that we, too, are active in our sanctification [*op cit.*])]**.**" (Hebrews 10:14) All this includes each of us who believe in Christ Jesus individually and, assembled together (ἐκκλησία [*ekklēsia*] assembly, congregation, church), the church. How's that for an rock-solid basis for a healthy self-concept of dignity, worth, and inestimable value?

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**The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited), p. 401.

***Recall here Jesus' words on the cross, "**It is finished**" (John 19:30), and the application to each believer in him. "Finished" (Τετέλεσται [*Tetelestai*] < τελέω (*teleō*) verb, to complete, finish < *telos*, consummation, perfect state.

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Lenski's additional analysis of the verse is insightful and uplifting.

"While the saints of all ages are referred to, we believe that in οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι [*hagiazomenoi*], 'the ones being sanctified,' we have the idea of the entire course of their sainthood;* from its beginning to its consummation it appropriates the one offering of Christ as the means by which he has brought them to completeness, to the great goal set by God. All Jewish sacrifices are not a means that achieves this. The main point is that we should not think merely of being sanctified in the narrow sense of the term, sanctified in holy living, but in the wide sense, namely being cleansed from sin by justification through Christ's sacrifice, a justification that is entirely complete and abides forever, of which holy living is only the fruit."**

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*As in the preceding slide, the root word, ἅγιος (*hagios*), means, holy, set apart, saint. In the New Testament, all believers in and followers of Christ Jesus are saints.

**R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 338.

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- “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— [13]children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:12-13)
- “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ [16]The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,” (Romans 8:15-16 NASB; cf. KJV and Greek)
- “so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. [6]Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:5-6 NASB; cf. KJV and Greek)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
6- **Justification**/justified: “Just-if-I’d” never sinned.
f- The elements of justification include a negative dimension and a positive dimension, yet both are good news with great comfort!
2] The positive element, contains two parts, God’s adoption of the believer and the privilege of eternal life.
a] When we are justified, God adopts us as his child, “that is, places him in the position of a child and gives him all the rights of a child. This sonship by adoption must be distinguished from the moral sonship of believers, which results from regeneration and sanctification. Believers are not only children of God by adoption and therefore in a legal sense, but also by virtue of the new birth and therefore in a spiritual sense. This twofold sonship is mentioned together in John 1:12,13; Rom. 8:15,16; Gal. 4:5,6.” (Berkhof 258-259) Throughout the Bible, the term, “children of God,” only refers to those who believe in God.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

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- “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— [13]children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:12-13)
- “For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ [16]The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, [17]and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him.*” (Romans 8:15-17 NASB; cf. KJV and Greek)
- “so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. [6]Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:5-6 NASB; cf. KJV and Greek)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification**/justified: “Just-if-I’d” never sinned, due to being credited with Christ’s righteousness
   f- The elements of justification include a negative dimension and a positive dimension, yet both are good news with great comfort!
   2] The positive element, contains two parts, God’s adoption of the believer and the privilege of eternal life.
   b] The privilege of having eternal life is essentially part of our adoption. Berkhof explains it well: “When sinners are adopted to be children of God, they are invested with all the legal rights of children, and become heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17. They are constituted heirs of all the blessings of salvation in the present life, and in addition to that receive a title to ‘an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,’ reserved in heaven for them. I Pet. 1:4.” (259)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." (Romans 3:20)
- "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, 'The righteous will live by faith.'" (Galatians 3:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
g- Justification takes place in two dimensions, an active dimension and a passive dimension.
1] The active dimension takes place in the tribunal of God, Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:11. In heaven God, the righteous Judge, declares the sinner who believes in Christ as righteous, not due to any merit of the sinner him or herself (for our debt of sin far outweighs any good we have ever done—even if we'd only sinned once, we would have offended God who is not only holy but holy, holy, holy), but due to God's crediting to him or her the righteousness of Christ.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." (Romans 3:20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
g- Justification takes place in two dimensions, an active dimension and a passive dimension.
2] The passive dimension takes place in the mind and heart, including the conscience, of the sinner. As Berkhof explains, "A justification that is not brought home to the sinner would not answer the purpose. Pardon means nothing to a prisoner unless the glad tidings are communicated to him and the doors of the prison are opened. The sentence of acquittal, pronounced in the tribunal of God, is communicated to the sinner and accepted by faith. When the Bible speaks of justification by faith, it usually speaks of this aspect of it." (259-260)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." (Galatians 2:16)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—[9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." **(**Ephesians 2:8-10**)**
- "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! [μὴ γένοιτο] We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1-2)
- "Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth." (1 John 3:18)
- "…Wisdom is proved right by her deeds." (Matthew 11:19)

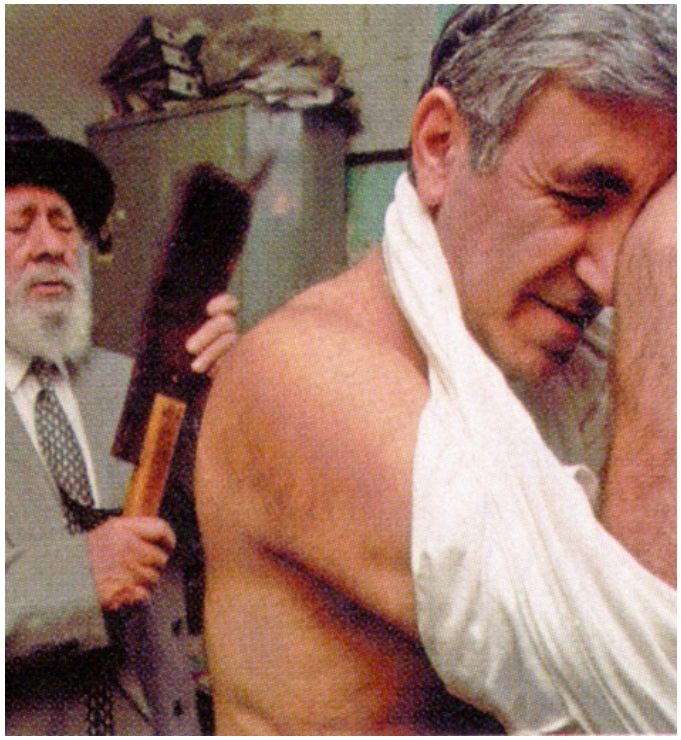
Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   6- **Justification**/justified: "Just-if-I'd" never sinned
   h- Two misunderstandings of the doctrine of justification must be avoided and corrected.
   1] Some say justification by faith alone means doing good works is unnecessary. Justification by faith alone does not mean that works are unimportant—far to the contrary, as we saw above and in our previous discussion of faith! We are ***not*** saved ***by*** good works ***but for*** good works. (Ephesians 2:8-10; Cf. Matthew 11:19) Consistently doing good works is the product of of the genuineness of one's true faith and his or her gratitude for being justified. (See also 1 John 2:3-6; 3:18; 2 Corinthians 8:8; 1 Peter 1:7.)
   2] Others say justification by faith alone fosters sinning, since people think they can do whatever they want and just ask for forgiveness. Justification by faith alone does not lead to licentiousness. Paul destroys that argument in Romans 6:1ff. with the powerful exclamation, μὴ γένοιτο (*mē genoito*), "By no means!"

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Contrast All Other Religions Where People Try to Save Themselves By Appeasing a False god

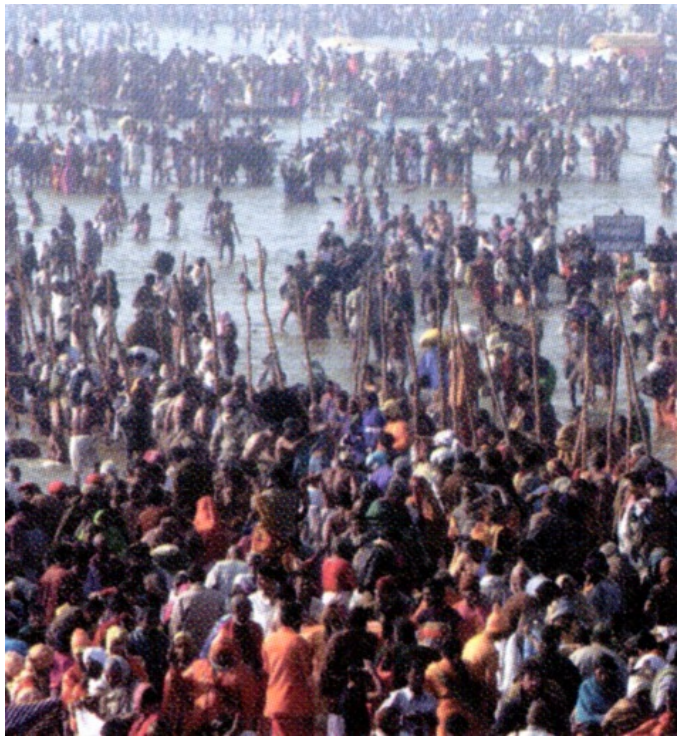
All other religions prescribe ways for adherents to save themselves. Thus, they are called autosoteristic (literally, self-saving). Sadly, these people can neither achieve salvation nor assurance of salvation and forgiveness of their sins by themselves. They can have salvation by believing in and following Jesus Christ. (See, e.g., John 14:6; Romans 10:9; Matthew 7:21; James 2:26.)

- Jews to this day still struggle with what to do with their guilt. In this photo a rabbi strikes the back of a Jewish sinner who hopes to atone for his sins on Yom Kippur. Similar flagellation and also cutting occurs in Islam, all for naught. This lashing is nothing like the scourging perfect Jesus went through, and crucifixion, on our behalf.
- Jews don't worship the same God Christians worship; neither does any other religion. See what Jesus said: John 8:19-59, esp. vss. 42-44; 47; 54-59. See also what God's Word says about other religions in 1 Corinthians 10:20-21; cf. Isaiah 44:6; John 8:44; 45:21; 14:6.



Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Contrast All Other Religions Where People Try to Save Themselves By Appeasing a False god

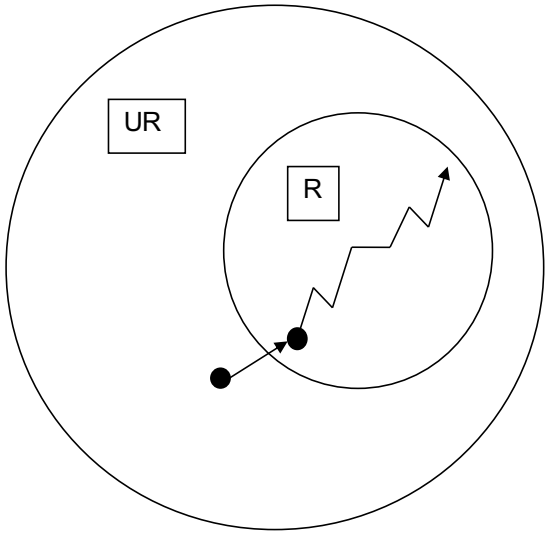
Hindu's try to wash away their sins and remove their guilt by washing in the Ganges River, which they believe is the holiest river in India.



- An estimated 70 million people participated in this six-week festival held once every 12 years.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? Regeneration, Justification, and Sanctification

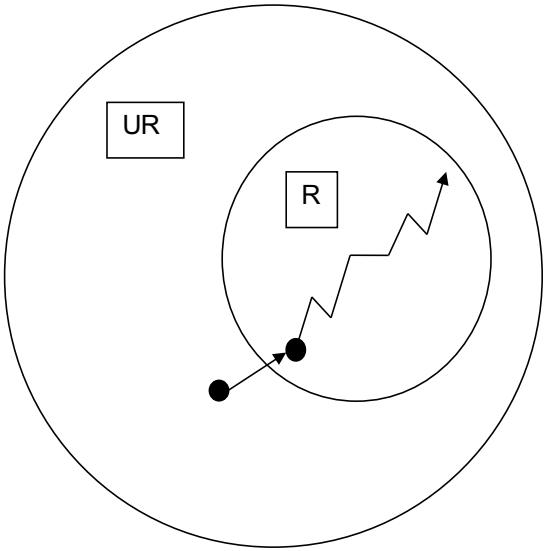
The large circle represents the world's population. When a person has been regenerated, or given the new nature by the operation of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3; Titus 3:5), faith is made possible. This faith is what justifies a person in God's sight. (Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17) God declares the person is just (justified) or righteous in his sight.



Justification moves the believer from the realm of those who are unregenerated (UR in the graphic) to a new state or relationship with God. The justified person becomes part of God's covenant community (those who are regenerated, having received the new nature, i.e., been born again, represented in the graphic by R), existing <u>within</u> the world <u>but not</u> part <u>of</u> the world.

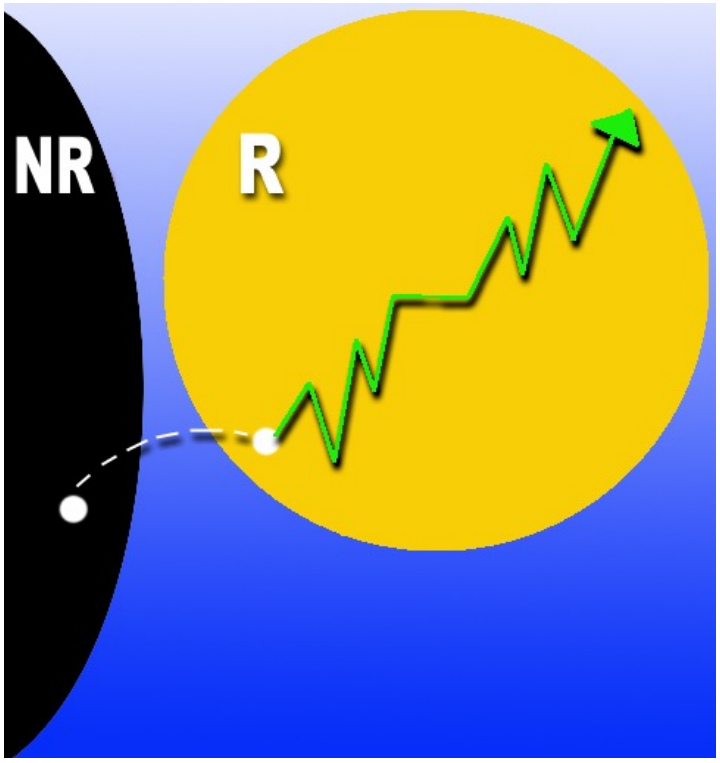
Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? Regeneration, Justification, and Sanctification

Historic Christian systematic theology also incorporates the Bible's use of the word covenant in a broader sense that refers to a legal relationship between God and humans, including both believers and those connected with believers who are unregenerate and therefore who do not believe, e.g., the reprobate sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas. (1 Samuel 2-4) Within the covenant community are some who are unregenerate, wolves in sheep's clothes and weeds in the garden. (Matthew 7:15-23; 13:24-43) Understanding that unregenerate are within the covenant community helps explain the phenomenon mentioned in Hebrews 6:4-6, "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace." This is why we say the church is the visible manifestation of the covenant and why we DO NOT say it is a visible manifestation of God's kingdom. Members of God's kingdom are true believers in Christ Jesus.



Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? Progressive Sanctification

As this graphic shows, in one sense a believer in Jesus Christ is separated from the evil of the world (e.g., John 15:18-19; Colossians 2:20; James 4:4; 1 Peter 2:11) and becomes holy, separated to God. Once a believing part of (not just associating with [cf. Hebrews 6:4-6, *op cit*.]) the covenant community, the regenerated person begins the process of progressive sanctification, which continues throughout his or her life. This process is not a straight, smooth, onward and upward line but one that is up and down with level (stagnant) periods, yet all of which are generally headed upward, though on occasion in a "two steps forward, one step backward" progression. Sometimes in our progress we're on a spiritual mountaintop and at others in the valleys (the peaks and the pits) of life; sometimes we're just existing, "spinning our wheels," and not growing in Christ. Then after a period of time growth continues, albeit in this phase of life, in this age, still with ups and downs but progressing with purpose. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in which the believer willingly cooperates in the desire to grow ever more Christlike.



Graphic: NR = Non-regenerate (unregenerate); R = Regenerate

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do? Calling, Regeneration, Conversion, Faith, Justification, and Sanctification

As we refer specifically to these aspects of the order of salvation (the *ordo salutis*), we must always keep in mind that they are not entirely separate, discrete categories but are linked together in a spiritual continuum. Paul writes, "To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours…." (1 Corinthians 1:2) Regarding the sanctification to which he refers, he uses the Greek verb, ἡγιασμένοις (*hēgiasmenois* < ἁγιάζω [*hagiazō*], sanctify < ἅγιος [*hagios*] holy, separate from common, including sinful, condition and use), the tense of which, a perfect participle, indicates a past action with its present and continuing effects, thus meaning, having been made holy. Theologians, therefore discern that there are two types of sanctification: 1) Positional sanctification, an aspect and result of justification, also called sanctification in the wider sense, for it includes the Holy Spirit's work in regeneration, conversion, faith, and 2) Progressive sanctification, or sanctification in the narrow sense, which involves the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of Christians in a gradual and lengthy process that enables us to mature in Christ more and more throughout our whole lives.

As Lenski explains, "The Corinthians, once made holy by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, by faith continue in this holiness. This term, οἱ ἡγιασμένοι, is a standard designation for true Christians in the New Testament; it is like οἱ πιστεύοντες, 'they that believe,' οἱ κλητοί, 'they that are called,' etc. The idea expressed in ἁγιάζειν is separation from everything profane and worldly and devotion to God in Christ Jesus. Theologically this is called 'sanctification in the wider sense,' for it includes conversion, faith, justification, and the life in good works—all that has made and still makes us the Christians that we are. This is to be distinguished from 'sanctification in the narrow sense,' namely the life in good works, which constitutes the fruit of faith and justification." (*Lenski New Testament Commentary—The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, WORDsearch, p. 23.) It is to this sanctification in the narrow sense, or progressive sanctification, that we now turn our attention.

The Holy Spirit dwells within us.

"…your body is a temple [ναὸς (*naos*), indicating the most holy part of the temple (see accompanying graphic)] of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God." (1 Corinthians 6:19 [*context is singular, referring to individual believers in Christ*]; cf., 1 John 4:13)

Consider the implications. One is: therefore, we are never alone. As we nurture this understanding by daily reading God's Word and in prayer throughout the day, we sense that the Spirit is always with us. Operating directly in our very being and indirectly through the church, we can avoid one of the most common and serious of human problems today: loneliness.

FROM ACORN TO OAK 12

Becoming Oaks of Righteousness Maturing in Christ Jesus (Isaiah 61:3, Ephesians 4:13)



FROM ACORN TO OAK 12

Becoming Oaks of Righteousness Maturing in Christ Jesus (Isaiah 61:3, Ephesians 4:13)



- The number 12 is the Biblical number for the church: God's covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel becoming in Jesus Christ the new covenant with the church, New Testament Israel, beginning with the 12 apostles and extending to "every nation, tribe, people and language." (Revelation 7:4-9; 21-22; Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 49:6; James 1:1; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 3:26-29)
- For resources to facilitate maturing in Christ Jesus, which in Christian theology is called sanctification, see https://fromacorntooak12.com; cf., https://seelyedward.academia.edu. The Holy Spirit works through the church, the body of Christ, to enable us to become more like Jesus and mature in the sanctification process.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- **"'**Say to the Israelites, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy [sanctifies you, NASB]."'" (Exodus 31:13)
- "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)
- "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out [not work for] your salvation with fear and trembling," (Philippians 2:12)
- "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   7- **Sanctification** (Progressive) Refers to the Maturing of the Christian in Christlikeness over Time.
   a- Definition: Sanctification is the gracious and continuous work of the Holy Spirit by which he purifies and delivers the sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his or her nature in God's image, and enables him or her to perform good works. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)
   + Thus, in sanctification man cooperates with God in growth toward Christlikeness.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- **“‘**Say to the Israelites, “You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy [sanctifies you, NASB].”’” (Exodus 31:13)
- “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
7- **Sanctification** Refers to the Maturing of the Christian in Christlikeness over Time.
b- The Biblical words likely come from a root, קָדַשׁ (*qādhash*) meaning to cut, thus emphasizing the concept of separation. Both the OT and the NT words primarily refer to separation, holiness (to God and from sin and evil). To understand the Biblical doctrine of sanctification, it is necessary to keep in mind this concept of separation, holiness.
1] OT Hebrew: קָדַשׁ (*qādhash*) to be holy, sanctify
2] NT Greek: ἁγιάζω (*hagiazō*), sanctify, consecrate, dedicate, purify, to set apart.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Berkhof clarifies key aspects of the separation, holiness, that express the Biblical concept of sanctification.

"To the minds of the great majority of Christians [sanctification] conveys first of all the idea of spiritual renewal, of the endowment of man with moral and spiritual qualities. And yet this is not the original idea. The Biblical words express the idea of a position or relationship between God and man rather than that of spiritual qualities wrought in the heart. The man who is sanctified is in principle lifted out of the sinful relations of life and is placed in a new relation to God, in which he is consecrated to Him and to His service. The Old Testament speaks repeatedly of holy persons and holy things, referring to persons and things which are externally set aside or consecrated to the service of God. This external consecration to the service of God symbolized the deeper and inner devotion of the heart. But while the Scriptural words are first of all indicative of a relationship, they also denote that operation of God by which He, through the Holy Spirit, works in man the subjective quality of holiness, John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 5:23." (265)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

As we've seen in this *Essential Christianity* course, "In Scripture the idea of holiness is applied first of all to God. It denotes primarily that God is absolutely distinct from the creature, is exalted far above it in heavenly majesty, and is therefore the unapproachable One…Only the clean in heart can stand in His presence, Ps. 24:3 f. But even this is not all. Positively, the idea of the divine holiness shades right into and becomes almost identical with that of the light of the divine glory.

"In the second place the idea of holiness is also applied to persons and things that are placed in special relationship to God. Israel had its holy places, such as Jerusalem and the temple, its holy persons in the priests and [L]evites, and its holy rites in sacrifices and purifications. These persons and things were separated unto the service of God. But this external consecration of certain persons merely served to symbolize the inner consecration of the heart, and did not necessarily carry this with it. One might be a sacred person, and yet be entirely devoid of the grace of God in the heart. And yet only they who possessed the latter were truly holy unto the Lord. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit ethical qualities are wrought in their heart. This Old Testament idea of holiness passed right over into the New Testament. It is of great importance to observe that this Biblical idea of holiness is never that of mere moral goodness, considered in itself, but always that of ethical goodness seen in relation to God. A man may boast of great moral improvement, and yet be an utter stranger to the work of sanctification. The Bible does not urge moral improvement pure and simple, but moral improvement in relation to God, for God's sake, and with a view to the service of God." (265-267)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." (Romans 8:26-27)
- "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." (Philippians 3:12)
- "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- "and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." (Colossians 3:10)
- "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   7- **Sanctification** Refers to the Maturing of the Christian in Christlikeness over Time.
   c- Notice the Characteristics of Sanctification.
   1] The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with God the Father. (Romans 8:26-27)
   2] God, not human beings, is the author of sanctification, but humans cooperate, unlike in justification, which is all God's doing.
   3] Sanctification "is not like justification, a legal act of God, but a moral and re-creative activity, by which the sinner is renewed in his inner being and made to conform ever-increasingly to the image of God." (Berkhof, 267)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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- "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," (Philippians 2:12)
- "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   7- **Sanctification** Refers to the Maturing of the Christian in Christlikeness over Time.
   c- Characteristics of Sanctification
      4] Sanctification removes the pollution of sin.
      5] It takes place in the inner life of man and affects his whole being.
      6] Negatively put, it's a deadening to sin; positively, it is a quickening to spiritual life. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," (Philippians 2:12)
- "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21]who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Philippians 3:20-21)
- "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, [23]to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect," (Hebrews 12:22-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)
   7- **Sanctification** refers to the Maturing of the Christian in Christlikeness over time.
   c- Characteristics of Sanctification
   7] It is a continuous life-long process (Philippians 3:12), and not smooth or even. This process is completed for the soul at death (Hebrews 12:23) and at the resurrection for the body. (Philippians 3:21) See the above graphics.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17)
- "But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, [15]and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16]All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, [17]so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
- "and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 3:21)
- "Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (Hebrews 12:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-
   d- Means of sanctification: Individually
      1] A prayerful daily reading of God's Word is the primary means to facilitate sanctification.
         a] Consider preceding your reading with a prayer requesting God to guide you into how he would have you apply what you are going to read to your own life, what he would have you do.
         b] In addition to reading, study God's Word. Compare the text you are reading with other Bible passages. Scripture is its own best commentary. Also use other <u>trusted</u> commentaries and concordances.
      2] Pray daily, communing with our triune God.
      3] Each day, look for God's Providence in your life. (Hebrews 12:10) According to James 1:17, God the Father gives every good and perfect gift. When you sense something good, say, "Thank you dear Heavenly Father!" Or "Thank you God!"

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "This is the verdict [κρίσις (*krisis*), judgment; cf. NASB, ESV]: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because [γάρ (*gar*)] their deeds were evil. [20]Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. [21]But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:19–21)

- "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)

- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)

- "…God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'" (2 Timothy 2:19)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)7-

d- Means of sanctification: Individually

4] Obey God's Word, including keeping his commandments and turning away from all wickedness. (John 3:19-21)

a] Here and in other passages in God's Word, we see evidence that behavior is linked to knowledge and emotion.

b] Notice the Lord reveals that the reason "men loved darkness instead of light[:] because [γάρ (*gar*) because, for] their deeds were evil." (v. 19) Thus, behavior shapes emotion and knowledge—a vital reason we are to obey God.

1- The words, "loved darkness" and "deeds were evil," are in apposition to one another; the word, *gar*, indicates the behavior is likely causative, as does the context, e.g., *krisis* (judgment) which primarily addresses behavior.

2- Some argue that *gar* is also used as an explanatory thought (e.g., Matthew 9:5 KJV), but the point in John 3:19 is significantly different. Lenski, without much comment, says the connection of these words is not causal.

3- However, the typical use of *gar* throughout the Greek literary periods—classic, Septuagint (LXX), New Testament, and the early church fathers—is to signify a cause or reason.

4- In addition to the above from God's special revelation (the Bible), insights from part of his general revelation (Romans 1:20, e.g., sound science) offer further help in our understanding of this phenomenon.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. [20]Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. [21]But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:19–21)
- "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)
- "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)
- "…God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'" (2 Timothy 2:19)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-

d- Means of sanctification: Individually

4] Obey God's Word, including keeping his commandments and turning away from all wickedness. (John 3:19-21)

c] Notice also how all three human learning domains, behavior, cognition, and affect, are mentioned together in John 3:19-21; 14:15,21. Identify them. (See the next slide.)

d] Sound human learning research shows the interconnection among cognition, affect, and behavior. They are not discrete categories; they align on a continuum. See the graphic that follows.

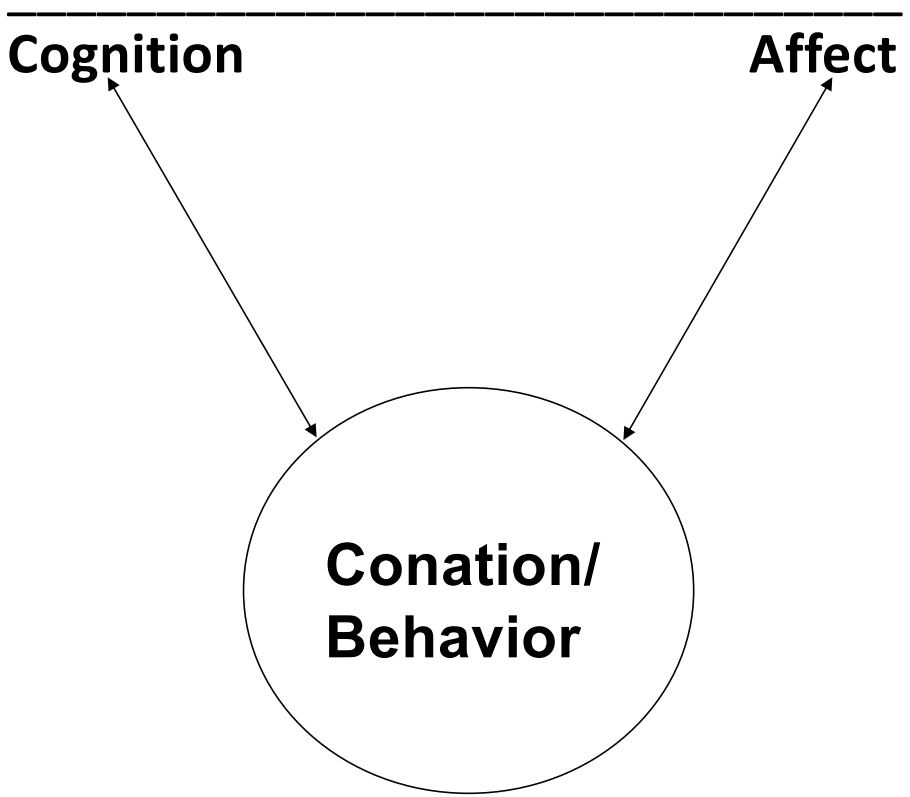
5] Avoid that which is unwholesome and evil, e.g., online videos (e.g., pornography), movies, literature, and "bad 'friends'." Recall the Spanish proverb, "Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are."

Key Resources for Church Education

From Human Learning Research: The Continuum of the Three Domains of Human Learning

Jesus said, “They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.” (John 14:21 NRSV)

FOR DISCUSSION OR INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION: Identify references to the three domains in what Jesus said.



Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)
- "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, [16]making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [17]Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. [18]Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [19]Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20]always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [21]Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:15-21)
- "Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." (Deuteronomy 4:9)
- "…God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.'" (2 Timothy 2:19)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-
d- Means of sanctification: Corporately: Family
6] Parents' primary responsibility is to raise their children in the faith by daily doing the above and modeling Christlikeness in their home.
a] Engage in a family devotional time (Bible reading, discussion, singing, and prayer). Two good times are at the conclusion of dinner or another meal together and at bedtime. (Recall the preceding head, heart, and hands discussion. In addition, see the other references to prayer throughout this presentation.)
b] Both parents must prioritize spending time with each other and with their children. As is said, "Love is spelled TIME." (See more below on Marriage.)
7] Grandparents must also teach their grandchildren. (Deuteronomy 4:9)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "[Christ has given gifts] [12]to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13]until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
"[14]Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. [15]Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. [16]From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:12-16)
- "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, [16]making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. [17]Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. [18]Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. [19]Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, [20]always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
"[21]Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (Ephesians 5:15-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-
d- Means of sanctification:
Corporately, Church
8] Participate at least weekly in corporate worship, including in the Sacraments. (1 Peter 3:21)
9] Keep in regular, at least weekly, fellowship with believers: including with the church, mutual witness, and Christian social relationships.
10] Be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18-21)

DISCUSS OR REFLECT on **the above in the light of Ephesians 4:14, which could have been written this morning! It perfectly and most realistically addresses many of our most urgent needs today!**

Soteriology, Sanctification: Being Filled with the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18— "Be filled with the Spirit." Greek: the verb's inflections are important!

πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι,

plērousthe en pneumati,

+ Greek **present tense** denotes continuous, repeated, not a once-for-all, experience.

+ Greek **imperative mood** denotes God commands us to do something: invite Him to guide, give wisdom, and direct us that His Spirit may fill us. He does not force us.

+ Greek **middle voice** denotes we are responsible to engage in the means God has provided (in 5:19-21)—and are necessary—for being filled with the Spirit.

+ Greek **number** denotes plural, 2nd person: for the whole church, not just me privately. We are filled with the Spirit together in Christ. Notice the implications for the importance and work of the church, the subject we will take up in the next section, Ecclesiology.

Soteriology, Sanctification: Being Filled with the Spirit

God's Word

"[18]…be filled with the Spirit;

[19]Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

[20]Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

[21]Submitting yourselves one to another [*horizontally*] in the fear of God [*vertically*]."
(Ephesians 5:18-21 KJV)

God's Word Applied

- The five participles that follow "filled" in Ephesians 5:18 indicate ways to apply, and results of, that filling.
- The participles are speaking (5:19), singing (5:19), making music (NIV) (5:19), giving thanks (5:20), and submitting [horizontally and vertically] (5:21).

➢ DISCUSS OR REFLECT ON examples of each participle.

Soteriology: Distinguishing Justification and Sanctification

Justification/Positional Sanctification

1. The work of God alone
   a. God declares man just.
   b. God is active
   c. Man is passive
2. A state (relationship with God)
3. Done once for all time—not repeated
4. Objective
5. Get for nothing
6. Birth
7. Bestowed by grace

Progressive Sanctification

1. Man cooperates with God
   a. Man works to grow in Christ-likeness
   b. God is active.
   c. Man is active.
2. A process (maturing in Christlikeness)
3. Continuing process—never completed on earth in this phase of life
4. Subjective
5. Work at (Philippians 2:12)
6. Growth
7. Works is fruit (James 2:24,26)

Soteriology: Distinguishing Justification and Sanctification

Justification/Positional Sanctification

8. Two key elements in justification
   a. Pardon of sin
   b. Imputation of Christ's righteousness
   c. While both justification and sanctification are results of the merits of Christ, justification is primarily ascribed to the Father.
9. Removes the guilt of sin and gives the believer in Christ all the rights of a child of God, including an eternal inheritance with God, restoring what was lost in Adam's and Eve's sin
10. Takes place outside the believer in the tribunal of God but is appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ

Progressive Sanctification

8. Two key elements in sanctification
   a. Believer is freed from sin by work of the Holy Spirit
   b. Holy Spirit enables believer to do the will of God
   c. While both justification and sanctification are results of the merits of Christ, sanctification is primarily ascribed to the Holy Spirit.
9. Removes the pollution of sin and brings the believer into conformity with the image of God
10. Takes place within the believer, in his or her inner life and gradually transforms his or her whole being

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [13]for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13)
- "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-

e- Whereas God alone provides justification, in Sanctification humans cooperate. In so doing, we have several responsibilities.

1] We need to cleanse ourselves spiritually. (2 Corinthians 7:1)

+ <u>REFLECT AND DISCUSS</u>: What are some ways we can cleanse ourselves spiritually? Include not only ***what we can do***, e.g., by a stronger commitment and resolution to obeying God's commandments, but <u>*also*</u> what we can commit to ***not doing***, e.g., *avoiding* sexually stimulating Websites, including *never* viewing pornography.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-

e- Human's responsibility in Sanctification

2] We work out our salvation (Philippians 2:12,13)—work out, **not** work for (thus sanctification not autosoterism). Lenski clarifies.

"The new life is born in us and is nourished by God to develop ever greater spiritual strength, and this divinely imparted strength is to exercise itself constantly in "working out the salvation of ourselves." Theologians call this the synergism of the new man. Here there is, indeed, a synergism. Saved by the monergism of God's grace, the danger for the saved is ever that they grow otiose, secure, and thus through their own fault lose the salvation bestowed on them by God. Hence all these admonitions in Scripture to stir up the new man. Κατά [kata, upon] in the verb lends it a perfective sense, and the tense is durative: 'keep on working thoroughly' so as actually to get the results." (798)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [13]for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13)
- "Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord." (Hebrews 12:14)
- [Jesus said] [15]"If you [plural] love me, you will obey what I command…. [21]Whoever [singular] has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." (John 14:15, 21]

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-

e- Human's responsibility in Sanctification

3] To obey the Lord's commands, including following the moral law (Hebrews 12:14; John 14:15,21)

a] Remember our calling to be holy, which includes being separated to God, whereby we function differently from our surrounding culture, which we are to transform, **not** conform to and be like everyone else. One way we function in holiness to God is by obeying his moral laws, e.g., the Ten Commandments.

b] Again, our motivation for obedience is love for and gratitude to God, NOT to try to earn our salvation, which we cannot do. John Calvin said it well: "We are justified not without, and yet not by works."

+ Jesus uses the verb obey in John 14:15,21 in a powerful way. The original word is τηρῶν (*tērōn*) < τηρέω (*tēreō*), which means watch carefully, guard; keep, preserve; obey, pay attention to,
+ and it is a present active participle, which means continuous and ongoing, NOT "one and done."

Soteriology, Sanctification: Excerpt from Calvin's Commentary on John 14:21

"21. *He who hath my commandments.* He [Jesus] again repeats the former statement, that the undoubted proof of our love to him lies in our *keeping his commandments*; and the reason why he so frequently reminds the disciples of this is, that they may not turn aside from this object; for there is nothing to which we are more prone than to slide into a carnal affection, so as to love something else than Christ under the name of Christ. Such is also the import of that saying of Paul, *Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth we know him no longer in this manner. Let us therefore be a new creature,* (2 Corinthians 5:16-17.) *To* HAVE *his commandments* means to be properly instructed in them; and *to* KEEP *his commandments* is to conform ourselves and our life to their rule.

"*And he that loveth me will be loved by my Father*. Christ speaks as if men loved God before he loved them; which is absurd, for, *when we were enemies, he reconciled us to him*, (Romans 5:10;) and the words of John are well known, *Not that we first loved him, but he first loved us*, (1 John 4:10.). But there is no debate here about cause or effect; and therefore there is no ground for the inference, that the love with which we love Christ comes in order before the love which God has toward us; for Christ meant only, that all who *love him* will be happy, because they will also *be loved by him and by the Father*; not that God then begins to *love* them, but because they have a testimony of his love to them, as a Father, engraven on their hearts. To the same purpose is the clause which immediately follows: —

"*And I will manifest myself to him.* Knowledge undoubtedly goes before love; but Christ's meaning was, 'I will grant to those who purely observe my doctrine, that they shall make progress from day to day in faith;' that is, 'I will cause them to approach more nearly and more familiarly to *me*.' Hence infer, that the fruit of piety is progress in the knowledge of Christ; for he who promises that he will give himself to him who has it rejects hypocrites, and causes all to make progress in faith who, cordially embracing the doctrine of the Gospel, bring themselves entirely into obedience to it. And this is the reason why many fall back, and why we scarcely see one in ten proceed in the right course; for the greater part do not deserve that he should *manifest himself to them*. It ought also to be observed, that a more abundant knowledge of Christ is here represented as an extraordinary reward of our love to Christ; and hence it follows that it is an invaluable treasure." (pp. 96-97)

Soteriology, Sanctification: Excerpt from Lenski's Commentary on John 14:21

21) "The entire line of promises from v. 15 onward rests on the condition 'if you love me.' The Scriptures are quite regular in emphasizing the love of believers when benefactions are promised to them. Jesus now recurs to this love, yet not in order to repeat the condition, but in order to assure the disciples that they are the ones referred to, and that their love shall meet with a most wonderful response. **He that has my precepts and guards them, he it is that loves me.** This is a pertinent description of the true disciple whom Jesus acknowledges as such over against the world or any false disciple. The two participles are combined under one article: ὁ [Whoever, or the one] ἔχων [having] καὶ [and] τηρῶν [keeping, guarding, obeying], for the characterizing actions are always combined. On ἐντολαί [commandments] and τηρεῖν [keeps, guards, obeys] see v. 15. The emphatic ἐκεῖνος [that one, he] takes up this subject, but by its emphasis conveys the thought, 'he, and he alone' is the one that loves me. The test is always obvious and simple: a true disciple, one who really loves Jesus, always does more than make protestations or pretenses, he cherishes and guards every precept of Jesus which he has by holding to it in his heart and his life against all opposition. Because the predicate is a participle it requires the article; at the same time this makes the predicate identical and interchangeable with the subject, R. 769. As in v. 12, Jesus now again uses the third person singular with its universal note—taking in all his believers (v. 12) and all [who love him] (v. 21)….

Soteriology, Sanctification: Excerpt from Lenski's Commentary on John 14:21

"All the promises hitherto made in this chapter, each one grand and wonderful in itself, are so many evidences of something far greater, namely divine love. And this is subsequent love, which, when antecedent love has kindled faith and love in us, delights to show itself to the beloved in most intimate fashion. **And he that loves me with the love just indicated shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.** The future tenses refer to the day of Pentecost and thereafter. This appears especially in the last verb; for the appearances during the forty days were only preliminary manifestations to be followed by his constant presence, help, and blessing in the spirit (v. 18). What this love of the Father means Paul states in Rom. 8:28, and 32….

Soteriology, Sanctification: Excerpt from Lenski's Commentary on John 14:21

"The verb ἐμφανίζω [show, manifest, reveal] does not refer to revelations in a special feeling of the nearness of Jesus, or to a consciousness of spiritual power (perhaps while the physical strength wanes), or to direct inner impressions of Christ's glory in glimpses of the other world. These are dangerous ideas, leading to autosuggestion, hallucination, or fanaticism (*Schwærmerei*). Gerhard points us away from this subjectivism to the objective Word: 'That is a salutary, practical manifestation of Jesus Christ, when he implants spiritual motions into the hearts of his believers and [those who love him]: as when they receive a living, believing impression of the divine love from the mystery of the incarnation; when they understand the greatness of their sins from the mystery of the passion, heartily lament them and are assured of their forgiveness; when they draw an earnest longing for heaven from the mystery of eternal life, etc. For thus Christ manifests himself to the soul as the most gracious Savior, as the most lovely Bridegroom, as the most faithful Shepherd, as the most mighty King, as the most wise Teacher, as the most ready Physician; and by such manifestation faith, love, hope, patience, and all Christian virtues are produced in the hearts of the godly and increase from day to day.'"

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1. *Lenski New Testament Commentary—The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel,* pp. 1007-1008 (WORDsearch)
2. One reason why I especially like the outstanding Greek scholar, R. C. H. Lenski, and his commentary is that he holds to and thoroughly and clearly explains the meaning of the original Greek text.
3. The great Anglican theologian, pastor, and author John Stott, said that every Christian should memorize John 14:21. Lenski shows why.
4. Words in brackets are explanatory additions by Edward D. Seely.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. [13]Then say to the LORD your God: 'I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them.'" (Deuteronomy 26:12–13)
- "Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. [42]But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. [43]Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. [44]They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.'" (Mark 12:35–44)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-
   f- Responses to and evidence of Sanctification
   1] By word and in deeds, we offer thanksgiving to God for our salvation and his countless other blessings to us.
   2] In our prayers we thank him for helping us mature in Christlikeness. We also ask him to continue to help us live more in accord with his Word and his will.
   3] We ask God to help us help others.
   4] In gratitude to God for all his unmerited grace to us, including our sanctification, we desire to respond to him in tangible ways to express our gratitude to him.
   a] We seek to obey his commands.
   b] We bring our monetary gifts to his corporate worship, gladly giving them during the offering. Give first to your local congregation's church and outreach ministries, then to faithful denominational and other ministries bringing the Gospel of Christ to the world.
   c] Teach family and friends to give and why. We have much to do. Only 19% of U. S. Christians give to mission work. (Barna)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store as God has prospered..." (1 Corinthians 16:2 KJV)
- "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. [18]For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" (1 Timothy 5:17–18)
- "When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. [13]Then say to the LORD your God: 'I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them.'" (Deuteronomy 26:12–13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-
g- In prayer, develop a plan based on God's Word and give accordingly. Through the following are some ways to do so.
1] Your local church home first. If your church home supports any of the following, give through your church.
2] Your church denomination, either through your local church congregation's budget or directly to the denomination.
3] Parachurch ministries specializing in serving segments of the population with needs in Jesus' name. The giving is done in his name. A word of caution: Since all humans are sinful and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23, *et al*.), check out churches and ministries before giving. The following are some of the ones doing well.
a] Prisoners, e.g., Prison Fellowship
b] Justice, e.g., American Center for Law and Justice, Alliance Defending Freedom, and other Christian legal organizations who defend especially fellow believers in Jesus Christ worldwide who are being treated unjustly.
c] Disaster relief, e.g., Samaritan's Purse
d] Evangelism, e.g., Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
e] Persecution, e.g., Voice of the Martyrs

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, [36] I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

[37]"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? [38] When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? [39] When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

[40]"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:35-40)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 7-

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d] Evangelism, e.g., Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

e] Persecution, e.g., Voice of the Martyrs

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

- "Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him,…" (1 Corinthians 16:2)
- "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. [7]Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. [8]And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. [9]As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.'

  "[10]Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. [11]You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

  "[12]This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. [13]Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. [14]And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. [15]Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Sanctification (< Late Latin *sanctificare* < Latin *sanctus* [sacred] < Greek: ἁγιάζω [*hagiazō*, sanctify, set apart, make holy])

Here is a testimony of what sanctification looks like in one's life. This anecdote is from a Roman Catholic ministry, Tradition, Family, Property (TFP): "…every day, TFP Student Action reaches more students with the truth.

And God moves them.

For example, this message arrived from Colton, a young man in Washington State:

'When I first came upon one of TFP Student Action's videos, I would 'hate watch' it, which means I would watch it just to make fun of it or leave hateful comments.

'But as I watched, I saw the true colors of the [opposition], and I saw them for who they truly are: intolerant, closed-minded, ignorant, and hypocritical people. By viewing your content, I converted from loosely being Christian to being a devout Catholic and started attending church every Sunday. I became happier, better dressed, and more polite.

'These young men at TFP are the definition of America and true American values. I think that on that fateful day when I first clicked on a TFP video, it was God trying to herd me back to his flock of lambs.

'I am eternally in the debt of TFP, as they saved my soul from eternal damnation in Hell.'

Thank God."

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Sanctification (< Late Latin *sanctificare* < Latin *sanctus* [sacred] < Greek: ἁγιάζω [*hagiazō*, sanctify, set apart, make holy])

REFLECT and DISCUSS: 1. Is the testimony on the preceding slide an account of sanctification or regeneration? Did the Holy Spirit enable Colton to experience the new (*veos*, brand new) birth (regeneration), or did the Holy Spirit enable him to take a giant step forward in sanctification?

On the basis of his statements of his "loosely being Christian," and that he thinks that "it was God trying to herd me back to his flock of lambs," he may have already been a Christian, albeit at an elementary stage of sanctification.

On the other hand, he refers to conversion, which typically follows—but sometimes occurs at the same time as—regeneration.

Also significantly, notice the behavior change that demonstrates the genuineness of his faith, e.g., "I converted from loosely being Christian to being a devout Catholic and started attending church every Sunday. I became happier, better dressed, and more polite."

This is an example of why Jesus said that we should not judge (Matthew 7:1ff.) in the sense of making a declaration that someone is not regenerated or going to be saved. No solely human being can see into a person's heart or predict the future. However, pertaining to other matters, Christians are to make judgments. (See Ecclesiology in Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Sanctification (< Late Latin *sanctificare* < Latin *sanctus* [sacred] < Greek: ἁγιάζω [*hagiazō*, sanctify, set apart, make holy])

REFLECT and DISCUSS: 2. In the light of the preceding information about the meaning of sanctification in God's Word, including its essential root meaning of holiness—being set apart for God's service—whereby the believer in Christ Jesus has been credited with Christ's righteousness in God's justification of him or her, thereby permitting entry into the presence of God who is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy, what can you say to someone who says, "What! Are you saying you're some kind of 'holier than thou' person?"

- Consider this reply: "That depends on who 'thou' is. If the 'thou' you have in mind is a fellow believer in Christ Jesus, maybe not, though you must understand that sanctification is a life-long process, and some of us are at more elementary stages—and some of us are at more advanced stages of the process—than other believers. On the other hand, if the 'thou' you have in mind doesn't believe in Jesus Christ, then God's Word, the Bible—and I didn't write the Bible—teaches that person is not holy to God. We who are sinful cannot enter the presence of God who is most holy without being credited with Christ's righteousness."

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. [28]I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. [29]My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. [30]I and the Father are one." (John 10:27-30)
- "for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29) See also Romans 8:28-39.
- "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 1:6)
- "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! [13]No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. [14]Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:12-14)
- "He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord…." (1 Corinthians 1:8)
- See also Psalm 121:7 "The LORD…will keep your soul." (NASB); John 5:24; Ephesians 4:30; and 1 John 5:13 "…so that you may know that you have eternal life."

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a)

8- **Assurance** of salvation for those who truly believe in Jesus Christ is clearly taught in Scripture; some of the passages appear in the left column.

a- This doctrine is understood as the continuous functioning of the Holy Spirit in the mind and heart of a true believer through which, and with the believer's cooperation, he or she matures more and more into Christlikeness until death.

b- This Biblical doctrine consists of several characteristics.

1] It is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit, since humans would fall away without God's help.

2] The doctrine applies to all who are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, i.e., those who adhere to the defining passages such as Romans 10:9. Jesus says in John 10:27, "I know them, and they follow me." He uses the Greek verb know, γινώσκω (*ginōskō*), an intimate, relational knowledge, not just knowing about someone. To them he has given eternal life, and they shall never perish; he will enable his true believers to persevere in spite of all challenges in this phase of life.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (2 Timothy 4:18)
- "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. [16]By their fruit you will recognize them….

  "[22]Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' [23]Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:15-16a; 22-23)
- "They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. [20]But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth." (1 John 2:19-20; cf. vss. 3-6)
- "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know [< οἰδα (*oida*, know fully)] that you have eternal life." (1 John 5:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 8- b-

Perseverance of the saints (Assurance of salvation).

3] Bible texts (such as those in the left column, and others such as 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; and 4:10) do cite actual cases of people leaving the faith, but there is no proof in those texts that these people were ever true believers. In fact, Jesus says to those he refers to that "I never knew [< γινώσκω (*ginōskō*)] you."

4] Likewise, those referred to in Hebrews 6:4-6, have been in association with the covenant community and have been informed of, and even enlightened by, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but they have not truly believed in Christ, including as their only Savior and Lord, and thus they are not truly saved. They have been in the company of the covenant community (Hebrews 10:29, ἡγιάσθη [*hēgiasthē*]), sanctified, i.e., being with those set apart), but being part of the covenant at one time does not mean at one time being saved. (Cf., e.g., 1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:11-14; 1 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Timothy 3:1-9.) Covenant inclusion increases exposure, and facilitates receptivity, to the Gospel but does not guarantee genuinely believing and living it. Cf. Luke 8:12; Matthew 7:21ff.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied?
Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?
God's Word assures his children of their salvation by truly believing in Jesus Christ.

Many other Bible passages assure believers of salvation, some of which are these:

- "'And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. [40] For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.'" (John 6:39–40; cf. 10:28)
- "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13–14)
- "therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure." (2 Thessalonians 1:4 NASB)
- "But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. [4] We have confidence in the Lord that you are doing and will continue to do the things we command. [5] May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance." (2 Thessalonians 3:3–5)
- "By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you." (1 Corinthians 15:2. When people are honest with themselves, they can know whether they believe God's Word. If they truly believe, they have assurance of their salvation.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied?
Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?
God's Word assures his children of their salvation by truly believing in Jesus Christ.

Many other Bible passages assure believers of salvation, some of which are these:

- "…in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. [38] For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, [39] neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37–39)
- "And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. [12] That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day." (2 Timothy 1:11–12)
- "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. [38] For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. [39] And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. [40] For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:37–40)
- "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23. See also Jude 24-25.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God." (1 John 3:9 ESV. The present tense of the Greek verb, ποιεῖ [*poiei*], denotes durative and continuous practice, and indicates the lifestyle of the regenerated person, thus a child of God, is not characterized by sin; it doesn't mean the person will never sin again, only that his or her new birth and the ongoing sanctification process no longer has a desire to keep sinning: "he doesn't have it in him." He or she especially does not want to repeat previous sins; rather the believer is repulsed by doing ongoing sins, repents, asks forgiveness, and does better, further evidence to the believer and to others that he or she is a child of God.)
- "…if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." (Romans 10:9 ESV. The text does not say you may be, might be, should be, probably will, or are likely to be, saved; it says you will be saved. Notably, the verb "will be saved" [σωθήσῃ (*sōthēsē*) < σῴζω (*sōzō*)] is in the indicative mood, which refers to an objective fact, and it's in the passive voice, which refers to our salvation not depending on us—such as earning it—which we can't. Such views, which characterize all other religions and sow doubt—whether the person has done enough; our salvation is granted to us by our faith in Jesus Christ.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. b. 12) a) 8- b-

Assurance of salvation is for those who truly believe in Christ Jesus as their only Savior and Lord. (Romans 10:9)

3] Bible texts (such as some of those above, and others such as 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:17-18; and 4:10) do cite actual cases of people leaving the faith, but there is no proof in those texts that these people were ever true believers. In fact Jesus says to those he refers to that "I never knew [< γινώσκω (*ginōskō*)] you."

4] Likewise, those in Hebrews 6:4-6 have been in association with the covenant community and have been informed of, and even enlightened by, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but they've not truly believed in Christ, including as their only Savior and Lord, and thus they aren't truly saved. They've been in—but not of—the covenant community, but being in the covenant at one time does not mean at one time being saved. Covenant inclusion increases exposure, and facilitates receptivity, to the Gospel but does not guarantee genuinely believing and living it. Cf. Luke 8:12; Matthew 7:21ff.; 1 John 2:3-6.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit *and* what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)
- "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God." (1 Corinthians 6:19 [*context is singular, referring to individual believers in Christ*])
- "'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.'" (Revelation 5:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, the key agent in the application to us of the redemption Jesus the Christ purchased for us at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! As mentioned above, the term redemption, which involves a purchase, comes from the cost of purchasing and freeing a slave, which God did when he freed his people from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 9:26) and which Jesus did when he purchased our freedom from slavery to sin. (Rev. 5:9)
b. 12) a) 8- b-
5] Covenant inclusion increases receptivity to the Gospel but does not guarantee it. The Holy Spirit enables saving faith, but he does not force people to believe. Forcing people, whom God has made in his image, part of which consists of a limited but genuine freedom, to believe would render them/us puppets, not humans. We would lose a significant part of his image, and God would never undo what he himself did in creating us. But once we truly believe in Jesus Christ as our only Savior and Lord, God gives us assurance of our eternal salvation through his Word and Spirit living within us and through a faithful church home.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit *and* what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "…we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose… [30]those he justified, he also glorified [ἐδόξασεν (*edoxasen*, indicative mood, aorist tense, active voice meaning already done and immediately)]." (Romans 8:28-30)
- "But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. [14]If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. [15]If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. [16]However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name." (1 Peter 4:13–16)
- "I have given them [those the Father gave Jesus] the glory that you gave me,…" (John 17:22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, the key agent in the application to us of the redemption Jesus the Christ purchased for us at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever!

   b. 12) a)

   9- **Glorification** < δοξάζω (*doxazō*) means being adorned or clothed with splendor, honor, bliss, because of our relationship with Christ Jesus. As a result of our justification by our faith, we have been credited with Christ's merits that puts us in an eternal saving relationship with him, in which we participate in his glory he has shared with us (John 17:22) in that most blessed relationship which links us with the whole triune God in an unsurpassed blessedness, a foretaste of which begins now (see the meaning of *edoxasen* in Romans 8:30) but that we will experience in its fullness in heaven. Glorification includes the destruction of sin's effects on us and the completion of redemption, an example of the the inaugurated eschatology we briefly considered in the section on Theology and will examine further in Eschatology. Here we have more rock solid basis for viewing our life as having great value and dignity, indeed glory!

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

As we've been seeing, in historic Christian systematic theology, the Biblical basis of soteriology is God's grace: we are saved by faith, which is God's free gift, whereby he credits Christ's perfect righteousness to us who believe. We are saved by faith to do good works. Here is one example of how practical that theology is in pastoral care and in the administrative responsibility of hiring church staff.

In a large church I served, I was asked to interview candidates and to focus on their theology. One such candidate was a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) who was applying for a position in the Pastoral Care Department. At one point in the conversation, I asked him if he held to the SDA doctrine of the investigative judgment. (This concept maintains that since sin is so serious—including its harmful effects on others, who in turn lead others to sin in an unending and humanly unknowable extension that could last until the Lord returns—therefore, with that doctrine no one can be sure of the degree of his or her responsibility for the effects his or her sins have had and will have. Thus, he or she cannot be assured of salvation until the Lord's Final Judgment when He thoroughly investigates each person and judges whether he or she will be saved.)

The applicant looked down and nodded saying, "Yes, I do hold to that doctrine." I replied, "You are applying for a position in the pastoral care department of this church, which involves calling on people who are dying. What they most want to hear is assurance of their salvation, that when they die they will be in the presence of the triune God. Holding to the doctrine of the investigative judgment, how can you give them the assurance they so desperately yearn to hear?" He answered, "I can't."

We agreed the interview was over. For the hugely practical benefit of our church members and others, we hired a pastor for this position who could affirm the Biblical truth of salvation by God's grace alone in the faith he freely provides and, on the basis of God's Word, assure such a person, and others, of his or her salvation when he or she testifies to such faith in Jesus Christ.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another* Counselor [παράκλητος (paraklētos), Helper, Paraclete < παρά (*para,* by the side of) + καλέω (*kaleō*), to call, name, summon, invite to advocate for (1 John 2:1), assist another; i.e., an advocate, an intercessor)] to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you." (John 14:16-17)
- "'When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.'" (John 15:26-27; cf. Luke 24:48-49)

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*Jesus, himself, is our first Paraclete: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate [paraklētos] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" (1 John 2:1 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Key Key Agent in the Application to Us of Jesus' Redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals. (1 Corinthians 6:19 and *op cit*.)
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         b) The Spirit guides the believer in Christ into all truth. (John 14:16-17)
         c) The Spirit applies the Word, including calling and equipping us to be Jesus' witnesses. (John 15:26-27; Luke 24:48-49)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Coming and Work of the Holy Spirit

- "On one occasion, while he [Jesus] was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. [5]For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'
  [8]…you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" (Acts 1:4-5; 8)
- "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- God the Father (John 14:16) and Jesus (John 15:26; Luke 24:49) send the Holy Spirit to give us the power, including the encouragement, we need to speak up about our belief in and love for Christ Jesus as we carry out his Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) for us to be his witnesses. (Acts 1:8)
- The Holy Spirit enables us to overcome temptations and to obey the Lord's commandments. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba,* Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:12-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Key Agent in the Application to Us of Jesus' Redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         d) The Spirit directs the church through believers. (Romans 8:12-18)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Key Agent in the Application to Us of Jesus' Redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         e) The Spirit convicts the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. (John 16:8) Now we know why people feel guilty, try to deny and escape it (e.g., by substance abuse), and try to silence us (e.g., cancel culture).

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Matthew 12:31-32)
- "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" (John 14:6)
- "…no one can say 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Key Agent in the Application to Us of Jesus' Redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         f) What does it mean to offend the Holy Spirit?
            1- The sin against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. (Matthew 12:31-32) Since faith in Jesus is the only way to be saved (John 14:6), and since faith comes by the Holy Spirit, rejecting, thus blaspheming, the Holy Spirit is unforgivable.

What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?

Other Bible Passages Pertaining to the Unforgivable Sin

- “It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.” (Hebrews 6:4-6)
- “‘I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.’ He said this because they were saying, ‘He has an evil spirit.’” (Mark 3:28-30)
- “And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.” (Luke 12:10)
- “If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God….How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of Grace?” (Hebrews 10:26-27,29)
- “If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.” (1 John 5:16)

What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?

The sin against the Holy Spirit is blasphemy including rejection and unbelief. It is forever unforgivable because it forever lacks repentance. (Cf. Hebrews 6:4-6) However, believers in and followers of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, need not be afraid of committing this unforgivable sin, as New Testament scholar R. C. H. Lenski explains.

"Yet we may say that whoever fears that he has committed the unpardonable sin thereby furnishes evidence that he has not done so. Nor can any man commit it inadvertently or unconsciously. Its commission is possible only when the Spirit through the Word has come upon a man and has been clearly recognized as God's Spirit with his divine power and grace to save. When a man deliberately answers him with blasphemy he forever nullifies even the Spirit's power to change him. His is already then the unalterable condition of the devils and of the damned in hell. It constitutes his *character indelebilis*."

R. C. H. Lenski, *New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, p. 485. WORD Search.

What is the sin against the Holy Spirit?

Louis Berkhof points out that a study of the relevant Bible passages (e.g., Matthew 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28-30; Luke 12:10; Hebrews 4:4-6; 10:26, 27; 1 John 5:16) indicates that this sin, which is commonly called the sin or blasphemy against the Holy Spirit "consists in the conscious, malicious, and willful rejection and slandering, against evidence and conviction, of the testimony of the Holy Spirit respecting the grace of God in Jesus Christ, attributing it out of hatred and enmity to the prince of darkness" and presupposes in those who commit it a thorough understanding but contradiction of the truth.

Berkhof consoles any who worry by explaining that it "is unpardonable, not because its guilt transcends the merits of Christ, or because the sinner is beyond the renewing power of the Holy Spirit; but because it is a sin that excludes all repentance, sears the conscience, and hardens the sinner. In those who have committed this sin we may therefore expect to find a pronounced hatred of God, a defiant attitude to Him and to all that is divine, delight in ridiculing and slandering that which is holy, and absolute unconcern respecting the welfare of their soul and the future life. In view of the fact that this sin is not followed by repentance, we may be reasonably sure that they who fear that they have committed it, who worry about it, and who desire the prayers of others for them, have not committed it."*

*Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1933), pp. 147-148.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51)
- "when the community rebelled at the waters in the Desert of Zin,…" (Numbers 27:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the key agent in the application to us of Jesus' redemption.
   b. 12)f) What does it mean to offend the Holy Spirit?
   2- Resist not. (Acts 7:51) The Greek word translated resist, is a strong word, ἀντιπίπτετε (*antipiptete*) < ἀντιπίπτω (*antipiptō*), that is used only in Acts 7:51 and in Numbers 27:14 in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew, ca. 250 BC), and the contexts of both are in reference to unbelievers. This resistance means opposition, a determined and active resistance, which Lenski explains as "hardness of heart or obduracy." Such opposition cuts one off from the very Being (the Holy Spirit) by Whom alone he or she can receive the regeneration that begins the process of salvation within us. Resisting the Holy Spirit is thus the counter process of committing the unforgivable sin.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"Do not quench the Spirit; [20]do not despise prophetic utterances."
(1 Thessalonians 5:19-20 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Holy Trinity, the key agent in the application to us of Jesus' redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         f) What does it mean to offend the Holy Spirit?
            3- Quench not the Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20) As Lenski explains exceptionally well, Paul is using a figure of speech (metonymy), where the Spirit is identified with what he produces, in his command that we do not extinguish the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot quench the Spirit himself, but we can, for example, allow Spirit-given wisdom, ideas, guidance, and gifts to be ignored and fail to act on them—thus not bearing fruit—thereby quenching them, resulting in stagnating our, and interfering with others', sanctification. We cannot prohibit the Spirit from accomplishing the Lord's will and objectives, but we can harm ourselves and others, which we must not do.

Since the Holy Spirit is the third person of the sovereign and almighty triune God, how can a human being “quench the Spirit”?

Lenski adds: The present imperative indicates a course of action. In all five injunctions [beginning with verse 16] the imperative is placed last, thus both object and verb are emphatic, all is striking brevity.

This is scarcely "the spirit" of the new life in the Thessalonians but the Holy Spirit who moves their hearts. The writers of this epistle are not referring to the special miraculous charismata such as speaking with tongues, inspired prophetic utterances, healings, and the like. They are writing about the ordinary and regular work of the Spirit and not about his extraordinary, miraculous manifestations. All that v. 12-18 contain, and all that follows in v. 20-22 deals with nothing exceptional. All of the Thessalonians are addressed, all of them are to let the Holy Spirit guide and prompt them, and none are to squelch these holy promptings.

They must not "extinguish" the Spirit, quench the holy fire and ardor he kindles in their hearts. The expression "to extinguish the Spirit" is concentrated, the Spirit being identified with what he produces; "extinguish" is figurative for putting out the holy fire upon the altar of the heart. Such quenching occurs when the fervor that the Spirit kindles in us is greatly lessened or put out altogether by fleshly, worldly objections. Many a noble, generous, godly impulse dies without producing fruit in action or brings only a fraction of what it might produce. Who has not seen many a good suggestion, plan, appeal, which certainly came from the Spirit, literally extinguished in whole or in part by unspiritual objections of ignorant or hostile brethren? So often some refuse to respond to the Spirit's promptings and yield to the flesh. These are worthy of blame. This occurs both in the individual, in the inner circle of his own motives and impulses, as well as in meetings where united efforts for some plan or work are to be set going.

R. C. H. Lenski, *New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, p. 359. WORDsearch.

Since the Holy Spirit is the third person of the sovereign and almighty triune God, how can the apostle Paul say, “Do not quench the Spirit”?

The Doctrine of Salvation

“Do not quench the Spirit;”
(1 Thessalonians 5:19 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- In addition to what R. C. H. Lenski said in the previous slide, we also observe throughout Scripture that God doesn’t force people to do something against their will.
- It was God’s will to create humans in his image, which includes a genuine, though limited, freedom of will.
- God marvelously allows people to make decisions and commit acts but in such a way that they do not prohibit the accomplishment of God’s will and his purposes.
- While God is always sovereign and in complete control, he allows people to make wrong decisions, but they need to live with the effects of those decisions. (Cf., e.g., 2 Samuel 12)
- Quench does not mean thwart. God will simply get the job done through other people.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "…no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3)
- "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7)
- "…the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)
- "Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit." (Matthew 7:17-18)
- **"**Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. God's special grace in Jesus Christ is applied to us through the work of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Key Agent in the Application to us Jesus' Redemption.
   b. We see in soteriology the work of the Holy Spirit in individuals.
      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         g) Paul identifies nine <u>fruits</u> of the Spirit for the building up of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:7)
            1- They are love, joy, peace, patience (longsuffering), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. They bless God and humans, and help us accomplish his purposes. By our fruit we discern that we're living by the Spirit instead of the flesh. They help the church discern potential leaders who are maturing in Christ-likeness. (Galatians 5:16-25)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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      12) The Spirit works in the life of the Christian.
         g) Paul identifies nine fruits of the Spirit for the building up of the church. (1 Corinthians 12:7)
            2- Physical redemption as well as spiritual redemption is part of our salvation. Man was created with a body and a soul, and God intends the two to always be saved. With that salvation comes the responsibility to serve the Lord, which is a form of worship. (Romans 12:1)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. [5]There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. [6]There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

[7]Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. [8]To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, [9]to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, [10]to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. [11]All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines." (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)

h) Paul identifies most of the gifts of the Spirit for the building up of the church to help us accomplish the work the Lord gave us, including the Great Commission that is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20. Some of these gifts are wisdom, knowledge, teaching, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, hospitality, evangelism, preaching, administration, exhortation, sharing, leadership, showing mercy, special faith, service.
   1- The gifts are given directly by the Spirit in a believer's life but confirmed by the church.
   2- A believer may be given more than one gift. (Ephesians 4:7)
   3- We are to eagerly desire these gifts. (1 Corinthians 14:1)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. [7]If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; [8]if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. (Romans 12:6-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)

h) Paul identifies most of the gifts of the Spirit to serve and build up the church in order to help us accomplish the Great Commission Jesus gave us as we read in Matthew 28:18-20. Some of these gifts are wisdom, knowledge, teaching, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, hospitality, administration, evangelism, preaching, showing mercy, exhortation, sharing leadership, special faith, service.

1- The gifts are given directly by the Spirit in a believer's life but confirmed by the church.
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Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)
- "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it…. [11]It was he [i.e., Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers," (Ephesians 4:7,11)
- "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." (1 Corinthians 14:1)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)2-

c- Paul identifies most of the gifts of the Spirit to serve and build up the church in order to help us accomplish the Great Commission Jesus gave us as we see in Matthew 28:18-20. Some of these gifts are wisdom, knowledge, teaching, healing, miracles, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, tongues, interpretation of tongues, hospitality, administration, evangelism, preaching, exhortation, sharing, leadership, showing mercy, special faith, service.

1] The gifts are given directly by the Spirit in a believer's life but confirmed by the church.

2] A believer may be given more than one gift. (Ephesians 4:7)

3] We are to eagerly desire these gifts. (1 Corinthians 14:1)

Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

Romans 12:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:4-11;28	Ephesians 4:11	Matthew 19: 11; 1 Corinthians 7:7-8	Matthew 12:22-32	Acts 13:2,3
Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophecy			
Teaching	Teaching	Pastor-Teacher			
Serving					
Exhortation					
Giving					
Giving Aid					
Compassion					
	Healing				
	Working Miracles				
	Tongues				
	Interpretation of Tongues				
	Wisdom				
	Knowledge				
	Faith				
	Distinguishing between Spirits				
	Apostleship	Apostleship			
	Helps				
	Administration				
		Evangelizing			
		Shepherding			
			Celibacy		
				Exorcism	

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- "Jesus replied, 'Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. [12]For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.'" (Matthew 19:11-12)
- "I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. [33]But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— [34]and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. [35]I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:32–35)

2.b.12)

i) Other gifts of the Spirit also exist, e.g., what is referred to as the gift of celibacy, also called singleness, to which Jesus referred in Matthew 19:11-12. Unmarried people can serve Christ in special ways. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 7:32-35)

j) The gifts of the Spirit should be confirmed by the church.

1- How do we validate and confirm a person's spiritual gifts?

2- They are validated by the church, which has been authorized to do so in its nurture and disciplinary functions.

3- The church must help people identify and grow in their understanding of their gifts and in their ability to use their gifts most effectively for accomplishing the Lord's purposes in their calling from him. Instructional guides are commercially available to help identify spiritual gifts. Those who have these gifts have the responsibility to be open to and seek such instruction. Providentially, most do.

Identify Your Spiritual Gift(s)

Instructional guides are commercially available to help identify gifts the Holy Spirit has given. Those of us who have these gifts have the responsibility to be open to and seek such instruction. Providentially, most do.

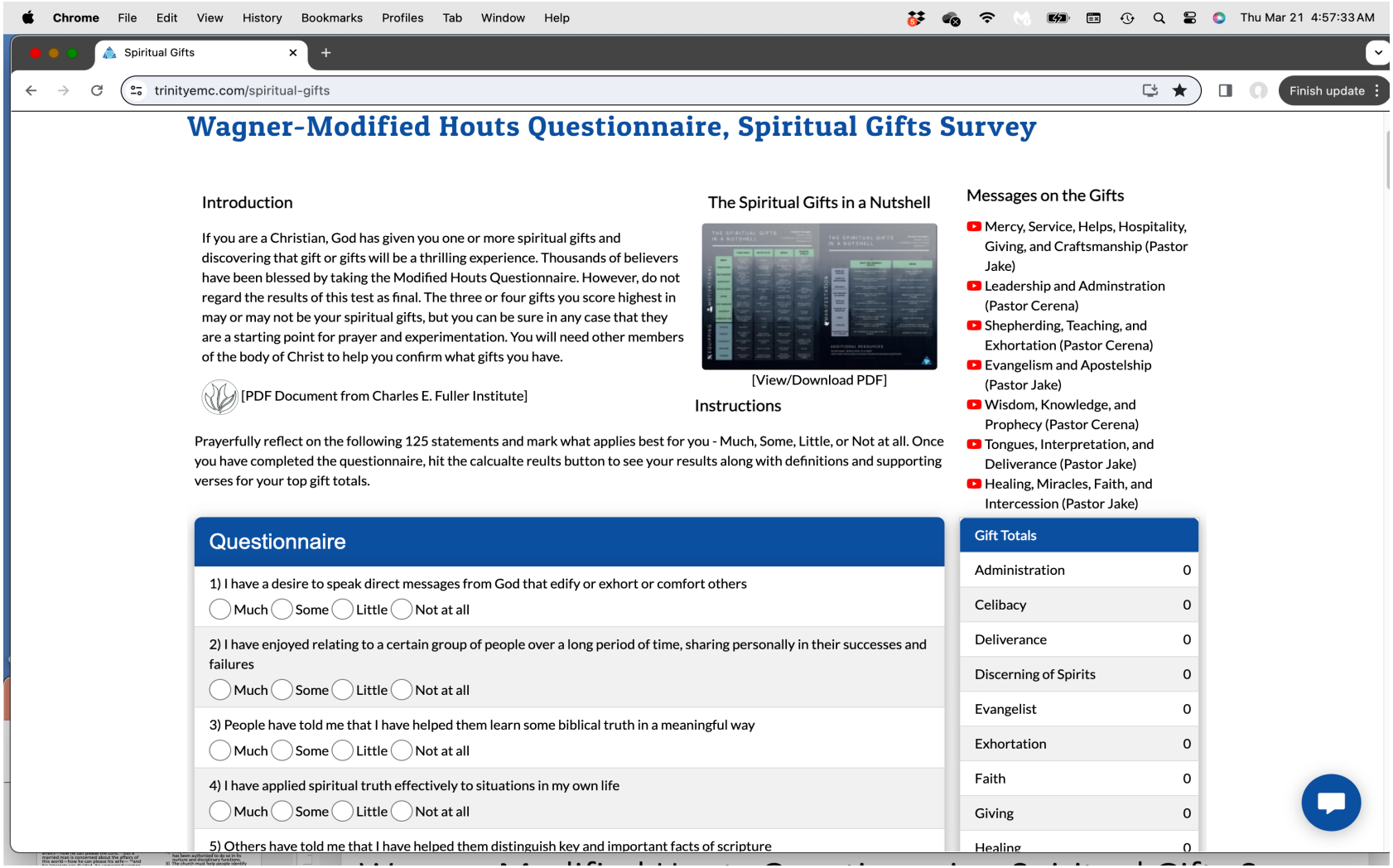
One such spiritual gifts inventory is called the *Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire*. The first URL below presents the *Questionnaire* with helpful instructions, all of which can be downloaded and printed.

- https://erbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Spiritual-Gifts-Test.pdf

For an even more helpful way to benefit from the *Questionnaire*, use both URLs. Use the first for the information and instructions and the one below that provides information and the document in a digital format, which can be completed on your computer, and which automatically calculates your responses. Digitally file or print out your completed form for future reference.

- https://trinityemc.com/spiritual-gifts

Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire, Spiritual Gifts Survey



Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)
j) The gifts of the Spirit should be confirmed by the church.
4- The church must monitor and guard against the abuse of the spiritual gifts, especially the extraordinary gifts, e.g., healing, miracles, tongues, and interpretation.
5- A basic way to monitor and guard against the abuse of the spiritual gifts is to remember God's Word as to their use. The gifts are to glorify and honor God (Acts 2:11; cf. v. 4; 1 Corinthians 12:7,10; 14:2) and, when interpreted, to direct people to God. They are also to edify, comfort, and unite the whole church. Tongues (*op cit*.) in the Bible refers to an unstudied but known language with grammar and syntax; it is not babbling, which does not honor God, direct people to God, or edify, comfort, and unite the whole church. (Matthew 6:7-8)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The church must monitor and guard against the abuse of the spiritual gifts, especially the extraordinary gifts, e.g., healing, miracles, tongues, and interpretation. Highly regarded Biblical and theological scholars believe that the extraordinary gifts were primarily to authenticate and firmly reestablish the church (*op cit*. Ecclesiology section) in the first century A. D. and that in God's Providence those gifts were mostly discontinued at the end of the first century after the church was well established. They reason that the whole of God's Word and the witness of the church is focused on Jesus Christ, and that the continued use of the extraordinary gifts would shift the focus away from Christ and onto the Holy Spirit, which is ironically the opposite of the Spirit's purpose (e.g., John 14:26), and the marvels of these gifts, which, as the following anecdote illustrates is precisely what has occurred; thus for the most part these gifts ceased after the first century. Thus, the extraordinary gifts were largely not emphasized or observed until the late 19th century A. D., with a rise in the holiness movement and especially in Pentecostalism. Biblical theologians raise many serious questions regarding the authenticity of tongues today.

In a course I was teaching in Chicago on 1 Corinthians, a guest in our class the day I focused on chapter 12 was a professor of Hebrew at a nearby seminary. He said he was a guest in a Pentecostal Bible study one day, and the group began speaking in tongues. As each person going around the circle would pray in a tongue, another would interpret. Not having the gift of tongues the Hebrew professor wondered what he would do when it came his turn to pray in a tongue, for he didn't want to be subjected to the Pentecostal disregard for those who don't speak in tongues. Then the idea came to him to pray the Lord's prayer that he had memorized in Hebrew. When he finished, someone in the group jumped up and interpreted, but the interpretation had nothing at all to do with the Lord's prayer! (Contrast 1 Corinthians 14.)

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

Specifically, the church must monitor and guard against the abuse of tongues, and interpretation. The gift of tongues, glossolalia, involves known languages that have grammar and syntax and is meant for the edification of the church. (1 Corinthians 14, esp. v. 26); it is not an unintelligible or even unconscious babbling. The same word, γλῶσσα (*glossa*, tongue, language), occurs in 14:26, Acts 2:4, and Revelation 7:9.

Another anecdote that is widely reported is the account of a church where someone was speaking in a tongue and a guest asked a member of the church, "Why are you letting this person speak like that?" The member asked, "What do you mean?" The visitor replied, "Because he is speaking in my native language, and he is speaking to the devil; he is blaspheming Jesus Christ!"

Yet, we should not say that there is no longer any legitimate use of the gift of tongues. A former missionary told a group with whom I was meeting that a foreign guest at an evangelistic crusade in Mexico was invited as a guest speaker. The guest speaker did not know a word of Spanish, so someone was prepared to translate. When it was time for the guest to speak, he approached the lectern and began to speak—in fluent Spanish! He spoke for 20 minutes and then sat down, but from that point on, he was no longer able to speak another word in Spanish.

Soteriology: How is the redemption of Jesus Christ applied? Who is the Holy Spirit and what does he do?

The Doctrine of Salvation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2.b.12)a)2-
e- The gifts of the Spirit should be confirmed by the church.
6] When I use an instrument such as the *Wagner-Modified Houts Questionnaire* and consider the results, I should seek the objective Spirit-led help of the church to obtain confirmation. When the Holy Spirit calls someone to serve the Lord, he works directly in the mind and heart of the believer in Christ but also in the mind and heart of leaders in the church, the body of Christ. If I think I am called to a particular function and gifted for that service but the church leaders (e.g., pastor, elders, others) in authority in these matters don't think I have those gifts and that calling, then I need to go back to the *Questionnaire* and have further conversations with the pastor, prayerfully seeking the Lord's guidance as to where he is calling me to serve.

Practical Implications and Applications of Soteriology Pertaining to Marriage: Respecting God's Command to Marry Only a Believer in Jesus Christ

God's Word on Marriage

- "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14)
- "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord." (1 Corinthians 7:39)
- "We promise not to give our daughters in marriage to the peoples around us or take their daughters for our sons." (Nehemiah 10:30)
- "Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you…For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession." (Deuteronomy 7:3-4,6)

Meaning and Practical Applications

- God's command to only marry other believers in him must be seen in its total context: the rest of God's Word. Throughout the Bible, the strong teaching that God's people must only marry other believers in the Lord stems from the major motifs (themes) of separation and holiness to God who is Most Holy.
- As we have seen in our study, since God is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy, he requires us to be holy to him. (Leviticus 19:2)

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Meaning and Practical Applications

- Marriage is a major motif throughout the whole of God's Word. It is about the most intimate of relationships on both the horizontal, human, plane and on the vertical plane, involving our relationship with God. He loves the people who bear his image, and he has called his people to be the main means through whom he is accomplishing his redemptive purposes. In order to do so, we must be holy to him; he will not permit unholiness and corruption to destroy his plan of salvation. Legitimizing an unholy union with pagans would result in the mitigation and destruction of his plan of redemption of his creation. See also Genesis 26:34-35; 27:42-28:1; Exodus 34:16; Malachi 2:11; Ephesians 5:31-32; Revelation 19:7; 21:2,9; 22:17.

The Practical Importance of Obeying God to Not Be Unequally Yoked with an Unbeliever

What Do I Do Where Marriages Are Arranged?

- In many countries in the world marriages are arranged by parents directly or with the help of a matchmaker, either a friend or a professional, contacted by the parents. Young Christians ask me what they should do. They say, "My parents are not Christians, and they bring non-Christians to me that they urge me to marry; what should I do?" Here is my answer.
- Tell your parents that you are a Christian, you must obey God's Word, and you cannot marry one who does not believe in and follow Jesus Christ. But also say that in his Word one of his commandments is to "Honor your father and your mother." Therefore, you will honor them by considering the person they want you to marry. Then use the next year or so to explain to this potential spouse that you are a Christian and can marry only another believer in and follower of Jesus Christ. Explain the Gospel of Christ to him or her and use this time to witness for Jesus. You have an exceptional opportunity to do so. Follow the principles in these guidelines, e.g., determining the genuineness of words by track record over time.
- If this person does profess and demonstrate in behavior a genuine faith in Jesus Christ as his or her only Savior and Lord, you can then decide if you would like to marry him or her. If, however, it becomes clear that he or she will not believe in and follow Christ, you can then say this to your parents: "In obedience to God's Word and will, I honored you by carefully considering the man [or woman] you brought to me. However, since he [or she] will not become a fellow believer in and follower of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I must obey God and not marry someone who is an unbeliever. Please bring me someone else."

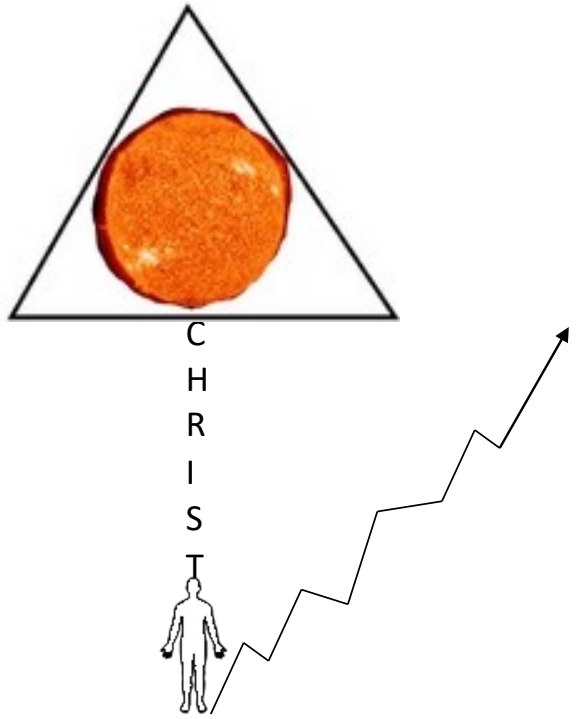
The Practical Importance of Obeying God to Not Be Unequally Yoked with an Unbeliever

- Allow time for the person to make any changes needed and for you to decide if you can love and live with this person's personality the rest of your life. Do you share this person's most important values and goals?
- Don't expect perfection. Remember Romans 3:23; two people struggling with sin under the same roof for 35 days, let alone 35 years, will experience conflict. Your goal is not to find a perfect person, who does live on this earth; your goal is to come to know a potential spouse well enough to decide if you can live with that person the rest of your life. (Malachi 2:10-16) However, keep in mind the reality of sin and its effects on both non-Christians and Christians. Sin motivates deception in the dating period before marriage. People trying to impress a potential spouse tend to hide rather than reveal their less attractive characteristics. You need to know those aspects of their being as well.
- The likelihood of change after marriage is remote; your greatest leverage for motivating change is before marriage, when your potential partner has the strongest motivation to please you. Track record is the most reliable means for detecting whether any change is genuine and lasting, part of the person's internal motivation and character. For example, is the prospective spouse willing to attend worship with you every week without you having to "drag him or her kicking and screaming" into the church? If it is important to you that your spouse not smoke, has he or she given up the habit long enough to assure you that he or she is done with smoking? Is this person you are considering for a spouse maturing in Christlikeness, growing in the sanctification process?

Soteriology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

What would you say to someone who thinks that since salvation is by God's grace alone that he or she can do whatever he or she wants to do and just ask God for forgiveness?



[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church

What or who is the church, and
What is it's purpose?

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

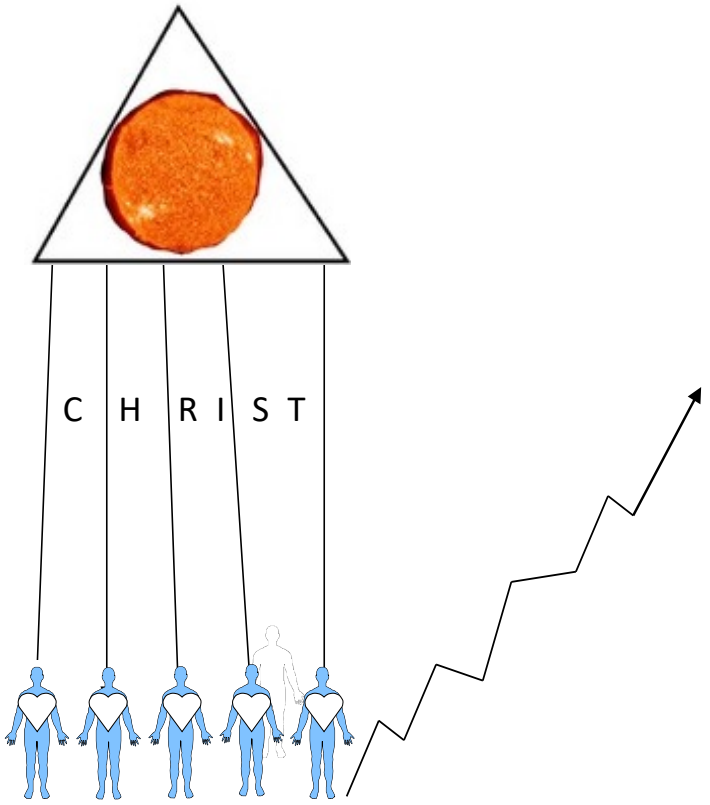
Ecclesiology is the study of all the Bible teaches about the church (< Greek: ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*) = assembly, congregation, church < ἐκ (*ek*) = from, out of, away from + καλέω (*kaleō*) = call, name, summon, invite = literally, the ones called out by the Lord, those saved individuals who are called out by God to be holy, i.e., separated to him, and gathered together as his church. The church is the entity God employs as the main means through whom he works to accomplish his redemption of his creation. The church is both an organism, the body of Christ consisting of his believers united in and called to serve God, and an organization, as the many individuals organize to accomplish with planned purpose what they could not do individually. Through Holy Spirit-guided worship, learning, and nurture, the church grows more Christ-like and serves the Lord ever more effectively in the mission God has given it to bring the Good News of redemption and reconciliation with God to every nation, tribe, people, and language, for it is God's will that all come into his Kingdom. (Revelation 7:7; 1 Timothy 2:4) The church sometimes has people in its communion who are not Christians and others who are Christians but so immature, stuck in an elementary stage of sanctification, that the congregation must be vigilant to lovingly establish certain limits, e.g., with the sacraments, and, when necessary, employ the Biblical use of church discipline. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The church is the primary means through whom God is working to accomplish his redemptive purposes and is especially helpful in discerning the will of God. He has given us the Bible through both the Old Testament church and the New Testament church, though since the end of the first century A.D., he is no longer giving any new revelation. He not only helps us directly through the Holy Spirit and his Word but also indirectly through others. Involving others, he primarily uses fellow believers whom the Bible calls the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; Colossians 1:18,24) to guide us.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

- In order to accomplish more corporately than could be done individually, God calls his saved people who are being sanctified to work together in a great global mission, to be the main means through whom he will accomplish his plan of redeeming his creation through Christ Jesus.
- Four important distinctions about the church should be remembered.
  1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham.
  2. The church is both militant and triumphant.
  3. The church is both visible and invisible.
  4. The church is both an organism and an organization.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Genesis 17:7)
- "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29, esp. v. 29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham. This is why some Biblical scholars use the word Church also in the OT, e.g., in Calvin's commentary on Genesis 17:7. He writes, "as soon as it was said, 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee,' the Church was separated from the other nations."
   a. The word covenant is another example of what Biblical scholars call a major motif, or theme, a doctrine that runs throughout the entire Bible, Old and New Testaments. The most common Hebrew word for covenant, בְּרִית (*berît*), occurs 286 times in the Old Testament and as διαθήκη (*diathēkē*) 33 times in the Greek New Testament. On numerous other occasions, references occur to covenants and covenantal relationships apart from the use of the word covenant.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. The church is the visible manifestation of the covenant God made with Abraham.
   b. When God tells us something over 300 times, we can conclude he’s trying to get our attention, right?!
   c. Do you recall your mother telling you, and have you said to your children, “How many times have I told you…?!”
   d. The covenant is a key to understanding the meaning of God’s revelation, but many Christians, including dispensationalists (*op cit.*), ignore this key teaching and its implications.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Genesis 17:7)
- "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29, esp. v. 29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

e. The unity and connection between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church is seen very clearly in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew, which was the Bible that Jesus and the early church used, "the holy Scriptures" to which Paul refers in 2 Timothy 3:15. In the Septuagint the Greek word, ἐκκλησία, *ekklēsia*, meaning assembly, congregation, church, and translated church in the New Testament, is used to translate the Hebrew word, קָהָל (*qāhāl*), assembly, congregation some 100 times throughout the Old Testament.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly." (Deuteronomy 9:10)
- "I will declare your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you." (Psalm 22:22)
- "Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly.
  16 Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children, those nursing at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber.
  17 Let the priests, who minister before the LORD, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare your people, O LORD. Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'' (Joel 2:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Thus, the word *ekklēsia* is also used in the Septuagint (abbreviated LXX), the third century B.C. Greek translation of the Old Testament, to refer to God's covenant people whom he has called and set apart to be holy to him. See, e.g., Deuteronomy 9:10; 18:16; Psalm 22:22; 26:12; 68:26; 149:1; Joel 2:16.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new [*kainos*] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20)
- "Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new [*kainos*] covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)
- "…For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new [*kainos*] covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant." (Hebrews 9:11-15)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

f. The essential unity of the covenant (which God said, e.g., Genesis 17:7, is "an everlasting covenant") throughout the Old and the New Testaments (testament meaning covenant) is also seen clearly in the Greek of the New Testament and in the LXX. In all but one (Hebrews 12:24) of the references to the new covenant in the New Testament, the Greek word, καινός (kainos, new), is used. The word *kainos* means new in nature or quality (i.e., renewed), not new in time or origin, which is designated by another Greek word also translated new, νέος (*neos*, i.e., brand new). See Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:8 (quoting Jeremiah 31:31 [38:31 in the LXX]); 8:13; 9:15. The word *neos* signifies something that was not there before in contrast to *kainos*, which signifies renewed, albeit constituting a genuine newness. The context of Hebrews 12:24 indicates that *neos* is used to emphasize how greatly the work of Christ impacted, indeed transformed, the original and everlasting covenant God made with Abraham. The excellent Lutheran Biblical scholar, R.C.H. Lenski, points out that the use of *neos* here "…does not deserve serious consideration. The newness of this testament has nothing to do with the testament that was given to Abraham, for this stands forever and cannot be called old in any sense since Christ fulfilled its promise and sealed the inheritance to all the heirs." (459).

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "But he was pierced for our transgressions,
  he was crushed for our iniquities;
  the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
  and by his wounds we are healed.
  6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
  each of us has turned to his own way;
  and the LORD has laid on him
  the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:5-6)
- "'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah… 33 'This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the LORD. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. 34 …'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" (Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- "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." (Hebrews 7:25 NASB)
- "Jesus…now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death…for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9) See also Matthew 28:18-20; John 11:50-52; Genesis 12:3; Isaiah 49:6; Revelation 7:9.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

f. While the main covenant throughout the Bible, the covenant God made with Abraham, is "an everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7; Matthew 5:18), Christ has made it a καινός (kainos, new) covenant by fulfilling the purpose of the old covenant, which no one else could do, and thereby forever bringing us, who believe in and follow him, into the covenant and granting to us the covenant blessings together with the covenant responsibilities.

1) Jesus' once for all sacrifice of himself to redeem us for our sins, replaced the old covenant repeated sacrifices of bulls and goats that were not sufficient to forgive our sins and only foreshadowed Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice that is credited to us by our faith. (Rom. 4) The sacrifice of animals was preparatory, temporary, and insufficient, because it was humans that sinned and thus humans needed to make reparation for their sins, but only a perfect, sinless, human could do so to satisfy God's righteous wrath against sin. Only Jesus, being both human and divine, was able to make the perfect sacrifice, doing so vicariously, substituting for us.
2) Jesus' sacrifice in the new covenant is all that is needed and makes possible our entry into the presence of God.
3) Jesus' work and his sending of the Holy Spirit to make it effective in our lives enables us to be God's children and to accomplish the original mission of the old covenant. (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 28:18-20; Rev. 7:9)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' [Quote from Jeremiah 31:33] [17]Then he adds: 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.' [Quote from Jeremiah 31:34] [18]And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin." (Hebrews 10:16-18)
- "[2]I will make you into a great nation…and you will be a blessing. [3]…all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:3)
- "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." (Hebrews 7:25 NASB)
- "Jesus…now crowned with glory and honor, because he suffered death…for everyone." (Hebrews 2:9)
- "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude, that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands." (Revelation 7:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

f. While the main covenant throughout the Bible, the covenant God made with Abraham, is "an everlasting covenant" (Genesis 17:7; Matthew 5:18), Christ has made it a καινός (*kainos*, new) covenant by fulfilling the purpose of the old covenant, which no one else could do, and thereby forever bringing us, who believe in and follow him, into the covenant and granting to us the covenant blessings together with the covenant responsibilities.

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Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2] Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:1-2)
- "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2:1 (KJV)
- "Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads." (Revelation 4:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

g. We have further Biblical evidence that the church was not born at Pentecost. Acts 2:1 uses a rare and important Greek word, not well translated in many new versions of the New Testament: συμπληρόω (*sumplēroō*) = fill completely, become entirely full, complete. With New Testament scholar, R.C.H. Lenski, the verse is better translated, "And when the day of Pentecost was being fulfilled." The King James Version translates the verse more accurately than most newer versions. Thus, we see the link with the rest of Scripture, in particular the immediate context in the beginning of Acts, and the entire Old Testament. The Holy Spirit did not just arrive in the first century A.D.; he's been everywhere from the beginning. (Review Theology and Soteriology.)

The number 12 in apocalyptic literature, the genre in which Revelation was written, refers to the church (e.g., 12 apostles) in the NT and also in the OT to the 12 tribes. The number 24 refers graphically to the unity of the OT church and the NT church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place." (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- 'And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2:1 (KJV)
- "'I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'" (Luke 24:49)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

h. Thus, Pentecost is <u>not</u> the church's birthday.

1) The church is not being birthed on the day of Pentecost, but rather empowered (cf. the context of the passage, e.g., Acts 1:8) and equipped, thus Christ is strengthening his still emotionally beaten up and timid post-crucifixion disciples by sending the Holy Spirit to give his church what they needed to "get the job done" in accord with their, indeed our, high and holy calling. See Luke 24:49.
2) This reality about the church is very important for many reasons, not the least of which is to help dispensationalists understand that this is not a new, a church, age; the church has been in existence since Abraham.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.” (Acts 2:1 NIV)
- ‘And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” Acts 2:1 (KJV)
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Ephesians 5:25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

i. In Ephesians 5:25 we read that “Christ loved the church…” If the church didn’t begin until Pentecost, how likely is it that Paul would say Christ loved [Greek aorist, past, tense] her?” The context of the passage indicates he is not speaking in a vision of the future.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:6)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

j. Much more Biblical evidence of the continuity between the church in the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament church can be adduced. One more shall suffice. Among many similar Scripture passages, notice the obvious connection the apostle Peter made (in 1 Peter 2:9) with Moses' account in Exodus 19:6. Moses records the LORD revealing to the Israelites "you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." With unmistakable clarity and obvious linkage with this Old Testament terminology and the church's calling and mission, not only in Exodus 19:6 but elsewhere in the OT, Peter writes what the Holy Spirit inspired him to reveal in these words, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:6)
- "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church's mission to witness for God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.

1) Individuals engage, e.g., in private or group conversations (1 Peter 3:15) as Christ's witnesses or evangelists.

- It is important to distinguish between witnessing and evangelism.

Ecclesiology: The Mission of the Church

The Mission of the Church Conducted Individually and Corporately

Distinguishing between Witnessing and Evangelism

Two Means of Lovingly Proclaiming the Good News about Jesus Christ

Individual Mission: Witnessing

1. Witnessing is communicating about Jesus Christ, which all believers in Christ are called to do. (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15)
2. While the verbal aspect of witnessing can be facilitated by conversational gambits, Scripture indicates a witness for Christ is usually passive until requested, a response to the query of others, typically as they observe the difference between our lifestyle and that of the world and ask us why. (1 Peter 2:9-12; 3:15)
3. Witnessing is done largely on an individual basis, where a believer explains his or her faith in Christ to one or more others in conversation, typically and especially effectively within relationships.

Individual Mission: Evangelism

1. Evangelism is a gift of the Spirit that some but not all believers receive. (Ephesians 4:11) This understanding relieves guilt in those who feel pressure to be assertive in proclamation of the Gospel of Christ but who don't have the gift of evangelism.
2. Evangelism, as seen in the Bible and in those throughout church history who have been given the gift, is a proactive initiative by individuals.
3. Yet individuals often do so in dyads (cf. Luke 10:1, 17). When done in larger groups (e.g., small groups, Vacation Bible School, and other outreach programs, even large groups as in the crusades many lead), the work is seen to be part of the corporate mission of the church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:6)
- "Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you…." (Jeremiah 29:7 NASB)
- "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)
- "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit." (Mark 13:11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church's mission to witness for God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.

1) Individuals engage, e.g., in private or group conversations. (1 Peter 3:15)

a) See the discussion that follows this slide.

b) We are also to engage the public square. See Jeremiah 29:7 and the related slides that follow.

2) Corporate missions are widespread, e.g.,

a) local church food pantries for poor people and their families.

b) local councils of churches to provide shelter, counseling, and education for homeless people and their families.

c) denominational programs, such as Thrivent. (financial management)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

DISCUSS: How can we witness most effectively for Jesus Christ in personal interactions with others? Include the following in the conversation.

1. In conversations always be looking for comments people make that we can use as a catalyst for mentioning a word for Christ. For example, if someone expresses worry or concern, offer a reply such as, "I've had those struggles too; however, I'd like to say that what helps me in that situation is knowing that the Lord Jesus Christ is sovereign, that he loves us, and that he can and does help us." (Refer to passages such as John 16:33.) If the other person indicates interest in what you have said, tell him or her more about Christ. Ask him or her if he or she has any questions about the Lord. If no interest is indicated, take pleasure in your attempt to be Christ's witness and that you have the assurance that you have given the other person vital words to think about and a catalyst the Holy Spirit will use to work in that person's mind and heart and upon which the Spirit will build, e.g., through another's comments. As God has said, his word will not return to him void. (Isaiah 55:11)
2. During your conversation, pray mentally that God will guide you as to what to say and not say, what to do and not do.
3. Don't feel obligated to press for an answer in your initial conversation. If you have the opportunity, you might say, "What do you think about this good news?"

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

4. Communicating within a relationship helps us witness for the Lord. A relationship involves friendship and trust, which facilitates communication on important subjects. The Navigators mission organization in their July 2019 issue, *Discipleship Resources*, included an article entitled, "Redefining Evangelism," in which they referred to research by the Barna Group. The article said, "The *Barna Group* recently released a fascinating report on how adults respond to evangelism. Among the findings, adults preferred faith interactions sparked out of sincere engagement rather than depersonalized outreach efforts. The takeaway? Nonbelievers are most receptive to faith conversations when they occur in the context of genuine relationship…the world is filled with millions of people who are on a spiritual journey. Many are not yet ready to attend church or make a decision to follow Christ, but they are open to relationships and to making small decisions that will move them closer to Christ." (The Navigators <email@navigators.org> July 2, 2019) This reality thus also applies to witnessing for Christ. Try to develop relationships whenever possible, as with a relative, neighbor, or coworker. Look for opportunities to speak a good word for the Lord and how he helps you. Ask the person if he or she has a church home; if not, ask if he or she would like to visit your church home with you.
5. Look at the brief but very helpful videos church educator, Jim Found, has provided on his Website at www.foundbytes.com that offer valuable and practical tips on effective witnessing for Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Part of our witness should be engaging the public square pertaining to issues that affect the welfare of the city where God has sent us. (Jeremiah 29:7) We must remember that we are in a spiritual warfare with Satan and his demons. (Ephesians 6:10-18 and Revelation 12-20) Jesus said we are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-16) We are to speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15) Many other passages in God's Word indicate his will that we do all we can to promote the good and oppose the evil in the society in which we live.

When we are opposed with false accusations, e.g., "You can't force me/us to believe and do this…," we can explain that neither we nor God want to force them to obey his will. First, our Biblical theology and anthropology (*op cit*.) reveal that God has built into us his image, part of which is a limited but genuine freedom that he respects. He wills that we obey him out of love, not constraint.

Second, in the light of Revelation 22:11-15, and related passages, we can prove that we're not trying to force anyone to do anything. Nevertheless, we must say that while God gives freedom for people to disobey, doing so will harm them sooner and later, and they will not be able to do it in his kingdom. Due to God's great love and holiness, he will not allow them to corrupt heaven or the new heaven and the new earth. If people choose to sin and do evil, they will do it in a place without God's presence. He will make sure of that at the final judgment. We should also forewarn them, as we have opportunity, that without God's presence and without his restraint upon their evil, where sinful people are all doing whatever they want to do, it will not be pleasant; indeed, it will be like existing in a "fiery furnace" (Matthew 13:42), a "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15), and with "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 8:12)

For much more information on why and how Christians need to engage the public square, i.e., effectively communicate God's Word and will in the current issues in our community, state, and nation, see the documents on the Christian Action and Current Issues pages of my free and secure general and academic Websites. See in particular both the lecture and the course, "Christian Witness in the Public Forum—Increasing Your Comfort Level to Speak the Truth in Love: Is Pleasing God Your Highest Priority?"

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:6)
- "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" (Matthew 28:18-20)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church's mission to witness for God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.

2) Corporate missions are widespread, e.g.,

d) national/international parachurch ministries

1- Focus on the Family (marriage and family)

2- Family Talk (marriage and family)

3- American Center for Law and Justice (legal action to address personal, corporate, and governmental injustices)

4- Dave Ramsey (financial management)

5- Family Research Center (research and action on family and social issues)

6- Habitat for Humanity (affordable housing for poor people)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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2) Corporate missions are widespread, e.g.,

e) worldwide parachurch ministries (most do more than the primary focus indicated below)

1- American Bible Society (Bible distribution)

2- Samaritan's Purse (disaster relief)

3- Luke Society (medical missions)

4- Exodus Global Alliance (helping people abandon homosexuality)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Practical Implications of Witnessing and Evangelism

NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list; what other questions should be added?

1. If the church doesn't witness, evangelize, and promote Christian missions to facilitate the extension and nurture of God's kingdom, and the society in which it exists becomes more and more unregenerate, what will the cost be to that society? (Consider, e.g., the serious harm to people and additional number of police that have to be hired.)
2. If the church fails to witness, how will entertainment change, corporately (e.g., in stage plays, TV, movies) and individually, i.e., what unregenerated people do to have fun?
3. If the church fails to witness, what non-Christian religions will fill the vacuum with their views as to what America should look like? For example, what would America look like if Islam were to expand and institute Sharia Law?
3. If the extension and nurture of God's kingdom is mitigated, how will minority groups in the society be affected?

[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

k. These and many other Bible passages are the basis of the church's mission to witness for God's plan of salvation in Jesus Christ, a witness that is done in many ways, individually and corporately.

1) Individuals engage, e.g., in private or group conversations. (1 Peter 3:15)

2) Corporate missions are widespread.

3) Corporate church art and architecture has always expressed an impressive witness for Jesus Christ by presenting the message of the Bible in visual form.

a) Notice the inspiring paintings, e.g., by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican in Rome.

b) Recall the breathtaking architecture of the Gothic cathedrals.

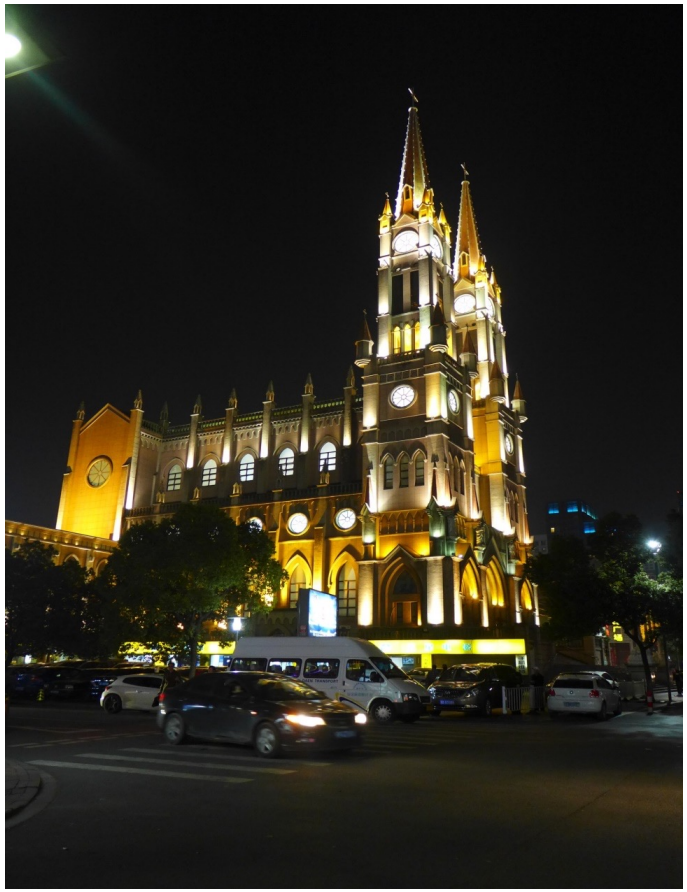
Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Notice how impressive and inspirational is the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of the Assumption in Ningbo, China. The light emitted, one of the characteristics of Gothic church architecture, continues in the evening via modern electricity, standing in sensational contrast to the darkness of the night in the heart of the city, drawing the attention of passersby and pointing their vision to the ascended and reigning Lord Jesus Christ.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

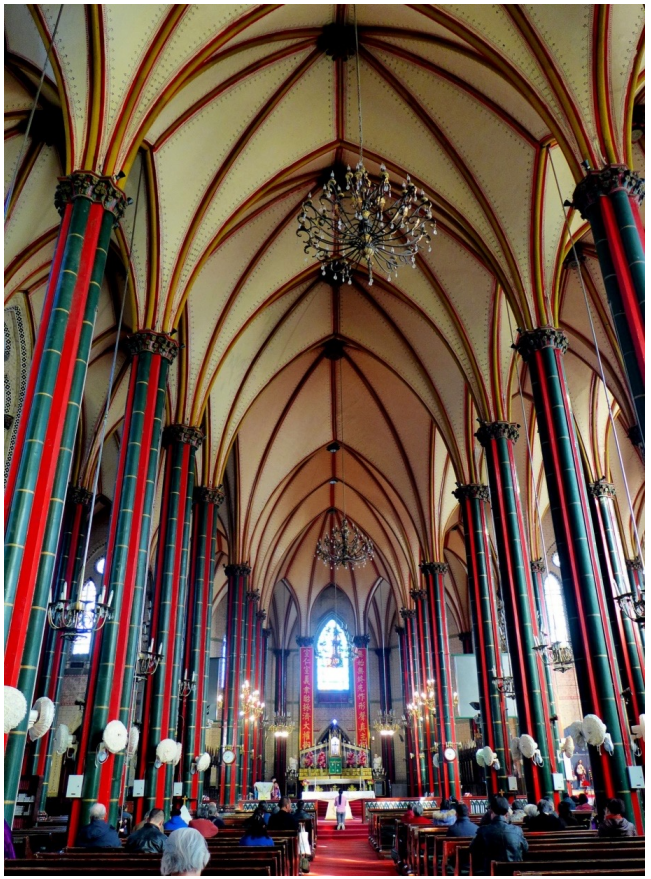


Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church **Meaning and Practical Benefits**

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The same impression, inspiring worship occurs inside Gothic churches, as in the historic Roman Catholic North Church in Beijing, China. The light and magnificent vertical lines support the liturgy and facilitate worshipers' engagement with the Lord Jesus Christ. Around 3,000 Beijing Christians were besieged in the cathedral during the Boxer Rebellion at the beginning of the 20th century, and it was used as a government school for girls during the Cultural Revolution and for a while afterward. One of the original buildings on the church grounds, a children's orphanage, remains.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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The same impact, inspiring worship occurs outside in the historic Roman Catholic North Church in Beijing, China. The breathtaking vertical lines draw the vision of worshipers toward heaven and help them keep the Lord Jesus Christ in their worldview and lives.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “all the people assembled as one man in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel. So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon…And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.” (Nehemiah 8:1-3)
- “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’
  All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: ‘Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!’” (Revelation 7:9-12)

As indicated throughout the Bible and this photo the church has always been for all ages and nations.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Doctrine of the Church

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As seen throughout the Bible and this video the church has always been for all ages and nations. This almost three hour worship service is at the Chikuluti CCAP (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian) in Malawi. Their worship is in the Chichewa language.

Meaning and Practical Benefits



View at: https://youtu.be/nMAHqs5SB5Q

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"[10]Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. [11]Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. [12]For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. [13]Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. [14]Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, [15]and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. [16]In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. [17]Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18]And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints." (Ephesians 6:10-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We also see a distinction in the Bible between the church militant and the church triumphant.
   a. <u>The church militant</u> is the theological term referring to the conflicts the church on earth faces in carrying out its calling from God.
      1) The church is engaged in a holy (spiritual) war. (Ephesians 6:10-18)
      2) We need to discern both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict to understand and be best prepared for the battle God has called us to engage.
         a) **This is a matter of life and death**—spiritually and eternally for everyone—and physically in the present for many in the horrendous persecution of Christians globally, many being put to death because they believe in Christ, which is one of the reasons Paul urges continual prayer for all the saints. (6:18)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. a. 2) We must continually keep in mind and teach both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict **to understand reality**, be best prepared for the fight ourselves, and to help God's people prepare for and win the fight as he has called us out (*ekklēsia*) to do. This is our identity, our raison d'être.

b) Conflicts with people (flesh and blood) are not the main problem we face.

c) As Paul points out in Ephesians 6:12 and John in Revelation 12-20, our main struggle is with Satan and his demonic forces.

d) We must explain this reality to people who dislike military terms and who don't like fighting. We cannot disobey and be unfaithful to God and disregard and ignore his Word on a subject we find uncomfortable. Neither is it realistic to do so.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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e) The failure to discern this reality brings much harm to many people, i.e., engaging in activities that are portrayed as being "innocent" and "fun" but are deceptively demonic, e.g., astrology; aura reading; tarot cards; crystal balls, and any other form of fortune-telling, e.g., Ouija boards, mediums, seances, black (and much other magic, except for Christian "magicians," who actually refer to themselves more accurately as illusionists and who use their program to show the dangers and deception in magic); false religions; Yoga (which is based on and is a form of Hinduism); any unbiblical sex; and married people flirting with members of the opposite sex. Cite local examples.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. a. 2) We need to discern both the visible and the invisible dimensions of this conflict to understand and be best prepared for the daily struggle.

3) Militant is a necessary term to help church people become aware, and to **keep reminding us, of the unseen (<u>thus unknown without God's revelation</u>) but very real and crucial spiritual battle that has an eternal dimension in which we are engaged.**

- Too many people think the church is a nice club that will look good on their resume and which they can attend when it fits into their crowded schedules.

  Little is farther from the truth.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. [2]And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?'…[5]Then one of the elders said to me…'See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'
[6]Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. [7]He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. [8]And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.
[9]And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. [10]You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:1-2,5-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. We also see a distinction in the Bible between the church militant and the church triumphant.
   b. <u>The church triumphant</u> refers to the church in heaven celebrating victory in and through Christ Jesus. (Revelation 4 and 5) See also Eschatology below.
      1) The church celebrates the victory ***<u>of</u>*** ***<u>and</u>*** ***<u>with</u>*** the Lord Jesus Christ!
      2) The church celebrates its vindication and coming reign in the new heaven and new earth.
         + Reflect and Discuss: What blessings for the church militant come from this doctrine <u>now</u>? Consider the encouragement knowing what lies ahead for us and the great joy our loved ones in Christ are already having!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
   a. <u>The church visible</u> refers to the typical congregation gathered together for worship and various other aspects of its life and work together.
      1) As such, unbelievers are mixed in with true believers.
      2) Unbelievers are present with many motivations including, but not limited to, the following among others:
         a) those genuinely seeking the truth but not yet committed to Christ,
         b) those looking for personal gain, e.g., business contacts, a pure spouse, trustworthy friends, information.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church visible includes true Christians at all levels of development, from very immature to mature. It also includes non-Christians.
   a. 3) Sometimes people have had painful experiences when associated with the visible church. This distinction helps people understand and be on guard. The Bible teaches that all people sin and fall short of the glory of God. (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23). Some true believers are not far along in the sanctification process.
   4) Non-Christians, who are also present, are either unaware of or not committed to following Christ's command to love.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
   a. 5) Nevertheless, it is good that immature Christians and non-Christians are present in the visible church for many reasons, including that they both hear the Word of God and see mature Christians modeling an engaging Christ-like lifestyle that the Holy Spirit can lead them to embrace and in which to mature in Christ. But important implications must be kept in mind.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
   b. <u>The church invisible</u> (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God, those who live and act willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts.

      The kingdom is here in part (Luke 17:21) but not yet in its fullest, so we pray regularly, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come [in its fullest], your will be done on earth as it is in heaven…." (Matthew 6:9-10)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?
8 Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.
9 Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. ‘If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk,
10 and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.” (Isaiah 58:7-10)
- “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,” (Matthew 25:35)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
   b. <u>The church invisible</u> (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God, those who live willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts.

The concept of the kingdom of God, though not mentioned in those words in the Old Testament (OT), is a major motif and theme running through the whole Bible. Key principles of the kingdom are mentioned in the OT, including in Deuteronomy 23:24. Thus, those principles that pertain to the kingdom in both testaments apply today and will forever. (Isaiah 58:7,10; Ezekiel 18:7,16; Matthew 5:17-18; 25:35-40)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

3. The militant church is both visible and invisible.
   b. <u>The church invisible</u> (spiritually) consists of true believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The true church invisible constitutes the kingdom of God,* those who live willingly ruled by God in their minds and hearts. At first it's not evident who do and who don't belong to the true church, but the true church becomes visible in
      1) the profession ***<u>and</u>*** conduct of the members,
      2) the ministry of the Word (rightly taught—no heresy) and sacraments (rightly in a worthy manner [1 Corinthians 11:20-34]), and
      3) the organization and government of the true church.

_____

* Only Matthew, writing primarily to people with a Jewish background, uses the term Kingdom of Heaven, because Jews are reluctant to say or write the word God, since they don't want to risk taking the name of God in vain. The two terms are otherwise synonymous.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?
Why does the church need leaders and managers/administrators?

4. The militant church is both an organism and an organization.
   - The church is an ***Organism***: It is "the body of Christ." (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; Colossians 1:18,24) We are his hands and legs here on earth. The church is not a club. Neither is it a purely human phenomenon. The church is very special. Those who believe in and follow the Lord are indwelt by him in his Spirit; he has a very special relationship with his people. When Jesus appeared to Saul (who became Paul) on the road to Damascus, he said, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me [not 'my people' or 'my followers' but me]?" (Acts 9:4) It is "God's household…the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:13). It is composed of people who sin, who are called by God to be holy and who are in various stages of the sanctification process, who have problems, needs, thoughts, feelings, and gifts from God, whom He has called to serve Him. (Special Revelation and General Revelation)
   - The church is an ***Organization***: In order to serve God most effectively and efficiently, the church has to function in ways that produce the results (Biblical term: fruit) the Lord expects. The church organizes in such a way to best accomplish its mission. The larger a church becomes, necessary modifications need to be made in order to function more effectively and efficiently. (Special Revelation, Acts 6:1-4, and General Revelation)

For further information on the leadership and administration of the organized church, see the PowerPoint presentation, *Leadership and Administration in the Church: Balancing Task Accomplishment and Caring*, by Edward D. Seely, and related essays available for free on the Church Leadership and Administration page of the author's Website at www.fromacorntooak12.com.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "…there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. [26]If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. [27]Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
- "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)
- "So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. [3]Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them [4]and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.'" (Acts 6:2-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   - <u>The church is an organism</u>.
     * The church is the body of Christ; it is people, believers called by God to gather together to be blessed by and serve in fellowship with him. (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
   - <u>The church is also an organization</u>.
     * God's people can serve more effectively working together in a coordinated and planned manner than they could as individuals in order to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit most effectively. (1 Corinthians 14:40; Acts 6:2-4)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)
- "…there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. [26]If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. [27]Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
- "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   - <u>The church is an organism</u>.
     1) The church is the body of Christ; it is people, believers called by God to gather together to be blessed by and serve him in worship and in the mission to which he is calling them.
     2) The church has both a vertical and a horizontal dimension; it is a special fellowship of believers in communion with God.
     3) Nowhere in the Bible is the church referred to as a building.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)
- "…there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. [26]If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
  [27]Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
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- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   - <u>The church is an organism</u>.

     4) The church is also referred to with the Greek word, κοινωνία (*koinonia*), i.e., fellowship, communion, association, partnership, sharing, participation, contribution, close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism (e.g., Acts 2:42). This dimension of the church is especially recognized in the Russian Orthodox Church with the word *sobornost*, considered untranslatable but the words fellowship or group consciousness are typically understood as coming the closest to its meaning. Theologian Bernard Ramm explains that "It is the feeling of oneness and communion which all worshipers have towards the assembled Church during the performance of the liturgy. This quality of *sobornost* distinguishes the Russian Church from the authoritarianism of Roman Catholicism and the individualism of Protestantism (ODCC, p. 1266)." (Ramm, p. 119)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." (Acts 2:42)
- "…there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. [26]If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.
  [27]Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." (1 Corinthians 12:25-27)
- "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   - <u>The church is an organism</u>.



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "For God is not a God of disorder* but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,…" (1 Corinthians 14:33)

  * < (Greek) ἀκαταστασία (*akatastasia*), disturbance, confusion, unrest, rebellion, insurrection, tumult, disorder

- "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   - <u>The church is an organization</u>.
     + God's people can serve more effectively working together in a coordinated and planned manner than they could as individuals.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that *they may be* one as we are one." (John 17:11)
- "There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church. Since 325 A.D. Christians have professed belief in these four Biblical attributes in the Nicene Creed.
      1) The church is ***one***, a unity. In John 17:11, the Greek verb, "*they may be*" (present tense, active voice) and Jesus' statement "as we" (he and the Father) indicate that the unity already exists, rather than something to accomplish; i.e., Jesus is praying for the Father to protect his people, the church, that they continue to be one rather than that that they become one. As the excellent Lutheran Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski says, Jesus "prays only for this, that the oneness already established may remain unbroken by the guardian care of the Father."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one." (John 17:11)
- "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. <u>The attributes (character traits) of the true church</u> are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church. Christians continue to profess belief in these four Biblical attributes cited in the Nicene Creed.
      1) The church is ***<u>one</u>***, a unity. Lenski continues, "How will [the oneness] be kept intact? By keeping the disciples 'in the name,' in the Word, in the utterances of Jesus (…v. 8). How may this oneness by endangered, how may a disciple drop out of it? By any teaching or doctrine contrary to the Word…The entire prayer has the one great burden that we may be preserved in oneness by complete adherence to the Word." Heresy hinders the preservation and growth in oneness.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

On the view that Jesus prays for the oneness which already exists among all believers by faith, instead of for the oneness that is to be the result of this faith in perfect adherence to the Word, see [John 17:11]. It is true, indeed, that even the smallest measure of faith joins us to God and to the mystical body of the church. But this is only the beginning. Our apprehension of the Word is to grow, the range and the inner power of our faith in that Word likewise. As this advances and is perfected, our oneness with God and with Christ and our oneness with each other becomes more and more what Jesus wants it to be. This is the burden of Jesus' prayer [John 17:17]. The mystical side must never blind us to the medium, the Word. We have no Christ and no God without the Word and no oneness among ourselves without the Word. On the other hand, the more we have of the Word in our hearts by faith and thus also ruling us in our lives, the more perfect is our oneness. Being spiritual and mystical, this unity is of necessity invisible and does not consist in any form of outward organization. How far, however, it is from being merely imaginary appears the moment we look at the Word. We are as much one with each other and with God and with Christ as we believe, teach, live, and confess all that is contained in the Word. Every deviation in doctrine, life, and practice from the Word mars and disrupts our oneness and hinders the fulfillment of Jesus' prayer. Those rend the church who deviate from any part of the Word, also those who demand things other than the Word demands. Those permit Jesus' prayer to be fulfilled in them who bring every thought and every act of theirs into subjection to the Word. "That they be one" means one in the Word; "that also they be in us" means in us through and by the Word. Thus Jesus prays.

R. C. H. Lenski, *Lenski New Testament Commentary* – The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The third ἵνα [that] introduces a purpose clause, “in order that the world may believe that thou didst commission me.” [John 17:21] “This is the fruit which is to follow from this oneness, namely that Christ’s Word is to break forth more and more and be accepted in the world as God’s Word, in which an almighty, divine, unconquerable power and the treasure of all grace and blessedness reside.” Luther. What stirs the world is not our faith but our faith arrayed as a unit behind the Word. This oneness of faith voicing the Word, adhering to it in every part, obeying its every precept, is bound to act powerfully upon the world. The greater our oneness in the Word, the greater our victories in the world. The more schism, heresy, and ignorance prevail, the less will our victories be.

Lenski New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one." (John 17:11)
- "There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:4-5)
- "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." (Romans 14:1)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
      1) The church is ***one***, a unity. The oneness of the true church must be remembered especially today with all its divisions. The true church includes the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), the Eastern Orthodox churches that split from the RCC in 1059, and the Protestant Churches, unregistered and registered, that hold to the Bible as their highest authority and whose authoritative doctrines, creeds, and official documents (including constitutions and by-laws) conform to God's Word. Even though we differ in some "disputable matters," (Romans 14:1ff.) we accept those others in these denominations as our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one." (John 17:11)
- "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters." (Romans 14:1)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. <u>The attributes (character traits) of the true church</u> are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
      1) The church is ***<u>one</u>***, a unity. We therefore treat all true Christians, i.e., all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their only Lord and Savior, e.g., holding to the texts such as Romans 10:9, John 3:16 and 14:6, as brothers and sisters in Christ. But concerning the "disputable differences" Paul mentions in Romans 14, this does not mean that we minimize the importance of our theological differences, e.g., by ignoring these differences. I like to say in such cases, "Well, we'll agree to disagree on [this matter], but let's continue the conversation."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [4]There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called— [5]one Lord, one faith, one baptism; [6]one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
[7]But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.
[8]This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.'
[9](What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? [10]He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) [11]It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, [12]to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up [13]until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
[14]Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.
[15]Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. [16]From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:3-16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. <u>The attributes (character traits) of the true church</u> are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
      1) The church is ***<u>one</u>***, a unity, but unity does not mean uniformity. Unity is to be maintained, but uniformity is not a goal: neither in the Bible nor in life. For the richness in diversity, see Ephesians 4:11. Diversity is to be valued, but not diversity that is in opposition to the Bible, God's Word.

Church Unity

Always keep in mind the church unity for which Jesus prayed so fervently, as recorded in John 17. We should avoid church divisions and splitting churches if at all possible. To do so, it is important to distinguish between these two very distinct matters and function accordingly.

1. "Disputable Matters" between and among true believers are allowable. (Romans 14:1ff.) Where true believers in Christ interpret the respective Bible texts differently, i.e., where two different interpretations are possible, then out of Christian love simply agree to disagree and maintain the unity of the church.
2. Heresy and apostasy **must not be allowed** in the church. (1 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:7)
   a. First, correct the misunderstanding of those who say, "The church should not judge others." That is a misreading of Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:1. Many places in the Bible, including Jesus himself later in the same chapter, indicate that there are times when we must make judgments pertaining to what is right and wrong, including for the sake of the other person(s). We are told to admonish one another. (Colossians 1:28; 3:16) For more on the Biblical teaching pertaining to judging, see my free e-book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love*.
   b. Next, attempt to correct the heretical teaching and/or evil behavior. Speak with the church leaders and follow the guidelines in the Bible, together with the church's denominational policy, for bringing such people under church discipline.
   c. If the person(s) who have been disciplined do not change, the last step is excommunication, with the prayer and objective of restoring the one(s) sinning so seriously. (1 Corinthians 5:5)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." (Leviticus 19:2)
- "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. [10]Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
  [11]Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. [12]Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (1 Peter 2:9-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. <u>The attributes (character traits) of the true church</u> are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and the calling of God to the whole church militant, and they help people discern between a true and a false church.
      2) The church is ***<u>holy</u>***. The word holy means separate, uncommon, pure. It does <u>not</u> accommodate its teaching to conform to cultural norms. Young people especially are looking for authenticity. Here it is. Peter explains perfectly and clearly what holiness means for the church; it seems like he could have written this passage this morning! People want to see their leaders maintain their courage and not capitulate the teaching of God's Word. They do not respect theological cowardice.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19]Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,'" (Matthew 28:18-19)
- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)
- "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands." (Revelation 7:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
      3) The church is ***catholic***; it has a global perspective, presence, and purpose. In order to appease former Roman Catholics who have very strong negative feelings about that denomination, some congregations substitute the word "Christian" for "catholic" in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds. However, Christian is not a substitute for catholic, which means universal or global. We should rather teach the difference and help fellow believers to distinguish in their minds "catholic" from "Roman Catholic." Such instruction may need to be done weekly for a while just prior to reciting the creed.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "…from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. [16]All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:15-16)
- "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:21)
- "Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. [16]He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction. [17]Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position." (2 Peter 3:15-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant invisible church is both an organism and an organization.
   a. The attributes (character traits) of the true church are characteristics primarily, but not solely, of the invisible church and help people distinguish between a true and a false church.
      4) The church is ***apostolic***. The term addresses the question of the validity of the church's authority. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the authority of the church comes directly in a succession from the apostle Peter, whom they call the first pope. Protestant churches derive their authority directly from being committed to and following the Word of God that was written by the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Scriptures recorded in the New Testament together with the Old Testament that was approved by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2]This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3]but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.” (1 John 4:1-3)
- “if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15)
- “Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> are primarily, but not solely, aspects of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      1) ***True preaching and teaching of the Word of God***. The failure to make the church’s preaching and teaching congruent with God’s Word is the primary human cause of heresy, discord, and dishonoring God where churches wind up departing from being a true church.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. [2]This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3]but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world." (1 John 4:1-3)
- "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)
- "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> help people discern between a true and a false church.
      1) ***True preaching and teaching of the Word of God***. David French insightfully exposes another disastrous error of those who fail to understand and teach historic Christian theology, "the temptation to forsake Christian doctrine to seek the approval of a hostile culture. This is the old argument that the world would embrace the Church if only the Church were more like the world. It is embraced by much of Mainline Protestantism, and it's the path to religious extinction. In the effort to appeal to the world, the Church becomes the world, and the logic for its distinct existence disappears. Thus the rapid decline of denomination after denomination that has decided to essentially merge with America's secular culture." In doing so, the church loses its holy mark.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," (Matthew 28:19)
- "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.
[27]Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28]A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29]For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep." (1 Corinthians 11:23-30)
- See also Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38-39,42.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      2) ***Right administration of the sacraments.*** The number of the sacraments in most Protestant theology is two, baptism and the Lord's Supper, based on the number of sacraments Christ specifically commanded to be celebrated. They always should be celebrated in accord with the Word of God, given only to believers and their children, and administered by lawful ministers of the Word and ordained church elders.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.'" (Leviticus 19:17)
- "'If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16]But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." [17]If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. [18]'I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'" (Matthew 18:15-18)
- "Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another…." (Colossians 3:16)
- Cf. Proverbs 15:1; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 3:16; James 5:19-20

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      3) ***Faithful exercise of church discipline*** This mark of the church occurs individually and corporately. Individually, it occurs as we care for one another, speaking up when a brother or sister needs a word of admonition. We do it by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), or as David Augsburger says, "care-fronting," (contrasted with confronting in the pejorative sense). Admonishing is not what Jesus meant when he said, "Do not judge…" (Matthew 7:1), where he was talking about not being judgmental. For more on the difference between admonishing and judging, see section on judging in my free e-book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others To Speak the Truth in Love*, p. 316 ff.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [2]And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [3]Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. [4]When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5]hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."
(1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      3) ***Faithful exercise of church discipline***
      <u>Corporately</u>, the church cares for its members when it collectively observes that a member has seriously departed from the teaching of God's Word in a way that is publicly noticed and whose behavior is harmful to him or herself, to others, that dishonors God, and is counterproductive to the church's mission of redemption in Christ Jesus. The church then disciplines that member in order to restore him or her and witness well for God in the world. When the church fails to discipline it fails the Lord and the accomplishment of his purposes, the church, and the sinner and his or her family.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [2]And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [3]Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. [4]When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5]hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."
  (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)
- "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord."
  (1 Corinthians 11:27. See also vss. 28-30.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      3) ***Faithful exercise of church discipline***
      <u>Corporately</u>, the church's caring discipline includes, but is not limited to the following:
      - Meeting with the pastor, pastoral counselor, or other authorized church leader(s).
      - Counseling leading to repentance.
      - Not permitting persons under church discipline, or continuing to commit unrepentant sin, to receive the elements of the Lord's Supper, until they repent and change their wrong ways. The church must not offer the sacrament to such unrepentant sinners, thereby affirming and rewarding their sinful disobedience to God; misleading them, the church and others; and enabling the continued sinful behavior, resulting in dangerous outcomes. (See 1 Corinthians 11:28-30.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32]When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:31-32)
- “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. [2]And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [3]Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. [4]When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5]hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. 3) The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church.
      a) The proper use of church discipline keeps us from coming under judgment.
      b) The marks as well as the attributes of the true church need to be taught more than they are in order to eliminate the confusion people have with all the “churches” from which to choose and with all the other religions of the world that that are being mentioned in the daily news.
      c) The world observes many who claim to be Christians but act contrary to what Jesus taught and did. This observation turns many away from the Lord and his church, the exact opposite of the Lord’s will. We must emphasize sanctification and, as needed, admonishment, all done speaking the truth in love. (Eph. 4:15)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." (Leviticus 18:22)
- "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this." (Deuteronomy 22:5)
- "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. [2]Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2)
- "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 11:27. See also vss. 28-30.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   b. <u>The marks (authenticating behaviors) of the true church</u> are aspects primarily, but not solely, of the visible church and help people discern between a true and a false church, now needed as much as ever previously.
      - We also must help people discern the Satanic and demonic activity in the world and that which is being done also in the visible church, when church leaders teach "political correctness" instead of Biblical correctness, and when many twist the Scripture, trying to make the Bible conform to their ideas as to what is right (e.g., homosexuality, "same-sex marriage," transgenderism, divorce, abortion), rather than conform their ideas to God's Word. Doing so, we must highlight the benefits of the historic systematic theology of the true church of Christ.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

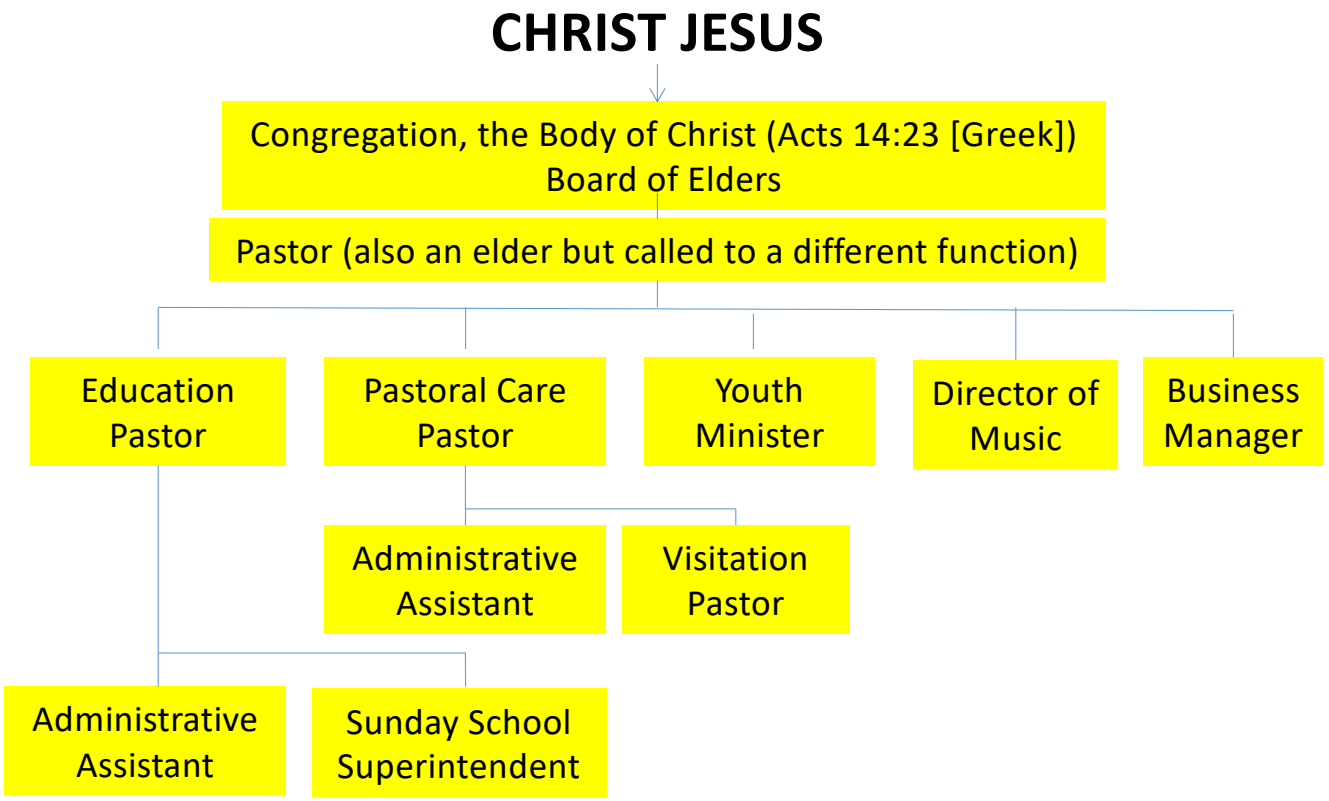
- "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)
- "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17)
- "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." (2 Timothy 2:2)
- "And God placed all things under his [Christ's] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, [23]which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:22-23)
- "'just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   c. The government of the church refers to how the church organizes itself to function most efficiently and effectively including faithfully. ***Power must not be confused with authority and function, as illustrated in the following flow charts.***
      1) Christ is the head of the church. (Ephesians 1:22)
      2) Local churches have at least three offices.
         a) A Board of Elders is responsible for the spiritual well being of the church. (Acts 11:30)
         b) Teachers proclaim and explain God's Word and help people understand its implications and applications to their lives. (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 5:17; 2 Timothy 2:2)
         c) Deacons are responsible primarily for the material well being of the church. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:8) Deacons are sometimes included in the Board of Elders, i.e., some elders' responsibilities are diaconal in nature. In addition, some churches have deaconesses.

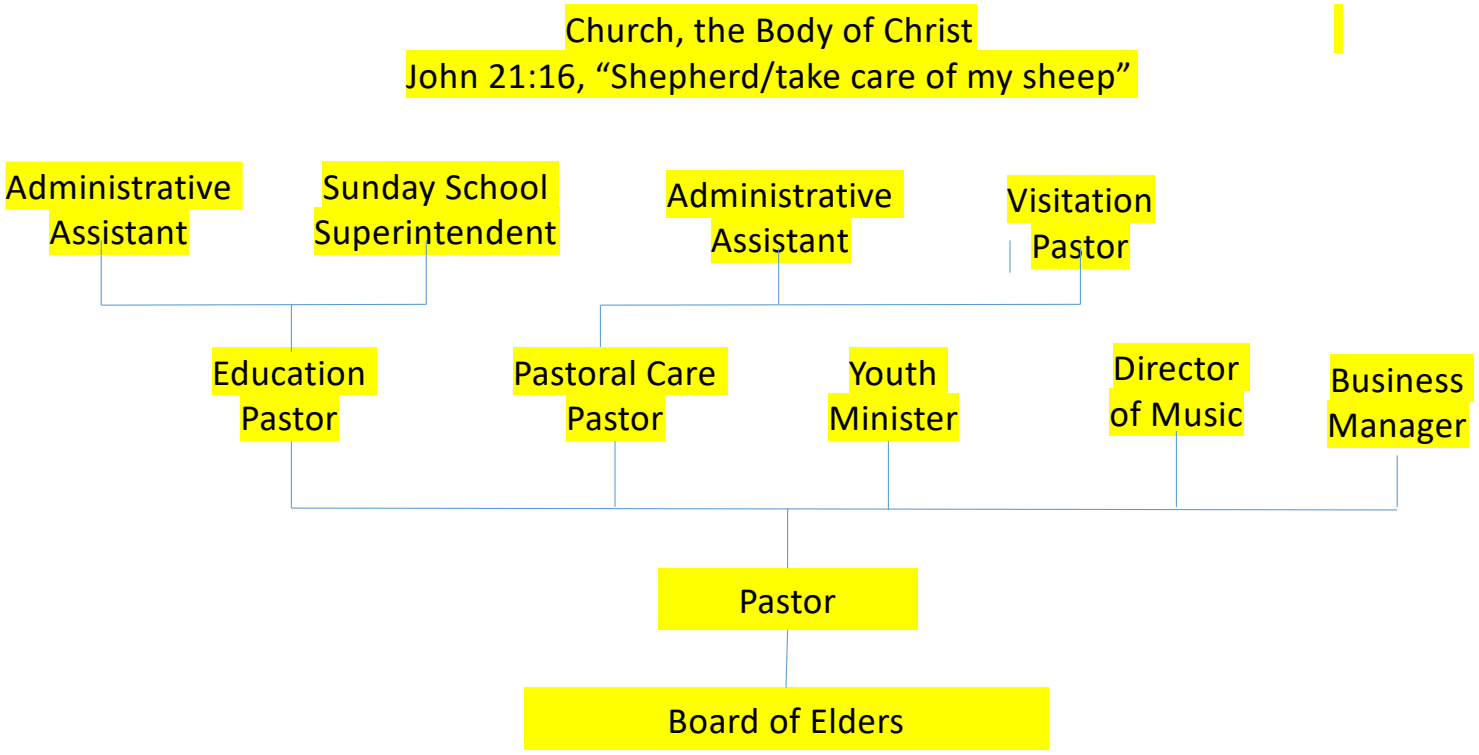
Authority Flow Chart of Church Leadership

Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:7,11; Acts 14:23



Functional Flow Chart of Church Leadership

1 Peter 5:3; According to Matthew 20:25-28, Christlike Servanthood, cf. vs. 26: ἔστω (*estō*, must be: imperative [command]; present tense [constantly])



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.” (Acts 14:23)
- “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)
- “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.

   c. The government of the church refers to how the church organizes itself to function most efficiently and effectively.

      3) Ecclesiastical assemblies consist of deliberative bodies in the local congregation and in regional, national, and in some denominations international judicatories.

         a) Local church government is run by the pastor(s) and elders (overseers), and in some denominations deacons acting together in consistory, as a board. (Acts 14:23)

         b) Major assemblies are regional, national, and in some denominations international deliberative bodies judicatories of a denomination.

         c) Most of the deliberations governing the local church are done by the board officers, but once or twice a year most congregations meet in a plenary session to vote on key issues such as to call a new pastor, approve recommendations from the boards, and the church budget.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."
This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. c. 3) c) One of the most important functions of the local assembly and the major assembly is to certify a person's claim to be called of God to be a church leader.
   1- God calls vertically, working in the heart and mind of a person, leading him or her to desire to serve him in church ministry.
   2- God also works horizontally, working in the hearts and minds of church leaders to confirm his call upon the individual who claims to have received a call from God.
   3- In an age of sin, this vetting is especially important to safeguard the church and God's work.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you." (1 Timothy 4:14)
- "[21]I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism. [22]Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure." (1 Timothy 5:21-22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.c.3)c)3-
In an age of sin, this vetting is especially important to safeguard the church and avoid corruption of God's work.

a- The horizontal vetting of pastors should begin in the local congregation, which knows the needs they have.

b- The local congregation's decision should be confirmed by the next highest church judicatory, with pastors and elders examining candidates and approving all pastoral appointments, offering wise Spirit-led corroboration and impartiality, without a hint of favoritism.

c- Laying on of hands is a strong ancient ceremony, symbolizing the confirmation and affirmation by the church of God's direct and indirect call of the individual who is being appointed to that office in the church, the body of Christ.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

A Guide for Individuals and the Church to Confirm a Call from God to Ministry

God Calls Paul

As he [Paul] neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [4]He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
[5]"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
[6]"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."
[7]The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. [8]Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. [9]For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.
[10]In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.
[11]The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. [12]In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."
[13]"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. [14]And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."
[15]But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. [16]I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."
[17]Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here--has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [18]Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, [19]and after taking some food, he regained his strength.
Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. [20]At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. [21]All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" [22]Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.
[23]After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, [24]but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. [25]But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.
[26]When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. [27]But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. [28]So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. (Acts 9:1-28)

Reflect and Discuss: (1) How did God call Paul? (2) How did he confirm his call of Paul to the church?

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

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Application to the Church

1. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind and heart.
   a. God prepares those whom he calls to ministry by giving them spiritual gifts, knowledge, and experiences that they will draw on in ministry long before God calls them to the ministry he has for them.
   b. Frequently, but not always, God calls people to ministry who are not at all thinking about ministry as a career, and, when questioned even oppose the thought, as we see in the Bible.
      + From childhood I was periodically asked if I had considered becoming a minister, and throughout the years I said "No, not me," until an experience I had in college.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

"[8][Elijah] traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. [9]There he went into a cave and spent the night.

And the word of the LORD came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

[10]He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.'

[11]The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.'

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. [12]After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. [13]When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave." (1 Kings 19:8-13)

Application to the Church

1. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind and heart.

   c. In the 1-1 aspect of the call to ministry, how does God work in the person he is calling?

   Sometimes, but not always (and it seems to me rather rare), God calls someone dramatically (as with Saul/Paul). Usually it is more like the "still small voice" or "a gentle whisper" (1 Kings 19:12 NIV) that Elijah heard (though not necessarily at his calling) rather than the flashing light from heaven that Saul experienced.

   + Have any of you had a dramatic call like Paul's?
   + My own call was not so dramatic, and it took much time before I sensed that call.

How God Called Edward D. Seely to Professional Ministry

From time to time as a child, I would hear Sunday School teachers, elders, others in the church, and neighbors ask me, “Have you ever considered being a minister?” Since I mostly saw myself being a journalist, as was my mother, I said, “No, that’s not for me.”

I kept saying that until a minister I knew in another church called me one summer in June. He told me that he was in charge of a youth camp for junior high students the third week of July, and he needed another college student on his staff. Providentially, his call came almost immediately after a summer job I had found in sales didn’t work out. So I said, “Yes; I have the time, and I’ll be glad to help.”

At the end of the week, the minister called me into his office and said, “The rest of the staff and I have been watching you, and you really hit it off with the young people; they really loved you and you did well with them.” I said, “The feeling is mutual, and I enjoyed being with them very much.”

Then, the minister asked me the question I’d heard so many times before, “Have you ever considered the ministry?” I gave him the same answer I always did, but then he said something I’d never heard before: “OK,” he said, “but if you ever find it hard to say “No,” consider that you may have a call from God to the ministry. With a confident smile I said, “Thank you,” but I didn’t think that would occur.

Well, wouldn’t you know. A little over a month later, back at college beginning my junior year, I’m sitting at my desk one day studying my psychology, sociology, literature, and other books, and the thought occurs to me, “Some of this stuff is good; some of it’s OK but inadequate; some of it’s unrealistic; and some of it is wrong; but none of it is the answer to people’s deepest questions and greatest needs. I began to pray, “Lord, I know what they need, and it’s your Gospel in Jesus Christ!”

How God Called Edward D. Seely to Professional Ministry

That Saturday morning, I awoke in my bed, and I began to think more about this insight as to what people most need for the matters most important to them in their life. I again sensed that I knew what they need, Jesus Christ in their life, and I began to pray saying, "Lord, if this understanding means you are calling me to the ministry, I'm willing to go, but you're going to have to open three doors first, so I can become a minister. (There was a fourth door, that I was unaware of, that he would have to open as well.)

So, I made an appointment with the president of the seminary I wanted to attend, to ask him for his help in his matter. I told him the story up to this point, and then I mentioned the three doors that would need to be opened: first, my grades in my freshman and sophomore years weren't stellar to say the least, and I wasn't sure I could even qualify in order to be accepted into seminary. I had fallen in love with and wanted to marry the girl of my dreams, Carol, and in spite of all her good help as a great student, it was hard to keep my mind on my studies while I was thinking about what I could do with her again as soon as possible.

The second door was that I wasn't a pre-sem(inary) student. Apart from a number of courses in the Bible department to help answer a lot of questions I had about my faith in Christ, I wasn't taking the courses that pre-seminary students take. I was majoring in English and the humanities for my planned career in journalism.

The third door was that I didn't have any Greek, the very important course for being able to teach God's Word (in the New Testament) as a pastor in my denomination. It was a two-year course in college, and I was already in my Junior year.

My eyes still moisten when I think of how God spoke to the seminary president as he proceeded to blow open all three of those doors within 15 minutes!

How God Called Edward D. Seely to Professional Ministry

The seminary president said to me, “As far as the first door is concerned, graduate schools, including seminaries, don’t even consider the first two years in college. We know that baccalaureate students are just out of high school and are still trying to find themselves. Starting now in your junior year, and throughout your senior year, for the rest of your undergraduate education, buckle down, take your studies seriously, and do well, and you’ll be OK.”

He continued. “As for the second door, not being a pre-sem student, from our point of view here at the seminary, that’s good! We’d rather have you be the humanities major you are, for as a pastor, you’ll be meeting many people from many different backgrounds, who will want to talk with you and to sense your interest in what they have to say. You’ll need to have a background that will equip you with an interest in and information about many different occupations, subjects, and types of people. We’ll give you all the Bible and theology you need when you come to the seminary.”

It took him even less time to open the third door. “As for Greek, take Greek in your senior year in college. We offer all the Greek you’ll need here in the seminary. Just do well in your remaining two years, and you’ll be OK!”

Well, as you can guess, I made a beeline straight to Carol to tell her of the great news I just heard. As I talked with her, she sat and listened carefully, as always, but I sensed she wasn’t as thrilled as I was. I soon discovered there was a fourth door God would have to open.

How God Called Edward D. Seely to Professional Ministry

After a thoughtful pause, she said, “Well, this is going to slow down the progress of our relationship.” I said, “It will? Why?”

She proceeded to explain. “I must tell you that as a girl growing up and thinking about my future, there were three people who I was pretty sure I didn’t want to marry, and one of them was a minister.”

“Why did you think you didn’t want to marry a minister?” I asked. She proceeded to explain that over the years she watched how her pastor’s wife was treated, noting the expectations of the pastor’s wife, and she didn’t want to have that experience. I assured her that situation would not ever occur with her, and I gave her several reasons why, including that I, and the areas of ministry into which I sensed God leading, would be significantly different. I also said that I would be including her in all plans for the future, that I wouldn’t make any decisions without her agreement, and that God would lead both of us together, such that if he were calling me into a specific type of ministry, he’d do so in ways and into places pleasing to her. We agreed that we’d keep thinking and praying about this development and continue the discussion. As Carol and I prayed and talked with each other in the weeks and months ahead, we planned together how we saw God leading in our lives, and we saw him leading me to specialize in the educational aspect of the ministry, a part of the ministry in which she felt more comfortable as a minister’s wife.

How God Called Edward D. Seely to Professional Ministry

In the meantime, I prayed fervently every day, and many times during each day, for her hand in marriage, that God would lead her to want to be my wife in ministry, and that God would help me to do well in my studies and both of us in all other ways we needed. Our love continued to grow, and my grades throughout the rest of my college, seminary, and graduate school degrees were excellent.

Before I graduated in my baccalaureate program, God gave me my greatest solely human* gift. Carol agreed to marry me, and after a year's engagement, we began our wonderful marriage of 48 ½ years until she died. During this time together, she was a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother, partner in life and ministry, and, solely humanly speaking, my best friend. Thanks be to our triune God, I can and do look forward to being with her again, next time forever, together with our family, friends in Christ, and brothers and sisters "from every nation, tribe, people, and language" serving, including worshiping, together our triune God through all eternity!

_____

*I say "solely human" for our best friend is Jesus, who is 100% human, but, as we studied in the Christology section, he is also 100% divine; he is God's only begotten Son who is 100% man and 100% God.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

As he [Paul] neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. [4]He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
[5]"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.
[6]"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."…
[8]Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. [9]For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.
[10]In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.
[11]The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. [12]In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."
[13]"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. [14]And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."
[15]But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. [16]I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."
[17]Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." [18]Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, [19]and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9:3-19)

Application to the Church

2. At the same time, God works through others in the church. He calls leaders for his church vertically (1-1) and horizontally.
   a. He thus communicates through fellow believers in Christ who know us well and who see in us gifts we sometimes don't see in ourselves.
   b. He also communicates through fellow believers in Christ whom God has put in places of authority to discern and approve God's call of those who claim he has called them to ministry. This is a very important function in the church, whereby candidates for ministry are "vetted," i.e., evaluated for approval, in the process of verifying God's call of them and their gifts, education, and experience.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. [16]By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? [17]Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. [18]A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. [19]Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20]Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. [21]"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22]Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' [23]Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:15-23)

Application to the Church

2. At the same time, God works through others in the church. He calls leaders for his church vertically (1-1) and horizontally.

   b. He also communicates through fellow believers in Christ…to discern and approve God's call of those who claim he has called them to ministry.

      1) This process is based on the Bible's view of sin that we studied in the anthropology section. Some who claim to be called by God to ministry in the church are "wolves in sheep's clothes" (cf. Matthew 7:15), teach false doctrine, and have not been called by God.

      2) Others, more well-meaning but still wrong, think they've been called by God but have not.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer" (1 Timothy 1:3)
- "But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, [9]realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers [10]and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, [11]according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." (1 Timothy 1:8-11 NASB)

Application to the Church

2. At the same time, God works through others in the church. He calls leaders for his church vertically (1-1) and horizontally.

   b. He also communicates through fellow believers in Christ…to discern and approve God's call of those who claim he has called them to ministry.

      3) The vetting process, when undertaken by leaders who remain true to God's Word and will, protects the church from leaders who would lead the church astray.

      4) The vetting process also helps the person who thinks he or she has been called by God to ministry. Affirmation gives encouragement, and being declined with love offers helpful guidance and redirection.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, [4]he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions [5]and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain." (1 Timothy 6:3-5 [*NOTE: 6:5 relates directly to, and exposes the deception of, the false so-called "prosperity gospel."*])
- "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. [11]You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned." (Titus 3:10-11)

Application to the Church

2. At the same time, God works through others in the church. He calls leaders for his church vertically (1-1) and horizontally.
   b. He also communicates through fellow believers in Christ…to discern and approve God's call of those who claim he has called them to ministry.
      4) The vetting process also helps the person who thinks he or she has been called by God to ministry. Affirmation gives encouragement, and being declined with love offers helpful guidance and redirection.
         + If I think I'm a leader and called by God, but no one is following me, and the authorities in the church do not concur with me, then God has not called me to this ministry.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." (Luke 10:7)
- "and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them." (Acts 18:3)
- "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. [18]For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" **(**1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- "But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:15)

Application to the Church

3. In the 1-1 process where God works with the person he is calling, he communicates with that person's mind and heart.
   a. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry. Often the two types of ministry involve the same work but with significant distinctions. Let's consider first <u>professional</u> ministry.
      1) In professional ministry the worker is paid, since he or she is doing that work so extensively that no other time is available for earning one's living.
      2) Professional ministry is one's life work, and compensation is needed and expected, either as a salary, or per hour, the latter being usually for part-time work that involves a significant time commitment.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." (Luke 10:7)
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- "But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ." (1 Corinthians 9:15)

Application to the Church

3. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind (knowledge) and heart (affect, desire, motivation—he doesn't force someone to serve him against his or her will.)
   a. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry. Often the two types of ministry involve the same work but with significant distinctions.
      3) Those called to ministry as professionals typically have received formal education that further equips them with the knowledge and skills to accomplish the work in that aspect of ministry.
      4) With compensation comes much more accountability in a formal reporting structure (as illustrated in the Authority organizational chart above).

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house." (Luke 10:7)
- "and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them." (Acts 18:3)
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Application to the Church

3. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind (knowledge) and heart (affect, desire, motivation—he doesn't force someone to serve him against his or her will.)
   a. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry.
      5) For those professional ministers who seek ordination, they must be members in good standing of a local church.
      6) He works through others in the ongoing accountability that we need to keep in accord with his Word and his will, e.g., the local church board and denominational judicatories that also serve as gatekeepers in the selection process.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

"This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. [4]Don't we have the right to food and drink? [5]Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? [6]Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? [7]Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? [8]Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? [9]For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? [10]Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us,… [11]If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?...

[13]Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? [14]In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." (1 Corinthians 9:3-14)

Application to the Church

3. Throughout the Bible God works 1-1 with the person he is calling, communicating with that person's mind and heart.

   b. God calls people to professional as well as volunteer ministry. Often the two types of ministry involve the same work, but with the amount of time involved being a key distinction. Now let's look briefly at <u>volunteer</u> ministry.

      1) Volunteer ministry is not usually compensated, or if an honorarium is given for exceptional and extensive service, it is not intended to be sufficient for full salary.

      2) Volunteers serve in most types of ministry, but in limited ways, typically due to time constraints or to not having the education required for doing that ministry professionally.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

[10]In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord
called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.
[11]The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street
and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. [12]In
a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his
hands on him to restore his sight."
[13]"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about
this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in
Jerusalem. [14]And he has come here with authority from the chief
priests to arrest all who call on your name."
[15]But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen
instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings
and before the people of Israel. [16]I will show him how much he
must suffer for my name."
[17]Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his
hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who
appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent
me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
[18]Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he
could see again. He got up and was baptized, [19]and after taking
some food, he regained his strength. (Acts 9:10-19)

Application to the Church

3. Thus, God works through others in the church in selecting the leaders he gives his people. He calls leaders for his church vertically and horizontally.

   c. He works through others in the ongoing accountability that we need to keep in accord with his Word and his will.

      1) Regarding professional ministers, he does so in and through the local church board and also on the "higher" interchurch judicatories, of which local congregation is a part, that also serve as gatekeepers in the selection process.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

"Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." [2]This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. [3]The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad. [4]When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them." (Acts 15:1-4)

Application to the Church

3. Thus, God works through others in the church in selecting the leaders he gives his people. He calls leaders for his church vertically and horizontally.

   c. He works through others in the ongoing accountability that we need to keep in accord with his Word and his will.

      1) Regarding professional ministers, he does so in and through the local church board and also on the "higher" interchurch judicatories, of which local congregation is a part, that also serve as gatekeepers in the selection process.

      2) Volunteer accountability is to the professional minister in whose area of ministry the volunteer serves.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "For God is not a God of disorder* but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,…" (1 Corinthians 14:33)
  * < Greek: ἀκαταστασία (*akatastasia*), disturbance, unrest, confusion, rebellion, insurrection, tumult, disorder
- "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)

Application to the Church

3. Thus, God works through others in the church in selecting the leaders he gives his people. He calls leaders for his church vertically and horizontally.

   c. He works through others in the ongoing accountability that we need to keep in accord with his Word and his will.

      3) Thus, whether I am a professional or a volunteer minister, I cannot just go and do anything I want. If everyone did that (and many are trying) there would be disorganization that would dishonor God and the body of Christ, and it would be counterproductive to accomplishing the mission of the church.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Twelve Important Questions to Help You Discern Such a Call from God

God calls young people and older people, who have had a career in another field, into ministry. "Second career" ministers are, and have been for many years, a significant percentage of seminary classes. If you think God may be calling you to professional ministry, consider these guidelines for discerning your call, assuming you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. (Romans 10:9-10) You need to be a member of a Christian church in good and regular standing. There are at least 12 questions that are especially helpful in order to ascertain whether God may be calling you to ministry as a profession.

1. Do you sense an urge to consider or do ministry professionally? Is it a persistent interest? Could you be content doing anything else? If so, do that other work.
2. Have you prayed about this question? Do you pray regularly, trusting God?
3. Have others in your home church, who know you well, asked you to consider becoming a minister (professionally)? Were these comments unsolicited? However, if no one ever says anything that you didn't prompt him or her to say, don't automatically conclude you shouldn't consider professional ministry.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Twelve Important Questions to Help You Discern Such a Call from God

4. What does your family say?
   a. If your parents and sibling(s) are believers in and followers of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, have you received encouragement from any of them as well as other close relatives who are Christians?
   b. VERY IMPORTANT: *If you are married, or if you have a serious relationship with someone that could lead to marriage*: How does he or she feel about being married to a professional minister?
      1) Even though churches today typically do not require a minister's spouse to be as involved in the ministry as in the past (e.g., many churches thinking they are "getting two for the price of one"), and are inclined to expect the spouse will be "involved to the extent of any other church member," nevertheless the minister's spouse is not an average church member from the point of view of the church. Further, most spouses understand this expectation, at least intuitively, and often have strong feelings about it. Many spouses of seminary students and ministers resent the situation they are and/or will be in, and these feelings negatively affect their relationship with their husband or wife.
      2) Further, a ministry with a dissatisfied spouse will negatively affect not only your personal relationship but other aspects of your life as well, including your work. This is why interviewers will always ask about how your spouse feels about your calling and work and why they will at some point want him or her to be included in the interview process as well.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Twelve Important Questions to Help You Discern Such a Call from God

4. What does your family say?
   b. VERY IMPORTANT: *If you are married, or if you have a serious relationship with someone that could lead to marriage*: How does he or she feel about being married to a professional minister?
      3) Thus, be careful to talk with your spouse, or "significant other" who could become your spouse, about your sense of calling to professional ministry. If he or she has strong negative feelings about your becoming a minister professionally that continue over time, reconsider whether you have a call to such ministry, or, if you are not yet married, whether this person should be your husband or wife. If necessary, obtain professional counseling with your spouse or significant other. As Campus Crusade for Christ executive Howard Ball wisely said, "If your spouse is not in favor of such a decision, it cannot be considered God's will [at least at this time]; God is not in the business of breaking up marriages."
5. Have friends in Christ, who know you well, suggested you consider the ministry? (Unsolicited, without your asking them first.)
6. Have you asked a church member, who is mature in Christ, what he or she thinks about you becoming a minister professionally? (This person should be someone who has the ego and other strength to say what you need to hear, including that you should not consider the ministry if that is true.) If you have asked such a person this question, what did he or she say?

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Twelve Important Questions to Help You Discern Such a Call from God

7. Do you love to study God's Word and explain it to others?
8. Are you a self-starter?
9. Do you manage conflict well?
10. Do you have a servant's heart? (Matthew 20:26-28)
11. Are you a team player?
12. Are you a leader? Are any others following you? Do people ask you for your opinion?

Doing so in prayer to our triune God, will significantly reduce the possibility of making a decision out of "selfish ambition or vain conceit." (Philippians 2:3)

As you seek to discern God's vocation for you and to do his will, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

These Scriptures and questions help in discerning God's calling to other work as well.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

NOTE: Some of the following may have to be done in connection with other types of ministry in smaller churches or denominations until enough experience is gained to be called to larger churches and agencies where such opportunities are positions in themselves. This is not an exhaustive list; these ministry positions are offered as examples of actual ministries in churches, denominational agencies, and international organizations.

1. Ordained Ministries
    a. Solo, Senior, or Lead Pastor
    b. Pastor of Preaching
    c. Executive Pastor
    d. Minister or Pastor of Education
    e. Minister or Pastor of Evangelism or Outreach
    f. Minister or Pastor of Youth
    g. Minister or Pastor of Young Adult Ministries

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

1. Ordained Ministries
    h. Teacher/Professor and Administrator
        1) Bible Institute
        2) College
        3) Private schools
        4) Parochial schools
        5) Seminary
        6) Other graduate schools

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

1. Ordained Ministries
    i. Pastor of Counseling (Church-based and Clinical)
    j. Pastor of Missions
    k. Pastor of Visitation
    l. Pastor of Small Group Ministries
    m. Singles Pastor

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

1. Ordained Ministries
    n. Chaplain
        1) College and University Chaplain
        2) Developmentally Disabled Chaplain
        3) Long Term Care Chaplain
        4) Military Chaplain
        5) Hospice Chaplain
        6) Hospital Chaplain
        7) Institutional Youth Ministry, e.g., Wedgwood Christian Services Chaplain, Grand Rapids
        8) Marketplace Ministries
        9) National Parks
        10) Police and Fire Chaplains
        11) Prison Chaplain
        12) Professional Sports Teams
        13) Veterans Administration
        14) Workplace Ministries (e.g., in a shopping mall)
        15) And many others, e.g., retirement communities, cruise ships, corporations

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

1. Ordained Ministries
    o. Specialized Interim Minister
    p. Denominational Office Administrative Ministries (NOTE: The purpose of the following list is to show what types of ministry exist in the global church.)
        1) General Secretary
        2) Church Revitalization and Multiplication
        3) Development
        4) Disability Ministries
        5) Evangelism
        6) Education and Faith Development
        7) Ministry Services
        8) Missions
        9) Operations and Support
        10) Pastor-Church Relations
        11) Regional Judicatories
        12) Social Witness
        13) Worship
        14) Youth Ministry

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

1. Ordained Ministries
   - q. Missionary
     - 1) Home Missions
       - a) Appalachian Ministries
       - b) Church Planting and Development
       - c) Native American Missions
       - d) Urban Missions
     - 2) World Missions
       - a) Administration
       - b) Pastor
       - c) Physician
       - d) Teacher
   - r. Urban Ministries
     - 1) Homeless Ministries
     - 2) Pastor
     - 3) Substance Abuse Programs

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

2. Nonordained Ministries
   a. Counseling Services, e.g., Psychologist
   b. Evangelist or Minister of Outreach
   c. Minister or Director of Christian or Church Education
   d. Director of Children's Ministries
   e. Youth Minister or Director of Youth Ministries
      1) Church-based youth ministry
         a) Director of Middle School/Junior High Ministries
         b) Director of High School Ministries
         c) Director of Young Adult Ministries
      2) Para-church youth ministry, e.g.:
         a) Camp Ministries
         b) Dynamic Youth Ministries
         c) InterVarsity Christian Fellowship
         d) Wedgwood Christian Services (residential and outpatient help for at risk youth who struggle with such problems as autism, abuse & neglect, learning difficulties, school expulsions, sex trafficking, sexual abuse, teen pregnancy, and more)

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

2. Nonordained Ministries
   e. Youth Minister or Director of Youth Ministries
      2) Para-church youth ministry, e.g.:
         e) Youth for Christ
         f) Young Life
   f. Other para-church ministries (See also section 3 below.)
      1) Focus on the Family
      2) Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk
      3) Grand Rapids Center for Ecumenism (GRACE)—Interdenominational and multichurch ministry to facilitate resolution of racial conflicts, educational needs, counselling, food banks, financial assistance, community justice issues, and more.
      4) Prison Fellowship—seeks to restore those affected by crime and imprisonment by introducing prisoners, victims, and their families to new hope available through Jesus Christ.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

2. Nonordained Ministries
   g. Missionary
      1) Home Missions
         a) Administration
         b) Small Group Discipleship and Prayer Mobilization
      2) World Missions
         a) Administration
         b) Agriculture
         c) Bible Translation, e.g., Wycliffe Bible Translators
         d) Medical missionaries (e.g., Luke Society—Helps physicians in their own countries to provide medical services through preaching, teaching, and healing)
         e) Relief (e.g., Samaritan's Purse)
         f) Resources, Education and Training
         g) Teaching (e.g., international schools, ESL)

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

2. Nonordained Ministries
    h. Denominational Office Administrative Ministries
        1) Archives
        2) Building and Loans
        3) Camps
        4) Communication and Production
        5) Finance
        6) Education and Faith Development
        7) Insurance and Retirement
        8) Missions
        9) Operations and Support
        10) Personnel Director
        11) Resources
        12) Social Witness
        13) Volunteer Services
        14) Women's Ministries
        15) World Relief
        16) Youth Ministry

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

2. Nonordained Ministries
   i. Teacher/Professor and Administrator
      1) Private schools
      2) Parochial schools
      3) College
      4) Seminary
      5) Other graduate schools
   j. Curriculum publishing

3. Other Ordained and Nonordained Ministries
   a. Entrepreneurial Ministries
      1) Ligonier Valley Study Center (R.C. Sproul)
      2) Griggs Educational Service (Donald and Patricia Griggs)
      3) Ministry to Ministers
   b. Global Ministries
      1) World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)
      2) Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC)
      3) World Council of Churches

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Types of Professional Ministry Opportunities

3. Other Ordained and Nonordained Ministries
   c. Music Ministries in Local Churches
      1) Cantor
      2) Minister of Music
      3) Organist and Choir Director
   d. Minister of Worship or Worship Leader in Local Churches (As in the prefatory note, this position is usually combined with other responsibilities.)
   e. National Ecumenical Ministries
      1) National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)
      2) National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC)
   f. Racial and Ethnic Ministries
   g. Radio Ministries
      1) The Back to God Hour
      2) Words of Hope
   h. Sports Ministries
      1) Chaplain for Professional Sports Teams
      2) Sportspersons Ministries, International
   i. Writing/Christian Publishing Companies

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
If So, What Kind of Education Do You Need?

1. Do you need seminary?
   a. For many ministries, as we've just seen, seminary is not needed. For example, many, though by no means all, churches prefer nonordained leaders for their youth ministry positions.
   b. Church membership is essential. If you are not already a member of a church congregation, it is necessary to become a member soon.
      1) Talk with your pastor.
         a) Make sure he or she knows you.
         b) Obtain his or her encouragement to pursue professional ministry, especially including praying with and for you.
         c) Find out from him or her your denomination's or your church judicatory's policies about pursuing professional ministry.
         d) Obtain your pastor's guidance in the process of pursuing professional ministry, including who to contact (e.g., which committee in your church's judicatory oversees this process).

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
If So, What Kind of Education Do You Need?

1. Do you need seminary?
   b. Church membership is essential. If you are not already a member of a church congregation, it is necessary to become a member soon.
      2) Talk with key leaders and others in your church who know you.
      3) What should you do if your pastor and church do not believe you should be in professional ministry, e.g., if you are a woman whose church is opposed to women in ministry?
         a) Talk with any members in your church who are not opposed to women in professional ministry and who have the characteristics we considered earlier (e.g., someone who has the ego and other strength to say what you need to hear but who will "speak the truth [to you] in love" [Ephesians 4:15], i.e., that you should pursue professional ministry if that's true or that you should not consider the ministry if that is true).
         b) Consider joining a church in your denomination or ecclesiastical judicatory that officially holds to the belief that the Bible allows women to hold church office and become actively involved in that church as much as you can, especially where the leaders can observe your spiritual gifts and other talents, skills, knowledge, and wisdom.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
If So, What Kind of Education Do You Need?

1. Do you need seminary?
   c. Where seminary is required, what seminary should you choose?
      1) Begin with the requirements of the denomination or ecclesiastical judicatory of which your church is a part. Some such church bodies require you to attend one of their own seminaries, at least part of the time.
      2) Consider the ministry to which you sense God is calling you. If you sense a call to specialize in a particular area of ministry, be aware that some seminaries offer more in certain areas of specialization.
      3) Select a seminary that is strong in its Bible department (i.e., has a high view of the authority of the Bible), is strong in systematic theology, and does not teach false doctrine that is contrary to the Bible.
         a) In any type of ministry people will expect that you know God's Word and how to interpret it correctly. Further, Bible study is essential, but people also have (an often unfelt) need and want to understand systematic theology to comprehend the whole counsel of God on the main subjects (heads of doctrine) of the Bible and how they fit together in order to make sense of life and understand the phenomena they are experiencing every day. If they only study a few books of the Bible or selected excerpts, they will have an understanding of certain trees but never see the forest, where they are in it, and where they are going.
         b) This view of God's Word and sound theology is what the people you serve need, are longing for, and expect you to teach them.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
If So, What Kind of Education Do You Need?

1. Do you need seminary?
   d. What program should you choose?
      1) If you sense the Lord's leading to a church staff position (e.g., pastor, church education, pastoral care) it would be good to seek ordination and choose the M.Div. program.
      2) If you want to teach in Christian schools or work in youth ministry in parachurch organizations, consider the M.A. in Educational Ministry. Many who want to work in children's ministry, youth ministry, or pastoral counseling in the church select this degree program; however, I recommend the M.Div. and the ordination route for supervisory church staff positions.
      3) If you are considering mission and/or parachurch work, where ordination is not necessary, the Master of Arts in Missions program would be good.
      4) If you want to teach Bible in high school or college, or if you want a good basis to build on for further graduate study, consider the MTS (a stripped down M.Div. without the applied ministry courses, but languages are required).
      5) If you want to serve as a worship leader in the church, the M.A. in Worship is valuable.
      6) Post-M.Div. degrees
         a) The Th.M. is for graduate study, research, and teaching; it builds on the M.Div.
         b) The D.Min. is a practitioner's degree; it's helpful for increasing knowledge and skill development for specific church or organizational work.
         c) The Ph.D. is designed for research and teaching, mostly in baccalaureate and especially graduate school levels in the academy.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?
If So, What Kind of Education Do You Need?

2. Keep in mind these other important matters.
   a. Does the ministry to which you sense God is leading you require ordination?
      1) If you choose the ordination route there are vital factors you need to know about before you begin seminary.
      2) Churches do not ordain; denominations ordain. Denominations are the agencies of the church universal that are historically and duly recognized as having the authority to ordain people to the ministry of God's Word and sacrament. This reality is another reason you need to be a member in good and regular of a church that is part of an established and credible Christian denomination.
      3) Independent churches hire ministers who have been educated and ordained in an established denomination. You need to know the requirements of the denomination of which your church is a part.
   b. Financial aid is available if you have need for it.
   c. Talk with your pastor.

Is God calling you to professional ministry?

Take a few minutes to think and pray about this question. Read some of the passages from the Bible we've been considering in this session.

Write down some questions or other thoughts you have.

Has God been nudging you to become interested in ministry as a profession, a career?

If you would like to talk with me about any questions you have, I'll be glad to do so with you. Are there any questions you have right now?

Vocation: God Also Calls to Other Occupations

God calls people to other occupations as well as to those in and associated with the church. Obviously, these other occupations are much more numerous than those in the church, and they, too, are significant and important.

It is a life-transforming and shaping experience to realize and include in our worldview, that our daily work is serving God and contributing to his work in his world. This is what in historic Christian theology is called our vocation (< Latin, *vocāre* = to call), our calling from God. ***No*** work a Christian does here on earth, whether as a homemaker (which is unsurpassed in importance), or an occupation for which one is paid, or volunteering, is unimportant; on the contrary, it is very important, for it is a service to God. When our work is done with that awareness, we have the strongest basis for finding meaning and joy in our work, even when some times are challenging, when we encounter various trials. At those times, we can say with the Apostle James, "I count it all joy." (James 1:2) This perspective is further reinforced when the apostle says several verses later, "…the brother [generic; sister is also included] of humble circumstances is to glory [Greek, καυχάομαι (*kauchaomai*) = boast {The verb is emphatic, indicated by being the first word in the sentence in Greek, and in the Imperative mood, a command.}] in his high position." (NASB, v. 9) What a wonderful way to manage and overcome stress, disappointment, discouragement, and a host of other problems and to experience great meaning in life! At those times remember also such comforting words from God's Word as John 16:33 and 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. For added joy: memorize them! Be sure to read a portion of God's Word and pray every day.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The Doctrine of the Church

"'Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. [29]I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. [30]Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. [31]So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.
[32]'Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.'" (Acts 20:28-32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   c. <u>The government of the church</u>
      4) The power or authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
         a) Teaching power: Berkhof explains it well: "The Word of God was given to the Church as a precious deposit of the truth, and the Church is commissioned to guard the truth, to hand it on faithfully from generation to generation, and to defend it against all forces of unbelief, 1 Tim. 1:3,4; II Tim. 1:13; Tit. 1:9-11." (301). See also Acts 20:28-32; 2 Timothy 3:16.

            + **<u>Reflect and Discuss</u>**: What contemporary applications to you see of this text?

            (Consider the attempts of many church leaders to distort the teaching of God's Word on homosexuality, trying to accommodate to cultural trends.)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Berkhof offers additional insights into the teaching power or authority, the expression I prefer, of the church.

"It has the further duty of preaching the Word for the conversion of sinners and for the edification of the saints, and to provide translations of it, [which now exist in audio form for those who can't read] so that the work of preaching may be carried on among the nations of the world, Isa. 3:10, 11; II Cor. 5:20; 1 Tim. 4:13; II Tim. 2:15; 4:2; Tit. 2:1-10. Furthermore, it must draw up creeds and confessions, in which it formulates its faith, so that the world may know exactly what it believes. The need of such creeds is felt especially in times of defection, when many depart from the historic faith of the Church. Finally, it is also the duty of the Church to develop the truth by theological study. It owes this to the truth itself as a revelation of God, but also to the training of its future ministers. According to Scripture the Church is in duty bound to provide for and to supervise the training of successive generations of teachers and pastors, II Tim. 2:2."

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Lewis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 301-302.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

God's Word

- "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)
- "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another." (Romans 15:14)
- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16)
- "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28)

See also John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:2.

Application to the Church

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   c. <u>The government of the church</u>
      4) The power/authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
         b) The governing power/authority of the church contains two aspects. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40)
            1- The governing authority of the church contains a <u>regulatory</u> power. Thus, as Berkhof writes, "the Church has the right to carry into effect the laws which Christ has ordained for the Church." (302)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Berkhof offers other observations into the regulatory aspect of the church's governing power or authority, the expression I prefer, of the church.

"All the members of the Church possess this power in a measure, Rom. 15:14; Col. 3:16; I Thess. 5:11, but it is vested in a special sense in the officers, John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28; I Pet. 5:2. This power also includes the right to draw up regulations for the proper application of the law, such as canons or Church Orders. These serve to *stipulate who can be recognized as members in good standing* [italics mine, an especially important regulatory need in our time], on what terms persons are permitted to bear office in the Church, how public worship should be conducted, and how discipline should be exercised. While these regulations must be based on general principles found in the Word of God, their details will always be dictated in part by considerations respecting the special needs, the well-being, and the edification of the Church."

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Lewis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 302-303.

Is God Calling You to Professional Ministry?

God's Word

- "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40 KJV)
- "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [2]And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?...[7]Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed….[13]God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:1,2,7,13)
- "Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him." (Titus 3:10)

Cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23; 2 Corinthians 2:5-7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 1:20.

Application to the Church

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   c. <u>The government of the church</u>
      4) The power/authority of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
      b) The governing power/authority of the church contains two aspects. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40)
      2- The governing authority of the church contains a <u>judicial</u> power. Thus, Berkhof observes, "The Church is in duty bound to guard its holiness by the exercise of proper discipline." (303)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Berkhof offers further guidance for the church into the judicial aspect of its governing power or authority. This aspect of the church's government is neglected too much today.

"The purpose of discipline in the Church is twofold. In the first place it seeks to carry into effect the law of Christ concerning the admission and exclusion of members; and in the second place it aims at promoting the spiritual edification of the members of the Church by securing their obedience to the laws of Christ. Both of these aims are subservient to a higher end, the maintenance of the holiness of the Church of Jesus Christ. If there are diseased members, the Church will first of all seek to effect a cure, but if this proves impossible, it will put away the diseased member for the protection of the other members. While all the members of the Church are in duty bound to warn and admonish the wayward [*e.g., Leviticus 19:17b*], only the officers of the Church can apply Church censures. The latter can deal with private sins only when these are brought to their attention according to the rule given in Matt. 18:15-17, but are in duty bound to deal with public sins even when no formal accusation is brought.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The disciplinary action of the consistory [*the highest governing body in the congregation, which consists of the pastor(s), elders, and deacons*] has three stages: (1) The sinner is restrained from celebrating the Lord's Supper. This initial action is not published and is followed by several private admonitions to bring the sinner to repentance [*which is always the purpose of all church discipline, see e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:5* (*italics mine*)]. (2) Three pubic announcements and admonitions. In the first of these the sin is mentioned but the sinner is not named. In the second the name is made known in accordance with the advice of the classis [*the next highest judicatory in the denomination or council of churches of which the local church is a part* (*all italics mine*)]. And in the third the immanent excommunication is announced. (3) Finally, this is followed by the excommunication proper, by which one is cut off from the fellowship of the Church. Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:13; Tit. 3:10." (Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 303-304.

These procedures are Berkhof's recommendations that are based on, but not specified in a precise chapter and verse, of the Bible and are practiced by his denomination. As always, restoration of the sinner is the objective of these disciplinary procedures, but for that restoration to occur, the procedures need to be implemented. Sadly, this judicial aspect of church government is being neglected today and must be reinstated in love for the Lord, for his holy church, and for the wayward.

Discuss: In groups of four, using a contemporary situation as in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, with Berkhof's recommendations, how would you proceed to lead your church in adjudicating this matter Biblically?

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." (Acts 20:28-32)
- "Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'" (John 21:16)
- "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; [3]not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2-3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   c. <u>The government of the church</u>
      4) The power of the church is from Christ the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23) through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 20:28)
         c) Ministry of mercy (John 21:16; 1 Peter 5:2-3)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

The power or ministry of mercy in the church is exercised today largely, but not only, by the pastoral care ministers of the church. This ministry consists primarily of the pastor(s) and elders, but also by members of the church who have the gifts of the Spirit for such work (e.g., Romans 12:7-13; 1 Corinthians 12:9;28,30; 14:1,3-4,26,31; Ephesians 4:11), and by the body as a whole who love one another (e.g., 1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:7,8,13; John 14:21; Romans 13:9-10; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 4:15; 5:28; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Philemon 1:7; 1 Peter 4:8; 2 John 1:6).

What about the spiritual gifts, such as healing? Some Bible scholars and theologians, e.g., Berkhof, believe that what are called the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, e.g., healing, the ability to perform miracles, and tongues, the special gifts God gave the apostles and some other early Christians, ceased with the end of God's special revelation, that was written down and became the Bible, at the close of the first century A. D. Other scholars, such as Peter Wagner, see the extraordinary gifts as still occurring. From my own study of the Bible and systematic theology, many conversations, and teaching for over half a century , I hold to a position somewhat between these two positions, but closer to the one espoused by Berkhof and others, where I observe some, but limited, evidence of the extraordinary gifts being employed by God today, albeit not frequently or widespread. Much talk has been made in the last century of the use of the extraordinary gifts, especially tongues speaking, but a considerable number of occurrences, purporting to be an expression of the gift, has been shown to be mistaken, as discussed above in the section on gifts of the Spirit in Soteriology.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

Since the first century A. D., the ministry of mercy, or pastoral care, of the church has focused on caring for the poor (see Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14:7, as an indication of one of the church's chief tasks after the Lord returned to heaven). See also the following texts that teach the importance of the church ministering to the needs of the poor: Acts 4:34; 6:1-6; 11:29; 20:35; Romans 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:1,6,7,12-14; Galatians 2:10; 6:10; Ephesians 4:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-12; 5:10,16; James 1:27; 2:15,16; 1 John 3:17.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

New Testament Terms for Church Elders

All three of these terms refer to the same person but convey slightly different aspects of the leader's work. As the church grew, and more challenges arose requiring more time than volunteers could afford to spend, certain elders were paid.

- **ἐπισκοπή** *episkopē* = position or office as overseer, bishop (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 3:1); refers to the structural work to be done. (Emphasis on task)
- **πρεσβύτερος** *presbuteros =* elder (Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 5:17); refers to the dignity of the office and the leader holding it and pastoral care (James 5:14).
- **ποιμήν** *poimēn =* shepherd, pastor (Acts 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11); refers primarily to the function of the leader as teacher and caregiver. (Emphasis on people)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

New Testament Term for Other Church Leaders/Ministers

- **διάκονος** *diakonos* = servant, deacon, minister

  + In Greek culture the *diakonos* was the servant of the king. The church used the term but shaped its meaning according to its service of the King of kings, Jesus Christ. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 15:25; 16:1; Acts 6:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:12)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

God's Word

- "Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of [Shepherd (NASB)] my sheep.'" (John 21:16)
- "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2-3 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Application

- In the Bible the Pastoral Care Ministry of the church is called shepherding. (John 21:16 [*poimaine*, take care of]; 1 Peter 5:2 [*poimanate,* shepherd]) > ποιμαίνω (*poimainō*), shepherd, herd or tend sheep; rule, govern; care for, look after, nourish
- Be a model of a caring servant leader for the rest of the church. (1 Peter 5:3)

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine? Ministry of Mercy

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of [Shepherd (NASB)] my sheep.'" (John 21:16)
- "shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of* God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock." (1 Peter 5:2-3 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

- The ministry of mercy functions informally in the church as organism as the believers in and followers of Christ act in caring ways to meet the needs of their fellow church members and others associated with the church.
- The ministry of mercy functions formally in the church as organization as pastors, elders, deacons, and others organize to meet people's needs on specific occasions and over time.
- For more specific information on the above caring occurs, see my PPT, "How to Be a Caring Christian Friend." The URL is www.fromacorntooak12.com.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: [18]‘The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, [19]to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.’ [20]Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, [21]and he began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” (Luke 4:17-21)
- “The LORD said to Moses, [2]‘Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.’” (Leviticus 19:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   d. Though the term, *means of grace*, is sometimes used in a general sense to refer to the many ways God’s people are blessed, the term is generally used in a more restricted and technical sense referring to the Word of God and the sacraments.
      1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to Jesus Christ, who is also referred to the Word of God.
         a) The Holy Spirit uses the proclamation of the Word of God to produce the desired fruit in the lives of people and accomplish God’s purposes, contrary to the Rationalists and others who think that the Word is enough to effect change in people’s lives, and contrary to the antinomians who disregard the Law and hold that the inner working of the Spirit is enough.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:16)
- "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18]I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matthew 5:17-18)
- "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24)
- "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.
      1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to and reveals Jesus Christ, his work and his will. (Galatians 3:24)
         b) Both parts of the Word of God, the Law (sometimes used as a metonymy for the Old Testament) and the Gospel (metonymy for the New Testament), are means of grace.
            1- The Law, coming from God, is an expression of his character and his will.
            2- The promises of the Gospel are in the forefront of our thinking, but, as Berkhof reminds us, "this does not mean that there are no demands in connection with the gospel, nor that [we are]…free from the law. The law requires that we shall believe the gospel, and the gospel aims at the fulfillment of the law in our lives." (308)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,” (2 Timothy 3:16)
- “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18]I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” (Matthew 5:17-18)
- “He replied, ‘Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’” (Luke 11:28)
- “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— [9]not by works, so that no one can boast. [10]For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.
      1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to and reveals Jesus Christ, his work and his will.
         b) Both parts of the Word of God, the Law and the Gospel, are means of grace. We must guard against seeing the Law and the Gospel as complete and polar opposites, as is too often heard today, especially by Christians rightly concerned to maintain the Biblical truth that salvation is only by faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9), but they ignore verse 10 and many other Old and New Testament texts which teach that God expects his people to do good works, including according to the moral laws.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” (Romans 3:20)
- “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24)
- “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.” (John 14:21; cf. 1 John 2:3-6 *et al*.)
- “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (1 John 3:4)
- “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,” (1 John 5:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.
      1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to and reveals Jesus Christ, his Word and his will.
         b) The <u>function</u> of the <u>Law</u> includes
            1- serving as a visual aid to convict people of their sin and need for God’s grace in Christ Jesus,
            2- restraining sin, and
            3- a rule of life for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus that promotes righteous and holy living in God’s people, which is a means of grace. *Motivation is the key: We obey the Law NOT to earn salvation BUT out of eternal gratitude to God for his free gift of our salvation in Christ, and for our own health.* (*A holy lifestyle is healthier*.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. [18]Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. [19]For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:17-19)
- "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.
   d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.
      1) The Word of God, when referring to the means of grace denotes the written Scripture, all of which points to and reveals Jesus Christ, his Word and his will.
         c) The function of the Gospel includes relieving the burden of the Law for those still in the covenant of works and are unable to keep the Law. (Luke 11:46) The Law, e.g., the ceremonial sacrifices, points to the Gospel of Christ, who alone fulfills the whole Law. The present and future benefits of the Gospel are bestowed on us who repent and believe in Christ; we receive the joyful relief from the burden of having to earn salvation, and motivated by thanksgiving to the Lord we obey the moral aspects of the Law with great joy and eternal gratitude to and with God.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:16)
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)
- "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.'
  [27]Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'" (Matthew 26:26-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4. The militant visible church is both an organism and an organization.

   d. The term, means of grace, refers to the Word of God and the sacraments.

      2) We should discern the distinctive differences between the Word and the sacraments.

         a) The Word is the authority for, basis of, and explanation of the sacraments; the latter should not be administered without the Word. The Word goes out to the whole world, but the sacraments are properly administered only to members of the covenant of grace in Christ. Luther: "…without the Word of God the water is simply water, and no baptism. But with the water it is a baptism, a gracious water of life….[and quotes Titus 3:5-8]." (164)

         b) The word sacrament, not found in the Bible, comes from the Latin word, *sacramentum*, originally a sum of money deposited by two parties in a lawsuit. After the court decision, the winner's money would be returned; the loser's money was forfeited as a type of offering to the Roman gods. (Berkhof, 310)

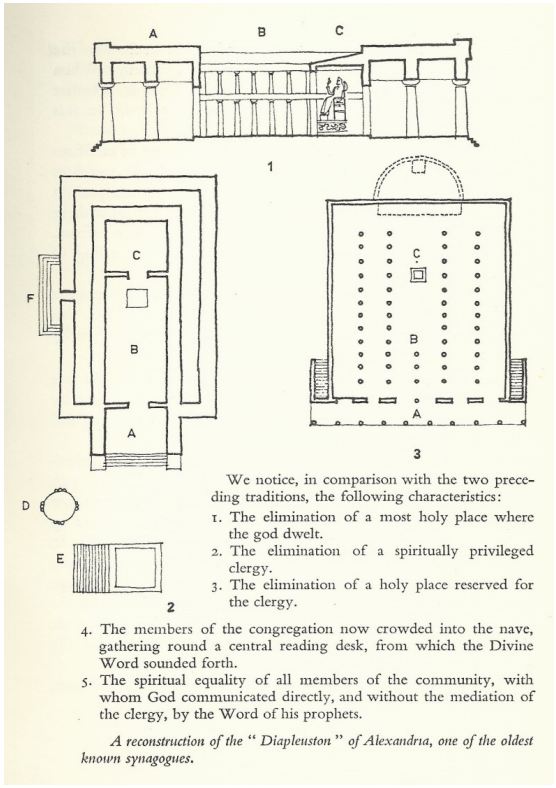
Ecclesiology: What does church architecture teach?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain. [31]"Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman. [32]Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. [33]Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. [34]Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place. (Exodus 26:30-34)
- "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. [51]At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split." (Matthew 27:50-51)
- "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, [20]where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 6:19-20; 7:25-27; 10:14,17-25)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

Church Architecture Portrays Biblical Theology



Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)
- “And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:4)
- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

c) The essence of each sacrament is seen theologically in the union of the sign and the reality signified. In what way this union occurs is viewed differently by theologians and the churches they represent and influence.

1- Physical—where the external is viewed as naturally including the internal (e.g., Roman Catholic)

2- Local—where the external and internal are seen as present in the same space (e.g., Lutheran)

3- Spiritual—where the grace of God is seen as internally accompanying the external element of the sacrament when it is received in faith. (e.g., Reformed)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness," (2 Timothy 3:16)
- "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)
- "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' [27]Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you.'" (Matthew 26:26-27)
- the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; [24]and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." [25]In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it,* in remembrance of Me." [26]For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

+ Two related occurrences likely link the term, sacrament, with the church: the military use of the word to indicate a soldier's solemn oath of obedience to his commander and the Vulgate (Latin) version of the Bible translation of the Greek word meaning mystery with the word sacrament. The early church viewed the sacraments as both pledges of obedience and having a mystical dimension. (Berkhof 311)

+ What is a sacrament? Berkhof defines it as "a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ is represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and they in turn, express their faith and obedience to God." (311) A sacrament is often explained with this mnemonic device: it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)
- “And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:4)
- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

d) Each of the sacraments contains one or more external elements (water in baptism; bread and wine and/or red grape juice in the Lord’s Supper). The external dimension of the sacrament signifies an internal reality that comes from Christ Jesus.

1- The sacraments were given to us by God, so we should not alter them in any way.

2- We should keep the Biblical words of institution in the celebration of the sacrament.

3- The symbols God gave must be kept to help people see the connection between the sign and the Biblical reality signified.

a- For example, we should not substitute peanut butter sandwiches and soft drinks to “jazz up” the sacrament or to advertise our church is avant-garde.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
- “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” (Romans 4:11)
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:28)
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- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

d) The external dimension of the sacrament signifies an internal reality that comes from Christ Jesus.

3- The symbols God gave must be kept to help people see the connection between the sign and the Biblical reality signified.

b- For another example, we should <u>not</u> do as one church did and change the red wine to white wine, because the custodian complained that when people spilled the red wine, it was hard to get the stain out of the carpet. <u>Jesus did not bleed white blood</u>!

+ Reflect and Discuss: How should such a problem be resolved?

+ Possible solutions maintaining Biblical integrity: _____ (One would be to change the floor covering to a surface that cleans easily.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

d) The external dimension of the sacrament signifies an internal reality that comes from Christ Jesus.

3- The symbols God gave must be kept to help people see the connection between the sign and the Biblical reality signified.

c- What should be done in this case? Some people struggle with alcoholism, and even the smell of the wine can give them a strong desire to drink too much alcohol again.

+ Reflect and Discuss: How should such a problem be resolved?

+ Possible solutions maintaining Biblical integrity: (Some congregations offer **red** grape juice in a specially designated part of the tray alongside the **red** wine glasses.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
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- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Romans 6:3)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

e) The internal reality that is pointed to by the external signs has several elements:

1- Membership in the covenant of grace (Genesis 17:11)

2- The righteousness of faith (Romans 4:11)

3- The forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28)

4- Faith and repentance (Mark 1:4; 16:16)

5- Communion with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3; Colossians 2:11-12)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring.” (Genesis 17:11-12)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

f) The essence of each sacrament is seen theologically in the union of the sign and the reality signified. In what way this union occurs is viewed differently by theologians and the churches they represent and influence.

1- As we consider each of the sacraments, we will look at some of the main theological differences that have emerged over the centuries and the rationale for the position here held.

2- As throughout this study of Essential Christianity, where differences among true Christians exist as to a Biblically permissible interpretation of God’s Word on such subjects as the sacraments, I find that continued discussion often leads to concurrence for the most part with an agreement to keep talking. This is not to minimize important doctrinal distinctives but to see them in the Biblical perspective. On some matters, we can agree to disagree, but to continue the conversation.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” (Romans 14:19)
- “May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, 6so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” (Romans 15:5-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

f) The essence of each sacrament is seen theologically in the union of the sign and the reality signified. In what way this union occurs is viewed differently by theologians and the churches they represent and influence.

3- Thus, as we continue the discussion, where differences continue among those segments (e.g., denominations) of the global church, that are faithful to God’s Word, where true believers in Christ agree on what is necessary for salvation (e.g., on John 3:16 and Romans 10:9), those differences can be seen as disputable matters (in an application of the basic principle Paul uses in Romans 14:1ff.) where, speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), the different interpretation of Bible texts informs and enriches rather than divides. (Cf. Romans 14:19; 15:5-6)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them." (Romans 4:11)
- "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. [2]They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. [3]They all ate the same spiritual food [4]and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
- "In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, [12]having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

g) Protestant Christians believe that the sacraments are not absolutely necessary for salvation, but that they are necessary, because they are divinely commanded by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Therefore, since they have been instituted by the Lord's command, to willfully neglect their use is spiritually dangerous, as is all disobedience of God's Word and will. The spiritual danger includes a weakening of the disobedient person's soul and the lessening of his or her accomplishing the work the Lord has called him or her to do for the extension and nurture of his kingdom.

h) As we'll see, when we study the two sacraments in depth, the New Testament sacraments the Lord established are based on their Old Testament counterparts. There is no significant difference between the two sets of sacraments. (See the texts at the left.) In each case, the Old Testament forerunner points forward to Christ, while the New Testament sacraments both point back to Christ and the efficacy of his completed and all-sufficient sacrifice of redemption.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them." (Romans 4:11)
- "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. [2]They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. [3]They all ate the same spiritual food [4]and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
- "In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, [12]having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

i) Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate seven sacraments

1- R.C.: Baptism, Eucharist (the Lord's Supper), confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction.

2- E.O.: Baptism, Chrismation (confirmation, immediately following baptism, priest anointing the newly baptized Christian with "Holy Chrism," i.e., oil blessed by the bishop), The Eucharist (also immediately after baptism, the beginning of the new life nourished by the Eucharist), confession, holy unction (anointing of the sick), ordination, marriage.

j) Protestant churches typically observe just two sacraments in both the Old Testament (OT) and the New Testament (NT). The signs and seals of membership in the OT covenant were circumcision and the Passover meal, which were replaced by baptism and the Lord's Supper in the new covenant in the NT.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. [20]He said, 'This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep.' [21]In the same way, he sprinkled with the blood both the tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies. [22]In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.
[23]It was necessary, then, for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. [24]For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. [25]Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. [26]Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. [27]Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, [28]so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:19-28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2) Protestant Christians celebrate two Sacraments, the only two Jesus commanded.

j) Protestant churches typically observe just two sacraments in both the OT and the NT.

1- The two OT sacraments were bloody and linked with the sacrificial system that pointed ahead to Jesus Christ.

a- Circumcision, though practiced among Gentile nations as a health measure, was given significance in Israel as a sacrament of God's covenant of grace with Abraham, symbolizing the cutting away of sin.

b- Passover was instituted by God at the time of the Exodus with Moses. This sacrament symbolized and became a type of deliverance of God's people from the bondage of evil.

2- The two NT sacraments are unbloody, since Christ's perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross, no more shedding of blood is needed for the redemption of sins. We now consider the two NT sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper in detail.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19]Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)
- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4]We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
[5]If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.” (Romans 6:3-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2- The two NT sacraments are unbloody, since Christ’s perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross, no more shedding of blood is needed for the redemption of sins.

a- Baptism

1] Christ commanded and thus instituted baptism after his resurrection, after he completed his atoning work, thus with his full and complete mediatorial authority and power. (Matthew 28:18)

a] He said baptism was to be done in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

b] Baptism is in, not into, as Lenski explains is the meaning in the Koine (common) Greek in which the NT was written.

Lenski Commentary on the Meaning of Baptize

Πορευθέντες [having gone] is something new. Hitherto men were welcomed when *they* came to Israel, God's people; now the people of God are to go to men everywhere. Yet Jesus does not command, "Go!" the participle is merely auxiliary to the main verb, "Having gone, disciple!" To go to the nations is the self-evident and natural way to proceed in making them disciples. What going there has been since Jesus spoke this word! Who will count the miles travelled by the messengers of Jesus?

The heart of the commission is in the one word μαθη-τεύσατε. This imperative, of course, means, "to turn into disciples," and its aorist form conveys the thought that this is actually to be done. The verb itself does not indicate *how* disciples are to be made, it designates only an activity that will result in disciples. It connotes results not methods and ways. The translation "teach" is, therefore, unfortunate and even misleading to those who are not able to examine the original. Those who draw the conclusion that we must always teach first and use this passage as proof against infant baptism are basing their conclusion on a mistranslation. With the participle that follows Jesus himself assigns the proper place to teaching. (1172-1173)

Lenski Commentary on the Meaning of Baptize

The universality of the commission is made plain by τὰ ἔθνη, "all nations" of the earth. Here we have the fulfillment of all the Messianic promises concerning the coming kingdom. Τὰ ἔθνη—one wonders how this sounded to the Jewish ears of these first disciples. One thing is certain, God had to give them much additional light and leading in order to induce them to go out to "all nations.“…What diversity exists among the nations of the earth: race, color, location, climate, traits, achievements: yet they are all included in this command, for all are sinners, all have souls, all need and are capable of salvation through the grace of God. Jesus did not overshoot the mark here, the nations that have been reached by the gospel prove it today. A tremendous task: "disciple all nations!" Who would not have recoiled from it had not Jesus first declared his omnipotence in heaven and on earth ("go ye *therefore*")!

Two participles of means then state *how* all nations are to be made into disciples: by baptizing them and by teaching them. The order in which these two participles appear is not accidental. Jesus sees beyond the first missionary stage of the gospel work when adults must be taught before baptism can be administered to them; he sees his church being established among the nations and children thus entering it in infancy, and this by means of baptism.

Lenski New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (1173)

Lenski Commentary on the Meaning of “Baptizing in” (Matthew 28:19)

Εἰς τὸ ὄνομα means, "in the name," not, "into." This is the use of εἰς in the Koine, which all the newer grammars treat in full. R. 592 says without qualification: "In Matt. 28:19 βαπτίζοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, and Rom. 6:3, etc., εἰς Χριστόν and εἰς τὸν θάνατον the notion of sphere is the true one.“…Although this phrase is so common in the New Testament, it is rather generally misunderstood. This is probably due to the fact that all the instances of its occurrence are not studied together. It does not mean, "on the authority of." If that were its meaning in this instance, we might well ask, "Why does Jesus not say on my authority?" If only the authority for this sacrament is to be stated, why bring in the Triune God? In all these phrases the ὄνομα signifies the revelation. The sense is, "In connection with the revelation of the Father," etc. This alone also gives us a thinkable thought and frees us from the older ideas that by baptism a person is to be carried *into* the Triune God or *into* his name—something that is wholly unthinkable. We must know once for all that no preposition denotes motion.

Baptism takes place in the sphere of the revelation of the Triune God. It is the gospel revelation that is referred to, which is full of grace and truth. Baptism is thus pure gospel and by no means a legal rite. It enriches the person baptized by the gifts of the gospel, it is not a mere act of obedience to a command on the person's part. Hence again, children may be baptized as well as adults; both can be equally blessed with the contents of God's blessed revelation.

In the Scriptures the three divine persons are named singly a large number of times, often two are named together, and at times all three; yet this is the only instance in the Scriptures in which we have the Trinity named as such: "Of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." This is God's full name; he is one God, yet exists in three persons. The mystery of his Being, of this one Essence in three persons, no human mind will ever fathom. We may say that because of its profundity and its incomprehensibleness God would not have revealed it to us, but because of the plan of salvation he had to reveal it to a certain degree; for our salvation we must know that the Father sent the Son, that the Son came for our redemption, and that the Father and the Son sent the Spirit for our sanctification. In all the confessions they have ever drawn up, beginning with the three great ecumenical confessions, all Christian churches confess the Trinity as the basic article; thus all who deny the Trinity place themselves outside the Christian Church. (Lenski, 1175-1176)

Lenski Commentary on the Meaning of “Baptizing in” (Matthew 28:19)

Later dogmaticians have made the Trinity the *materia coelestis* in baptism to correspond to the body and the blood in the Lord's Supper. But the disparity is too great; it is also impossible to find a complete correspondence and similarity between the features of the two sacraments. "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" designate the three divine persons in union with whose revelation we are baptized. Thus "by baptism God gives himself to us: the Father becomes our Father and adopts us as his children (Gal. 3:16-27; John 1:12, 13; 1 John 3:1); the Son becomes our Redeemer, for we are baptized in union with his death and cleansed by his blood to be his own (Eph. 5:26) and have put on Christ (Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13), so that his righteousness is our glorious dress (Matt. 22:11; Isa. 61:10), and we are members of his body (Eph. 5:30; 1 Cor. 12:13; John 15:4); the Holy Spirit becomes our Comforter and the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 11:22), we become his temple in which together with the Father and the Son he dwells (1 Cor. 3:10). In this way we assume *a new relation to God* by means of this sacrament of regeneration, our heart and our spirit being renewed and pursuing a new direction through the joint operation of the three divine persons." Rohnert, *Dogmatik,* 413, etc.

When we administer the sacrament we have every reason for using the full name of God as Jesus uttered it, and no reason can be advanced for doing anything else. While the participle βαπτίζοντες is not an imperative, it yet receives imperative force from the main verb which is imperative. Here Jesus prescribes how we are to make disciples, and what he wants us to do he states in these words which are thus called "the baptismal formula." Those who venture to alter these words and, for instance, baptize in the name of Jesus, do so at their own risk, and no man can be sure that their baptism is valid. The name as it was uttered by Jesus is much like a person's signature. This is made in a specific way, and any change renders it void. Gerhard writes: "It is safest to adhere to Christ's words and not to use a form of words different from the one he prescribed; for he certainly had his reasons for wanting the three persons explicitly mentioned in baptism, and by no means the least of these reasons was this that each and every person acts in this sacrament and dispenses his blessing. The Father receives the baptized person as his child, the Son as his brother and disciple, the Holy Spirit as his temple and habitation."

Lenski New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel. (1176-1178)

Lenski Commentary on the Meaning of “Baptizing in” (Romans 6:3)

This εἰς is simple *in* and indicates no motion but only sphere; it is *in* with its first meaning: "in connection with." We were baptized "in connection with" the Name of the Holy Trinity (Name = revelation), "in connection with" Christ, with his death and all its saving power. Baptism is "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit. 3:5) because of these its connections which reveal the power and the effect with which it works. Baptism connects us with the Messiah Jesus, and Paul says that this means the connection with his death. Here all that he has already said on the efficacy of that death must be recalled: 3:25; 5:6-11, plus all that has been said on Christ's mediation. Note the chiasm, the two verbs being outside, the two phrases inside, thus placing great emphasis on the second phrase: "in connection with his death.

Lenski New Testament Commentary – The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. (39)

Luther is helpful here. “…the words themselves indicate, when the priest says: ‘I baptise thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen’—and not: ‘I baptise thee in my own name.’ It is as though he said: ‘What I do, I do not by my own authority, but in the name and stead of God, so that you should regard it just as if our Lord Himself had done it in a visible manner. The Doer and the minister are different persons, but the work of both is the same work, or, rather, it is the work of the Doer alone, through my ministry.” (167)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? [4]We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
[5]If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.” (Romans 6:3-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2- The two NT sacraments are unbloody, since Christ’s perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross, no more shedding of blood is needed for the redemption of sins.

a- Baptism

1] Christ commanded and thus instituted baptism after his resurrection, after he completed his atoning work, thus with his full and complete mediatorial authority and power.

c] Baptism indicates that all who receive this sacrament have entered into a new relationship with God and now belong to him.

2] Before discussing the mode of baptism, we must consider what it is that baptism symbolizes.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.” (Ezekiel 36:25)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 2:38)
- “‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’” (Acts 22:16)
- “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,“ (Titus 3:5)
- “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2- The two NT sacraments are unbloody, since Christ’s perfect and all-sufficient sacrifice on the cross, no more shedding of blood is needed for the redemption of sins.

a- Baptism

2] Before discussing the mode of baptism, we must consider what it is that baptism symbolizes.

+ When we examine the texts, we see that the essence of baptism, i.e., what it symbolizes is rebirth and purification. The only way we can belong to God, who is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy, is to be purified of all that separates us from him, from what contaminates us, our sin.

+ As Jesus explained to Nicodemus, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” (John 3:5)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "To purify them, do this: Sprinkle the water of cleansing on them; then have them shave their whole bodies and wash their clothes, and so purify themselves." (Numbers 8:7)
- "[13]Whoever touches the dead body of anyone and fails to purify himself defiles the LORD's tabernacle. That person must be cut off from Israel. Because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean; his uncleanness remains on him.…[18]Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave or someone who has been killed or someone who has died a natural death. [19]The man who is clean is to sprinkle the unclean person on the third and seventh days, and on the seventh day he is to purify him. The person being cleansed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and that evening he will be clean. [20]But if a person who is unclean does not purify himself, he must be cut off from the community, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on him, and he is unclean." (Numbers 19:13,18-20)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

3] The NT does not specify, much less prescribe, any mode of baptism as being required.

a] The Greek verb, Βαπτίζω (baptize), refers to all applications of water, including dipping, immersing, washing, sprinkling, cleansing.

b] Rites for cleansing, purification, by sprinkling were prescribed for God's people in the Old Testament. In addition to the texts at the left, recall the Ezekiel 36:25 text previously cited.

c] Throughout its history, from the earliest times, the church has customarily practiced all three main modes of baptizing: sprinkling, pouring, and total immersion.

d] Thus, while Baptist Christians do no wrong by practicing immersion, they cannot fault other believers for using other modes.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols." (Ezekiel 36:25)
- "'And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'" (Acts 22:16)
- "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)
- "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22)
- "and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

3] The NT does not specify or prescribe any mode of baptism as being required.

e] Immersion does carry with it the beautiful motif of life, death, and resurrection alluded to in the Romans 6:3-5 passage. Luther and Calvin both preferred immersion.

+ Note that immersion does not prohibit infant baptism. Eastern Orthodox churches practice infant baptism by immersion. The priest holds the baby's nose and quickly lowers the baby into and out of the water.

f] Since Scripture specifies that the water is a symbol, and it is a symbol of rebirth, cleansing, purification, the mode, as Berkhof rightly concludes, "is immaterial, as long as the fundamental idea of purification finds expression in the rite. Jesus did not prescribe a particular mode…, [nor does the Bible]." (316)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.” (Ezekiel 36:25)
- “Jesus replied, ‘You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.’
[8]‘No,’ said Peter, ‘you shall never wash my feet.’
Jesus answered, ‘Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.’
[9]‘Then, Lord,’ Simon Peter replied, ‘not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!’
[10]Jesus answered, ‘A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.’ [11]For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.” (John 13:7-11)
- “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

3] The NT does not specify or prescribe any mode of baptism as being required.

g] The water symbolizes cleansing and rebirth, the new life in Christ regardless of the quantity used.

+ The rationale of a small amount sufficing to include the whole is also seen in Jesus’ explanation for washing only the disciples’ feet, as he responded to Peter in John 13:10.

+ That principle is also seen in Jesus’ death being sufficient to pay for the sins of everyone in the world and to redeem his creation.

+ One reason for the Bible’s silence on the mode of baptism is likely seen in the circumstances throughout church history where only a small amount of clean water has been available for one or more baptisms.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39]The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’
[40]With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ [41]Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:38-41)
- “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

4] Who may administrate the sacrament of baptism?

a] Since most Protestants believe that the sacraments should be administered with the proclamation of the Word of God and in a public gathering of believers in Christ, therefore they hold that baptism should be administered by a duly accredited minister and always in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

b] Roman Catholics, believing that baptism is necessary for salvation, except in rare instances, do allow for others to administer baptism, but only in the name of the triune God.

5] Who may receive baptism?

a] As we see in Acts 2:39 and elsewhere in the Bible, baptism is intended for believing adults and for their children.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
- “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)
- “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39]The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ [40]With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ [41]Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” (Acts 2:38-41)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

a] As we see in Acts 2:39 and elsewhere in the Bible, baptism is intended for believing adults and for their children.

1} When Jesus gave the Great Commission, it was to adults to enable them to receive their mission assignment and to have the essentials of what to do.

2} As we see in the Biblical texts, a profession of faith, including repentance, precedes baptism for adults.

3} The sincerity of that faith is the responsibility of the believer; the church is not required to do extensive examination of the genuineness of a confession of faith. However, in matters of church discipline, as we’ve seen above, the church has the responsibility to act accordingly.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

a] As we see in Acts 2:39 and elsewhere in the Bible, baptism is intended for believing adults and for their children.

4} Baptists argue that there are 12 examples of baptisms in the NT, all of which involve adults and a prior profession of faith.

R. C. Sproul finds that three of the 12 mention household baptism, so we have nine examples in the NT that are clearly referring only to adults. The dispute is about the other three, which is 25% of the recorded instances of baptism in the NT, and they include the term household (So and So and his household were baptized).

Pertaining to the nine NT adult baptisms, Sproul offers an insightful observation.

R. C. Sproul on Adult Profession of Faith Prior to Baptism

Pertaining to the nine NT adult baptisms, Sproul offers an insightful observation.

"But there is another dimension here that is very significant, and you almost never hear this one mentioned, and it's critical: Everyone of those examples that we can find in the New Testament of adults being baptized, who first are required to make a profession of faith and to repent, whatever we can tell about their status prior to their baptism, in the places where we can tell, every single one of them, the person is a pagan convert, a Gentile coming to the faith as a first generation believer. Now if the Baptist could show that one of those adults had been in the family of Christians when that person was an infant and is only now being baptized, then you have a case. Otherwise, all you're arguing for is what everybody already agrees on, namely that in the case of adults you have to repent and believe before you can receive the sign." [EDS comment: Notice in Acts 16:29-34, the Philippian jailer asks, "…what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas reply, "'Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved—you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house….then immediately he and all his family were baptized." Nothing is said about a preceding repentance.]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"'I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. [8]The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.'

[9]Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. [10]This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11]You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. [13]Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. [14]Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'" (Genesis 17:7-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] Though no Bible verse overtly says to baptize infants, the authorization, indeed the command, for doing so is clearly presented in God's Word, but it was clearer to the early church that was connected so closely with the Old Testament, so we have to examine the Scriptures theologically in order to see the Biblical basis for God's command to include infants and other children.

1} Understanding God's covenant of grace with Abraham is the strongest Biblical basis for baptizing infants.

2} As Biblical scholars explain, the covenant is one of the major motifs that occurs throughout the Bible and that provides the basis for understanding the message of God's Word.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"'I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. [8]The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.'

[9]Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. [10]This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11]You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. [13]Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. [14]Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.'" (Genesis 17:7-14; see also Romans 4:11.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

3} Notice that this covenant is to be an everlasting covenant, as Jesus indicated in Matthew 5:17-18. However, the covenant promise in verse 8, pertaining to God's gift of Canaan, was given a condition of obedience (1 Kings 9:1-9 *et al*.), which Israel failed to keep, so they lost the land.

4} But the rest of this covenant promise remains everlasting and still intact. Nowhere in the Bible has God removed the promise that children could receive the sign and seal of the covenant.

5} That sign in the covenant with Abraham was circumcision, and God commanded it to be done when the baby was *eight days old*.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- [9]Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. [10]This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11]You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,'" (Genesis 17:7,9-12)
- "At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met [Moses] and was about to kill him. [25]But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. [26]So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said 'bridegroom of blood,' referring to circumcision.)" (Exodus 4:24-26)
- "[31]'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
[32]It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

6} The incident that occurred when Moses was returning to Egypt from Midian (in Exodus 4), shows how seriously God views the disobedience of his command pertaining to circumcision and the disobedience of the leaders of his people. Moses was the leader of his people, and the one through whom God planned to work mighty acts in front of Pharaoh, and he was living in disobedience to God in failing to circumcise his son!

7} Later in the OT, God revealed through the prophet Jeremiah that the time was coming when he would make a new covenant with his people.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you….[10]This is my covenant with you and your descendants…, the covenant you are to keep:…[11]…circumcision will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. [12]For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised,'" (Genesis 17:7- 12)
- "At a lodging place on the way, the LORD met [Moses] and was about to kill him. [25]But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. [26]So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said 'bridegroom of blood,' referring to circumcision.)" (Exodus 4:24-26)
- "[31]'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.
[32]It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 31:31-32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

5] Who may receive baptism?

b] We see the Biblical basis for baptizing infants beginning with God's covenant with Abraham.

7} As discussed above, later in the OT, God revealed through the prophet Jeremiah that the time is coming when he would make ***a new covenant*** with his people. Remember, the word in the LXX, Jeremiah 31:31, καινός (*kainos*), means new in nature or quality (somewhat like renewed, ***having continuity but with a new dimension*** [which is why it would "not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers"]), not new in time or origin (not brand new) which is designated by another Greek word also translated new, νέος (*neos*). Recall that the covenant is an essential unity, for it is "an everlasting covenant." (Genesis 17:7)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)
- "In the same way, after supper he [Jesus] took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [καινός, *kainos*] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)
- "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, [10]and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. [11]In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, [12]having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:9-12)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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8} Jesus established the new (καινός [*kainos*]) covenant. The apostle Paul explained to the Galatians that since all who are in Christ are Abraham's seed and members of this new (but not brand new) covenant, that is the "everlasting covenant" but new in its essence, all in Christ are thus heirs of the covenant promise to Abraham.

However, with God changing both sacraments, and with the other modifications he made, it truly was "not…like the covenant I made with their forefathers." (Jeremiah 31:32)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ… [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)
- "...[10]and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. [11]In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature,…with the circumcision done by Christ, [12]having been buried with him in baptism…." (Colossians 2:9-12)
- "Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. [3]For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—" (Philippians 3:2-3)
- "…go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them…[20]and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you…." (Matthew 28:19-20)
- "…the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs [the high priests of the old covenant] as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises." (Hebrews 8:6)

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9} Paul further reveals in his letter to the Colossians that baptism now replaces circumcision. (2:11-12)

10} In fact, in the new covenant it is wrong to be circumcised for religious reasons. (E.g., Philippians 3:2-3)

11} R. C. Sproul and other theologians point out that the NT, in particular the Book of Hebrews, emphasizes that new covenant is more not less inclusive than the old covenant. How, then, can the church prohibit infant children from receiving the sign and seal of the covenant, taking away from them the sign and seal that they have been receiving for thousands of years, thus making the new covenant more exclusive?!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)
- "In him [Christ] you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, [12]having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead." (Colossians 2:11-12)
- "Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39]The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.'" (Acts 2:38-39)
- "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." (1 Corinthians 7:14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

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12} Since God commanded that infants be given the privilege of bearing the sign of the covenant, and nowhere has God withdrawn this privilege, they now receive that privilege in baptism.

As Berkhof well explains, the "exclusion of children would require an unequivocal statement to that effect, but quite the contrary is found, Acts 2:39; Matt. 19:14; 1 Cor. 7:14." (320) **Since Peter does not specify an age restriction, on what authority can we?** (Acts 2:39)

13} Furthermore, there is no explicit NT command or example in support of Baptists and others who require profession of faith prior to baptizing children.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
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14} We see in the NT other reasons confirming it is God’s will that infants be baptized. As Berkhof says, “The language of the New Testament is perfectly consistent with a continuation of the former state…Whole households were repeatedly baptized, and this is represented as something perfectly normal.” (321) Noted Swiss NT Bible scholar and theologian, Oscar Cullmann, maintains that the Greek word, οἶκος (*oikos,* meaning house, dwelling, home, habitation, household, family) not only can but must be understood as specifically referring to children, especially considering the size of first century Near East families.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. [10]All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, [11]together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. [12]You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, [13]to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 29:9-13)
- “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.” (Joshua 8:35)
- “All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the LORD.” (2 Chronicles 20:13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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15} Furthermore, we also see that children were always present whenever the covenant was renewed. The Scriptures in the left column are only a few of the ones that can be cited.

16} Since infants receiving the sign and seal of the covenant is so clearly commanded throughout the whole OT, the burden of proof as to why infants in the covenant cannot receive the NT sign and seal of covenant membership is on those who withhold this privilege, and this matter is huge in the light of its importance to God. The silence of any NT mention of God taking away this privilege is deafening.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. [10]All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, [11]together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. [12]You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, [13]to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” (Deuteronomy 29:9-13)
- “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the aliens who lived among them.” (Joshua 8:35)
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16} God nowhere in the OT or NT rescinds the command to give the covenant sign to infants. Sensing the need to offer something, churches that do not baptize infants typically offer some type of dedication. R. C. Sproul insightfully points out a significant theological problem with dedication: they give the children an OT sign where there is no NT provision for such a practice. Also, recall that dedication only occurs once in the OT and that not by any command from God; thus, it cannot hermeneutically be considered normative. Further, dedication is theologically very different from baptism.

Ecclesiology: Historical Argument for Infant Baptism

Those who argue against infant baptism like to point out that we don't read of infants being baptized until well into the second century A. D. However, a closer look shows that history is very supportive of the practice of infant baptism by the early church. For example, one of their leaders, the North African lawyer, Tertullian, called the "father of Latin theology," who questioned the practice, admitted it was universal throughout the church, not just in North Africa. Origen, an outstanding scholar of the Scriptures, writer, and preacher, who was martyred for the faith, said the tradition came from the apostles and is the custom of the church. With the early church literature clearly mentioning the controversies that existed at the time, such as heavy persecution and the fight against the influence of pagan theology, the silence of any controversy concerning giving the covenant sign to infants argues for rather than against the practice.

Theologian, R. C. Sproul adds a further point. "How likely is it given the abundance of written material that does survive from apostolic times to middle of the second century, that focuses on every serious controversy and theological debate in that hundred year period, isn't it strange that there is not a word of debate about infant baptism? The historical record seems to suggest that this thing spread to be the universal practice of the church and nobody said a peep about it. I think the reason for that is obvious. That at that time the New Testament Christian community was much more in tune with the historic continuity of the covenants. And that nobody even ever questioned the business of including the babies with the covenant sign. I think the argument from history is also in favor of infant baptism and not against it."

In his comment on Acts 2:38-39, R. C. H. Lenski states, "'Your children' allows no restriction as to age. How the Holy Spirit enters their hearts by baptism is his concern only, ours is to administer that baptism, in no wise doubting, otherwise we could not answer to God." (110)

Ecclesiology: Significant Differences between Baptism and Dedication

Infant Baptism

1. Based on covenant commands of God and is required in his Word.
2. Covenant commands continually recur in Bible.
3. Focus is on what God is doing in the life of the child.
4. Baptism a means of grace.
5. God's declaration that the child belongs to him and is affirmed as a member of his covenant and the body of Christ with all the accompanying blessings assured. Consider the implications.
6. Child shares in one of the two sacraments instituted by our Lord (and both in some church denominations).
7. Practice is well-grounded in God's Word.
8. Result: 1st class citizenship in God's kingdom.

Infant Dedication

1. No command of God and is optional for parents.
2. No Biblical basis: occurs only once in OT, where Hannah dedicates Samuel to the Lord's work in the tabernacle (1 Samuel 1:21ff.), which was voluntary and not by any command of God, thus not normative for others.
3. Focus is on what parents are committing to do in the life of the child.
4. Dedication not a means of grace.
5. No God-declared authoritative statement that the child belongs to him, or affirmation of being a member of his covenant, or assurance of his continued blessings. Consider the implications!
6. Child is deprived from sharing in even one of the two sacraments instituted by the Lord.
7. Commits a serious theological error: gives the child an OT sign where there is no NT provision for such a practice. Hermeneutical principles prohibit making Scriptural occurrences normative that take place only once and without a command to do so.
8. Result: lower class citizenship and inferior status, in God's kingdom.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [καινός, *kainos*] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:25)
- “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)
- “When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, [14]saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.’ [15]And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised.
  [16]Men swear by someone greater than themselves, and the oath confirms what is said and puts an end to all argument. [17]Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.” (Hebrews 6:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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17} The writer to the Hebrews explains that this new covenant is unchangeable. (6:13-17)

18} One question I’ve often received from women and girls, is what about women and girls in the OT? Were they included in the covenant? The answer is yes they always were; however, in the culture of the Near East at that time, women and girls were included by their relationship with their husband/father head of the clan. In that patriarchal society, the women and girls participated in the benefits of the male head of the clan, which among God’s people included covenant membership.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. [13]And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. [14]For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.
[15]But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. [16]How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?
[17]Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches."
(1 Corinthians 7:12-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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19} To rightly interpret this text, view it in the light of the covenant. Also, remember what holy means and that it's the root of the word sanctification. (For more on both words, see the sections above: holy in Theology and sanctification in Soteriology.) Essentially, holy means set apart, uncommon, clean; sanctification is development in Christ-likeness that further equips God's covenant people to serve and please God and accomplish his purposes for them ever more effectively. A child needs at least one believing parent to be and develop in the covenant. Sproul explains more.

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

Now one thing is significant that's often overlooked here, and that is what seems to be communicated here, that is the same as the Old Testament, is that when the head of the family enters into a covenant, his entire family receives the benefit of that. So that covenant principle is reaffirmed in the household baptisms. Now that's very significant, particularly where we do have passages in the New Testament that do specifically refer to infants and their status in the covenant. And I'm thinking of 1 Corinthians where the apostle teaches (and as far as I'm concerned this is one of the most poignant reasons for infant baptism there is, and it's one you hardly ever hear talked about) where Paul says the unbelieving wife is sanctified by her believing husband, and the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife. [EDS Note: This text refers to marriages in which one of the partners has become a Christian since the wedding; it is not contradicting God's will elsewhere stated in his Word that Christians should not marry non-Christians. See the discussion above, especially pertaining to 1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Nehemiah 10:30; and Deuteronomy 7:3-4,6.]

Now that throws a lot of people for a loop, because we normally use the term sanctified to refer to that which follows justification. It presupposes being in a state of grace or in a state of salvation…Now the message of the New Testament is clear, that salvation depends on faith. The important part of that text in 1 Corinthians is not about the unbelieving wife and the unbelieving husband but the rest of it. Why does Paul say that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the believing wife, for what reason? Else would their children be unclean. But says the apostle now are they holy. Now you have three words in this text that are very significant and pregnant with meaning: sanctified, unclean, and holy. Now I ask you this: what would those terms mean to a first century Jew?

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

What does it mean to be sanctified? In our doctrinal language, we use the word sanctification to refer to the process of our being conformed to Christ after we are justified. But the primary meaning of sanctification in the Bible is to be set apart, to be consecrated, to be placed in a sacred, favorable position. Just as Israel was set apart from the nations, and the families of Jewish people were sanctified, that is they were set apart, and those who were not in that group of sanctified people, which was the covenant community, what were they called in the Old Testament? They were not the set apart ones. Here we have Paul using this word that specifically refers, not just to children in general, but to infants, and he says of this that infants are now, if there's just one believer, for the sake of the infants lest they not be considered unclean, because the infant is holy. There is a certain sense in which the unbelieving spouse is considered sanctified, not for the sake of the believing husband or the believing wife, but specifically for the sake of the infant. That the infant may not be considered unclean, and that the infant may be considered holy. What I submit to you is that that is covenant language par excellence. What I hear Paul saying there, and I could be wrong, but what I hear him saying in the light of the language of the Bible is that infants clearly belong in the new covenant, because the validity of the sacrament rests upon the integrity of the one who's sign it is, namely God….

The point I want to make is this: if two pagans come to this church and say baptize our babies, we're not allowed to do that. At least one of them, following 1 Corinthians, must make a profession of faith. Now suppose it's a bogus profession of faith. We can't read the heart. But if that person is a member of the church, makes a profession of faith, is a member in good standing living in accord with God's Word, and brings [his or her] child for baptism, we baptize [him or her].

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul on the Implications of 1 Corinthians 7:12-17, and especially 7:14, for Baptizing Children

Let's not lose sight of the critical point here: the covenant community status of the children of at least one believer. I don't think there is any doubt about that in the New Testament, that our children have covenant privilege. Now the whole question then becomes, if they are included in the covenant, why in the world would you not give them the sign of the covenant? The whole reason the sign of the covenant was given to infants in the Old Testament was because that was the sign that they were included in the covenant, and if God is going to stop including infants in the covenant community, you would think that that silence would suddenly become a screaming change.

We know that the Old Testament laws that have been abrogated, are abrogated by specific new teaching in the New Testament. To me the biggest problem the Baptist has is the silence of the New Testament. They want to argue that a principle that God initiates and institutes throughout the whole of Old Testament redemptive history suddenly is set apart in the New Testament, set aside and without a word. It's repealed and nothing is said about it. I submit to you that 1 Corinthians assumes the continuity of inclusion of infants. [EDS Note: This continuity is clearly indicated in such texts as Luke 22:20 (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:25; Jeremiah 31:31-35, [38:31 LXX]), by the original Greek word, καινός (*kainos*), which means new in nature or in quality, i.e., renewed; Jesus does not use the other main word for new, νέος (*neos*), which means new in time or in origin, i.e., brand new. In 22:20, Jesus' says, "This cup is the new (*kainos*) covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you," clearly linking his new covenant with the covenant with Abraham, which commanded that infants receive the covenant sign. (Genesis 17:12)]

Ecclesiology: R. C. Sproul's Comments on Baptism and Salvation

Baptism signifies cleansing from sin; the washing away of sin. Baptism signifies the things associated with the washing away of sin. It is a sign of my forgiveness. It's a sign of my justification, and it's a sign of my total cleansing, so it's a sign of my sanctification; it's a sign of glorification, in other words, everything that is involved in the process and the complete work of salvation is indicated by baptism; it's a sign of my salvation.

What about faith? Baptism is a sign of faith; whose faith? Historically, virtually every church believes that baptism is a sign of faith and of the participant's faith. One of the chief reasons why the Baptist church won't baptize infants is because they believe that baptism is a sign of faith and they say you shouldn't give the sign of faith until there is faith or at least a profession of faith. How can you give the sign of faith to somebody who is incapable of faith?

Other churches that practice infant baptism argue that the sign, and that to which the sign points, do not have to be present at one and the same time. In the case of Abraham, Abraham has faith and then has circumcision, which is a sign of his faith (among other things). Isaac gets circumcision and then later faith. So that which the sign signifies is not tied inseparably to the moment of the sign.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols.” (Ezekiel 36:25)
- “‘And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’” (Acts 22:16)
- “And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- “he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,“ (Titus 3:5)
- “let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.” (Hebrews 10:22)
- “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

6] What is the relationship between baptism and regeneration? The answer deals with how Scripture is interpreted concerning the connection between baptism and regeneration and renewal.

Passages such as Titus 3:5 indicate that through baptism the Lord working through the Holy Spirit regenerates and renovates us. But the question next arises, how and when does this rebirth and renewal occur? Here is where true believers differ, due to Scripture not specifying how and when and thus also to the profound mystery involved. Two main views prevail.

a] Some hold to an understanding called presumptive regeneration, which assumes that infants, and all others receiving baptism, are regenerated and should be considered as such unless they evidence in their lives that they are not regenerated.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' [Genesis 15:6]…[10]Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! [11]And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. [12]And he is also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised." (Romans 4:3, 10-12)
- "When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him." (Genesis 21:4)
- "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

6] What is the relationship between baptism and regeneration? The answer deals with how Scripture is interpreted concerning the connection between baptism and regeneration and renewal.

a] Some hold to an understanding called presumptive regeneration, which assumes that infants, and all others receiving baptism, are regenerated and should be considered as such unless they evidence in their lives that they are not regenerated.

b] Others maintain the practice of infant baptism on the basis of the manifold and comprehensive covenant promise of God, which includes the promise of regeneration. Then the question is when that saving faith occurs: before, during, or after baptism.

1} Abraham believed <u>before</u> receiving the covenant sign and seal.

2} Isaac believed <u>after</u> receiving the sign and seal of the covenant.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. [45]The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. [46]For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.’ [48]So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.” (Acts 10:44-48)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

6] What is the relationship between baptism and regeneration? The answer deals with how Scripture is interpreted concerning the connection between baptism and regeneration and renewal.

b] The question is when that faith occurs: before, during, or after baptism. Notice that in the book of Acts, the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit is revealed as coming <u>before</u>, <u>during</u>, *and* <u>after</u> the sacrament is administered.

1} Abraham believed <u>before</u> receiving the covenant sign and seal. Cf. the God-fearing Gentiles, who met in Cornelius’ house in Caesarea, who received the Holy Spirit <u>before</u> they were baptized. (Acts 10, especially 44-48)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples [2]and asked them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'

They answered, 'No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.'

[3]So Paul asked, 'Then what baptism did you receive?'

'John's baptism,' they replied.

[4]Paul said, 'John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.' [5]On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. [6]When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. [7]There were about twelve men in all." (Acts 19:1-7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

6] What is the relationship between baptism and regeneration? The answer deals with how Scripture is interpreted concerning the connection between baptism and regeneration and renewal.

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1} Abraham believed <u>before</u> receiving the covenant sign and seal. Cf. the God-fearing Gentiles, who met in Cornelius' house in Caesarea, who received the Holy Spirit <u>before</u> they were baptized. (Acts 10:44-48)

2} The Spirit came <u>during</u> baptism at Ephesus. (Acts 19:1-7; note v. 6.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. [15]When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, [16]because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. [17]Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." (Acts 8:14-17)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

6] What is the relationship between baptism and regeneration? The answer deals with how Scripture is interpreted concerning the connection between baptism and regeneration and renewal.

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1} The God-fearing Gentiles, who met in Cornelius' house in Caesarea, received the Holy Spirit <u>before</u> baptism. (Acts 10:44ff.)

2} The Spirit came <u>during</u> baptism at Ephesus. (Acts 19:1-7)

3} The Holy Spirit came to believers in Samaria <u>after</u> they were baptized. (Acts 8:14-17) Cf. Isaac believing <u>after</u> receiving the sign and seal of the covenant.

R. C. Sproul's Further Comments on Baptism and Salvation

Baptism is a sign of rebirth, regeneration.

Jesus: that which is born of the flesh (sarx; not soma, body) is flesh (not spirit/spiritual). When we are born we are alive physically (bios) but are dead spiritually. We are in a state of spiritual death.

The person who is of the flesh is by nature at enmity with God. He or she has a disinclination toward God. The pagan, the unbeliever, is never in a neutral state with respect to God. In his heart he is anti-God. He is a fugitive from God. He rejects God; he refuses to have God in his thinking; and his natural disposition is opposition toward the living God. Churches think about regeneration differently but all agree that the essential point is that God works internally on the soul of a person and changes the disposition of the human heart. Regeneration has always been seen as an antidote to original sin (the degree of our fallen, corrupt, nature that we inherit from Adam and Eve.)

Baptism symbolizes the new birth; it is a sign of spiritual resurrection [and of the physical resurrection to come], of spiritual renewal, of being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. [EDS Note: Some denominations, e.g., Lutherans, interpret the Scripture, e.g., Titus 3:5, as indicating baptism is not only a symbol but an instrument through which the Holy Spirit provides regeneration.]

Baptism also signifies, is the outward sign of, the new covenant.

Baptism signifies cleansing from sin; the washing away of sin. Baptism signifies the things associated with the washing away of sin. It is a sign of my forgiveness. It's a sign of my justification, and it's a sign of my total cleansing, so it's a sign of my sanctification; it's a sign of glorification, in other words, everything that is involved in the process and the complete work of salvation is indicated by baptism; it's a sign of my salvation.

R. C. Sproul's Further Comments on Baptism and Salvation

[Sproul quote of church history professor, Dr. John] Gerstner: "In your justification, when you put your faith in Christ, truly trust him for your regeneration, in the sight of God all that Christ has and all that Christ is becomes yours." In this identification in the sight of God that takes place in our salvation, all that Christ is and all that Christ has becomes yours. When God looks at you, he sees the merit of Christ. My salvation rests not on my performance but on his.

We are redeemed not only by the death of Christ, but it is by the life of Christ by which he fulfills every jot and tittle of the law and wins the blessing that is promised to the people of the old covenant to anyone who keeps the Law. ***Jesus keeps the Law for me and receives the reward for me.***

He becomes an heir of God, ***but then in my adoption*** I become a joint heir, and we look to that day when the Father says to us, "Come my beloved children inherit the kingdom the Father has prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Why am I going to inherit a kingdom? The real heir to the Kingdom is Jesus. But ***now I am in Christ, and Christ is in me, and this is not just a symbol. There is an authentic identification here, and my identity with Christ is signified by baptism. My baptism says to the world I belong to Christ, and he belongs to me.*** [*Emphasis is mine* (*EDS*)] All that is his is mine, his merit, his inheritance, and so on. (This doesn't mean I become divine; we're talking here in terms of his Savior role.) The symbol here is burial and resurrection. We are buried with Christ in baptism. He has a baptism with which we can't be baptized, but my baptism signifies my identity with him in his humiliation in his suffering in his affliction and in his Resurrection.

R. C. Sproul's Further Comments on Baptism and Salvation

Virtually all the churches historically that practice dipping and sprinkling took the position that the preferential mode of baptism is through immersion but that it is not required for it to be authentic. Even Calvin would say it is better to immerse than to sprinkle if you have the opportunity. The point is what it signifies: my baptism signifies my identity with the death and humiliation of Christ. The apostle Paul gives us these marvelous, marvelous, promises that we will participate in the glory that the Father has bestowed on Christ; we're going to go to heaven; we're going to be kings and priests; we're going to inherit the kingdom that the Father has prepared for his beloved, for his Son, God is going to include you in his exaltation of his Son. Those are the wonderful promises that the apostle makes to us, but every time he does it, he warns us that unless we are prepared and willing to participate in the humiliation of Christ and in the afflictions of Christ, his inheritance will not belong to us.

I hear complaints from people in the church all the time, "How can God allow Christians to suffer the way they do?" I hear preachers stand up and say, "We're not supposed to suffer as Christians." And I want to get up on a soap box and say, "Get out of here you false prophet! You're speaking with a forked tongue. Not only are we allowed to suffer, it's our vocation as Christians. [Another rejection of the false so-called prosperity gospel. Recall our discussion in the Theology (Doctrine of God) section on the theodicy question.] Our Savior was a suffering Savior; a man of sorrows acquainted with grief who endured manifold affliction. How many times…does the New Testament tell you that your baptism identifies you with that; you participate with that if need be for a season. Peter tells us, "Think it not strange when afflictions come into your life."

R. C. Sproul's Further Comments on Baptism and Salvation

The thing that is strange is when we are enjoying relative freedom from afflictions in this world. The time where afflictions are over, and the time of exaltation, is when we pass the veil. Don't weep for me at my funeral. Jesus said, "Don't weep for me but for yourselves and for your children." Right now I'm identified with affliction.

Here's the hard part. If I have to suffer in this world for righteousness; if somebody slanders me because of my stance for the Gospel, or somebody hurts me because I'm a Christian, that's one kind of pain; that's one kind of suffering. To wake up at night with a bleeding ulcer, is a different kind of suffering, because when you're suffering in the direct visible warfare with the pagan forces that are against you, it's easier to bear it when you know you're bearing it for the Gospel's sake. When you wake up with excruciating pain and they rush you to the emergency room of the hospital, how in the world does that relate to the Kingdom of God? What's the difference? Whether I'm assaulted by a human being's animosity to the things of God or if I'm afflicted by the forces of sin and darkness through bodily disease (don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that God has nothing to do with suffering) it may be the Lord himself who sends this affliction of suffering into my life [EDS: or allows it to occur], but that affliction, that disease, is part of the fallen world; it's part of the kingdom of this world, and to bear that affliction is the same testimony to the redemption that is ours in Christ as to bear the affliction of the persecutions of the emperor Nero. Do you see what I'm saying? Our spiritual response to disease should be no different than our spiritual response to persecution.

…in the history of redemption Christ, who performs the perfect sacrifice once and for all, nevertheless calls his church to bear witness to his suffering until he returns, and there is still a measure of suffering that in the history of redemption must take place….

R. C. Sproul's Further Comments on Baptism and Salvation

…God uses nonverbal things to reinforce and emphasize the verbal promises he makes. How easy it is to go through the outward sign and miss the significance either due to lack of understanding or a lack in one's heart. ***We not only have to understand what the sign means but to then embrace its significance with our heart if we are to please God.*** (Baptism, Part 1, Tape 6) [*Emphasis mine* (*EDS*)]

[EDS observation: Consider the implications of this important theological reality for our own maturing as Christ's disciples and for our parenting and teaching in other contexts. Recall here the insights from the finest of human learning research on the three domains of mental processing and acting on input from outside ourselves: cognition, emotion, and action, where all three are interconnected and affect development and decision-making. For further information on this subject, see the Christian Education page of my Website at www.fromacorntooak12.com.]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. [2]Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. [3]Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. [4]There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—[5]one Lord, one faith, one baptism; [6]one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:1-6)
- "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6:11)
- "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

7] What do we say to people who were baptized as infants, who want to be rebaptized as adults?

a] Ephesians 4:5 indicates there is now one baptism that unites all in Christ Jesus. (See also John 3:5-6; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 19:4-6) All have been baptized into Christ, not into one or more church leaders, e.g., Paul (1 Corinthians 1:13).

b] The Greek aorist (past) tense of key verbs in texts pertaining to baptism (e.g., 1 Corinthians 6:11 and Titus 3:5) incline me to think that another application of "one baptism" in Ephesians 4:5 can mean it is not intended to be repeated. Once is sufficient.

c] The same aorist tense of related verbs in 1 Corinthians 6:11, made holy and justified, which don't need to be repeated, along with washed, suggest the same about baptism.

R. C. Sproul Explains Further Why No Rebaptism

Many Protestants…say, "Well if baptism doesn't automatically convey the grace, why do it? What's the big deal? The big deal is the promise of God, whose promise for all who believe all these marvelous blessings is signified by a sign that our Lord instituted and commanded to be taken to all nations. I know…that I am saved and when Satan comes to assault me I can look at the Devil and say, "I am baptized." That is, I can show him the sign of the promise of God. When I say that, what I am saying is this, "I trust in this promise, Satan, and it's God's promise, and if it's God's promise, though my faith is fallible, my faith is fragile, the promise of God cannot be broken." And so I hold on to the pledge of that promise that is mine in baptism. This is the point the church hasn't gotten.

People come to me all the time and say, "I was baptized as an infant, and all these things were symbolized to me, I was unaware of it, I didn't know anything about it, and now I've come to faith, and would you baptize me now when it means something to me?" And I say, "Not on your life!" "Why?" "I don't want to commit blasphemy!" "What?!" "Look, I know that nobody ever came up to me thinking it this way. But I say, here's what you're doing: when you were baptized the first time, you received an outward sign of the promise of God for all of these things. And now that you've come to faith, did God keep his promise? Are you now born again?" "Yes." "Are you now a member of the new covenant?" "Yes." "Do you now enjoy in the sight of God a personal identification with Jesus Christ?" "Yes." "Do you now participate in the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ?" "Yes." And we go through all these things. Then I say, "What part of that promise has God failed to keep?" "Well, no part." "OK, so then 25 years ago, when it meant nothing to you, you were given the sign of a promise of God. Now God in time and space fulfills every aspect of that promise to you, and you want me to say to God, 'Run by me that again?! I'm not sure you meant it?!'" "No." Do you hear what I'm saying? Nobody intends that when they ask to be rebaptized; they're looking for a spiritual experience. I understand that. And I explain that to them. But I want you to understand why I will not do it. I rather want to take this opportunity for you to understand how blessed you are that that sign that you had outwardly has now been realized inwardly and now you are living proof of the trustworthiness of the promises of God."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- Even the baptism of John had a causative effect. "(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. [30]But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)" (Luke 7:29-30)
- "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)
- "let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water." (Hebrews 10:22)
- "and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

8] Passages such as Titus 3:5 indicate that through baptism the Lord working through the Holy Spirit regenerates and renovates us. But the question next arises, how and when does this rebirth and renewal occur?

a] Here is where true believers differ as to the interpretation of the Bible's related texts. We can say what follows.

b] From our study of the texts in the left column, and the other preceding passages, baptism is much more than just a symbol, and the regeneration that it symbolizes does not occur automatically; the Holy Spirit is the main agent, and we saw in the Bible passages, he comes before, during, and after baptism. (Cf. Acts 10:44; 19:1-7; 8:14-17.)

c] The Holy Spirit makes baptism and all it signifies a very powerful means of grace.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the LORD.
[9]'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
[10]As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
[11]so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.'" (Isaiah 55:8-11)
- "he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5)
- "and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," (1 Peter 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-a- Baptism

8] Passages such as Titus 3:5 indicate that through baptism the Lord working through the Holy Spirit regenerates and renovates us. But the question next arises, how and when does this rebirth and renewal occur?

d] While there is much we can learn and know from God's Word about baptism, as we've seen in this study, much about this marvelous sacrament remains a mystery, which makes perfect sense, for the limited cannot comprehend the unlimited; neither can the finite comprehend the infinite. (Cf. Isaiah 55:8-9)

e] As with other "disputable matters" (cf. Romans 14), we need to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) with, and learn from, other true believers in and followers of Christ, continuing to discuss the Scriptures, pray together, and graciously accept one another and the practice of their long-standing tradition.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. [2]They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. [3]They all ate the same spiritual food [4]and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.” (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)
- “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [> εὐχαριστέω, *eucharisteō*], he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [> καινός, *kainos*] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- As baptism replaces circumcision in the new covenant, so also the Lord’s Supper replaces the Passover feast. The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist, the Lord’s Table, the Breaking of Bread, and Holy Communion. The following statement in the Eastern Orthodox tradition explains well the connection between Passover and the Lord’s Supper. “The Christian eucharist is a meal specifically connected with the Passover meal of the Old Testament. At the end of his life Christ, the Jewish Messiah, ate the Passover meal with his disciples. Originally a ritual supper in commemoration of the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Passover meal was transformed by Christ into an act done in remembrance of him: of His life, death and resurrection as the new and eternal Passover Lamb who frees men from the slavery of evil, ignorance and death and transfers them into the everlasting life of the Kingdom of God.” (https://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith/worship/the-sacraments/holy-eucharist)

Meal in First Century A. D. Italy



This picture shows a fresco archaeologists discovered on the wall of a 2,000-year-old house in Pompeii. It is believed to show a meal of focaccia covered with fruit, containing pomegranate, dates, and spices or a kind of pesto on a silver plate with a wine glass. When the first century church met in homes and had a meal, and then celebrated the Lord's Supper together, this is what the meal could have looked like. (*Reporter-Herald*, 06/28/2023, p. B6.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
- "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)], he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? [17]For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist, the Lord's Table, the Breaking of Bread, and Holy Communion.

1] The term Eucharist, means thanksgiving; it comes from the Greek verb εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*), to be thankful, give thanks, the word Jesus used in the institution of the Eucharist. (E.g., Matthew 26:26-27; Luke 22:17,19; 1 Corinthians 11:24)

2] The term Communion comes from Greek, κοινωνία (*koinonia*), fellowship, communion, sharing, of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 10:16.

3] Throughout church history, the celebration of the Lord's Supper has been central to congregational worship, likely done weekly, as it still is with many churches. Some, e.g., Roman Catholic, churches celebrate the Lord's Supper daily. Everyday somewhere in the world, Christians celebrate the Eucharist and all that it means and experience all its benefits.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
- "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)], he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [κοινωνία (*koinonia*)] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? [17]For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

3] Throughout church history, the celebration of the Lord's Supper has been central to congregational worship, likely done at least weekly, as it still is with many churches.

a] Calvin preferred weekly participation in the Lord's Supper, but suggested that less frequently doing so would lessen the likelihood of the experience being taken too much for granted.

b] Thus, churches following him, called Reformed churches (largely on the European continent and some in the U. S. and Canada), including Presbyterians (largely in Scotland, in the U. S. and elsewhere), did so four or five times a year. Some are now celebrating the Lord's Supper more frequently, at least monthly.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

4] The sacraments are signs and seals of Biblical realities. (Cf. Romans 4:11) What are they in the Lord's Supper?

a] What is <u>signified</u> by the Lord's Supper? Berkhof lists four that are largely seen in the passages to the left.

1} It symbolically represents the Lord's death.

2} It symbolizes the believer's participation in the crucified Christ.

3} It represents the effect of this spiritual eating and drinking as giving life, strength, and joy to the soul.

4} It is a symbol of the union of believers with one another as members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. (324-325)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Then God said to Abraham, 'As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. [10]This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. [11]You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.'" (Genesis 17:9–11)
- "And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them." (Romans 4:11)
- "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)], he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called Holy Communion.

4] The sacraments are signs and seals of our membership in the covenant. (Cf. Romans 4:11)

b] What is sealed by the Lord's Supper? Berkhof explains, "These two aspects of the sacrament [signs and seals] are closely related. The sacrament as a sign or with all that it signifies constitutes a seal. The seal is attached to the thing signified and is a pledge of its realization." (325) He lists four seals.

1} It seals to the participant the great love of Christ revealed in His self-surrender to a bitter and shameful death as a ransom payment for our sins.

2} It gives the believing partaker of the sacrament the assurance that all the promises of the covenant and all the riches of the gospel offer are his or hers.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

4] The sacraments are signs and seals of Biblical realities. (Cf. Romans 4:11) What are they in the Lord's Supper?

b] What is <u>sealed</u> by the Lord's Supper? Berkhof sees four seals.

3} It even assures the believing participant that the blessings of salvation are his or hers in actual possession.

4} It is a badge of profession on the part of those who partake of the sacrament in faith. They profess their faith in Christ as their Saviour, and their allegiance to Him as their King, and solemnly pledge a life of obedience to His divine commandments. (325)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

5] The celebration of the Lord's Supper engages all five of our senses: taste, touch, smell, sight, and hearing.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning: past, present, and future.

a] Holy Communion points to the past.

1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

a} The acme of Jesus' mission to be a propitiation, redeeming human beings and his Creation, was done in history and linked with the old covenant, here Passover, all pointing to the cross.

1> Too much of the church today has lost this crucial understanding of the seriousness of human sin in God's sight.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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a] Holy Communion points to the past.

1} Jesus: "in remembrance of me."

a} We must remember the acme of Jesus' mission to be a propitiation, removing God's righteous wrath against our sin. Remember also, to understand God's wrath against human sin, review his characteristics, especially his being holy, holy, holy.

2> Remembering with at least a wince what Jesus did for us to satisfy God's wrath due to us, causes great thanksgiving, Eucharist, to burst forth from the depths of our soul.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, [2]through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. [3]Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; [4]perseverance, character; and character, hope. [5]And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.
[6]You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. [7]Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. [8]But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
[9]Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! [10]For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! [11]Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:1-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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1} Jesus: "in remembrance of me."

a} Remember also, to understand God's wrath against human sin, review his characteristics, especially his being holy, holy, holy.

3> Ironically, the church today in wanting to ignore God's righteous wrath and focus only on love, by failing to keep God's wrath against sin in the picture, we don't see many benefits of his love for which we long so greatly, especially the huge meaning of the Father's and the Son's love for us in Jesus' passion!

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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1} Jesus: "in remembrance of me."

a} Remember also, to understand God's wrath against human sin, review his characteristics, especially his being holy, holy, holy.

4> Ironically, by failing to keep God's wrath against sin in the picture, we miss many benefits of his love, especially the huge meaning of the Father's and the Son's love for us in Jesus' passion! Consider the implications: e.g., how much God values you and relationship with you. **Discuss:** What others?

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

a} The acme of Jesus' mission to be a propitiation, redeeming human beings and his Creation, was done in history and linked with the old covenant, here Passover, all pointing to the cross.

b} Jesus ratified the covenant God made with Abraham and at the same time renewed (*kainos*) it in his body and blood.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
- When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. [15]And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'" (Luke 22:14-15)
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1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

c} We also remember that Jesus' passion had both an emotional as well as a physical dimension, and it began with emotional anguish at the beginning of the Supper (profound anguish that continued into the Garden of Gethsemane after the meal). His great concern, translated, "I have eagerly desired (to eat this Passover with you…") is literally "with desire I desired." Lenski explains that this is a figure of speech to emphasize intensity.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

d} Jesus' great emotion, translated, "I have eagerly desired (to eat this Passover with you…") is literally "with desire I desired." Lenski explains that this is a figure of speech to emphasize intensity: it's "regarded as a Hebraism (infinitive absolute) although the Greek, too, uses the cognate noun or participle for intensifying the verb (R. 531): 'with great desire.'" (1041)

e} "With you," is theologically very significant.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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a] Holy Communion points to the past.

1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

e} "With you," is theologically very significant.

1> He refers here to his human emotional need to be with his closest friends, especially during a traumatic time, another indication of his humanity. As we studied in the Christology section and others, Jesus had to be 100% human as well as 100% divine. Here is more poignant and gripping evidence of Jesus' being human as well as divine.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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a] Holy Communion points to the past.

1} Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

e} "With you," is theologically very significant.

2> "With you" refers to the unique NT fellowship, communion [*koinōnia*], a clear reference to the bond we have with the Lord and with his church, especially in celebrating together this sacrament, called also by this term.

3> In addition to its fostering our sense of oneness with the Lord and each other, consider the implications for pastoral care.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- **"**The LORD had said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.
  2 'I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.
  3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)
- "But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace." (Psalm 37:11)
- "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5)
- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28-29)
- "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands." (Revelation 7:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning: past, present, and future.

a] Holy Communion points to the past.

2} Jesus' renewed the old covenant that had its nationalistic emphasis with the new (*kainos*) covenant, consistent with God's expanding revelation through all the Bible that his objective always was to include all nations. (Genesis 12:3; Psalm 37:11 broadened by Matthew 5:5; Galatians 3:28-29; Revelation 7:9; notice also Deuteronomy 5:16 ["in the land the LORD your God is giving you" broadened by Ephesians 6:3 to ["on the earth"]). Cf. Isaiah 49:6.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. [15]And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. [16]For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.' [17]After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:14-20)
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- "Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'" (Revelation 19:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

b] Holy Communion points to the <u>future</u>.

1} Jesus' statement that he "will not eat [the Passover] again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God," refers to his doing so in the future, when the kingdom of God, which is here in part (Luke 17:21), comes in its fullest, when Christ brings all things to completion in the great Messianic "wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. 18For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ 19And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ 20In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
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6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

b] Holy Communion points to the future.

2} We see in God’s Word that when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper we are publicly witnessing in word and in deed to the wonderful Gospel message of Jesus’ death “until he comes,” thus also to his Second Coming. (1 Corinthians 11:26).

3} As Sproul puts it, “so every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we don’t just think about the past, but we remember that there’s a future for the people of God and that we are having a foretaste at the Lord’s Table of that ultimate fellowship that we’ll have with him in heaven.”

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, 'Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'" (Luke 22:17-20)
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- "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- "Then the angel said to me, 'Write: "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"' And he added, 'These are the true words of God.'" (Revelation 19:9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

b] Holy Communion points to the future.

4} Calvin Theological Seminary professor, Ronald Feenstra, describes how dialogue with Roman Catholics has taught him "to appreciate the sacramental meal as a foretaste of the future.

"The Christian journey of life has a goal: new life in Christ lived in community with all of God's people in the presence of the triune God. When he instituted the sacramental meal, Jesus suggested that it anticipates the coming fulfillment of the kingdom of God (Matt. 26.29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16,18).

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for? The Lord's Supper also Points to the Future

Continued from previous slide:

"The Catechism of the Catholic Church highlights this dimension in a quotation from Vatican II: 'In the earthly liturgy we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God' (CCC 1090). Moreover, the Eucharist unites us with 'the heavenly banquet, when all the elect will be seated at the table of the kingdom' (CCC 1344, 1326). In a key passage, the Catechism says, 'The whole community thus joins in the unending praise that the Church in heaven, the angels and all the saints, sing to the thrice-holy God' (CCC 1352). According to the Catechism, 'The Eucharist is celebrated in communion with the whole Church in heaven and on earth, the living and the dead' (CCC 1354). In this way, the Catechism notes that the Eucharist is not only 'the memorial of the Passover of the Lord Jesus' but also 'an anticipation of the heavenly glory' (CCC 1402).

"Viewing the sacramental meal as a foretaste in which the church on earth joins in praise with the church in heaven provides helpful insights into difficult questions about how Christ is present at the meal. The traditional opening of the liturgy for the Christian meal gives a hint. The worship leader says, 'Lift up your hearts,' to which the people respond, 'We lift them up to the Lord.' Dialogue with Roman Catholics helped me see the invitation to lift our hearts as an indication that in this meal we are spiritually lifted up to be with Christ. The church that meets on the corner of First and Elm Streets is spiritually transported to be with the ascended Lord. When we enter his presence, we join believers who have already died and are already present with him. There, surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Heb.12:1), we commune with one another and with the Lord. In this event, then, the meal is a foretaste of the final banquet of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9)." (*Forum*, Fall 2017, pp. 8-9.)

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for? The Lord's Supper also Points to the Future

Continued from previous slide:

As seen above (*op cit.* Christology), this concept of the church militant communing with the church triumphant is also graphically portrayed in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, where the sanctuary of the church on earth in which the believers celebrate the sacrament is under a dome, referring to heaven. At the center of the dome, looking down on and watching over the faithful yet here on earth, is an icon of the Lord Jesus Christ, called Pantokrator (> Greek meaning Ruler of All; Psalm 33:13-15, Revelation 1:8), with his fingers positioned in a symbol indicating he is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Feenstra continues, "The sacramental meal is often called 'Communion,' emphasizing both the communion we share with one another in the meal and the communion we have with the ascended Lord. The church present can also sense communing with those loved ones, family and friends in Christ, who are already with the Lord, as Samuel J. Stone and Samuel S. Wesley have stirringly portrayed in their magnificent 19th century hymn, "The Church's One Foundation," Jesus Christ her Lord, especially in the fourth verse where we sing with moistened eyes, "Yet she on earth hath union with God the Three in One, and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won…."

Both dimensions of communion anticipate the final goal of life, when we are united fully with the triune God and with one another in the new heaven and new earth. So in a world in which people are often alienated from one another and alone, the sacramental meal provides fellowship for today and a taste of the life to come." (*Forum*, Fall 2017, pp. 8-9.)

Here we see what great blessings occur from fellowship with the church catholic (universal). While we still differ on some doctrines, we can continue to love, learn from, mature in Christ with, and encourage one another as we read and talk with other Christians from different historic church traditions through the ages.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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- "The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)], he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
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Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

c] Holy Communion points to the present. Feenstra says, it's "spiritual food for the spiritual journey…like manna in the wilderness, God provides spiritual sustenance in the form of a sacramental meal—a meal that serves as a means of grace to sustain us along the spiritual journey from slavery to sin to new life in Christ." (*Forum*, Fall 2017, p. 8)

There is not much debate in the church about the meaning of the Lord's Supper for the past and the future, but considerable debate continues about the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the present, both pertaining to the meaning of certain Bible texts and to the manner of celebrating Communion.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

c] Holy Communion points to the present. Debate exists about the meaning and the manner of celebrating Communion.

1} The meaning of how Christ is present in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is explained by four main theological traditions with different interpretations.

a} The first two traditions, the Roman Catholic (and Eastern Orthodox) and the Lutheran, interpret Jesus’ use of “is” literally, when he said, “This is my body” and “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” The literal view was taken by most Christians until the Reformation and remains the view of most today.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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1} The meaning of how Christ is present in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper is explained by four main theological traditions with different interpretations.

b} The third and fourth traditions, the Zwinglian and the Reformed, interpret Jesus’ use of “is” figuratively. They say Jesus here uses “is” as a metaphor, which is not unusual, since he as a master teacher often used figurative language.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

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1} The meaning of what is done in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper centers on the question of if and how Jesus is really present. The crux of the matter is what did Jesus mean by one word, “is,” when he said, “This is my body” and “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” Four main interpretations answer if and how Jesus is really present. R. C. Sproul explains them well.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

1. Transubstantiation, the classic Roman Catholic View and Eastern Orthodox View

In the miracle of the mass, during the prayer of consecration, a supernatural miracle takes place in which the common ordinary elements of bread and wine are supernaturally changed into the actual body and blood of Christ, so that at communion, the person who is communing is actually participating in the body of Christ, physically. Now…you have to understand the origin of this formula.

In ancient Greece, the one who was known as the philosopher, namely Aristotle, was very much concerned with questions of reality. What is really real? What is the nature of reality? And he was concerned with the nature of substance. And he made the distinctions between form and substance, which we're not going to be concerned with this morning. But he said that every material object that exists has two aspects to it: its substance (or its being, i.e., what it really is) and then what he called the accidents, which refer to the outward qualities, the perceivable qualities of a thing. This is a piece of chalk; I identify this chalk because somehow it participates in chalkness, but I don't see the essence of chalkness in this; that's kind of a metaphysical thing. All I can see are its cylindrical shape, its whiteness, its texture (I can feel it and taste it if I put it in my mouth) and so on, hear it if I drop it on the chair; those are the outward perceptions that we have of the chalk. Now for Aristotle every substance had its own peculiar accidents. That's why pieces of chalk can be identified, because all pieces of chalk have certain outward characteristics. [For Aristotle, the accidents of an object always flow from its essence. You don't have the essence of a kangaroo with the accidents of chalk. Kangaroos look like kangaroos, because they are kangaroos.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

Rome sees in this miracle a change that really involves a two-fold miracle. More technically the definition of transubstantiation is this: in the miracle of the mass [which occurs, Catholics believe, when the bell rings] the substance of the bread and the wine change to the substance of the body and blood of Christ, though the accidents of bread and wine remain. So what you had before the miracle takes place is the substance of bread, the substance of wine, the accidents of bread and the accidents of wine. It looks like bread, it tastes like bread, it sounds like bread (if you drop it), it feels like bread, it smells like bread, because it is bread. It doesn't look like somebody's body, doesn't feel like somebody's body, and so on, because it isn't anybody's body, before the miracle.

Now the miracle takes place, and the substance is altered. So now the substance of bread and wine are gone away. And in their place the substance of Jesus' physical body and Jesus' physical blood has replaced that substance. All that's left of the original bread and wine are the accidents. (The perceivable qualities, the accidents, which are not essential to an object but are accidental to their being. Now what happens is you once had bread and wine; the bread and wine now change to the body of Christ, but the accidents are still bread and wine. So the problem is you have the accidents of bread and wine without the substance of bread and wine; and you have the substance of the body and blood of Christ without the accidents of the body of Christ.

So when I say the miracle is two-fold, I mean it takes a miracle to have the substance of one thing with something else's accidents and it takes another miracle to have the accidents of something and the substance of something else. This is a very complicated way to define the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. You can't see him, can't taste him and feel him and touch him in terms of his accidents, but Rome is saying you really are chewing the body of Christ. Now Luther objected to this, because he felt that there were unnecessary, frivolous miracles going on here.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

2. Consubstantiation, the Lutheran View

Now, the Lutheran view differs from [the Roman Catholic view]. The Lutheran view has historically been called consubstantiation, although…characteristically Lutherans don't particularly like this designation, but that's what everybody else calls it. They don't, and you have to be sensitive to that.

The idea that Luther was getting at is that while Luther on the one hand was denying this unnecessary miracle, on the other hand he absolutely insisted on the substantial presence of Christ at the Lord's Supper. *Hoc est corpus meum*, this is my body. Luther was very much concerned that people would trivialize the sacrament by reducing Jesus statements to mere symbolism, empty symbols, naked symbols and wanted to retain a significant doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

So he said that Christ's substantive presence is in, under, and through the elements. [EDS Note: *The Large Catechism*, by Martin Luther just says "in and under." "*It* (the Sacrament of the Altar) *is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by the Word of Christ to eat and to drink*." (The Sacrament of the Altar, I. The Nature of the Sacrament of the Altar) In the same section, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* just says "under."]

That is the substance of bread and wine are not obliterated by the visitation of Christ to the Lord's Table. The bread stays bread, and the wine stays wine, but underneath this, hidden from our view, there is a real union of the body and blood of Christ with these elements. They remain imperceptible to us, but they're there; Christ is truly there, substantially, touching his human nature as well as his divine nature, so that we are truly feeding upon the body and blood of Christ in his glorified humanity at the Lord's Table.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

3. The Zwinglian View

This is probably the widest view held among evangelical Christians today. There is no real substantive presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Rather, this whole event is a sacramental drama where the elements remain mere signs and symbols, although it is perhaps a misrepresentation of Zwingli to say that they are "mere" signs and symbols; that suggests that they are not important signs and symbols. This representation of Christ is found in the bread and in the wine, but there is no substantial presence of Christ's body and blood at the Lord's Table.

[Berkhof adds: "The impression remains that for him (Zwingli) the Lord's Supper is mainly a mere sign or symbol, a memorial of the death of Christ, and an act of profession on the part of the believer. There is an evident tendency to exclude the mystical element from the sacrament altogether." (327)]

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

4. The Reformed View, carefully articulated by Calvin

Calvin argued with Luther against the substantial presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. When he debated with the Zwinglians, Calvin insisted upon using the word substance and substantial with respect to the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. [Now lest you think that Calvin was contradicting himself, you need to remember that the word substance can be used in two ways.] It can and is often used as a synonym for physical or corporeal. Now when Calvin talked to Luther and the Lutherans he denied the substantial presence of Christ in so far as Calvin was denying the physical presence of Jesus, the body of Jesus and the blood of Jesus. [See below for why.]

When Calvin argued with Zwingli and that crowd, he argued for the substantive presence of Christ, but now he's using the term substance, not to mean physical but to mean real. So what Calvin was saying is do we believe in the real presence of Christ in the sacrament? And Calvin would say "Yes!" Is Christ really there at the table? Yes! Do we really meet with him in the sacrament? Yes! Do we really fellowship with him in his real presence? Yes!

But Calvin is saying two things: (1) The presence of Christ is in no way tied to the elements themselves, but more significantly he's saying (2) The physical presence of Christ is not immediately localized at the Lord's Table. The issue between Luther and Calvin was basically an issue in Christology, how we understand the two natures of Christ, which is perhaps the greatest mystery we have to deal with in theology, how the human nature of Jesus is perfectly united with the divine nature and yet there's only one Person. You have one Person and two natures.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

The question was this: do you believe that Christ can be at more than one place at the same time? Yes. All Christians believe that. But then you go to the next question and you get a little bit more technical and you ask, by what mode is he present? Is he able to be everywhere at one time in his human nature? Or to put it another way, does the human nature of Jesus have the power or the capacity for omnipresence, or what is called ubiquity? You read the New Testament and you see Jesus showing up all over the place in some very mysterious ways where he disappears and pops up somewhere over there, but we don't have any account of Jesus in the New Testament in his resurrected body appearing two different places at the same time, physically.

You see, Calvin's basic axiom for which he is famous…is the finite cannot contain the infinite. What he means by that is that though the human nature is always and everywhere perfectly united with the divine nature, it is only the divine nature that can actually be everywhere at the same time. The human nature still maintains the limits of humanness.

At the Council of Chalcedon [A. D. 451] the fathers at Chalcedon made this statement: that Christ was…truly man, truly God, because there are heresies that deny the deity of Christ, and there are also heresies that deny the humanity of Christ. The tendency in this great mystery of humanness and divineness is for us when we think about the nature of Christ to swallow one pole up by the other pole and end up with a deified human nature or a humanized divine nature.

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But we don't know how the two natures really are united, only that they are united perfectly, and Chalcedon says that they are united but that that union is without mixture, confusion, separation, or division, each nature retaining its own attributes. That is when the divine nature unites with the human nature the divine nature doesn't stop being divine, it doesn't give away its divine attributes. Conversely, when the human nature is united with the divine, the human nature doesn't stop being human. They are joined but not confused. So that Jesus, e.g., when he weeps, are those divine tears or human tears? They are the tears of a divinely human person. But we ask the question another way, do the tears, the water drops, manifest to us his divine nature or his human nature? They are part of the human nature, because the divine nature doesn't have tear ducts, but the human nature does. When Jesus is hungry does that mean that God gets hungry? No. That's a manifestation of the human nature…but his human hunger is still perfectly united with his divine nature….

Calvin says to Luther, "You can't have the body and blood of Jesus all over the place unless the body of Jesus, unless the human nature, all of a sudden takes on divine power, ubiquity, or omnipresence." Luther says, "That's right." And Luther would say, that the body and blood of Jesus properly belong to his human nature, and in and of themselves they couldn't possibly be in Orlando and St. Petersburg and Miami and Jacksonville at the same time. But since the divine power can do that, the divine nature can communicate some of his powers or attributes to the human nature in order for the human nature to be present in all these places at the same time. This created a controversy called the *communicatio idiomata* controversy, the communication of attributes.

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And Calvin would say, "No, if what you mean by the communication of attributes is that the divine nature is communicating attributes of the divine nature to the human nature, brother Martin, you are violating Chalcedon, because now you're confusing and mixing the two natures, and the two natures are not retaining their own attributes." Luther says, "Wait a minute. You are saying that they can't be so mixed together; you're separating them and dividing them." Luther calls Calvin a Nestorian (Nestorius was condemned at Chalcedon); and Calvin accuses Luther of the monophysite [one nature] distortion…. But the point I want us to get here is not the intermural debate between Calvinists and Lutherans. The Reformed view here gets somewhat mystical. The Heidelberg Catechism (or the Belgic Confession) makes this statement: touching his humanity, Jesus is no longer present with us; touching his divine nature, he is never absent from us. Jesus, before he left this planet said: "Yet a little while, and I'm leaving; I'm going away, and you'll see me no more. Yet, nevertheless, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." So Jesus announces a real departure, but a real abiding. And so, historic Reformed theology says, he has departed in his human nature; his human nature is at the right hand of God in heaven, and we won't see that human nature again until he returns or until we go there. But touching his divine nature, Christ is still with us and still present.

We often have the tendency to think that here's heaven up here, and earth is down here; and the human nature of Jesus is there, and the divine nature of Jesus is here. Now if we looked at it this way, what's wrong with that picture? That does separate the two natures, doesn't it?! That would mean that the union of the incarnation has been fractured; that's certainly not what Calvin meant. Calvin is saying the body and blood is up here, because that's part of his human nature, and the human nature is localized; it's only in one spot, the finite cannot contain the infinite. But the human nature up here is perfectly united with the divine nature, whose presence is not limited to this locale, so that the presence of Jesus the Christ spans all of this through the divine nature. [Cf. John 17:26]

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Of course Calvin would look at it this way: when we celebrate the Lord's Supper here on earth, we are communing with the divine nature. Calvin says that in this act of mystical communion with the divine presence of Christ, the human nature of Christ is made present to us. (To explain it in a kind of crass way, it's kind of like the knee bone is connected to the thigh bone.) When I meet at the Lord's Table the divine nature, who is still in perfect union with the human nature, I am communing with the whole Christ. Not because his body and blood are brought down to earth, or my body and blood are carried up to heaven, but in this intimate meeting with the risen Christ at his table, I am communing, not just with the divine nature, but I am communing with the Person of Christ, who is perfectly united. So that even though I am removed geographically from the human nature of Jesus, spiritually and really, Calvin is saying <u>really,</u> not just figuratively, but <u>really</u>, I am in communion with the human nature of Christ. The thing I like about this is that it does avoid all the problems with Chalcedon, and it does keep the human nature human, and the divine nature divine, but it also strongly emphasizes that we really are communing with the real presence of Jesus Christ at the Lord's Supper.

Now you say, "What's the difference between that and the communion and fellowship we enjoy with Jesus in this room in this meeting? Or in a prayer meeting? Couldn't you say that all that's true in all those things?" And I'm saying, "Yes, in one sense it is. Christ's presence is Christ's presence." "So what's the difference?" "Well, the difference is what's happening in this meeting. We can have a meeting in this room, and sometimes we meet in this room for classes; sometimes we meet in here for another agenda; sometimes we meet in here for fellowship; sometimes we have church dinners in this room.

[EDS NOTE: Ask people, What does it mean that God is holy, holy, holy, i.e., most holy? What is the significance that this room (the sanctuary) has been dedicated to God who is most holy? Is there any sense in which there is a dividing line between the sacred and the common? How does the activity in this room affect one's understanding of and relationship to God who is most holy? Relate these questions to the subjects of both the sacraments (the Lord's Supper and baptism) and to church architecture.]

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

When I lived in Pennsylvania, I belonged to Latrobe Country Club, Arnold Palmer's club. I met Arnold Palmer a gillion times; I know Arnold Palmer and his family. There are many times I'd be on the golf course the same time Arnold Palmer was on the golf course; or we'd be in the dining room at the club, and he'd be there…One time down here at Bay Hill we happened to be here when he was having his birthday, and Winnie invited us over there, and I've had those kind of meetings with Arnold Palmer. But I have never been invited to Arnold Palmer's house for dinner. There is something extraordinary in our own human relationships, just…sharing a meal together is significant. But when people really get close to each other, they begin to visit back and forth in each others' homes for that special intimate fellowship of a meal.

If we can understand that at a human level, what Jesus is saying here is, "You are coming to my house for dinner. (Relate to Zacchaeus, "I'm coming to your house.") I'm coming to your table. I'm going to give you that kind of concentration of intimacy and assurance that goes with it that we have a special relationship that the unbeliever does not participate in, because the Lord's Supper is for believers only. They can come, and they can listen to the sermon; they can come to the church, and my presence is pervasive in the sanctuary. But they have no access to my table. That is where I sit down with my bride. This is an intimate thing, and so I'm there for a different reason, to give you special attention, and I'm also there to dispense a particular grace to you. I want to comfort you; I want to forgive you; I want to strengthen you, because you need my personal attention."

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

Practically, in very simple terms, I'm a professional theologian, but when I get on my knees at the Lord's Table, I'm the same as anybody else at that level. I mean I have a very simple view of it. I come to the Table to see Jesus. I come there, because I need Jesus to put his hands on my head and forgive my sins. I need Jesus to give me a fresh assurance of my relationship with him. When I go to the communion rail, and the minister in Jesus' name, and I'm a supplicant like a child, and the minister takes the piece of bread and puts it in my hand and says, "The body of Christ broken for you," I can hardly tell you who's giving me the bread; I can hardly tell you who's ministering in my name, because I'm hearing Jesus say to me, "I died for you, R.C.; my body was broken for you R.C.; my blood was poured out for you R.C., and I know you need to be covered again. You need a sensation and reaffirmation of this, and I'm stooping down in my grace to strengthen your soul this morning," and it's just incredible to me. I'm not just sitting there thinking about the past, thinking about the future, interested in interesting signs or tokens or symbols.

One thing the Reformed view, the Lutheran view, and the Roman Catholic view all have in common (there's this tremendous debate about the mode of the Presence on a Christological basis), what all those views are insisting upon, is that he is really there. And we are really in his presence and are really being strengthened by this bond and communion of our souls with the presence of Christ.

As indicated in the beginning of this course, worship is something that God ordained in creation and how we worship God is of supreme importance to our faith. As sinful people, our sinfulness is perhaps manifested nowhere else as clearly as in our proclivity for departing from worship of the living God. The fundamental sin of man is idolatry. God wants worship that comes from the heart, that is true according to his Word, and according to the integrity that we are called to use as we bring it. And we're not to mix in it elements of paganism, elements of idolatry, in any way whatsoever. It's interesting to me that in the Reformation, Calvin came to the Reformed faith in the first instance not from theology but through worship. His overarching concern was not the doctrine; that was second. The most important thing he was concerned about was the propriety of worship.

R. C. Sproul's Overview of the Four Main Explanations as to the Real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper

And we're living in an age where there's a real crisis in worship. There's a lot of empty liturgies and empty ritualism that goes on according to human traditions here, and to get away from that, other churches are trying everything they can to make worship more meaningful, to make it more exciting, to get people drawn into it, and some people have the idea that anything goes. And both of those are exceedingly dangerous to the people of God, because the focal point in worship has to be God and how God is to be honored; how God is to be glorified, not how I am to get excited or turned on. But God has to be at the center of everything we do. What is worship if not that? If not the exaltation of God? But we're so concerned about getting people off the street and involved in our programs and into the church on Sunday morning and rescue them from secularism and everything else, that we'll turn the worship service into anything goes type of thing, and we justify it on the basis for the sake of these people.

Well, that's what happened to Aaron when the people were getting ticked off with the God who rescued them from Exodus. Hey! Let's have a party! Let's make an idol; let's make this golden calf, despite that God had said, "No golden calves. No idols." Now the people wanted it! Boy is that a tough line. The thing that scares me is that we tend to think that idolatry ended in the first century. We're the same kind of people that were at the bottom of Mt. Sinai. We want our golden calves; it wasn't just those wicked people in Israel. It's we!

The Reformed View according to The Belgic Confession, Showing Closeness to Lutheran View

We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper to nourish and support those whom He has already regenerated and incorporated into His family, which is His Church.

Now those who are regenerated have in them a twofold life, the one corporal and temporal, which they have from the first birth and is common to all men; the other, spiritual and heavenly, which is given them in their second birth, which is effected by the Word of the gospel, in the communion of the body of Christ; and this life is not common, but is peculiar to God's elect. In like manner God has given us, for the support of the bodily and earthly life, earthly and common bread, which is subservient thereto and is common to all men, even as life itself. But for the support of the spiritual and heavenly life which believers have He has sent a living bread, which descended from heaven, namely, Jesus Christ, who nourishes and strengthens the spiritual life of believers when they eat Him, that is to say, when they appropriate and receive Him by faith in the spirit.

The Reformed View according to The Belgic Confession, Showing Closeness to Lutheran View

In order that He might represent unto us this spiritual and heavenly bread, Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as a sacrament of His body, and wine as a sacrament of His blood, to testify by them unto us that, as certainly as we receive and hold this sacrament in our hands and eat and drink the same with our mouths, by which our life is afterwards nourished, we also do as certainly receive by faith (which is the hand and mouth of our soul) the true body and blood of Christ our only Savior in our souls, for the support of our spiritual life.

Now, as it is certain and beyond all doubt that Jesus Christ has not enjoined to us the use of His sacraments in vain, so He works in us all that He represents to us by these holy signs, though the manner surpasses our understanding and cannot be comprehended by us, as the operations of the Holy Spirit are hidden and incomprehensible. In the meantime we err not when we say that what is eaten and drunk by us is the proper and natural body and the proper blood of Christ. But the manner of our partaking of the same is not by the mouth, but by the spirit through faith. Thus, then, though Christ always sits at the right hand of His Father in the heavens, yet does He not therefore cease to make us partakers of Himself by faith. This feast is a spiritual table, at which Christ communicates Himself with all His benefits to us, and gives us there to enjoy both Himself and the merits of His sufferings and death: nourishing, strengthening, and comforting our poor comfortless souls by the eating of His flesh, quickening and refreshing them by the drinking of His blood. (The Belgic Confession, A. D. 1561, Revised 1619.)

<u>Conclusion</u>

I hope and pray that the preceding explanation of this profound sacrament helps you understand and sense the real presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in holy communion. If you still have questions, keep thinking, praying, reading God's Word, and talking with your pastor and mature fellow Christians. Between now and the time when you can feel comfortable with your understanding of what the Lord meant when he said, "Take and eat, this is my body…this is my blood" and after both, "do this in remembrance of me," i.e., whether he was using "is" literally or figuratively, you can say, "I believe whatever the Lord Jesus meant when he used the word "is."

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [κοινωνία (*koinōnia*)] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? [17]For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)
- "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28]A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29]For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. [31]But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32]When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.
[33]So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. [34]If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment." (1 Corinthians 11:27-34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

c] Holy Communion points to the present. Considerable debate continues about the <u>meaning</u> of the Lord's Supper in the present, both pertaining to the meaning of certain Bible texts and to the <u>manner</u> of celebrating Communion.

2} From the beginning in the early church, some in the church have celebrated in an unworthy <u>manner</u>. Thus, Paul admonished them and stipulated procedures the church should follow in its celebration of the sacrament.

a} Each "ought to examine himself." (1 Corinthians 11:28)

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c] Holy Communion points to the present. Debate continues about the manner of celebrating Communion.

2} Paul stipulated procedures the church should follow in its celebration of the sacrament.

a} Each “ought to examine himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:28) This requirement is addressed to and for adults.

1> Some churches admit children to the Lord’s Table. Some, the Eastern Orthodox, admit baptized infants. The Western church did also until the Middle Ages.

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c] Holy Communion points to the present.

2} Paul stipulated procedures the church should follow in its celebration of the sacrament.

a} Each “ought to examine himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:28) This requirement is addressed to and for adults.

2> Paul does not mean that children should not be admitted to the Lord’s Table. But it does mean that when they reach the age of conscience, they, too, must learn to examine themselves before partaking of the elements.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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2} Paul stipulated procedures the church should follow in its celebration of the sacrament.

a} Each “ought to examine himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:28) This requirement is addressed to and for adults.

b} Wait for each other before beginning to eat. (21,33)

c} Care for those who have nothing. (22)

d} We should judge ourselves, individually and collectively, exercise church discipline, to avoid being condemned with the world. (31-34)

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

The church has historically based its answer to this question on God's Word and the Biblical theology of the relationship of the sacraments. In the early church, evidence exists at least from the middle of the third century A.D., that all who were baptized were admitted to the Lord's Table.

The strongest, but not the only, basis for the historic understanding of infant baptism is in the concept of God's covenant with Israel that he executed with Abraham in Genesis 17:7-14. Understanding this major theme throughout God's Word, the covenant, is a key to unlocking the meaning of many subjects in God's revelation.

Since the covenant with Abraham is everlasting; since the new (kainos) covenant has continuity with the old covenant; since baptism replaces circumcision required for infants as the sign and seal of membership in the covenant; since children in the Old Testament participated in the Passover (Exodus 12:3-4; 21-26) and other sacred festivals (Deuteronomy 12:6-7); since the Lord's Supper is the new (kainos) covenant, New Testament, counterpart to Passover; and since children are included in the covenant via their baptism, on what Biblical and theological basis can they be excluded now?

If we appeal to the covenant as our Biblical and theological basis for infants receiving baptism, how can we not allow children to partake in the New Testament counterpart to these Old Testament feasts? Are we being Biblically and theologically inconsistent if we do not also allow these young members of the covenant to partake of the Lord's Supper? Consider the apostle Paul's linkage of the two sacraments:

"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

Employing the first axiom of the historic Protestant principles of interpretation (hermeneutics), examination of the context, to 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, we see that the command to examine oneself pertains primarily to the practice of the time of a considerable number of adult church members to become divisive and to demean and exclude other members of the body of Christ and thereby profane the sacrament. Paul is telling such members to examine themselves before partaking of the sacrament so they don't bring condemnation on themselves. To the extent we do so today, we also need to conduct such self-examination.

To properly interpret this passage (indeed all passages of God's Word) we must consider the context. I urge that in so doing we need to not only reflect on the verses immediately preceding and following the one(s) at issue, but also the whole chapter, indeed the whole book, as well as other related texts in the Bible. The context of 1 Corinthians 11:17-29 includes 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.

While the primary issue of the context of the passage is this divisiveness, verses 11:27-32 expand the principle to anyone who "eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner" being "guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Thus, Paul urges a self-examination before partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

Lenski properly interprets the text as follows: "Paul does not state directly into what the communicant is to probe when he is testing himself. The context, however, indicates what is in Paul's mind. It will first be in regard to faith in Christ's words which are used in the very institution of the Sacrament, v. 23-25. Secondly, it will be in regard to the removal of anything from the heart that would clash with the reception of Christ's body and blood. This is done by true contrition and repentance." (*Lenski New Testament Commentary - The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, p. 480. WORDsearch 12)

Recall that repentance (μετάνοια [*metanoia*]), means much more than feeling sorry for a sin but a complete turning away from and stopping it. The Greek verb, δοκιμαζέτω (*dokimazetō*), test or examine, is an imperative, a command, in the present tense and active voice, meaning an ongoing self-examination. A desire and practice of committing habitual sins is evidence of unrepentance whereby the sinner brings judgment on him or herself.

However, little children who have not engaged in such behavior would not have to do such reflective self-examination. Yet, they will when they become older if they engage in such actions against the body of Christ (the church), and as they reflect on their need to repent of other sins they've committed. (Romans 3:23) It is to assist us in so doing that the logic of the liturgy in historic corporate Christian worship prescribes that the prayer of confession precedes the celebration of the Lord's Supper. In fact, it is important for us to quickly confess our sins as soon as possible upon entering the sanctuary and coming into the presence of God who, though being love to the core of his being and most merciful, is not only holy but holy, holy, holy. (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8). Such confession should be immediately followed by the assurance of pardon in the form of a passage from God's Word.

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

As my former seminary faculty colleague, Lyle Bierma, Calvin Theological Seminary Professor of Systematic Theology, writes with a firm grasp of sound Reformation doctrine, "a sacrament is first and foremost something God does, not something we do. Christ himself instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper, and in both sacraments it is God who acts and speaks. They are, as we say, means of grace—God's grace. There God reminds and assures the covenant community of his promises. But this gracious character of the sacraments is compromised when we exclude covenant children from the Lord's table. In the baptism of an infant, the covenant community is given a graphic demonstration of the promise of salvation by grace alone as the water of promise is applied to a tiny child—helpless, uncomprehending, and wholly incapable of any merit-earning work. Why, then, must these same children 'earn' their way to the table of promise? Why must they first pass a test of understanding and worthiness? That seems to run counter to the very message of grace that the sacraments proclaim. If the sacraments are for members of this community who are weak and in need of God's grace, everyone—whether near the end of their Christian life or in the earliest stages—should feed around the table."

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

David Rylaarsdam, Calvin Theological Seminary Professor of Historical Theology, observes that the church has historically understood the sacraments, though of course distinct, to be inextricably linked, which is seen in the ancient liturgies of the church in the centuries following Christ's earthly ministry. He writes as follows:

"Ancient liturgies show that both baptism and communion were part of the ceremonies that marked a person's entrance into the church. These ceremonies included baptism, a laying on of hands (later referred to as confirmation), and immediate participation in communion. From the day of one's baptism, the Lord's Supper was part of a person's entrance into the church that was repeated throughout his or her life.

Clear references to very young children participating in communion go back as far as the earliest arguments for infant baptism. The church father Cyprian (d. 258 A.D.) cited John 3:5 ("Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit…") and John 6:53 ("Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man…."), arguing that baptism and the Lord's Supper were necessary for membership in the Christian community. For both sacraments, age was not important. The two sacraments were inseparable. To abandon the Lord's Supper would be to abandon the community of Christ and therefore Christ himself.

Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa (A.D. 354-430), also administered communion to infants immediately after their baptism. Infants participated by some accommodating means such as receiving in their mouths the priest's little finger dipped in the wine. In his Easter sermons to the newly baptized, Augustine would cite 1 Corinthians 12:27 ("You are the body of Christ and individually members of it") and 10:17 ("We who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread"). Then he would point to the bread of the Lord's Supper and tell the newly baptized that they who were now part of the body of Christ would receive the body of Christ in communion; Christ's church body and sacramental body were united in the Supper. For Augustine, infants and the mentally impaired were the ideal subjects for the sacraments, for they imaged the helplessness of the human condition.

Rylaarsdam states that a number of references in Augustine and other trustworthy authors indicate that the participation in the Lord's Supper was the practice of the church everywhere for the first thousand years. It has always been done in the Eastern church.

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

We should also keep in mind that the admonition in 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, about examining oneself and "discerning the body" (i.e., the body of Christ, the church, and any sins against the body one has committed, specifically divisiveness) before eating the bread and drinking of the cup, was not used in the early church or the Western church in the Middle Ages to bar little children from the Lord's Table, as it is not in the Eastern church to this day. Is it not obvious the passage does not apply to them?

How, then, should we understand the key text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34?

As another trustworthy and careful former colleague of mine, Calvin Theological Seminary New Testament Professor Jeffrey Weima, explains, "if we examine the historical context of the Corinthians passage—namely, the specific problem that was taking place in the Corinthian church—we will have a different understanding of the key phrase 'recognizing the body.' In both the preceding chapter (10:17) and in the next chapter, Paul refers to the church, and specifically as the body of Christ in 12:27."

Weima continues: "The church in Corinth, like other congregations well into the second century, celebrated the Lord's Supper as part of a dinner or full meal. The whole church would first break bread at the beginning of the meal to remember Christ's death, then they would eat their main course, and finally at the end of the meal they would drink wine also to remember Christ's death (note 1 Cor. 11:25, 'In the same way, *after supper*, he took the cup, saying…'). The problem was the main course that took place between these two acts of remembrance: the Corinthians were celebrating the Supper in a way that created divisions (v. 18). The guilty were the wealthy ('those who have homes'), whose conduct at these meals involved 'despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing" (v. 22). In fact, things got so out of hand that poor church members left the worship services hungry while the rich members staggered home drunk (v. 21)!' This reality strongly suggests Paul is referring to the church when he asserts the requirement of 'recognizing the body,' that is to not mistreat others, in particular the poor and disadvantaged, and meet the needs of their fellow members of the body of Christ."

Ecclesiology: Should children be admitted to the Lord's Table?

Do these commands in 1 Corinthians 11 apply to infants and little children who have not sinned in these ways? Where do we read that God requires us to repent over a sin we have not committed?

Do we not see the basic underlying principle here and elsewhere in Scripture that more is expected of a person as he or she matures and is given more? (Cf., e.g., Luke 12:47-48)

While these commands do not now apply to infants and little children, they will as they become older and need to confess and repent, as this and the other relevant Biblical passages stipulate. How do children learn the meaning of the sacrament and learn to do such remembering (v. 24), proclaiming (v. 26), examining (v. 28), and recognizing (v. 29)? The Word of God tells us throughout its revelation that this learning occurs daily in the home and regularly in the worship of the church. And surely it occurs in the participation of the sacrament. (E.g., Exodus 12:24-28; Deuteronomy 4:9-10; 6:4-9, 20-25; Joshua 4:4-7, 19-24; Nehemiah 8: 1-3; Psalm 78:1-8; Acts 20:7-12; Ephesians 5:18-21; 6:4; Colossians 3:19, 21; 2 Timothy 1:5)

We must remember that development occurs over a long period of time. The sooner we can facilitate our children's and grandchildren's ongoing and regular engagement with the Word and sacraments together with the body of Christ and the operation of the Holy Spirit, and emphasizing obedience to God's Word, we will be fostering the spiritual nurture that will most effectively enable them to mature in Christ. (Ephesians 4:11-16)

Thus, Rylaarsdam observes that "what the early church joined together, the later medieval church gradually put asunder. Today, Protestants are returning to the practice of the early church."

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Now, as much or more than ever, with social science research showing the need to belong is the top need human beings have, and with news media reporting, and our own experience observing, the high level of family dissolution (the family being understood sociologically as the phenomenological basis of society itself), lack of commitment, alienation, personal isolation, and loneliness, with the Biblical and theological questions resolved, how can the church withhold the sacraments, which are signs and seals of the marvelous covenant God has provided for the most solid relationships in all time and eternity? The covenant's everlasting vertical dimension, offering the eternal relationship with God for which humans most crave, and horizontal dimension, providing for the strongest and most fulfilling human relationships that meet human beings' greatest needs should be made available for children, who, schools report, have unprecedented struggles in moral, psychological, and relational areas of life that are occurring at earlier and earlier ages. God has provided a perfect resource in his covenant that will help the children that he desires to come to him, and this resource is far superior and more helpful to these children to any other plan devised my human beings.

These are some of the main reasons I am persuaded we can demonstrate not only that the Bible does not prohibit the admission of even small children to the Lord's Table but that doing so is more fitting with the major themes of God's Word and his will. Nevertheless, let us do so in love, including with all due patience (remembering one of the main Biblical words for which means longsuffering), being careful to avoid divisions in the body of Christ, as God has so strongly commanded in these very words of the apostle Paul. I offer practical resources for doing so on the Church Administration page of my Website. For further Biblical, theological, and other information on the whole question of admitting children to the Lord's Table, see the Worship page on my Website. Readily access both pages at www.fromacorntooak12.com.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- “After taking the cup, he gave thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)] and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. [18]For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ [19]And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ [20]In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:17-20)
- “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, [24]and when he had given thanks [< εὐχαριστέω (*eucharisteō*)], he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ [25]In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new [< καινός (*kainos*)] covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ [26]For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)
- “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [κοινωνία (*koinōnia*)] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [*koinōnia*] of the body of Christ? [17]For we *being* many are one bread, *and* one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17 KJV)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

6] The sacrament draws our attention to three main aspects of its meaning.

c] Holy Communion points to the present.

3} As in all Christian worship, when we participate in the Lord’s Supper, we renew our covenant commitments.

7] How is the Lord’s Supper effective as a means of grace?

a] As stated earlier, the sacrament engages all five of our human senses. The Lord has chosen a marvelous educational means of helping us understand and remember his Word and its meaning. But the sacrament is much more.

b] Berkhof puts it this way on the next slide.

Ecclesiology: How is the Lord's Supper Effective as a Means of Grace?

"The Lord's Supper was instituted for believers [EDS adds according to the foregoing, and their children] only, and therefore does not serve the purpose of beginning the work of grace in the heart, but only of strengthening it. The grace that is received in the sacrament does not differ in kind from that which is received through the instrumentality of the Word. The sacrament merely adds to the effectiveness of the Word and to the measure of the grace received. It is the grace of an ever closer fellowship with Christ, of spiritual nourishment and quickening, and of an ever increasing assurance of salvation. According to the Roman Catholics, and also many Anglicans and Lutherans, all those who partake of the Lord's Supper by that very act also receive the grace signified, except when they put an obstacle in the way. The gracious operation of the sacrament does not depend in any way on the faith of the recipient. According to the Reformed conception, however, only those who partake of the sacrament in faith [EDS adds and their children] receive the grace that is signified by the external elements." (328)

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- “And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?' [27]then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.’ Then the people bowed down and worshiped.” (Exodus 12:26-27)
- “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28]A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29]For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. [31]But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32]When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. [33]So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. [34]If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

8] In the light of the foregoing, then, whom should be admitted to the Lord’s Table? As indicated in the preceding discussion, some debate is ongoing, especially in the West about the admission of children to participate in the Lord’s Supper. Nevertheless, a close study of God’s Word supports the following answer.

a] The Supper is for all who are in good and regular standing in their membership in a local church that faithfully proclaims God’s Word. All believers should repent of their sins and recommit to obeying God’s will.

b] As explained above, and with the Eastern Church for all its history and the Western Church for over half its existence, children of adult members in good and regular standing should be able to partake.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

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- “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. [16]But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' [17]If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15-17)
- “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28]A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29]For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. [31]But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32]When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:23-32)
- “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [4]When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5]hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 5:1,4-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord’s Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

8] In the light of the foregoing, then, who should be admitted to the Lord’s Supper? As indicated in the preceding discussion, some debate is ongoing, especially in the West about the admission of children to participate in the Lord’s Supper. Nevertheless, a close study of God’s Word supports the following answer.

c] Good and regular standing means, as Berkhof says, though not using that term, “even true believers are entitled to participation in it only when their conduct is not in flagrant opposition to their profession…. And professing Christians cannot be admitted, if they consciously and persistently depart from the truth or lead offensive lives.” (329) By “offensive lives” is meant habitual sinning in disobedience to God’s Word. Church discipline is necessary.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

The Doctrine of the Church

- "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. [28]A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29]For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. [31]But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32]When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world…[34]If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment." (1 Corinthians 11:27-34)
- "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. [2]And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? [3]Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. [4]When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, [5]hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." (1 Corinthians 5:1-5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

4.d.2)j)2-b- The Lord's Supper in other ancient Christian traditions is also called the Eucharist and Holy Communion.

8] In the light of the foregoing, then, who should partake of the Lord's Supper? As indicated in the preceding discussion, some debate is ongoing, especially in the West about the admission of children to the Lord's Table. Nevertheless, a close study of God's Word supports the following answer.

d] Of course, unbelievers should not be admitted to the Lord's Table. This "fencing of the Table," forbidding participation in the sacrament, is not only to prohibit them from dishonoring the Lord and his church but to keep the unbeliever from one more sin for which he or she will have to face judgment. (1 Corinthians 5:5; 11:29-31) Church discipline needs to be improved for the sake of the sinner, for the integrity of the church's witness, and to honor God.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

What is the church? Why should I attend?

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

The church is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27); he is its head (Ephesians 5:23). Jesus said even "the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Matthew 15:28). It is nothing like any other organization.

The church first appears in the Old Testament in God's implementing his covenant with Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17; Galatians 3:26-29), and throughout the New Testament its mission is described and commanded. Further, the church is the people of Christ, not a building, and many of the people use the Internet for the purpose of trying to accomplish the mission Christ gave his church; yet, the Internet is a means the church can use to serve the Lord, but it is not a replacement or a substitute for his body. Thus, the church will always exist, and it is always needed, even by people who don't feel such a need.

God's Word clearly states that we should worship him regularly. Jesus himself did and provided such an example for us to follow. In Luke 4:16 we read that Jesus on the Sabbath day "went into the synagogue, *as was his custom*." (Italics mine) Even Jesus worshiped regularly. In his human nature he obeyed his parents (Luke 2:52), and he "grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:52) In Hebrews 10:25 the writer exhorts his readers, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." That "meeting together" involved worship and the special fellowship God's people have with each other called *koinōnia*, a great blessing, including encouragement.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Regular attendance at church worship gives us a disciplined means of praising God. We can and should ask the person who says he or she "would rather worship God in my garden [or in the woods or on the beach as is also said]," "But do you? Even if your premise were correct (that God would be just as pleased to have his children worship him individually instead of corporately, which premise cannot be defended from the Bible, his Word), do you in fact worship him on Sunday mornings (the day Christians all over the world from the first century have witnessed to the Lord's Resurrection by their corporate worship) or any other time each Sunday?"

Through corporate worship we human beings, who are weak and constantly tempted to become distracted by and involved in other matters than worship, have a strong and healthy discipline to join with our brothers and sisters in Christ and praise and worship in other ways the owner and ruler of the universe who has performed the most wonderful demonstration of love for us ever!

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Blessings in the Call to Worship

In historic Christian worship services, the pastor begins by reading a passage from God's Word such as Psalm 95:6-7, "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." How do you feel when you receive an invitation to the home of someone you respect and who is very important in your community? What an unparalleled privilege and pleasure we receive from such an invitation! How much more, how much exceedingly more, when we sense that the God of the cosmos, the whole universe, has invited us to come into his house and meet with him in his very presence!

Blessings in the Prayer of Confession and the Immediately following Assurance of Pardon

Once there, in the presence of God who is Most Holy, intuitively I sense my great need to be relieved of the weight of my sin, including its effects, including my guilt. We know why this feeling arises from our preceding study of theology, the Biblical doctrine of God—that it is necessary for sinful people to be cleansed in order to come into the presence of God who is Most Holy. And God provides that relief immediately in two ways. It occurs when I confess my sins, including fears and failures, to him in the prayer of confession, and then it occurs most wonderfully when I hear the blessed words in the assurance of pardon that next follows, also typically from God's Word in a passage such as Psalm 103:8-13, "The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him…."

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

What relief! The burden is gone!

When this feeling of guilt is not relieved by God, humans try to relieve it in other ways. Some of those ways are short-lived and counterproductive to their mental and physical health and other well being. All the ways of trying to relieve guilt other than by God are ultimately ineffective.

Another passage that is often used in the assurance of pardon is 1 John 1:6-9, "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Notice how practical and helpful is this worship! It frees us from guilt, shame, and intense feelings of inadequacy and strengthens us for engaging life! It provides the basis for mental, including emotional, health.

The music of the church facilitates and reinforces the message of God's gracious love. The instruments and voices help me express my joy in the Good News of what Jesus did, continues to do, and forever will do. The music also enables me to express my eternal gratitude to the triune God for all I value, cherish, count as good, and enjoy.

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These blessings do not occur out in the woods. Even if those who go into a forest seeking to worship God (would that be the only true God who reveals himself in the Bible?) took their Bible and knew where to look for these passages above and the many other related texts, they would miss the profound significance of hearing God's forgiveness being authoritatively and lovingly proclaimed by a fellow human being whom he has called and ordained to be one of his spokespersons. The wind rustling the leaves can't even come close to the breath of a faithful pastor through whom God is speaking in ways that calm our deepest concerns.

The Holy Spirit uses our consciences to convict us of our sins. (John 16:8; Romans 2:15) We feel guilt. Yet, we are relieved of our sin and guilt. How do we overcome our sin and guilt and experience forgiveness, from God and from those we've offended? Those blessings come in God's corporate worship services and in the special Spirit-infused *koinōnia* of the church—not out in the trees. Even when we are in wonderful quiet (for us) of nature, and even when we remember in our solitude the promises of God for forgiveness, we can't come close to the balm of the assurance and experience of forgiveness and relief from our guilt as we can when we hear in the worship services those precious words of forgiveness as proclaimed by the ordained and authorized representative of God through whom God is speaking to assure us of our pardon. Similarly, though on a different plane, we are comforted by the forgiveness extended to us of other humans who know and view us as we are: flawed but renewed in Christ Jesus.

In some parts of the world the church meets in congregations that do not have an ordained pastor. They still receive these blessings when their church leader, who is a committed believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, reads those words and others from the Bible, the Word of God, at this point in a corporate Christian worship service.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Blessings in the Proclamation of the Word of God

In corporate worship we meet the triune God, and he reveals himself in and through the clear and faithful proclamation, explanation, and application of his Word to our lives and in the sacraments. In these ways and in the congregational prayers, we sense the mystery and awe of God, we're drawn to him in and through the presence of Christ Jesus, and we're further equipped by the Holy Spirit for living life abundantly and effectively in Christ in the service to which he is calling us.

We learn who God is, what he is like, and his plans for us, our role as he works in and through us as he accomplishes the redemption and restoration of his creation. We discern the difference between God and his creation, a distinction which is often blurred and misunderstood by people who only want to worship God in the woods or somewhere else in nature. We rejoice in God and in his creation without confusing them. Many churches hold at least one or more of their worship services outdoors in the summer, thus giving worshipers an experience of meeting God in a natural milieu but with the clear distinction of each, which enables us to worship the Creator and more fully appreciate and respect but not worship what he created.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

When we attend church worship services we're blessed individually as well as corporately. We're edified, encouraged, and strengthened in our faith by attending worship. In particular, we're further informed, inspired, and equipped in our high and holy calling and mission to witness for Jesus Christ more effectively and to serve him in other ways as well.

By attending corporate public worship services regularly, we are taught God's Word. If I were to only go out in a garden, woods, or beach and worship by myself, I'd not cover the whole counsel of God; I'd just focus on the things that most interested me or that I thought were important. In so doing I would be ignorant of vital needed information and fail to mature and become equipped for functioning most effectively in my calling from God in the place he has for me in his plan for redeeming his creation. In my observation, and in the testimony of the historic Christian church, this typically occurs with all who try to "go it alone."

In a sermon based on a text from the Bible, which is an explanation of that text, God speaks to us; we don't get that "out in the woods." We hear what we need to hear from an authority credentialed by respected educational institutions, and an official ecclesiastical organization, in the historic Christian tradition, who, led by God, has prepared a thoughtful presentation explaining God's Word and applying it to matters we address and need to address today in order to serve most effectively in the holy calling God has given us, and to experience the most joy in so doing.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

We increase in our understanding: we grow in our ability to make sense out of life. We find answers to the great questions of life and eternity. And we're encouraged to ask the tough questions of life and to find their answers in and consistent with God's Word, our ultimate guide, trustworthy standard, and highest authority. Because Jesus has set us free from the bondage of sin, we seek the truth, and the church helps us apply it accurately to the issues of life we encounter.

One way I've seen this understanding occur many times, in both my own life and in the life of others in the church, is in the answer to one of the most often asked questions: "Why does God allow evildoers to prosper while at the same time so many righteous people struggle?" The answer to that question is found in the Bible and in the helpful commentary that is given by pastors who have studied and prepared carefully to explicate those texts in sermons in the church's corporate worship and in church education classes. See for example Psalm 73:1-17 (cf. v. 17).

As much as I've studied God's Word, have degrees in theological education, and have taught and preached God's Word, I never cease to be amazed at how much I still have to learn! As I attend worship and hear an exposition of a Scripture passage, even one I've read and taught many times, I rejoice in learning more, not only about the meaning of the text but also its application in many new ways! Even though I hear some words that I've heard most of my life from the Bible and from sermons, I'm blessed as I hear them again in worship. I receive new insights and new applications for this time in my life that inform me regarding matters I'm engaging now that I never before dreamed I'd be encountering. Frequently fellow believers and I hear a Bible text and its explanation that provides us with an insight to share in an upcoming conversation that very week or soon after that we never anticipated, but that God knew was coming. What a joy it is to communicate what we've learned with others, which is part of what God is calling us to do.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Believers receive vital instruction helpful for their physical and spiritual health. Over time in a church faithful to the Bible, we receive "the whole counsel of God." This occurrence is especially true in churches that follow the lectionary, a prescribed series of Scripture texts for each Sunday over a three-year cycle, on which the sermons are based; thus the worshipers hear a balance in the messages that cover the main themes of God's Word rather than over-repeating the favorite emphases (sometimes called "hobbyhorses") of the pastor. In a congregation that proclaims the Bible as God's Word, infallible and inerrant, we learn the full counsel of God, what we believe as Christians. In worship we are edified, but we also have many other opportunities to learn, for there are subjects in the Bible that, together with the explanation of what they mean and how they are applied, require more time than the 20 minutes, or even in some places an hour, a sermon is typically allotted.

Our society, which doesn't hold to a Biblical standard, is finding it more and more difficult to define what is right and what is wrong, especially in moral and spiritual matters. People who try to "go it alone" are buffeted by Satan and his legions of demonic followers. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5.) We need the help of fellow believers in and followers of Christ to stay on the right path. As members of a church we learn what is right and wrong and how to explain this distinction with conviction and with courage that comes from God directly in our hearts and minds and through fellow members.

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We learn to be discerning and to speak the truth in love. For example, we distinguish homosexuality (Romans 1:18-27) from the gift of singleness (Matthew 19:11-12), yet following the command of Christ Jesus, we show love to all people, even our enemies (Matthew 5:44). The apostle Paul defines this love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, which includes being patient, kind, not envious or rude; it does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. We thus don't commit the naturalistic fallacy (saying that since something exists, it ought to exist) and confuse love with condoning behavior God condemns. At the same time love characterizes our approach to and our actions concerning homosexuals; we oppose homosexuality, because God opposes it, and social science research shows why: the homosexual lifestyle is very unhealthy, dangerous, and unholy. There is a disconnect between loving people as Christ has commanded and advocating for a lifestyle that will harm them. How can a person truly love someone and affirm, much less encourage, that one's choice to engage a lifestyle that is unhealthy, dangerous, and unholy? That is why Scripture tells us in many places that if we see a brother or sister going down the wrong path, we must speak up, albeit in love. (Leviticus 19:17b; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20)

For further information and documentation of these realities, see my book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love*. This book is available for free, and shareable, on the Current Issues page of my Web site at www.fromacorntooak12.com.

By attending worship and other learning opportunities with the church, we are reminded of Biblical teachings we've forgotten, but which we need to remember and act on, in order to obey and to serve God most effectively, and to experience in abundance joy and fulfillment in life. (Cf. John 10:10) We remember and are blessed by the characteristics of God himself. (Cf. 2 Peter 1:12-15 for the importance of being reminded.)

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Believers are inspired as their focus is lifted to God, relieved from their burdens by doing so, and receive guidance for coping with, dealing with, and overcoming the challenges of life. When we encounter problems, especially big ones, we tend to get tunnel vision and focus inward, concentrating on the thorn in the flesh that is causing so much discomfort. In so doing we lose the broad view, including the eternal perspective, that puts things in their proper proportion and order. Losing the broad perspective leaves God, our greatest help and hope, out of the picture. We need to remember that God is not only in the picture; he's holding the picture!

Fellow believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ help us to keep that perspective. In meeting with them, they remind us of these realities, and comfort us in other ways, during the difficult times we encounter and at other times as well.

We're healed of the great hurts of life, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The healing is always from God, sometimes directly and often indirectly through others in the church. We receive sound advice for dealing with the challenges of life, from small to large, both in sermons and in more focused counseling on other occasions as needed. Such a resource is vitally important, indeed crucial. So many individuals, books, videos, Web sites, and other sources are leading multitudes of people astray by offering counsel that is spiritually bankrupt, even demonically inspired, and contrary to God's Word. Watch out for them!

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When we regularly attend corporate Christian worship, our minds expand to include the broader perspective in which we live, our historical roots and the future in the context of eternity, and that perspective blesses us and many others. Many people are "trying to find themselves," and they are only looking within. No wonder they lack a sense of meaning and value. First of all, the fallen human heart is "deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9; cf. Matthew 15:18-19; Mark 7:21-23) Looking within fails to provide a viable and sustainable source of help in "finding oneself."

Part of the reason for this reality is that we are not "an island to ourselves." We are connected with, partially shaped by and partially influencing, other people historically, in the present, and in the future.

When we have significant problems, we tend to narrow our focus on that issue and lose sight of the context in which we are living. When we broaden our perspective and see a particular problem we're encountering in the light of eternity, including the past as well as the future, all under the control of God who is sovereign and who loves us and is committed to his covenant people, we are freed from the tyranny and bondage of the present predicament. We see that this angst of the moment has not always been so and will not last forever. In God's worship our minds and hearts are lifted (*sursum corda*) and we receive his help in our every need.

Furthermore, until we find our identity in our relationship with the triune God, we will experience a constant and highly unsatisfying emptiness and meaninglessness in life. (Ecclesiastes 1:14) Thus, we see many people trying to escape and, sadly, using means counterproductive to their own and others' well-being, such as alcohol, drugs, loud music, aberrant sex, gambling, excessive entertainment, and self-harm in addition to many other ways of avoiding reality. On the contrary, as we worship God, we draw near to him and sense the meaning, purpose for living, and joy in further awareness of our place in his world in the high and holy calling he has given us in his plan for redeeming his creation. (Ecclesiastes 2:26; Psalm 68; Matthew 28:16-20) We also see and receive his help to fulfill that calling!

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This broadening of perspective is not only with regard to matters on this earth, but it also has a cosmic dimension. In our participation in corporate worship and other aspects of the life and work of a true church of Jesus Christ, in a congregation which holds to the Bible as the trustworthy Word of God and our highest authority, where Christ is proclaimed, honored, and glorified, we are equipped and strengthened for engaging in, and winning, the spiritual warfare which lies behind all the evil and hardship that is going on in the world. We have the protection and support of God and his people in his covenant community, through whom he is working to redeem his creation. (Ephesians 6:10-20)

Everyone is affected by this cosmic battle, but multitudes, including too many in the church, are blissfully (until something bad occurs) unaware of what is going on. They tend to be the ones who shout the loudest, "Where's God in all this?!" when something goes terribly wrong, and they find themselves impacted by and struggling with the serious problems including evil that the enemy, Satan, the demons, and their followers through whom they work, perpetrate.

But, thanks be to God that he is sovereign, and he loves us. He is working in and through his church to accomplish his redemptive purposes. He has promised that he will build his church and that the gates of hell will not overcome it. (Matthew 16:18) One of the ways he is building and strengthening his church is as we regularly meet together for edification and encouragement and guidance. (Hebrews 10:23-25) By regularly meeting with God in his worship and participating in other work, as he's calling his covenant people to do, we become ever more aware of and receive his protection and ongoing support. (Matthew 10:19-20; 18:20; 28:20) God, working through his people, guides, strengthens, and emboldens us to make the tough choices and do what pleases him throughout our lives and especially during challenging times.

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Without the guidance and support that God provides through his people, one becomes vulnerable to the temptations, misdirection, and evil of the enemy. As more and more people drift away from their moorings in God's covenant community, the church, they make choices and engage in activities that not only displease God but are counterproductive to their own well-being and the well-being of our society.

Consult the social science literature to see the correlation between the decline in church attendance and the increase in social evils such as abortion, divorce, cohabitation, adultery, substance abuse, suicide, and a host of other maladies. The converse is also true, i.e., the reduction of such societal problems where the church is strong and engaged in bringing the light of God's Word in their society. Government officials recognize this reality, not only in the United States but elsewhere in the world as well.

In fact, the church is the primary source in society for keeping the definition of these problems as being bad not good. There are many, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, who want to redefine these issues, calling "evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20) The church by teaching the truth in God's Word, preserves human dignity and the awareness that one is made in and carries with him or herself the image of God, which means that he or she can be viewed as such by him or herself as well as by others. Such awareness motivates the thinking about the issues of the day to be more in accord with God's will.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Blessings through the Prayers of God's Righteous People

The Bible says that "the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." (1 Peter 3:12) Indeed, through the prophet Isaiah we hear God saying, "your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." (59:2) "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective." (James 5:16 NRSV; cf. Proverbs 15:29) For these reasons I've often said that I'd rather have one righteous quadriplegic in Christ, who can only lay in bed and move just his or her eyelids, praying for me than a million pagans. And in God's corporate worship we have many righteous people praying for us. How are they righteous? They are credited with Christ's righteousness on account of their faith in him (Galatians 3:26-29; Romans 4) and are trying to live out that faith in their daily lives in gratitude to him.

Thus, we are prayed for in the corporate worship of the church, and in so doing, we join those prayers for ourselves as well as for others. We learn to pray.

By attending church worship and other activities, we come know other believers and the pastor(s) who then care for us. If we or our family have needs, we can ask these people in the church, and they will pray for us and help us in other ways. Some churches also have email prayer lines that are daily updated. We can come to the pastor's office to meet with him or her for counsel and/or for prayer. The pastor will also come to our home and meet with and pray for us and our family.

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Through the prayers led at corporate church worship, we broaden our awareness of the needs of others throughout the world, locally, nationally, and internationally, and we pray for their needs. We learn of the power of the prayers of those whom God declares righteous by their faith in Christ. We see exciting results of such prayer.

The children of Christ's followers who attend corporate public church worship services regularly, especially with both parents, tend to avoid many serious and negative practices. Some of these benefits include significantly less tendency to become involved in premarital sex, illicit drug use, dropping out of school, and suicide. They also tend to select as marriage partners fellow believers in and followers of Jesus Christ, which results in a much more successful marriage than is experienced in the population as a whole, e.g., a significantly reduced divorce rate, as a result of obeying God's will to only marry a fellow believer in Christ. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 Corinthians 7:39; Malachi 2:11; Ezra 9:1-2 and 3-10:44; Nehemiah 10:30; Exodus 34:16; Genesis 26:34-35; 27:42-28:1ff.; Deuteronomy 7:3-6; James 2:26)

To see more benefits, see the document, "Empirical Benefits of Church Worship," on the Christian Worship page of my Website. It may be accessed at this URL: http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Empirical-Benefits-of-Church-Worship.pdf. See also the supporting documents on the Marriage page at http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/marriage/.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Blessings in the Benediction

The benediction, also coming to be called the Sending, is the last part of the service during which we are reminded that God sends us back into the world to continue growing in Christ and to partner with God in his redemptive work in his creation. In the benediction (from the Latin meaning good words) we hear the pastor proclaim words from the Bible in which God promises to go with us, equipping us with all we need to serve him effectively and to facilitate the accomplishment of his redemptive purposes, which is why he has called us to be holy (that is separate and uncommon) to him. These words are very supportive, encouraging, and strengthening.

Consider the meaning of these passages from the Bible that are often used in the benediction, and consider how you feel after reading and hearing them. "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26 NRSV) "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 1:24-25) "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14) "May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Hebrews 13:20-21)

Singing a benedictory song, such as a psalm put to music, lifts our spirits and gives us peace and joy that meets our deepest needs as does no other activity, especially as we do so standing next to other brothers and sisters in the Lord. An example of one such composition is "Psalm 84: How Lovely, Lord, How Lovely." See the arrangement by Arlo D. Duba and Hal H. Hopson in *Sing! A New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, CRC Publications, 2001), p. 184.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Blessings after the Benediction

Having worshiped, we leave further equipped mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and physically strengthened to serve God in the high and holy calling he has given us to be his witnesses. Of course, before we even leave the church building we've begun to witness to him. Corporate worship, in addition to individual worship, is one special way to witness to Christ's Resurrection, especially when it occurs on Sunday, Resurrection Day. As the world travels by the church's building and sees a parking lot full of cars, observers conclude that a significant number of people are taking the triune God, including his only begotten, risen, and reigning Son, seriously.

Regarding edification, we have to remember who the church is and who attends the worship services. To begin with, all humans are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23) We all need to grow more Christ-like. The members of any congregation are in various stages of sanctification, the ongoing growth in Christ-likeness that occurs throughout the life of one who is a believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus.

Thus, some will be more mature (cf. Ephesians 4:13) than others at any given point in time. Then there will be some in attendance who are not committed to Christ. All of us need to hear God's Word in order to improve *in God's sight*. In my own sight I may not need to improve, but my standard is not the same as God's standard, or even another person's perspective who can readily see where I need to do some improving.

I wish more people would point out those areas on which I need to do some work. Most people are afraid to say anything, because they want to be liked, and past experience has shown them that such speaking up isn't well received. But it should be, especially in the church. In fact, that corrective feedback is commanded in Scripture. For just a few examples, consider these: "Rebuke your brother frankly so you will not share in his guilt." (Leviticus 19:17b) Jesus said, "So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." (Luke 17:3) Paul wrote, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." (Galatians 6:1) Observe that these are sins that are being referred to in these texts. God is not saying we should be walking around nit-picking and calling people on matters that involve only a difference of opinion.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

In a guest editorial, a Christian psychologist explained our need to forgive. "Why forgive? For two reasons: One, you will actually end up feeling better because holding anger and unforgiveness against someone else actually eats at your body and soul, not theirs. Two, a mutual friend says His Father who resides in heaven will forgive you your sins as you forgive those who have sinned against you. [Matthew 6:14] His forgiveness is worth it!" (*Reporter-Herald*, May 8, 2022, p. 4A) Further, we all need forgiveness. It's easier to forgive when we remember we also need to be forgiven.

The key, as God also said, this time through the apostle Paul, is to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), which love he defined as being patient, kind, and acting not in a way that is boastful, arrogant, or rude. (1 Corinthians 13:4-5) The truth is, we need one another, especially as God works through us to help each other to mature in Christ-likeness in God's calling for us to be holy to him for the accomplishment of his purposes through us. As one Lutheran pastor well put it, "We won't attract people to Christ if we're living our lives in the gutter."

You've heard the partial-truth, "God accepts you as you are." The matter depends on our relationship with Christ Jesus. If we've been credited with Christ's righteousness, we are acceptable to God in an eternal relationship with him, who requires those in his presence to be righteous, but even then, he wants us to improve in our actions. In Christ we are OK ontologically, but morally and ethically in this phase of life here on earth we always need to do better, to be more like Christ in our actions and in the accomplishment of God's purposes, his work in and through us. (Cf. Ephesians 2:10)

Further, the key message of the Bible is that outside of Christ we are not acceptable to God. To correct that often-heard partially true assertion, we need to add some more words for all of us—those in as well as those outside of Christ. As a minister/evangelist friend of mine accurately responds to that partial-truth for those in Christ, "Yes, God accepts you as you are, but he loves you enough to not leave you that way!" In order to find how to not remain that way, and how to become mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16), we need to hear his Word from those who live in and walk with Christ and who've studied and applied the Word in their lives. This Ephesians 4:11-16 text is one of the Biblical bases for the very important Christian education ministries in the church.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

We find and develop deep friendships. Social science research confirms what we feel in our daily lives, namely that the need to belong is one of our greatest needs as human beings. That need is met most fully through friendships in Christ that grow to a much deeper and more meaningful level than those we have in society in general.

In the special Holy Spirit-led fellowship in Christ, that the New Testament calls *koinōnia*, we're encouraged by others and we encourage them. This encouragement occurs in many ways:

- By warm greetings that lift our spirit and convey acceptance and belonging.
- Through affirmations of work and characteristics that are right and good.
- By affirming our faith in our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ and the reasons for it, thus greatly facilitating perseverance.
- By giving and receiving advice based on God's wisdom as the Holy Spirit speaks through friends in Christ on matters of importance to us.
- By giving and receiving admonition. God helps us learn his will as he speaks directly to us in our own minds and hearts and as he speaks through others. If we have thoughts that differ from the Bible's interpretation by the historic Christian church, we must talk about them with a respected leader in a Bible-believing church, one who has the courage to tell us what we need to hear, not what we necessarily want to hear. Through receiving corrective feedback in the context of affirmation and love.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

God blesses us not only directly as individuals but indirectly, corporately, through other believers in the Body of Christ, the church. Involving others, he primarily and mostly works through the church to bless us. We know these gifts are from God, because he has told us so: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

The freedom from the bondage to sin that Jesus provides frees church members to care for one another. They are able to consider, and desire to help, others and not just focus on their own needs and desires. Caring Christians coming to know and love others who attend worship and other times of fellowship together, help them think rightly and work through times of doubt if they arise and to overcome the difficulties encountered in daily life. As a result, the church makes a significant difference in the community of which it is a part in countless and far reaching ways. We need the regular reminders of what is right and what is wrong, as the Bible, God's Word, is truthfully proclaimed, explained, and applied to our daily lives. Moreover, we rejoice in seeing that we're not the only ones who believe that way; many others throughout the whole world, all in Christ Jesus, do too!

The members and leaders of the church lovingly listen to us in ways we do not find in the world that doesn't care about, and has little time, for us. They not only do this for us when we meet together at church. When we have questions and/or problems at home, at work, in school, in our neighborhood, we can find help in the body of Christ, the church; we ask God for help in this context and we receive that help. We find the wisdom to answer the most important questions in life and eternity and usually without cost (always without cost unless a problem requires the extra help of a trained professional such as a Christian physician, psychologist, or other worker). When such highly specialized help is needed, we have the assurance the church will guide us to one who is trustworthy, competent, and caring; ***never*** rely on the Internet in such circumstances.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

Though the church sometimes has members and attendees who are spiritual infants in elementary stages of sanctification, not yet mature in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-24), and not treating all others of every race in a loving Christlike manner, it is clear in this passage and throughout the whole Bible, that such behavior does not please God and is not in accord with his will.

Further, Jesus Christ, whom we worship with the other two Members of our triune God, with whom we identify, and proclaim, is not an Anglo-Saxon. He is not "a white guy;" he is (and will forever be in his already resurrected fully human body) a Person of color.

- *Thus, the church can never rightly be accused of "systemic racism" or of being inherently racist. Clearly, God has called the church to lovingly reach out to all people and invite them into his kingdom.*

That reality is also true individually as well as corporately. I know and have worked with many Christians of every color who are not at all racist. Christian missionaries of every color are called by God to live in lands as far as half the world away from where they were born and raised and where their parents, other family members, and beloved friends continue to live. If they were racists, what would explain their leaving these loved ones to live with another race? It certainly is not for money. Believe them when they explain they are responding to their call, which is part of the great commission of the Lord to "go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19)

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

We sense we're loved and accepted as we are and are not made to feel we have to be someone we are not. This is not to say we shouldn't always be trying to be more Christ-like, which all of us need to do. When we're most honest with ourselves, we recognize we all have changes we need to make. But Jesus is the only one we all are trying to be like; we never sense someone maturing in Christ is trying to remake us according to his or her preconceived notions.

We grow in our love for all people as they grow closer to God who loves all people and who wills that his Kingdom will comprise those "from every nation, tribe, people and language." (Revelation 7:9) We learn to value fellow believers from other parts of the world and what they bring into God's kingdom that enriches our lives. As people mature in Christ, any racial concerns are diminished and extinguished. (Ephesians 4:12-18)

We learn of and have opportunities where we can serve God with brothers and sisters in Christ both in the church and in the community in which we live and work. In so doing we sense we are connected with and pleasing God and helping to accomplish his redemptive purposes for his creation. In such opportunities for service we experience joyful fellowship at a deep and profoundly meaningful level that is uniquely enriching, including as a witness for Christ partially fulfilling his calling for us.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Marriages are strengthened and maintained, especially for those who were married in the church. For those who were married with a traditional liturgy, they took their vows "before God and these witnesses." A considerable percentage of the witnesses were members of that church with whom the couple is still in a relationship, and the couple is accountable to them if they don't live up to those vows. They are especially accountable to God. For those couples who now are part of another church, their present congregation serves to help them stay on the right path. (See for example, Leviticus 19:17b; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; James 5:19-20.) All these benefits are even more strongly and easily experienced by couples who are members of the church, for the members find it much easier to relate to those who are fellow members, in the same way that family members can speak more easily and helpfully to members of their family than they can do with those who are not family.

The whole family is strengthened and blessed in countless ways, each member individually, and the whole family together corporately. Each person experiences the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her mind and heart directly during worship and in other activities, as well as indirectly through brothers and sisters in Christ in the life and work of the church, for example in conversations while working together on a service project, at choir or praise team practice, or in Bible study and Sunday school classes. When children hear other adults voicing and living the same values as their parents, they and their parents are all strengthened and encouraged. Even in nursery little children experience the special love and caring of Holy Spirit-inspired believers in and followers of Jesus Christ. That special milieu facilitates the development of an "at home" feeling for which the children will long when they are away from it as adults.

As Paul indicates in the first part of the Philippians 4 passage, sometimes conflicts occur in the church, but they usually are, and always can be, short lived. Further, when a conflict due to our human sin and immaturity occurs in the church, we have help on the vertical plane from God and on the horizontal plane from many others who will help us resolve the matter. Again, such human resources are more forthcoming with membership, as analogous in family relationships contrasted with visitors in a family context.

See the accompanying essay, "What is the Church? Why should I become a Member?" on my Website at https://fromacorntooak12.com/what-is-the-church/.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

We have opportunities to prepare to serve and to then serve. We read in Ephesians 4:11-16 that God has given spiritual gifts to the believers in and followers of Christ Jesus so that they will be able to help people mature and become more Christ-like. We don't usually find these people out in the woods on Sunday morning, and even if we did it would not be enough for the education we need. Conversely, all of us who are believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, are important parts of the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) We've been given gifts to use to help build up the body of Christ, to help brothers and sisters in the Lord, to bless them and facilitate the accomplishment of his purposes. We can't bless them as much as possible if we're not with them.

As we engage in the worship of the triune God in the company and ongoing fellowship with his covenant people, we mature in Christ-likeness and in God's service. We seek to prepare ourselves and help others to prepare "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming." (Ephesians 4:12-14) Here again is a key Biblical basis for the vital teaching ministry the church offers.

Preparation for the end of life here on earth should be mentioned as one of the first reasons to attend church regularly, but I put it at the end since many if not most people may not read farther if this were one of the first points. Sadly, those who ignore preparation for eternity are the least prepared and find the end of this phase of life most difficult when it comes instead of experiencing the joy Jesus has provided. To do well in the challenges facing all of us in our final days in this world requires a life-long walk with the Lord, maturing in Christ via the time honored means of God's grace, which include hearing the proclamation of his Word and receiving the sacraments in his sanctuary where he meets with his people and dialogues with us, drawing us closer to him and to our church family, whose support is huge when our death, and the death of our loved ones, draws near and comes. To be the strongest and best prepared, we need to meet with God in his sanctuary regularly, ideally at least weekly, throughout our whole lives.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

As a long-time pastor, I've observed the very significant difference in countless people who've faced their death and the death of loved ones. Those who have given little thought to matters pertaining to God and his weekly worship throughout their lives have a much harder time coping in these situations. On the contrary, those who've nurtured their faith in Christ, and the faith in Christ of their loved ones, do grieve, including weeping, (John 11:35) but "not as those who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13)

I've experienced the death of both of my parents, who were wonderful and whom I loved dearly. I have also experienced the death of my precious wife of 48 ½ years. The death of a spouse is much, much harder. As Jesus explained, "at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh…So they are no longer two, but one." (Matthew 19:4-5) That Biblical one flesh marital bond is such a deep and profound oneness, that when separation occurs, especially where abundant love exists, enormous sadness emerges.

However, God gives us all we need to help us cope with and overcome this greatest of all challenges. In a brief video, entitled "Managing Grief: Thanking God in and for Everything," and an accompanying essay, "Preparing for Living again as an Unmarried Person," I have explained how God has greatly helped me, and in countless ways each day continues to help me, function well in this temporary time between now and when I am reunited with my precious Carol in his eternal service and presence! Those resources can be accessed on my Website at http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/marriage/. As with everything else on my Web site, they can be accessed for free and forwarded to anyone who may find them helpful.

Nevertheless, in Christ we can say with the apostle Paul,

"Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:54-58)

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The encouragement we hear each time we attend the meetings of the body of Christ, the church, enables us to stand firm indeed! And when our time comes to face the end of life on this earth, we can do so without fear and even look forward with joy to what is coming in and with Christ Jesus, with our loved ones in him, and with all his other people throughout the ages!

In this section, we have seen many reasons why to attend church. God blesses us uniquely in countless ways in his church, the body of Christ, especially in services of God's worship, and in other ways in the life and work of the church, the people of God, blessings that are not obtained anywhere else outside the church.

For further information on this subject, see the preceding section of this study on *Essential Christianity*. See also my accompanying essay, "What is the church? Why should I attend?" which is on the Christian Theology page of my Website, in the section "What is the church, and how is God using it? (Ecclesiology)," which can be accessed at https://fromacorntooak12.com/what-is-the-church/.

But there's more! Much more!! Many additional blessings are experienced uniquely when one *joins* a local congregation of Christians. We look next at what God offers you when you become a member of his church.

The church in the Bible always refers to people, never to a building.

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

What is the church? Why should I become a member?

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

The following are reasons for church membership drawn from the wisdom of the historic church through the ages. In addition, I've included findings of social science research, e.g., informing us of basic human needs that are met most fully by membership in the church, which the New Testament reveals and explains is the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:5; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; Colossians 1:18,24. See also above.)

The unconnected private life is neither personally fulfilling nor God's plan for us. Especially in Western society, which is highly imbued with individualism, even to the extent of narcissism, exceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, most people are inclined to think primarily in terms of themselves. Even for those who have come to faith in Christ Jesus, many think that being saved, and thus qualified for heaven, is all they need. However, that view runs counter to what we read throughout the Bible; there we see that salvation is always for service for God. As one Christian leader said long ago, if qualifying for heaven were all that were needed, a believer would be immediately transported to heaven; the fact that he or she is still here is an indication that God has more in mind for us. We are saved to serve. And when we do serve, for example by calling on a church member in the hospital, it is a lot easier for us, is much less awkward, and means much more to the other person if we can introduce ourselves as a fellow member of the church.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

God has called us to be his people, holy (uncommon and set apart) to him for the accomplishment of his purposes through us, and he has established his covenant with us. As we read throughout the Bible, the church is the primary means God is employing in the redeeming of his creation. The covenant, a major motif or theme throughout the whole Bible, explains key theological concepts in God's Word.

The covenant is not a contract or an agreement where both partners are equal; it is not a democratic idea. As with Abraham, through whom God established the present covenant (Genesis 17, Romans 4, Galatians 3), which was renewed in and by Jesus Christ, we come into this relationship on God's terms. (See the discussion earlier in our consideration of the nature and work of the church for further information on the covenant.) The covenant is a relationship with God which involves a historical continuity, commitment, and membership based on faith and obedience. Regarding the latter, obedience brings blessings; even disobedience can result in forgiveness, healing, and restoration through corrective feedback and, when necessary, discipline. The visible manifestation of the covenant is the church.

Membership is required for these blessings to occur, both for the individual and for the church. For any meaningful membership, the church must have a standard to which all who are part of the fellowship agree in order for the congregation to have an identity. Can you imagine the Lions club, Michigan State University, or the U. S. Marines having no membership requirements or an enrollment list? Every country has a membership requirement for citizenship and the attendant benefits thereof. People place a higher value on an organization, and are more inclined to join it, if it has a high standard and requirements for membership.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

For any meaningful membership, the congregation must have a roll or a list of those who are part of the communion distinguished from those who are only attendees. Some people, including some congregations, think an open membership is possible and even most to be desired. In too many cases the reason for not wanting to join are self-serving. They intuitively know if they aren't members they won't be asked to do a lot; they want the benefits offered in a congregation but without accepting responsibility to help produce those benefits. Some think that just by attending they are members. If that were the case, leaders and many others may never know a given person or that he or she is a member. To have any significance, the corporate fellowship must know who are members and who are not.

Membership in the church family is analogous to the difference in benefits experienced by being a member of a regular family contrasted with being a visitor in the home of that family. The family is there for its members, not nearly as much for a visitor; there are limits to which the family will go to meet the needs of an acquaintance, but a family, especially a family in Christ, will do all it can to help any of the members of their family whenever he or she requires their succor.

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

Church membership meets and satisfies humankind's deepest needs and longings, including the need to be loved and to belong. We sense keenly that we belong to God and to one another in the special fellowship in the Holy Spirit the Bible calls *koinōnia*. We also learn how to give and receive this love more effectively.

Both on the horizontal and on the vertical level we need to belong and engage with other people and with God, our Creator. Pertaining to human interaction, Cleveland Clinic M.D., Raul Seballos, writes, "not having face-to-face interaction with other adults can become a major health risk. Studies show that a lack of social contact can lead to higher blood pressure, heart disease, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline and even early death, regardless of previous underlying issues…Along with engaging socially, stimulating your mind can lower your risk of dementia. Plan for obligations and activities with others that fuel a sense of purpose…." While such general activities as volunteering and computer-based programs like Facebook or LinkedIn can help, think about the far greater benefits that come with membership in the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27. See also above for additional text references.) that includes engaging in the Great Commission the Lord Jesus Christ gave to his people! (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:11-32)

As members of the body of Christ, we have the most special relationship of all in our connection with God. *We experience and grow in our sense of what it means to belong to God*. We even catch a glimpse of what it means to belong to something, and especially Someone, so huge that it (creation) and he (God) are beyond containment!

In God's worship we learn that we are in the presence of God who is not only holy but holy, holy, holy, which is the Biblical way of saying, Most Holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8) and all love. (1 John 4:8) We come to worship to meet the one true God, who is triune: the Father; his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Spirit, three distinct Persons who share one substance. Since God is redeeming his creation in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; since God has put all things under the feet of Christ (Psalm 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:25-27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8); and since we come into the presence of God only in Christ, (John 14:6) we fix our eyes on Jesus in our worship. We learn to sense more of his presence in worship, to grow ever closer to him, and to serve him in the high and holy calling he is giving us. In worship, which is true to God's Word, we enter God's presence with Jesus and grow in our relationship with the risen and reigning Christ! And we are doing so with the church triumphant, our fellow faithful loved ones and others in Christ who are already with him! (Revelation 4-5)

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

Part of what it means to be created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) is that we are social beings. We are created to be in fellowship with one another. We help one another by being in relationship with each other and in the ensuing interactions that take place. Left alone in isolation from others, especially fellow believers in Christ, we are vulnerable to the residue of sin in our nature and to the oppression of Satan and his demonic forces, which can have severe negative effects on us that are counterproductive not only to our mission to which God has called us, but also to the joy he wants us to have. (See, e.g., Galatians 5:22; Romans 15:13.) Alone, our minds play tricks on us, but those tricks are exposed, put in perspective, and overcome through relating to God's people through whom he works for our benefit. We need ongoing fellowship with the church, God's people in Christ, the body of Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in order to "be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18) and live life in Christ Jesus to the fullest (John 10:10), including accomplishing a more healthy and effective service for the Lord which is our calling, our vocation.

Sense your belonging even more keenly and fully by volunteering for work that needs to be done. Do any kind of work in the church, no matter how menial because it is important, and do it well, knowing it is the Lord you are serving. (Cf. Colossians 3:23-25) Remember also what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 15:58, when he wrote "…stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Of course, you can serve in some limited ways in the church without becoming a member, but the experience is much deeper and more meaningful, fulfilling, and extensive with the sense of belonging you have as a fellow member of the church. Accordingly, you are also obeying the Lord (Hebrews 10:25) and reaping the benefits of doing so.

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The Holy Spirit uses our consciences to convict us of our sins. (John 16:8; Romans 2:15) We feel guilt. Yet, we are relieved of our sin and guilt. How do we overcome our sin and guilt and experience forgiveness, from God and from those we've offended? Those blessings come in God's corporate worship services and in the special Spirit-infused *koinōnia*, fellowship, of the church—not out in the trees by ourselves. Even when we are in a wonderful quiet (for us) place in nature, and even when we remember in our solitude the promises of God for forgiveness, we can't come close to the balm of the assurance and experience of forgiveness and relief from our guilt as we can when we hear in the worship services those precious words of forgiveness as proclaimed by the ordained and authorized representative of God through whom God is speaking to assure us of our pardon. Similarly, though on a different plane, we are comforted by the forgiveness extended to us by other humans who know and view us as we are: flawed, but contrite with a sincere desire to not repeat the offense, and renewed in Christ Jesus.

This forgiveness is much more meaningful for those who are members of the church, who belong to each other as family, and who know and are committed to each other, rather than only being attendees who lack, or who cannot make, the commitment. The forgiveness is much more meaningful when those who know us, with our imperfections, still forgive and love us. We can experience God's love and forgiveness through those who know and still love us. An analogy is marriage, which metaphor God uses for his relationship with the church throughout the Bible. (E.g., Jeremiah 3:1-25, esp. v. 20; Ephesians 5:21-33, esp. v. 32) The Biblical one flesh marital bond, in which a man and a woman experience the deeply profound physical, psychological, and spiritual oneness in Christ, enables, facilitates, and fosters the ability and desire to actively care for the other, including to forgive, which is far more satisfying than is typically experienced in the commitment-less cohabitation that leaves so much to be desired.

In addition to God's Word, which reveals fornication to be a sin, careful social science research reveals why cohabitation harms those who do it. See the evidence from both Scripture and sound science in my essay, "Is Cohabitation an Option for God's People—Or for Anyone Else?" on the Marriage page of my Web site. This essay can be accessed at https://fromacorntooak12.com/marriage/.

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Church membership ensures receiving the prayers and other support of God's people, whose prayers are powerful and effective. (James 5:16; cf. Proverbs 15:29) Though a church will gladly pray for someone who is not a member, the needs of persons who are not part of the church may not become known by the whole church, or even a smaller number. Each local church has a system for caring for its members in need, e.g., praying for and bringing meals to those who are ill. Those who may have attended the church or even be attending on a regular basis, may have needs arise that no one in the church will discover, especially if it is a larger church. To receive the prayers and other support of God's people, prayer needs are usually listed in the church publications for members, especially in larger congregations.

One of the most significant differences between nonmembers, who just attend the worship services and other events and programs of a congregation, and those who are members, is commitment to the congregation, corporately and individually. Corporately, the level of support for the congregation's mission, vision, objectives and other values (see below) is much higher among members; *they have more of a vested interest in the church, for they recognize they are part of the body*. They know they are doing it (whatever that is) not only for others but also for themselves and most of all, for God.

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Individually, members sense and share a common bond in the commitment to one another over time, a lifetime, which is typically deeper than with those who attend but do not commit. The commitment is sometimes consciously but usually unconsciously appreciated and respected. Consciously, the question occasionally emerges, "What is there about us and what we stand for that John [or Mary] doesn't like? What is keeping him [or her] from committing to our fellowship?" Of course, then it is good to ask John or Mary those questions, but sadly many people are reluctant to do so for a variety of reasons. Moreover, those who cannot or will not commit to the congregation, as in other relationships, usually don't stay for "the long haul." Except for those attendees who are church shopping with the intention of finding a church home, the presence of people who want to attend but not join is typically not as steady as that of members. Sensing that attendees may not be around regularly or long, and not be as dependable, members and others tend to not invest in the relationship, resulting in a less satisfying and enjoyable friendship over time.

Commitment frequently motivates reciprocity. The converse is also true. Without commitment to a relationship, such people tend to move off, or farther and farther from the center on, one's already busy, demanding, and cluttered "radar screen."

Some exceptions to this practice exist but are exceptional, atypical, and rare. For example, a very involved and committed attendee of a church I served for many years answered my question of why he was so involved for so long but wasn't joining by informing me, "As much as I love this congregation and consider it my church home, I can't join while my 85-year-old mother is alive. She's a charter member of the Community United Methodist Church, and she'd die if I joined another church."

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Further, *since commitment is one of the bases of a lasting, rewarding, and fulfilling relationship, it enables members to walk together with a growing level of care that is much deeper than a more superficial acquaintance provides*. As members walk together through the life stages, they share common experiences and offer help in coping with and managing the challenges of life. For example, caregivers for spouses with chronic afflictions, offer understanding, compassion, time, encouragement and a host of other resources, including praying for one another. People need to feel cared for, and membership in the body of Christ meets that need more than in any other organization.

"I have your back" is a nice-sounding saying, but when the chips are down most people don't come through or follow through all the way. Except in the church. Because the church is not just a human institution; it is the body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:27. See also above for other text references.) Recall not just the pleasant words but the promises of God to his faithful people: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5. Cf. Deuteronomy 31:6,8; Hebrews 13:5; Isaiah 41:10) Never forget what Jesus said, "…surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) Notice I said "faithful people." God has not promised to bless disobedience and rejection, which harms the people he loves. See, e.g., 2 Chronicles 15:2; Proverbs 3:3; Jeremiah 17:13.

Membership has many privileges, including *the availability of more staff time*. A person who is not a member will receive attention to his or her needs from staff members, but the staff member is obligated to meet the needs of the church members to whom he or she is called by God, directly and through the church, and who have hired him or her. For example, a member is entitled to a certain amount of counseling from a pastor. Because of this obligation, a staff member will be limited in what he or she can do for nonmembers. The staff members are glad to serve nonmembers but can only do so after having met the needs of the members whose requirements are their priority. By becoming a member, an attendee now has a right to more of the staff members' time.

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Many if not *most leadership positions are open only to members*, as they should be. In many cases the values of church members are different in significant ways from those of nonmembers, especially on some issues that are important to the church. That is often why the nonmember has made the decision not to join.

I observed an illustration of this principle on one occasion when I was meeting with the volunteer board of a singles organization in one of the churches I served. We were planning the next month's program, one of the events of which was a favorite called "Ethnic Dining," where the group would eat at a restaurant featuring the cuisine of a selected culture, e.g., Chinese, Italian, French. At this meeting, one of the members of the board, the only one who was not a member of the church, decided to challenge the church's policy that official programs of the church would not involve the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The other board members patiently explained the rationale of the policy, that the church cares for those struggling with alcoholism and wants to provide a safe environment wherein those with that struggle and who want to attend need not fear exposure to temptation and possibly losing their control over alcohol. The Biblical basis of the policy, the freedom we have in Jesus Christ to limit our freedom due to love and for the sake of another who is struggling (1 Corinthians 8-10), was also explained and applied to the matter under discussion. The nonmember would have none of it. She proceeded to press her point and took up 45 minutes of a board meeting, arguing that alcohol should be permitted at church-sponsored events, when the board had already made the decision not to do so and to comply with the church's policy years ago when it agreed to become a part of the church's program.

The other board members were at first pleased to try to help the nonmember understand and become sensitive to the needs of those who struggle with the difficult disease of alcoholism. However, when the nonmember demonstrated an unwillingness to cooperate with the church, its program, its values, and its understanding of the Lord's will, the board concluded such a situation was neither the wisest nor most productive use of its limited time. The nonmember, who was usually a pleasant person and a good worker in those matters to which she agreed, was allowed to serve out her term on the board. Providentially, there were no other occasions of opposition like this one. The church subsequently made the policy that only members would be permitted to hold positions of authority in the church.

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Not only I but many others have observed that there is a difference between members and non-members. The latter typically have values, theological or other opinions, personnel problems (with the staff or others in the church), or additional concerns that keep them from membership. When such people are permitted to serve on committees or teams, especially in any form of leadership, they frequently want to set a policy that is in opposition to one in place in the church or to set one that opposes the positions held by many if not most in the church, or to change a current policy or practice that has been established to meet human needs and to serve the Lord most effectively. This is <u>not</u> about unwillingness to make necessary changes; it <u>is</u> about doing God's will.

Further, the historic Christian church has always had a standard for determining membership. Adherence to the Bible as God's Word and ultimate authority has been the standard from the beginning. As the early church encountered problems in interpretation of the Scriptures regarding membership, they turned at first to the apostles who helped them define and operate the standard, as Paul did in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. In this text we see clearly that the apostle firmly believed that to allow a person to continue to be a member of the church while conducting his life in opposition to the teachings of God's Word would be destructive not only to himself but also to the whole church, so Paul commanded the church to put the member who had sinned so extraordinarily, egregiously, and publicly outside the church with the goal of not only preserving the holiness of the church to which God called it (Leviticus 19:2; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Peter 1:13-16) but in love for the one being excommunicated so that he would come to his senses, change his ways, be readmitted, and function according to God's will. Without such action, the church and the individual would suffer, and God's redemptive purposes would not progress as well or please him. God will not be thwarted. He will accomplish his purposes; but if he were to allow gross disobedience without it being disciplined, people would suffer unnecessarily.

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After the apostles died and issues arose about specific key theological understandings and commitments, the church established standards in the creeds and confessions, such as the Apostles' Creed, which was likely not written by any of the apostles but was a summary of the cardinal teachings of the apostles in the New Testament writings. When further questions and heresies arose, the church explained their common belief in additional creedal standards, such as the Nicene Creed which specified who Jesus Christ is and what he will do, focusing on the presenting issues, which issues still exist today and will until Christ returns, which is why the church still uses these creeds in its worship and educational programs.

Subsequently, since the Reformation, many denominations have found it helpful, indeed necessary, to write confessional statements called standards of unity, including catechisms, that address not only historic but contemporary issues, the adherence to which results in congregations that agree on the most important matters in the Christian faith. That agreement fosters unity, peace, maturing in Christ, and joy in the church. Since these issues occur not only in the United States but all over the globe, such standards have been developed by the church worldwide.

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Church membership facilitates commitment and discipline, two key characteristics of maturity in Christ-likeness. Many people think they can worship God out in their garden, in the woods, or on a beach, just as well, if not better, than they can in a church service. Of course, it is not only possible but desirable to worship God alone in private; we should read the Bible and pray in solitude every day. (Psalm 63:6; Matthew 6:5,6) However, part of worship includes edification that encourages maturing in the sanctification process. And sanctification, as we saw previously in the Soteriology section, involves serving as part of a body, the body of Christ, where each part is important in the use of one's gifts given by the Lord. (1 Corinthians 12)

Sanctification, maturing in Christ-likeness, involves reaching our potential in our calling from the Lord to serve him. The church facilitates that development in many ways, including providing corporate educational ministries (many churches also providing parochial and private schools) and individually encouraging, advising, and, when needed, gently and lovingly admonishing us to modify an aspect of our behavior, making a change or changes in accord with God's will as we read in the Bible. (Ephesians 4:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) Members receive this caring for the person's own good (1 Corinthians 5:5) and because God has given the church the responsibility to do so. The church's reputation in the community, its helpfulness for others, and its witness for Christ is at stake. Attendees' behaviors do not impact the church and its witness as much as that of members.

However, if attendees do misbehave significantly, especially in ways that become public knowledge, they also should receive admonition out of love in a caring manner. (See, e. g., Leviticus 19:17b, Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1)

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In our interactions with others in the church we experience a refreshing Christ-like humility that we typically don't see in the world. This statement is not to say there are no nice non-Christian people in the world. As God the Father out of his great love and grace, grants blessings to the righteous and the unrighteous, (Matthew 5:45) some unbelievers can have an extra measure of grace that results in their being pleasant people—nice enough to be considered fine from our horizontal perspective, a norm reference—but not meeting God's criterion for an eternal relationship with him in his holy, holy, holy, albeit all-loving and most gracious, presence. Since all humans have a sinful nature and have sinned, we are unable to enter God's presence, and the only way he has provided for us to be fit for being with him is to be cleansed by being credited with Christ's righteousness by faith. Also, exceptions to the contrary notwithstanding, God's redeemed people growing in their relationship with God in sanctification, maturing in Christ-likeness, stand out and are wonderful to live with in the church's unique Spirit-infused *koinōnia*, fellowship.

Thus, in the world we see arrogance, pride, manipulation, power playing, narcissism, one-upmanship, pecking orders, kowtowing, grudge-bearing, and other forms of selfishness. Similarly, and as a result, we experience in the church the peace that transcends understanding (Philippians 4:1-13, esp. v. 7), peace that Jesus gives, which, as he said, is not as the world gives. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

As Paul indicates in the first part of the Philippians 4 passage, sometimes conflicts occur in the church, but they usually are, and always can be, short-lived. Further, when a conflict due to our human sin and immaturity occurs in the church, we have help on the vertical plane from God and on the horizontal plane from many others who will help us resolve the matter. Again, *such human resources are more forthcoming with membership, as analogous in marriage and family relationships, contrasted with visitors in a family context*. *Commitment provides the dynamic that facilitates the effective communication required to resolve conflict*. In church relationships, when a conflict involves people who are not members, members will be reluctant to engage the nonmember(s), and especially be hesitant to initiate corrective feedback, due to the concern the nonmember will misunderstand, leave, and not return. In so doing, the nonmember and the congregation lose more than they gain, and the cause of Christ in that congregation receives a temporary and unnecessary setback.

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Marriages are strengthened and maintained, especially for those who were married in the church. For those who were married with a traditional liturgy, they took their vows "before God and these witnesses." A considerable percentage of the witnesses were members of that church with whom the couple is still in a relationship, and the couple is accountable to them if they don't live up to those vows. *They are especially accountable to God. For those couples who now are part of another church, their present congregation serves to help them stay on the right path*. (See for example, Leviticus 19:17b; Luke 17:3; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:15; James 5:19-20.)

The children of a married couple are also blessed together with their mother and dad. Families are strengthened and blessed in countless ways, each family member individually, and the whole family together corporately. Each person experiences the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her mind and heart directly during worship and in other activities, as well as indirectly through brothers and sisters in Christ in the life and work of the church, for example in conversations while working together on a service project, at choir or music team practice, when being visited in the hospital, or in Bible study, youth groups, and Sunday school classes. *When children hear other adults voicing and living the same values as their parents, they and their parents are all strengthened and encouraged*. Even in nursery little children experience the special love and caring of Holy Spirit-inspired believers in and followers of Jesus Christ. *If it has been a regular part of their lives, that special milieu facilitates the development of an "at home" feeling for which they will long if they are away from it as adults*.

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Church membership facilitates doing work decently and in good order (1 Corinthians 14:40) and most effectively and efficiently, such as in national and international mission work. Even the U. S. federal government has recognized this reality and has sought the help of church organizations to accomplish the meeting of human needs where governments cannot, e.g., by asking international mission agencies to move supplies into areas of other countries to feed those who are starving, whereas by using government channels the supplies have been siphoned off into the black market and/or into private use by government officials and their friends, stolen by rebel raiders, or left to rot on the loading docks, illustrating the differences in the behavior and effects of the regenerate vs. the unregenerate mind and heart.

Similar situations involving human sin that thwart government efficiency and effectiveness exist also in the United States. Thus, the federal government has decided to use church organizations as a means of helping people here in this country as well.

The many services provided by global and stateside missions cannot be done by an individual, and without the corporate church, the body of Christ, such organizations would not exist to facilitate such accomplishment. If a group of people gathered together only to worship with no commitment to a permanent membership, such mission work would not likely occur and not likely as effectively and over the desirable extended timeframe. Denominations bring together the vast resources of many churches, including the gifts the Lord has given to their members, effectively and efficiently coordinating the individual efforts. Interdenominational collaboration and cooperation empowered by the Holy Spirit accomplishes great outcomes.

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Members have considerably more influence on the decision-making of the church. Sound cross-cultural research in the field of communication, the subfield of the diffusion of innovations, shows that people in a social system, including a church, trust and allow themselves to be persuaded by a person who is most like them, represents their values, and is well-grounded in their social system. I explain this research in detail and relate it to facilitating change in churches in my essay, "Defusing Fear of Innovations: Facilitating Change in the Church." Previous versions of this essay have been published in *With an Eye on the Future: Development and Mission in the 21st Century*, Duane H. Elmer and Lois McKinney (eds.), Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1996, pp. 223-229 and the international journal, *REC FOCUS*, Vol. 3, No. 3, September 2003, pp. 40-61. The most recent version of this essay is on the Church Leadership and Administration page of my Web site at http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Defusing-Fear-of-Innovations-Facilitating-Change-in-the-Church.pdf.

The church cannot accomplish its mission and enabling objectives as effectively and efficiently with an amorphous gathering that comes and goes. The following quote from Leslie Newbigin's book, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, links God's calling of his people to membership in the local church.

[A]ll human thinking takes place within a "plausibility structure" which determines what beliefs are reasonable and what are not. The reigning plausibility structure can only be effectively challenged by people who are fully integrated inhabitants…. A Christian congregation is a community in which, through the constant remembering and rehearsing of the true story of human nature and destiny, an attitude of healthy skepticism can be sustained, a skepticism which enables one to take part in the life of society without being bemused and deluded by its own beliefs about itself. And, if the congregation is to function effectively as a community of truth, its manner of speaking the truth must not be aligned to the techniques of modern propaganda, but must have the modesty, the sobriety, and the realism which are proper to a disciple of Jesus." (Pp. 228-229)

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A key reason why Newbigin says that "The reigning plausibility structure can only be effectively challenged by people who are fully integrated inhabitants," is due to what social psychologists observe as the essential basis of relationships: basic trust. The members of a church, or any other organization, know that the challenges from within regarding a needed change, come from those of like mind, who share the most important values, and are committed to the institution's success and continuity. Moreover, in the church is the bond of love that holds the members together, while at the same time permitting the stretching needed to consider opposing viewpoints, all of which are put forth with the positive desire to accomplish the church's mission for the Lord.

Church membership links us with saints and experiences in the past. We enjoy precious memories with loved ones and others we knew who have gone before us, and we anticipate meeting and sharing eternity with the wonderful people God has redeemed, sanctified, and glorified.

We need Christ-like role models to visualize what becoming "mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) looks like in the context of the culture in which we live, with its pressures, temptations, and challenges that we face. We need to see and, having seen, to be reminded regularly that it is possible, realistic, and most beneficial to obey Christ as he requires. (See, e.g., John 14:15-21; 15:1-17; Matthew 7:13-23) Christ-centered commitment is a key personality characteristic that bears fruit for the Lord in countless ways.

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We need to see this maturity over time, and that usually occurs most in members who are committed to the long haul through thick and thin, and which usually outlasts the uncommitted who only attend, often more occasionally than regularly. Members see this maturity easier. Many people are less reserved with other members than with nonmembers, who they don't know as well; they aren't sure that what they do will be acceptable in the judgment of the nonmember. Just as in a family: members know they'll be loved and accepted no matter what they do; they don't have that assurance from those outside their family.

Again, what I am saying about uncommitted attendees in contrast to the commitment of members, applies to those who are just attending after several years. I know it can take time, now as much as, if not more than, in years past, especially in certain locations, to find a church congregation that is a good fit. Nevertheless, if you are looking for a church home, for your sake, for the sake of the church, and especially to accomplish the Lord's purposes in and through you and the church, don't let too much time go by for the above reasons and those that follow.

One caveat: examine your presuppositions. Are you assuming that there is a perfect church? Remember that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:23) Therefore, there is no perfect church here on earth. Also keep in mind with regard to pastors and other church staff members, they come and go; none will be around forever. If you like just about all of the most important aspects of a particular congregation, but not the pastor or another staff member, that person will be moving on sooner or later. The converse is also true; if you like all the staff members, they will leave at some point, but as a member you'll have more influence on who takes their place.

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Our giving is more effective. Well planned by the authorized leaders of the church, it is targeted, purposeful, and joined with others it is more helpful, e.g., in meeting the needs of the poor. Members are typically more motivated to such giving over time than those who don't commit to membership and the congregation's attendant stewardship program. Members trust those who manage the money, who they've known for many years, and as volunteers, the overhead is virtually nonexistent, the money thus going to those for whom it was given.

The church is a very helpful resource for people new to the community, as well as others, who need a trustworthy professional. The Yellow Pages, other advertisements, and people appearing at your door are risky, since insufficient or no prior screening is done, and frequently lead to a scam. I prefer to contact the pastor of my church home, a minister who has been in the community a long time, and ask him or her who is a good plumber, electrician, physician, attorney, etc. The pastor talks with many people and over time hears who does good work and who is to be avoided. Frequently, the minister has hired these people him or herself and is a trustworthy resource for finding the professional who will do good work for you. Often such labor, business, and professional people are trusted members of the congregation, and I can help them in their livelihood as they help me. *As a member of the church, you have relationships, based on trust, which will provide many helpful contacts that will meet your needs, and whom you will be able to help in special ways as well*.

As I wrote in the companion article on reasons to attend church, preparation for the end of life here on earth should be mentioned as one of the first reasons, but I put it at the end, as here, since many if not most people may not read farther if this were one of the first points. Sadly, those who ignore preparation for eternity are the least prepared and find the end of this phase of life most difficult when it comes.

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To do well in the challenges facing all of us in our final days in this world requires a life-long walk with the Lord, maturing in Christ via the time honored means of God's grace, which include hearing the proclamation of his Word and receiving the sacraments in his sanctuary where he meets with his people and dialogues with us, drawing us closer to him and to our church family, whose support is huge when our death, and the death of our loved ones, draws near and comes.

Regarding the sacraments, churches in the historic Christian tradition baptize children and adults in a worship service in the church. An essential part of the meaning of baptism is that the recipient becomes a member of God's covenant with Abraham renewed in Christ. Baptism is usually done in the church, during a worship service, signifying that the church has a responsibility to the one(s) being baptized, specifically to be the main indirect conduit of God's care for the needs of the baptized person(s), most importantly spiritual maturity in Christ. *Baptism is a sign and a seal of membership in the covenant, and the church is the visible manifestation of that covenant*. (Genesis 17:7, 10-12; Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:26-29; Colossians 2:9-12) For attendees of a congregation over time, it becomes *inconsistent with the meaning of baptism to reject membership*.

In many churches one can only partake of the Lord's Supper if he or she is a member, and a member in good standing, as defined by the Bible and that congregation. The congregation cannot be criticized for this stand; they should be affirmed, for they are taking seriously the Biblical warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-34 to protect not only themselves but anyone who might wrongly partake in holy communion and thus "eat and drink judgment on himself." (v. 29)

Further, *when we are members of a church home, a congregation of brothers and sisters in Christ, we experience the monumental blessings of our commitment to one another as members, similar to the difference mentioned above in benefits experienced by being a member of a family rather than a visitor in the home of that family*. Members often refer to the others in their congregation as "my church family."

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

To be the strongest and best prepared, we need to meet with God in his sanctuary regularly, ideally at least weekly, throughout our whole lives. As I mentioned in the companion essay on why one should attend church meetings, especially corporate worship services, as a retired pastor I've observed the very significant difference in countless people who have faced their death and the death of loved ones: those who have given little thought to matters pertaining to God and his weekly worship throughout their lives have a much harder time coping in these situations. On the contrary, those who've nurtured their faith in Christ, and the faith in Christ of their loved ones, do grieve, including weeping, (John 11:35) but "not as those who have no hope." (1 Thessalonians 4:13) Those who are members of a church congregation have additional support and succor.

I have experienced the death of both of my parents, who were wonderful and whom I loved dearly; I grieved for both of them, and also for my wife's parents. I have also experienced the death of my precious wife of 48½ years. The death of a spouse is much, much harder. I have learned a lot in the years since my wonderful wife died in how to cope with this temporary, but still sometimes painful, period apart until we are reunited in glory with God in heaven where she is already! I have posted a brief video where I explain what I've learned that is most helpful, and I've also written what I have learned in order to help others who lose a spouse in an essay, both of which are on the Marriage page of my Web site at https://fromacorntooak12.com/marriage/. The title of the video is "Managing Grief: Thanking God in and for Everything." The essay is titled, "Preparing for Living again as an Unmarried Person: Begin Now."

As Jesus explained, "at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh…So they are no longer two, but one." (Matthew 19:4-5) That Biblical one flesh marital bond is such a deep and profound oneness, that when separation occurs, especially where abundant love exists, enormous sadness emerges. Nevertheless, in Christ we can say with the apostle Paul,

"'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain." (1 Corinthians 15:54-58)

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I join?*

God helps us stand firm in two main ways: (1) He works directly himself in our minds and hearts, a blessing both members and attendees in Christ experience. (2) He works in special ways *indirectly through brothers and sisters in Christ to whom we are mutually committed as members of the body of Christ, the church*.

As a final answer to the question with which this essay began, consider the following story. I've had this anecdote in my files a long time, but it no longer contains the name of the original author; I don't think I ever knew who that was. It is nevertheless an insightful illustration of a profound and relevant truth.

Someone wrote a letter to the editor of the local newspaper complaining about how he had been going to church each week for thirty-some years, and had heard about 3,000 sermons, but since he couldn't remember any of them, he figured he was wasting his time and the pastors were wasting their time. A considerable controversy erupted on the op/ed page for several weeks until someone penned a striking analogy.

I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

Very significantly, in both cases commitment is key. He and his wife made a life-long commitment to God and to each other. His wife gave him those meals as part of his commitment to her, her commitment to him, and the commitment of both to God. How many of those 32,000 meals do you think she would have been willing to prepare for him if he were a "fly-by-nighter," who only showed up periodically, unexpectedly, and without anything much for her? Likewise, he received life-giving spiritual nourishment due to his commitment to God and his church, and God's and the church's commitment to him. In fact, his wife, her meals, and all her other blessings to him were also from God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. (James 1:17)

All of these and many other blessings are available for church members—all church members—including those with special needs, such as those who are homebound. Mobile members, serving with those who have physical and other incapacities, are willing to meet in the homes of those who are unable to leave their residence but who have much to offer with their Holy Spirit-guided wisdom, knowledge, experience, and ability to communicate in such social gatherings and via the Internet.

Think now. Reflect on what a ***huge*** blessing it is for people of all ages who have significant disabilities but who with God working through them still contribute in important ways to the Lord's work in and through his church. Their lives here on earth are not over! Not at all! And their lives have great meaning, value, significance, and purpose. Until they draw their last breath, all church members are able to serve the Lord in magnificent ways. This reality includes a quadriplegic person, who is bedridden; he or she can still serve Christ Jesus and his church. He or she can do so in several of the preceding ways applicable, and always and especially in prayer. As we read and recall in God's Word, "The prayer of a righteous person is effective." (James 5:16, Greek; cf. Proverbs 15:29). Many, and usually all, times pastors, elders, and others who have visited homebound church members come away from the visit thinking and saying, "I came to visit [Name] to be a blessing, and I came away being even more blessed by him [or her]."

Ecclesiology: *What is the church? Why should I attend?*

In this section we've been focusing on the teaching of God's Word regarding the church, those whom God has called to be holy to him and who constitute the body of Christ. Our calling is to serve God, and in the process we receive many blessings that equip us to serve him most effectively. In this segment we've seen that those who engage the process of membership in a local church congregation are especially well equipped and blessed in so doing, now and forever.

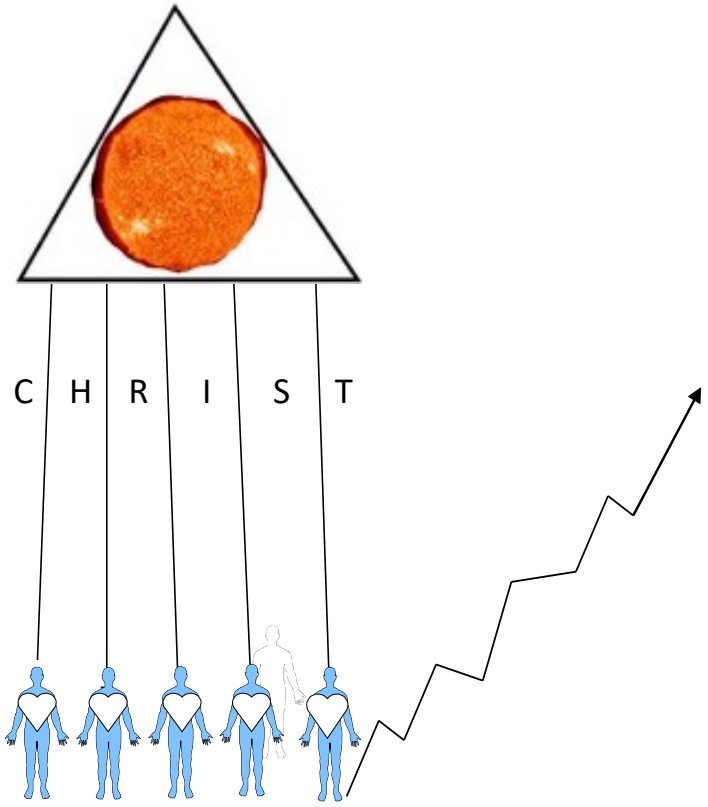
Many additional blessings are experienced uniquely when one joins, not only attends, a local congregation of Christians. For further information on this subject, see the preceding sections of this study on *Essential Christianity*. See also my accompanying essay, "What is the church? Why should I become a member?" which is on the Christian Theology page of my Web site, in the section "What is the church, and how is God using it? (Ecclesiology)," which can be accessed at https://fromacorntooak12.com/what-is-the-church/.

The church in the Bible always refers to people who believe in and follow Jesus Christ, never to a building.

Ecclesiology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Question for Reflection and Discussion

What do you say to young adults who say, "Jesus, Yes; church No; I don't need the church?"



[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

Ecclesiology: What or who is the church, and what is it for?

For more on some of the subjects in this section on ecclesiology, see my essay on that subject on the Christian Theology page of my Web site at http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/theology/. Click on the link, What is the church, and how is God using it? (Ecclesiology) and then on the title of the essay, e.g., What is the church, and why should I attend? Or What is the church, and why should I become a member? Or Empirical Benefits of Church Worship. More explanatory essays are forthcoming; please feel welcome to keep checking back.

Eschatology: The Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

What will occur at the end—the end of my life, and the end of history?

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Eschatology focuses on the fourth of the four main themes of the Bible: creation, fall, redemption, and consummation. It informs us of all the Bible teaches about the end (< Greek: ἔσχατον, *eschaton* → last), involving several main categories, including inaugurated and future, individual and corporate/cosmic, i.e., the former referring to a human being's own personal end (specifically what occurs when he or she dies) and the latter, the end of history (specifically what occurs at the end of time when Jesus returns in his Second Coming)? This subject is important for many reasons, including first of all because it's part of God's Word and that a key aspect of this doctrine for everyone is *hope*. A study of the Biblical teaching in eschatology is primarily about the great hope we have in Christ, and it's not entirely a future hope but one that is already being experienced in part, resulting in what theologian Anthony Hoekema calls "an inaugurated eschatology," indicating that some aspects of the Kingdom of God (cf. Luke 17:21) and the end times are already here, blessings currently being enjoyed by the redeemed community in Christ, but not yet in their fullest, the completion of which is yet to come. This section comprises highlights, implications, and very practical applications of the Biblical doctrine of Eschatology, which already begins with certainty in the Old Testament (e.g., Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22, e.g., v. 31, all fulfilled in Christ). Our hope is thus a realized expectation, which will be fully experienced when our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ returns.

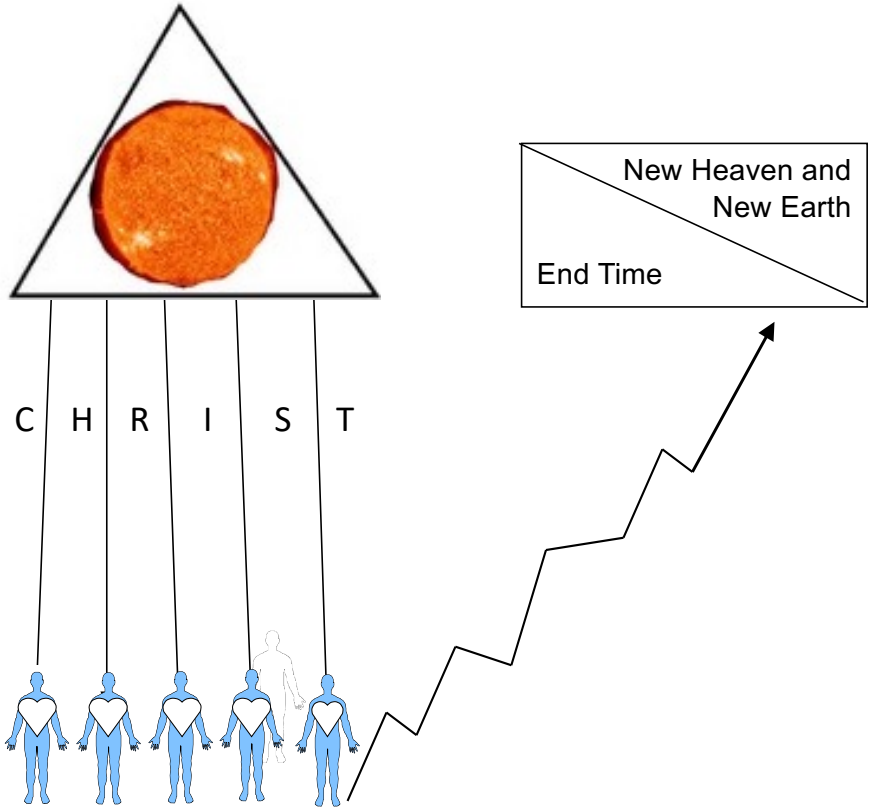
Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

As we saw earlier, the whole Bible is about eschatology, pointing to, implementing, and explaining God's great plan of redemption in Christ Jesus. Three main aspects of the Biblical teaching about eschatology are:

1. Inaugurated eschatology and cosmic warfare

2. Future eschatology: Individual and corporate/cosmic

3. Interpretation of eschatological Bible passages and hope for the persecuted church

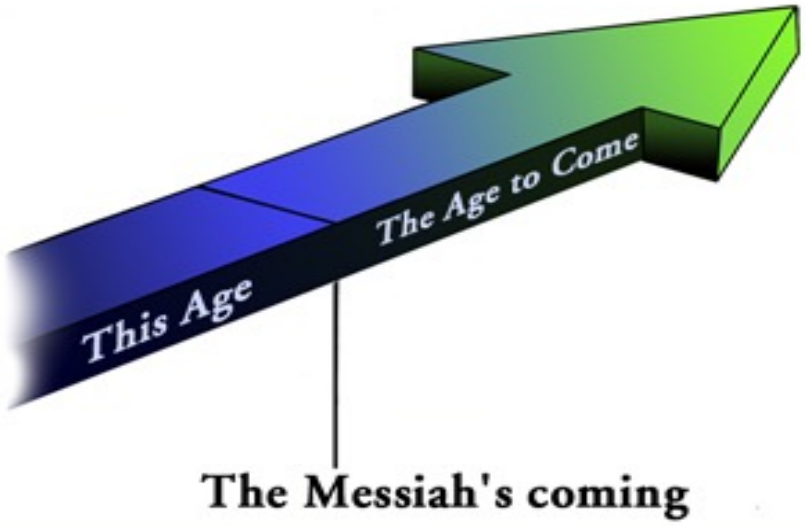


Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

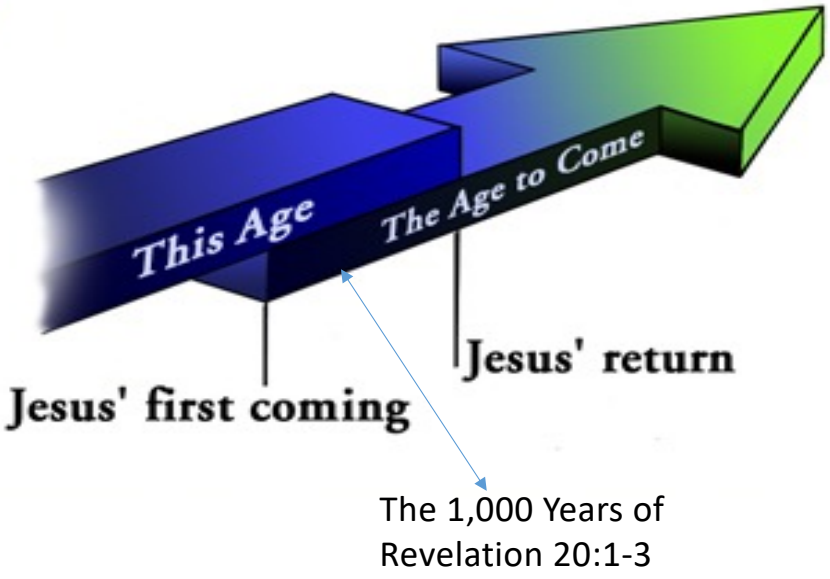
1. As theologians Anthony Hoekema and Jürgen Moltmann have observed, eschatology is at the core of Christian theology and the plan of God's redemption and renewal of his creation. In his classic text, *The Bible and the Future*, Hoekema writes, "PROPERLY TO UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ESCHATOLOGY, WE must see it as an integral aspect of all of biblical revelation. Eschatology must not be thought of as something which is found only in, say, such Bible books as Daniel and Revelation, but as dominating and permeating the entire message of the Bible."
2. Hoekema then quotes Moltmann as follows: "From first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present. The eschatological is not one element of Christianity, but it is the medium of the Christian faith as such, the key in which everything in it is set...Hence eschatology cannot really be only a part of Christian doctrine. Rather, the eschatological outlook is characteristic of all Christian proclamation, and of every Christian existence and of the whole Church." As we saw when we studied the Biblical teaching of the church, the church is the major human means through which God is fulfilling his plan of redemption and restoration of his creation, a reality that has profound, extensive, and very practical implications and applications.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Old Testament View



New Testament Additional Revelation



Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Anthony Hoekema, whose exceptionally insightful Biblical analysis has informed much of what I present in this section on eschatology mostly but not only from his excellent book, *The Bible and the Future*, well explains the reality depicted in the preceding diagram. "With characteristic prophetic perspective, the Old Testament [OT] prophets intermingled items relating to the first coming of Christ with items relating to Christ's second coming. Not until New Testament [NT] times would it be revealed that what was thought of in [OT] days as one coming of the Messiah would be fulfilled in two stages: a first and a second coming. What was therefore not clear to the [OT] prophets was made clear in the [NT] era." (*The Bible and the Future*, p. 12)…"The coming of Jesus Christ into the world is specifically interpreted in the [NT] as the fulfillment of [OT] prophecy." [E.g., Matthew 1:20-23; 5:17] (15)… "[NT] writers are conscious that they are already living in the last days. This is specifically stated by Peter…(Acts 2:16-17)." (16) "Since, however, there remain many eschatological events that have not yet been realized, and since the [NT] clearly speaks of a future as well as a present eschatology, I prefer to speak of 'inaugurated' rather than 'realized' eschatology." (17)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Hoekema continues: "*In the [NT] we also find that the realization that what the [OT] writers seemed to depict as one movement must now be recognized as involving two stages: the present Messianic age and the age of the future.* Or, to put this into different words, the [NT] believer, while conscious that he was now living in the new age predicted by the prophets, realized that this new age, ushered in by the coming of Jesus Christ, was perceived as bearing in its womb another age to come." (18) "We find a most interesting illustration of the juxtaposition of the two ages in the [NT] use of the expressions 'the last days.' and 'the last day.'…When the expression is found in the singular…('the last day'), it never refers to the present age but always to the age to come, usually to the Day of Judgment or the day of resurrection….(John 5:39)…According to the [NT] writers…we are in 'the last days' now, but 'the last day' is still to come." (19)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Hoekema continues, “Because God is the Lord of history, history has meaning and direction. We may not always be able to discern God’s purpose in history, but that there is such a purpose is a cardinal aspect of our faith. The supreme revelation of God’s purpose in history is, needless to say, the coming of Jesus Christ into the world….Christ is the center of history…. [Oscar] Cullmann goes on to say that the primary difference between the [OT] understanding of history and that of the [NT] is that the midpoint of history has moved from the future to the past. For the [NT] believer the coming of Christ is that midpoint, and he is therefore conscious of living between the midpoint of history and its culmination—the Parousia [second coming] of Jesus Christ. This implies that the coming of Christ was the single most important event of human history.” (28-29)

God’s revelation in the Bible that is rooted in Christ and worked out through his church is the only religion in which this work occurs in and through history, including involving other well-documented actual nations. The official literature of all other religions consists only of the ruminations of their founder’s thoughts.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Cursed are you…[15]And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:14,15)
- "The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time [16]and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17]I will surely bless you…[18]and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'" (Genesis 22:15–18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology, a term introduced by theologian Anthony Hoekema in *The Bible and the Future*, refers to God's Word in the Bible that some aspects of the end time have already begun due to what Christ Jesus accomplished in his first coming. An integral part of this worldview we must properly understand to function effectively in serving the Lord in this age, that we need to know about, protect ourselves from, and engage, is the cosmic warfare going on all around us, and help others to do the same.
   a. The Old Testament (OT) eschatological perspective begins at the very time of God's judgment of Adam and Eve, and the serpent already in Genesis 3, with this powerful revelation of God's plan of redemption in Jesus Christ and the vanquishing of Satan in what is called the protoevangelium, literally the first [proclamation of the] Gospel of Christ. Only partially understood in the OT, it is fully understood in the light of the New Testament (NT) revelation.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Cursed are you…[15]And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:14,15)
- "The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time [16]and said, 'I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, [17]I will surely bless you…[18]and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.'" (Genesis 22:15–18)
- "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his." (Genesis 49:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to some aspects of the end time that have already begun due to what Christ Jesus accomplished in his first coming.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective begins with the protoevangelium, the first [account of the] Gospel, of Christ and includes the following.
      1) First is the expectation of a coming redeemer. Hoekema observes, "…in [Genesis 3:15] God reveals, as in a nutshell, all of his saving purpose with his people. The further history of redemption will be an unfolding of the contents of this mother promise. From this point on, all of [OT] revelation, looks forward, and eagerly awaits the promised redeemer.
      a) This coming redeemer, described in Genesis 3:15… as the seed of the woman is designated as the seed of Abraham in Genesis 22:18….
      b) Genesis 49:10 further specifies that the redeemer shall be a descendant of the tribe of Judah." (P.5)
      c) The rest of the OT incrementally reveals more about the coming Messiah.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,… And he will be called…Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7]Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever…." (Isaiah 9:6-7)
- "Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. [5]But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53:4–5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First is the expectation of a coming redeemer.
         c) The rest of the OT incrementally reveals more about the coming Messiah, such as:
            1- The redeemer would culminate in himself all three functions of the monarchy: prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15), priest (Psalm 110:4), and king (Zechariah 9:9).
            2- The redeemer will occupy David's throne, e.g., Isaiah 9:6-7, and rule justly over all.
            3- The names of the redeemer will manifest God coming to his people, e.g., Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) and Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6).
            4- Later Isaiah reveals that the Messiah will suffer in order to redeem his people. (42:1-4; 49:5-7; 52:13-15; 53)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. [14]He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." (Daniel 7:13–14)
- [10]Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, [11]trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow." (1 Peter 1:10–11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First is the expectation of a coming redeemer.
         c) The rest of the OT incrementally reveals more about the coming Messiah, such as:
            5- The redeemer will also be depicted as "the son of man" (Daniel 7:13-14), which Jesus frequently used to refer to himself.
            6- See how Peter summarized the OT eschatological perspective and helped people see how the expected Messiah is fulfilled in Jesus the Christ/Messiah. (1 Peter 1:10-11)
      2) Another aspect of the OT eschatological perspective is seen in the concept of the kingship of God, a major motif throughout the Bible.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever. (Psalm 145:1)

- "'In the time of those [coming] kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. [45]This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands—a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.'" (Daniel 2:44–45)

- "'In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. [14]He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.'" (Daniel 7:13–14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First is the expectation of a coming redeemer. (See also our earlier study of Theology.)
      2) A second part of the OT eschatology is seen in the subject of the kingship of God, a major motif, or concept, throughout the Bible. (Review Theology.)
         a) Though the term, kingdom of God, does not appear in the OT, the concept of God as king is revealed. Due to human sin, God's kingship, his rule, was only partially accepted and followed among his people.
         b) Rather than seeing God's rule in their hearts and minds, Israel looked more to a political rule. Notice even Jesus' disciples' question to him in Acts 1:6.
         c) OT prophets foresaw the day when God's rule would be universal, not just within Israel.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever." (Psalm 145:1)
- "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. [5]No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. [6]I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. [7]I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." (Genesis 17:4-7)
- "'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'" (Jeremiah 31:31)
- "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, [27]for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. [28]There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29]If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:26-29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      3) A third aspect of OT eschatology is the major motif of the covenant and God's introduction of the new covenant through the Prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34), including the meaning of the special word for new (*kainos*) to designate this important dimension of the new covenant and other related entities, such as the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), and the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1). Very significantly, *kainos* signifies substantial and extensive renewing but with continuity. (Review Anthropology, Ecclesiology, and see more below.)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "'In those days, at that time,' declares the LORD, 'search will be made for Israel's guilt, but there will be none, and for the sins of Judah, but none will be found, for I will forgive the remnant I spare.'" (Jeremiah 50:20)
- ""'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. [25]I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. [26]I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. [27]And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."'" (Ezekiel 36:24–27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      4) Fourth, we see the restoration of Israel but not what is presented in a relatively new theology called dispensationalism (*op cit*.) The Biblical restoration is a restoration of the purified remnant, the members of the covenant who have remained faithful to the LORD. (Cf., e.g., Jeremiah 50:20)
         a) Recall the hermeneutical (*op cit*.) principle of prophetic foreshortening (*op cit*., Theology), more commonly referred to as near and far fulfillment, where a prophecy applies both to a situation soon to occur and to an event much farther in the future. Ezekiel (e.g., 36:24-27) speaks in the context of the return of the remnant from exile but with a reference to future fulfillment in the new covenant in Christ.
         b) Notice the references to Soteriology, e.g., regeneration (new heart, new spirit), the work of the Holy Spirit, and baptism, which come in the new covenant in and through Jesus Christ.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: [29]And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." (Joel 2:28–29 KJV)
- "An oracle concerning Babylon that Isaiah son of Amoz saw:… [4]Listen, a noise on the mountains, like that of a great multitude! Listen, an uproar among the kingdoms, like nations massing together! The LORD Almighty is mustering an army for war. [5]They come from faraway lands, from the ends of the heavens—the LORD and the weapons of his wrath—to destroy the whole country…. [9]See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. [10]The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. [11]I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless." (Isaiah 13:1-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      5) Fifth, the Old Testament introduces the expectation of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Throughout the New Testament we read that this outpouring has occurred and continues to occur. (See Soteriology.)
      6) Sixth, the concept referred to as the day of the Lord is a prominent part of OT eschatology, sometimes employing the prophetic principle of speaking of that day in the near term and sometimes, even in the same passage, of it being in the far term. See, e.g., verses speaking of the day of the Lord that refer to the soon-coming destruction of Babylon (Isaiah 13:1-8,17-22) and other verses in the same passage, referring to the day of the Lord in the sense of that event which will occur in the far term at the eschatological end of time and will include the whole world, not just Babylon. (Isaiah 13:9-11)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "'As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the LORD, 'so will your name and descendants endure.'" (Isaiah 66:22)
- "the desert becomes a fertile field, and the fertile field seems like a forest. [16]Justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field. [17]The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. [18]My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. [19]Though hail flattens the forest and the city is leveled completely, [20]how blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream, and letting your cattle and donkeys range free." (Isaiah 32:15–20)
- "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun.
   a. The OT eschatological perspective includes the following.
      7) Seventh, we already see in the OT references to the culmination of God's perfect plan of redemption, the new heaven and the new earth.
         a) Unlike pagan and secular philosophies, the OT values God's creation.
         b) The OT reveals the profound symbiotic relationship between humans and the rest of God's creation. Recall the meaning of the related Hebrew names: Adam < אָדָם (*ʾādām,* man) and דָּמָה (*ʾădāmâ*, ground).
         c) See also Anthropology for more pertaining to the disharmony throughout creation, due to human sin. The disharmony now in creation will be replaced in the new heaven and the new earth with the original blessedness God gave it in the beginning, e.g., Isaiah 11:6-8.
         d) In the new heaven and the new earth, "the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD." (Isaiah 11:9) The Hebrew word for know indicates a close relationship, knowing and obeying God's Word and will. Contrast the opposite as Jesus reveals in Matthew 7:23.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.' [45]Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. [46]He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, [47]and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'" (Luke 24:44–47; cf. Acts 10:43)
- "…he will crush your [Satan's] head, and you will strike his heal." (Genesis 3:15; cf. Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 3:21; John 16:33)
- "…an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. [21] She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' [22]All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: [23]'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'—which means, 'God with us.'" (Matthew 1:20–23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First, observe the NT emphasis that the main eschatological event prophesied in the OT, the coming and work of the Messiah, has now occurred.
         a) The NT emphasizes and explains that, and how, the coming of Jesus Christ fulfills OT prophecy.
         b) Scholars have identified over 300 OT Messianic prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. (*op cit*.) In addition to those in the left column, Hoekema cites several others, some of which are the following: Jesus the Christ's birth in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2/Matthew 2:5-6; rejection by his people (Isaiah 53:3/John 1:11); triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9/Matthew 21:4-5); being sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12/Matthew 26:15); being pierced on the cross (Zechariah 12:10/John 19:34); none of his bones were to be broken (Psalm 34:20/John 19:33); his resurrection (Psalm 16:10/Acts 2:24-32); and his ascension (Psalm 68:18/Acts 1:9).

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you hear and see: [5]The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. [6]Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me." (Matthew 11:4–6)
- "say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.' [5]Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. [6]Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy." (Isaiah 35:4–6)
- "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4]that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, [5]and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. [6]After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. [7]Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, [8]and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born." (1 Corinthians 15:3–8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First, observe the NT emphasis that the main eschatological event prophesied in the OT, the coming and work of the Messiah, has now taken place, and the NT presents proof in the form of factual evidence, citing Jesus' miraculous deeds.
      c) In reply to John's (the Baptist's) question as to whether Jesus is the promised Messiah, Jesus sent John's disciples back to him with the charge to simply tell John what they have actually seen the Lord do, precisely as predicted. (Cf. Matthew 11:4-6 with Isaiah 35:4-6) Paul cites eye witnesses, "most of whom are still living," implying: go talk with them.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit," (1 Peter 3:18)
- "For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. [25]Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. [26]Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. [27]Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, [28]so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:24-28; cf. 7:23-28)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First, observe the NT emphasis that the main eschatological event prophesied in the OT, the coming and work of the Messiah, has now occurred.
         d) The NT also emphasizes that high priestly sacrifice was done once for all, contrary to the OT high priests, precursors of the coming Messiah, who first had to be cleansed themselves in order to make the required sacrifices repeatedly and with the blood of animals, not their own.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Now in those days John the Baptist [1]came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, [2]'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" (Matthew 3:1–2)
- "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you." (Matthew 12:28)
- "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; [21]nor will they say, 'Look, here *it is!*' or, 'There *it is!*' For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20–21)
- "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:3)
- "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world.'" (John 18:36)
- "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17)
- "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Ephesians 5:5)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First, observe the NT emphasis that the main eschatological event prophesied in the OT, the coming and work of the Messiah, has now occurred.
         e) The NT reveals that the promised kingdom of God has now come, but it is not yet here in its fullest. That completion will occur when Christ returns, in his second coming and everyone in the kingdom will live according to his will.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "…this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17'"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy."'" (Acts 2:16–18)
- "when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)
- "Now all these things were occurring to them as examples and were written for our admonition on whom the conclusion of the ages arrived." (1 Corinthians 10:11, Greek, literal translation)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      1) First, observe the NT emphasis that the main eschatological event prophesied in the OT, the coming and work of the Messiah, has now occurred.
         f) The NT clearly indicates that with the arrival of the Messiah, the great focal point of history has occurred, and we have entered the final key period of history, which is all centered on Christ's redemption of God's creation.
      2) Second, the NT shows that what the OT portrayed pertaining to the end time as one phenomenon, God's further revelation indicates it involves two stages: the first coming of Christ and his second coming.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. [11]They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:10-11)
- "…just as it is appointed for mortals to die once, and after that the judgment, [28]so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." (Hebrews 9:27–28)
- "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12]instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13]looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, [14]who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:11-14 NASB)

Meaning and Other Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come and will occur when the time is right in God's sight.
   b. The New Testament (NT) eschatological perspective includes the following.
      2) Second, the NT shows that what the OT portrayed pertaining to the end time as one phenomenon, God's further revelation indicates it involves two stages: the first coming of Christ and his second coming.
      3) Third, the relationship between the two end time, eschatological, stages (the present age that began with Christ's first coming and the second that will take place at his second coming) include that the blessings of the present age are what Hoekema calls a pledge and a guarantee of greater blessings to come. For example, Christ's first coming establishes the certainty of his second coming, e.g., the angels' rhetorical question in Acts 1:10-11.

         + In Titus 2:11-14, the Greek words for appeared and appearing are both from the same verb, which, Hoekema notes "denote an actual, visible manifestation. As Christ appeared in the past, this passage teaches, so he will appear again in the future." (20)

Biblical Eschatology: Hope (A Realized Expectation **Based on Jesus' Accomplishments** in His First and Second Comings)

What Biblical Christianity offers, that we long for and which no other religion can provide, is Hope. Biblical hope is a realized expectation, because it is already here in part but not yet completely fulfilled. The Apostle Peter calls it "a living hope." (1 Peter 1:3)

Hoekema explains: "What is unique about New Testament eschatology, therefore, is that it expects a future consummation of God's purposes based on Christ's victory in the past. George Ladd makes this point: 'Its [the church's] witness to God's victory in the future is based on a victory already achieved in history. It proclaims not merely hope, but a hope based on events in history and its own experience.'

"Oscar Cullmann uses a well-known figure: the Christian believer lives between D-day and V-day. D-day was the first coming of Christ, when the enemy was decisively defeated; V-day is the Second coming of Christ, when the enemy shall totally and finally surrender. 'The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place.'

"[Hendrikus Berkhof adds:] 'In short, in the New Testament the future is the unfolding and completion of that which already exists in Christ and the Spirit and which will be carried through triumphantly in spite of sin, suffering, and death.' He makes the point that the 'Christian hopes for far greater blessings in the future, not because he now has so little, but because he already has so much….That is why hope is regularly found in connection with faith and love, which are both possessions." (21)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"'The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. [25]And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. [26]From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. [27]God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. [28]"For in him we live and move and have our being." As some of your own poets have said, "We are his offspring."

[29]"'Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill. [30]In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. [31]For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.'" (Acts 17:24-31)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology refers to aspects of the end time that have already begun, but the full and final completion of God's plan is yet to come when the time is right in his sight.
   c. The meaning of history is a key question every generation encounters. God's Word answers that question best. We view history in the light of the reign of Christ, which gives meaning, hope, and guidance to our lives and frees us from the fear most, if not all, have who look at human existence only from a secular perspective, the views of which are contrary to the Bible, e.g., the cyclical view that history is constantly repeating itself and going nowhere and the atheistic existentialist view that history is only a meaningless succession of events with no pattern or goal.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, [21]nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you.'" (Luke 17:20-21)
- "'My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. [28]I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. [29]My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. [30]I and the Father are one." (John 10:27-30)
- "Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'" (John 18:36)
- See also Revelation 12-20, esp. 20:1-2.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20)
   d. The kingdom of God
      1) The kingdom of God in the Bible refers to the rule of God in the hearts and minds of those who believe in him.
      2) The kingdom of God in the New Testament is presented as here but not yet, i.e., it has been inaugurated by Christ, but it is not yet here in its fullest.
      3) It is yet to be completed, and it will when Christ returns.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. [12]The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13]Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. [14]Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:11-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20)
   e. A tension exists between the already and the not yet: Due to Christ's first coming, the kingdom of God is here, but it is not yet in its completeness; that will occur at Jesus' second coming.
      1) The Greek word for time in Romans 13:11, καιρός (*kairos*), means a fixed time, a special season, specifically the present era, the end time, the culmination of history before Jesus' second advent. The NT typically expresses a sense of urgency in this period of time, e.g., "the hour has come," "the night is nearly over," "the day [of Jesus' second coming, which ushers in the consummation of the kingdom] is almost here." We must prepare and remain prepared for Jesus' arrival, a serious, very important, matter to not take lightly, especially for his people whom he has called to serve him in the extension and nurture of his kingdom. This awareness is to motivate Godly living.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24]For in this hope we were saved." (Romans 8:23-24a)
- "And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. [12]The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. [13]Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. [14]Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature." (Romans 13:11-14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves cosmic warfare.
   e. A tension exists between the already and the not yet: Due to Christ's first coming, the kingdom of God is here, but it is not yet in its completeness; that will occur at Jesus' second coming.
      2) Walter W. Wessel well explains that the term, "our salvation is nearer now," means the "full realization of salvation at the second coming of Jesus Christ (see 8:23; Heb. 9:28; 1 Peter 1:15)." Wessel adds that Christians have always "regarded the death and resurrection of Christ as the crucial events of history that began the last days [the final era of history]. Since the next great event in God's redemptive plan is the second coming of Jesus Christ, 'the night,' no matter how long chronologically it may last, is 'nearly over.'" (*NIV Study Bible*)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "…this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: [17]"'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. [18]Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy….[21]And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."'" (Acts 2:16-21)
- "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. [2]The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD…." (Isaiah 11:1-2)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.
   f. The OT indicates the Holy Spirit is involved in eschatology in <u>the following important ways</u>.
      1) OT prophets revealed God's Word that the Holy Spirit would prepare the way for the arrival of the eschatological end time by certain signs, e.g., as Peter explained at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) his quote of Joel 2:28-32.
      2) The prophets revealed that the Spirit was would rest upon the Messiah to come. (Isaiah 11:1-2; 42:1; 61:1-2)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. 3For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. 4They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams." (Isaiah 44:2–4)
- "Then John gave this testimony: 'I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. 33I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, "The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit." 34I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God.'" (John 1:32–34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.
   f. The OT indicates the Holy Spirit is involved in eschatology in the following important ways.
      3) Anthony Hoekema well adds that God's Word also says, "The Spirit appears as the source of the future new life of Israel, including both material blessings and ethical renewal. (Isaiah 44:2-4; cf. also 32:15-17; Ezekiel 36:25-27; 37:14; 39:29) Interpreting these passages in the light of the hermeneutical principle of prophetic foreshortening (*op cit*.), we understand this prophecy being partially fulfilled in the return from exile and in Christ's first coming but completely in his second coming.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "…when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, [5]so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." (Galatians 4:4–5 NASB)
- "…for 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. [14]For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15]For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" [16]The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, [17]and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him.*" (Romans 8:13–17 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.
   f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.
      4) Through the Holy Spirit, who has given us the faith that regenerates us, which gives us the new birth (review Soteriology) in Christ Jesus, whereby in Christ, who is the only begotten Son of God, we also become children of God by adoption. In our progressive sanctification, the Spirit continually testifies (verse 16, συμμαρτυρεῖ [*summarturei*], indicative [factual] mood, present [ongoing] tense, active voice—not "one and done") with our spirit of who we are, that we are protected by our loving Father, assured we are always his children with no more of the fears that characterize those living apart from God in this hostile world.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19]For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. [20]For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope [21]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. [22]For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. [23]And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. [24]For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? [25]But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." (Romans 8:18–25 NASB)
- "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. [2]Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:1-2 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.

f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.

4) Cont'd.: In the Romans 8 passage, Paul next explains another aspect of life in the kingdom of God, which is here now, but not yet in its fulness that will occur in Jesus' second coming: our adoption as God's children. Hoekema interprets these and other texts from Paul (e.g., Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 1:14,18; Titus 3:7; Colossians 3:24) and John well:
"…the role of the Spirit in connection with our sonship is to assure us that we are indeed sons of God in Christ and heirs of God with Christ, but at the same time to remind us that the full riches of this sonship will not be revealed until the Parousia." (60) Parousia means coming; it here, and typically, refers specifically to Jesus' second coming (e.g., Matthew 24:3).

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "You are to give [the Levites] the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, [5]for the Lord your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the Lord's name always." (Deuteronomy 18:4–5; cf. 26:2; Nehemiah 10:35-37)
- "…Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. [22]For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. [23]But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. [24]Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power." (1 Corinthians 15:20-24)
- "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." (Romans 8:23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.
   f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.
      5) We also see the eschatological work of the Holy Spirit in the concept of firstfruits.
         a) Since OT times, the term, firstfruits, referred to the first of the produce from the field or from animal flocks, the unblemished best of which were offered to God. The term refers to the beginning of the harvest.
         b) Notice the difference in the NT: Christ and the Holy Spirit, God, is the giver and the firstfruits of the harvest, the fullest of which is yet to come after Jesus' second coming, including the resurrection of the body. The presence of the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits assures us we shall reap the full harvest. (See Hoekema, 61)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "…it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, [22]set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)
- "…while we are in this tent [our present mortal body], we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. [5]Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 5:4-5)
- "…you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14]who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13–14)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged. We cannot forget either and certainly not both.
   f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.
      6) The Spirit is also revealed to be our guarantee of future blessings. The word in In all three of the passages here, ἀῤῥαβών (*arrhabōn*), means a deposit guaranteeing God's promises of the completion of our salvation in the eschaton. Hoekema insightfully helps us see the connection with the firstfruits: "Whereas the designation of the Spirit as firstfruits indicates the provisional nature of present spiritual enjoyment, the description of the Spirit as our guarantee, implies the certainty of ultimate fulfillment." (62)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "…it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, [22]set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come." (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

- "…you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, [14]who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:13–14)

- "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. [30]And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. [31]Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. [32]Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:29–32)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged.
   f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.
      7) The NT also refers to the Holy Spirit as a seal, where believers in Christ are sealed with the Spirit. Hoekema draws yet another connection with the foregoing: "It is significant that here [in Ephesians 1:13], as in II Corinthians 1:22, the concept of being sealed with the Spirit is paralleled by the concept of the Spirit as our guarantee (*arrabōn*). It would appear, therefore, that to be sealed with the Spirit not only means to be designated as belonging to God but also to be assured that God will continue to protect us and will finally complete our salvation." (63) In so doing humans' greatest spiritual need (salvation) is met and one of our greatest psychosocial needs (the need to belong) is met most perfectly.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, [4]and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 1:3-4; cf. 9:5)
- And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:11)
- "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; [43]it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [44]it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1. Inaugurated eschatology involves the blessings that come from Christ's first coming, which began the end time, and also the challenges of the cosmic warfare in which we're engaged.
   f. The Holy Spirit's work is of vital significance in eschatology in these additional ways.
      8) The NT also reveals that the Holy Spirit is involved in the resurrection of the body, both Jesus' resurrection and our resurrection.
         a) In Romans 1:3-4 and 8:11 we read that the Holy Spirit was instrumental in Jesus' resurrection from the dead.
         b) In Romans 8:11 we see that the Holy Spirit is the guarantee that our bodies will be raised from the dead as was Jesus', the firstfruits of our glorious future with our bodies resurrected like his. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 [See above.])
            1- In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, we observe that our resurrection body is no longer a "natural body" with the imperfections of this age but a "spiritual body," yet <u>not</u> nonmaterial.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Romans 8:11)
- "So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; [43]it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [44]it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:42-44)
- "we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed [μεταμορφούμεθα (metamorphoumetha), present tense which indicates a continuing process] into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

1.f.8)b)2- Hoekema explains the relationship of the Holy Spirit and our spiritual body well. "By 'spiritual body' Paul does not mean a body which is nonmaterial, but rather a body which will be completely under the control of the Holy Spirit…therefore, the Holy Spirit is not only active in bringing about the resurrection of the body, but also will continue to sustain and direct the resurrection body after the resurrection has occurred." (66)

9) Hoekema adds another important point: Since 2 Corinthians 3:18 reveals that "the Spirit is already at work in us now, transforming us into the image of Christ, it follows that this progressive renewal is a kind of anticipation of the resurrection of the body. The Holy Spirit is thus the connecting link between the present body and the resurrection body….

In conclusion we may say that in the possession of the Spirit we who are in Christ have a foretaste of the blessings of the age to come, and a pledge and guarantee of the resurrection of the body. Yet we have only the firstfruits. We look forward to the final consummation of the kingdom of God, when we shall enjoy these blessings to the full [and forever!]." (66-67)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. [29]Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. [30]And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31]So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:28-31)
- "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:26)
- "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [17]For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. [18]So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- "We are of good courage then, and are well pleased rather, to be away from home out of the body and to be at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8; EDS translation)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and the world.
   a. Individual eschatology addresses the end of this phase of one's life.
      1) The Lord helps his faithful followers prepare for physical death.
         a) He works through His Word and the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process, so that as we age, we are ready for "coming home" to be with the triune God and all his people forever in His eternal service and presence!
         b) As we grow in our love for the Lord through daily reading his Word, obeying Him (see, e.g., John 14:21), and communing with Him in prayer, knowing what He has prepared for us in heaven (John 14:2-3), who would want to remain here, when we have done all He has asked us to do here? We have no need to worry. (Philippians 4:6-9; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
         c) God gives to those of us, who believe in and follow (truly trying to obey and repenting when we sin) Jesus Christ, an ongoing courage, confidence, and assurance that enables us to not worry about physical death but to fix our eyes on what it means: to be at home with the Lord!

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord

In 2 Corinthians 5:8, the first word, and therefore in Greek grammar emphasized, is θαῤῥοῦμεν (*tharrhoumen*), which means "We are of good courage," the verb also meaning confident. Therefore, we need not worry, in particular in this passage about the end of this phase of life or any of the next, eternity. On the contrary we in Christ Jesus rather look forward to what is ahead. This need to not worry also precludes other negative reactions, e.g., anger, anxiety, fear, lashing out, dread, despair, depression, stress. Also, the verb is in the indicative mood, thus making an assertion; in the present tense; and in the active voice; which means this testimony of courage and confidence is present now and ongoing. It's not something we said once or twice some time ago and now disavow, doubt, or ignore. It's not occasional, fleeting, and ephemeral; it's durative, continuous, and lasting. The great Biblical scholar, R. C. H. Lenski, rightly insists that this is the main point. Thus, we can live courageously and confidently with a worldview, that shapes our understanding of daily events, which enables us to see everything in the broad perspective of eternity. (Recall 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.) What occurs each day is not all that is! Not even close! Moreover, the best is yet to come!

We're here for a while with a vitally important calling from God that lasts right to the end: to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to people who don't have this perspective, who are absorbed in bleakness or in other aspects of unreality, and who have no hope. (Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13) Our lives have meaning, value, and purpose! The context helps us understand what and why Paul adds, "and are well pleased [εὐδοκοῦμεν (*eudokoumen*, favor, prefer—this verb also assertively indicative present active)] rather to be away from home [ἐκδημῆσαι (*ekdēmēsai*, for important meaning see below)] out of the body and to be at home [ἐνδημῆσαι (*endēmēsai*, see also below)] with the Lord." Now walking by faith and not by sight (v. 7), we long (v. 2) to see and be with the Lord and the great heavenly realities in the home Jesus has gone ahead to prepare for us. (John 14:2) Paul indicates that this great wish will take place quickly when it occurs. How? With the verb forms he uses.

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord

The verbs, ἐκδημῆσαι (ekdēmēsai), to be away from home, and ἐνδημῆσαι (endēmēsai), to be at home, are both infinitives in the aorist (a past) tense, and in the active voice, representing the subject as acting. The aorist infinitive active expresses a simple, single, momentary and immediate action. When the Lord brings his followers home to be with him this passage will take place instantly. Our travel to be with the Lord face to face will be instantaneous, meaning we don't have to worry about our journey taking hundreds or thousands of years; or being done again (we die only once [Hebrews 9:27], thus also ruling out any concept of reincarnation, which is nothing like resurrection); or any harm coming to us; or getting lost on the way; or having any detours, such as Purgatory (the Greek here and lack of proof elsewhere in the 66 canonical books of most Protestants' Bible, do not support such a concept). Further, recall what Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross: "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43) Jesus neither implied nor stated that his declaration to the repentant thief applied to him only and not to other believers as well. In addition, we will not be alone: The trip into glory is done in an instant, and always keep in mind God's Word, e.g., Jesus promising, "I will be with you always," (Matthew 28:20) and God assuring Joshua, "Never will I leave you nor forsake you," which the writer of Hebrews applies also to the church. (13:5) The terms, always and never, in these two texts negate any idea of the Lord being absent at some point. We're never alone; God is with us—Immanuel—always and forever!

Obviously, what Paul is talking about here is the Biblical, Christian, view of death, one's personal eschaton, a subject most people, especially non-Christians, try to avoid thinking about at all costs, some of which are tragic. Not at all so for followers of Christ Jesus!

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord

We see here another important aspect of this Biblical, Christian, worldview is the understanding that the home in which we live is a "home away from home." Both Paul (e.g., vss. 1, 4) and Peter (e.g., 2 Peter 1:13) refer to our present body as a tent and only a temporary home. As long as we are in the tent, we are away from our lasting, permanent, and glorious home with the Lord, indeed with our triune God, and with all God's other people, including with our loved ones in Christ.

What great comfort that reality provides! As I mention in an essay and a brief video on the Marriage page of my Website, since my precious wife of 48 ½ years, Carol, died, now many years ago, I miss her greatly and long to be with the Lord and with her again. I have times of sadness each day, but the Lord immediately pulls me out of those difficulties and redirects my attention to what he has called me to do while I am yet here. (Cf. Philippians 1:23) When the time is right in his sight, I'll be with him face to face and with Carol again—he's bringing me through this challenging time well, and he's doing so for all his faithful followers who are maturing in Christ. (See sanctification, *op cit*.)

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord: Therefore, Should I Try to Prolong Life Here on Earth?

The Holy Spirit inspired the Apostle Paul to write these words:

- “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. [22]If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! [23]I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; [24]but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.” (Philippians 1:21-24)
- “Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. [7]We live by faith, not by sight. [8]We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [9]So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.” (2 Corinthians 5:6-9)

In the light of the Good News that is ahead for believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, should I ever take extraordinary measures to try to live as long as possible here on earth?

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord: Therefore, Should I Try to Prolong Life Here on Earth?

Should I ever take extraordinary measures to try to live as long as possible here on earth? These extraordinary measures will cost a considerable amount of money, some of which will exceed resources such as Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance and require withdrawal of savings. This are important questions, the answer to which varies according to individual circumstances. From the time the questions first occur until the arrival of the answers, be sure to pray. The Lord Jesus Christ will lead you to the answers that are best for you and your family. Here are key questions to ask the Lord, which he will use to guide you to the answers.

1. At this age, how much am I yet needed by my family? (If you are young or even middle aged and have young children and a spouse who need you, your answer will likely be different from that of an elderly person who's family is well and doing well.)

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord: Therefore, Should I Try to Prolong Life Here on Earth?

2. What do your physicians say is the likelihood these measures will work? Have you obtained a second or third opinion?
3. Does your spouse or any son or daughter have special needs that your remaining here on earth as long as possible will provide significant help?
4. Do any of the needs in question #2 have to do with his, her, or their salvation? Will your remaining here increase the likelihood of his, her, or their coming to Christ? What more can you uniquely yet do to facilitate the Holy Spirit's gift of saving faith in his, her, or their lives?
5. Will not the Holy Spirit use your life-long relationship with this or these family members together with how each is observing how you are managing this matter and the related questions and any written message you could leave in addition to remaining family members and other Christians to bring this or these loved ones to Christ?

Looking Forward to Being at Home with the Lord: Therefore, Should I Try to Prolong Life Here on Earth?

6. How likely is it that these measures will work?
7. Will the cost of these measures place a burden on your family either while you are still alive, or, if the measures don't work, your survivors?
8. Knowing you are in Christ and will be with the Lord when you die that you will be reunited with your loved ones in Christ, will they not benefit by your decision to not spend the money for extraordinary measures to remain here on earth?
9. What does my spouse think, and what do I hear from our children?

Unless the answers to these questions leads to a strong consensus that you should undertake these measures, just ask the Lord to do what is best in his sight and in his perfect timing.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. [29]Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. [30]And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. [31]So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:28-31)
- "For the time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God: if it begins with us, what will be the end for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17, NRSV)
- "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [17]For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. [18]So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology: the end for individuals and the world
   a. Individual eschatology addresses the end of this phase of one's life.
      1) The Lord helps his faithful followers prepare for physical death.
         a) He works through His Word and the Holy Spirit in the sanctification process, so that as we age, we are ready for "coming home"!
         b) As we grow in our love for the Lord through daily reading his Word, obeying Him (see, e.g., John 21:14), and communing with Him in prayer, knowing what He has prepared for us in heaven (John 14:2-3), we have no need to worry. (Philippians 4:6-9; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
         c) God gives to those of us who believe in and follow, including obeying, Jesus Christ an ongoing courage and confidence that enables us to not worry about physical death.
      2) Observe three key aspects of physical death.
         a) Humans are immortal; the person is a whole being, body and spirit/soul. See Anthropology.
         b) A temporary separation of the body and the spirit/soul exists in the intermediate state. (Matthew 10:28-31; Luke 12:4; John 12:25; Ecclesiastes 12:7; James 2:26)
         c) Physical death never means annihilation, a concept not taught in God's Word.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

What Is the Proper Way to Treat the Body after Death?

- The traditional way Christians have treated the body after death is by burial. (Cf., e.g., Matthew 27:57-28:15) In these times, due to funeral costs and other circumstances, many people are choosing cremation. As long as cremation is done without any reference to pagan religion, or an expression of a denial of the resurrection of the body, it is permissible in the church when rightly done. Both the traditional burial of the body, and the cremation of the body, have the same result: the return of the body to the ground. (Genesis 3:19) Cremation only accelerates the process. The casket, or the urn in which the ashes of the cremated body have been placed, can be buried with the same committal service in the same cemetery plot. Some churches have a Columbarium wherein to place the urn of their loved ones.
- The pastor or other officiant at the funeral and committal service should counsel the family against the popular idea of "scattering the ashes" of the deceased. Scattering the ashes does not sufficiently care for and treat with dignity and respect this body that has been created by and borne the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and was the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The Roman Catholic Church has a very thoughtful and correct policy whereby it prohibits the practice, and it also forbids keeping the ashes at home, dividing them among family members, and the various ways people try to turn a body's ashes into mementoes (e.g., turning them into diamonds and tattoos or planting a tree with them). The church teaches that the ashes must be stored in a sacred place, such as in a cemetery. This is a good policy to practice.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. [22]If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! [23]I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; [24]but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body." (Philippians 1:21-24)
- "Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. [7]We live by faith, not by sight. [8]We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. [9]So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it." (2 Corinthians 5:6-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology explains what God's Word reveals about what takes place at the end of each individual's life and, corporately, at the end of the present world.
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life, i.e., when I die?" First, he or she then enters the intermediate state.
      3) The intermediate state refers to the period of a person's life between his or her death until Jesus' second coming to earth for the final judgment, after which the person enters heaven or hell.
         a) Scripture indicates that believers in and followers of Christ Jesus enjoy a conscious life with the Lord beginning immediately after they die. (See also Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Revelation 6:9.)
         b) When we die, believers in and followers of Christ Jesus are immediately in paradise with the Lord. (Luke 23:39-43)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Since believers in and followers of Christ are immediately in paradise with the Lord, the intermediate state, which begins immediately at death, is the beginning of the full glorification of the children of God, the entering into glory where the Lord's faithful will enjoy being with him, indeed with the triune God, forever! We must keep in mind, however, that the intermediate state is not a separate entity between physical death and the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. It is distinct but not separate.

As Anthony Hoekema writes, "The Bible does not have an independent doctrine of the intermediate state. Its teaching on this state is never to be separated from its teaching on the resurrection of the body and the renewal of the earth. Therefore, as Berkouwer points out, the believer should have, not a 'twofold expectation' of the future, but a 'single expectation.' We look forward to an external, glorious existence with Christ after death, an existence which will culminate in the resurrection. Intermediate state and resurrection are therefore to be thought of as two aspects of a unitary expectation." (*The Bible and the Future*, p. 108)

The intermediate state is the first part of our eternal glorification, but it is incomplete, awaiting our resurrection bodies and the new heaven and the new earth that will come following the final judgment at Jesus Christ's second coming. That will be the second and eternal part of our glorification and the completion, the consummation, of God's marvelous plan of redemption in Christ Jesus.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!'
[40]But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence?
[41]We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.'
[42]Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'
[43]Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43)
- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,..." (Revelation 21:1)
- "We live by faith, not by sight. [8]We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:7-8)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and the world.
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life?"
      3) The intermediate state refers to the stage of life between our death and Jesus' second coming to earth for the final judgment.
         a) Scripture indicates that believers in and followers of Christ enjoy a conscious life with the Lord beginning immediately after they die. (See also Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Revelation 6:9.)
         b) They are immediately in paradise, a synonym for "the first heaven" (Revelation 21:1), that part of the intermediate state for believers in Christ. (See the texts in the left column.) In the original Greek of 2 Corinthians 5:8, the verbs "to be away" and "at home" are both infinitive aorist active, meaning a once-for-all momentary occurrence. Thus, at the very moment of death, Paul explains, we will be at home with the Lord.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!'
[40]But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God,' he said, 'since you are under the same sentence?
[41]We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.'
[42]Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'
[43]Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (Luke 23:39-43)
- "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:17)
- "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.
[30]And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and of the world.
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life?"
      3) The intermediate state refers to the stage of life between our death and Jesus' second coming to earth for the final judgment.
         c) Those whose faith is in Christ are glorified. In his commentary on Romans 8:17, Lenski explains, "We join in Christ's suffering 'in order that we may also be glorified with him,' aorist [verb tense] to indicate the one act, and passive [voice of the verb] because God will glorify us as he glorified Christ. We are to become partakers of his glory. This includes both the body and the soul, the soul when we die, the body at the last day." (528)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. [26]And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' (Luke 16:25-26)
- "Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?'… And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15]Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. [16]Never again will they hunger…thirst…[17]For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;…And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."'" (Revelation 7:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and of the world.
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life?"
      3)d) Can those who are in heaven in the intermediate state communicate with, or at least perceive what is occurring with, loved ones yet here on earth? The Bible texts reveal a great chasm between heaven and all elsewhere that prevents interaction between those on earth and in heaven.
      1- Also, in Revelation 7:14, the Greek for "they who have come out (NIV)" is ἐρχόμενοι (*erchomenoi*), a present tense participle, thus "are coming" (cf. NASB, come), which, together with the context, indicates those in Christ who continue to enter the intermediate state, heaven, prior to the new heaven and the new earth. We see that they are and always will be protected from all, even from unintentional, hurt and harm by those of us yet in this sinful age.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. [26]And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' (Luke 16:25-26)
- "Then one of the elders asked me, 'These in white robes—who are they, and where did they come from?'… And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. [15]Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. [16]Never again will they hunger…thirst…[17]For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;…And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."'" (Revelation 7:13-17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology: the end for individuals and the world
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life?"
      3)d) Can those who are in heaven in the intermediate state communicate with, or at least perceive what is occurring with, loved ones yet here on earth? The Bible texts reveal a great chasm between heaven and all elsewhere that prevents interaction with those in heaven.
      2- However, it is comforting to recall that we can always ask God to let a loved one know what we would like him or her to know. God, who knows best, will do so if it would be good for our loved one to know, or wait for the best time and then tell him or her, and/or let us do so (and it will all be good, since we won't remember the bad in glory [cf. Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 8:12; 10:17]) when we reunite with our loved one when God calls us home. I find comfort in each way with the assurance God always knows and does what is best; he **never** makes a mistake! It will all be perfect!

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- " 'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.'" (Leviticus 19:31)
- "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? [20]To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn." (Isaiah 8:19-20)
- "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. [26]And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'" (Luke 16:25–26; see vss. 19-31)
- See also 1 Samuel 28 and Isaiah 65:4.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and the world.
   a. Individual eschatology answers the question, "What will occur at the end of this phase of my life?"
      3)d) Can those who are in heaven in the intermediate state communicate with, or at least perceive what is going on with, loved ones yet here on earth? The Bible texts reveal a great chasm between heaven and all elsewhere that prevents interaction with those in heaven. The glory of God and the others in heaven will not be destroyed by our sin.
      3- We are also to never ask our departed loved ones or other ancestors for help. Nor are we to fear ancestors coming back or doing anything else to harm us. The Bible is clear throughout every page, that ancestors should **never** be worshiped. We are to **only** worship our triune God! The triune God is our only trustworthy and all-sufficient help. We honor our ancestors (Exodus 20:12; Mark 10:19; Ephesians 6:2—the command does not say only while they are here on earth) by speaking as well of them as possible, not disparaging them, and doing the good they taught us, but not now ever asking them for their help.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

What can Christians say about the phenomenon of "Near Death Experiences"?

Researchers have reported several thousand of what are being called "near death experiences" or NDEs. They are also referred to as out of body experiences. The majority of these NDEs have been beautiful, but not all: many have been very negative and terrifying. Some of these phenomena and/or their claims have been shown to be not credible. However, some have demonstrated a certain degree of credibility. Typically, NDEs involve the person's spirit hovering nearby his or her body and observing resuscitation attempts, such as a blind woman who saw one of the physicians drop his pen and shortly pick it up by a window near where she was observing. Later, when the doctor heard her say she saw the attempts to revive her, he tried to explain it away, until she told him about the pen.

Some of those who have had such experiences have claimed to go to heaven. How do we understand and respond to such claims?

As we've seen, there is "a great chasm" between heaven and hell (Luke 16:26), and those in heaven are in glory where there is no sadness (cf., e.g., Revelation 7:13-17). Moreover, where God is there is no sin; sinful people, who have not been cleansed by the blood of Christ and are not his faithful followers living in obedience to him, cannot enter heaven. (John 14:6) Faithful people who claim to have been in heaven have either been given a vision or a dream, as others in the Bible, but have not in their NDE actually been in heaven. God does not bring people to heaven and then return them to earth.

Further, the term "near death experience" is quite accurate, since these people are not completely dead, where they have gone to either heaven or hell, from which, Biblically, there is no return. Those having an NDE, have had a key bodily function stop, such as no heartbeat for a short time, but full and complete death has not occurred. Hence, when they revive, they have experienced resuscitation not resurrection; they still have their original body, not the resurrection body (*op cit*); what occurred to them is more like Lazarus' body than Jesus' body, Jesus being the only one resurrected until he returns in his second coming.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)
- [11]"Men of Galilee," they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.'" (Acts 1:11)
- But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21]who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      1) The expectation of Jesus' second coming includes many references to it throughout the whole Bible. Anthony Hoekema writes, "The expectation of Christ's Second Advent is a most important aspect of New Testament eschatology—so much so, in fact, that the faith of the New Testament church is dominated by this expectation. Every book of the New Testament points us to the return of Christ and urges us to live in such a way as to be always ready for that return." (109)
      a) Jesus referred to his second coming. (Matthew 24:30; 25:19; 26:64; John 14:3)
      b) Angels mentioned it at Jesus' ascension. (Acts 1:11)
      c) Many references to it occur in Paul's letters and in Hebrews. (Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15, 16; 2 Thessalonians 1:17,10; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14)
- "…[25]I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. [26]And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. [27]And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.' [28]As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, [29]for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable." (Romans 11:17–29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      2) In his first coming, Jesus identified signs of the times that would indicate the end of this age and that his second coming was drawing closer, great events that will precede his second coming.
         a) The calling of the Gentiles: The Gospel of God's kingdom must be preached to all nations before Christ returns. (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10; Romans 11:25)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. [26]And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. [27]And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'" (Romans 11:26-27)
- "Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. [16]But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." (2 Corinthians 3:15-16)
- "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. [10]At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, [11]and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. [12]Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, [13]but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. [14]And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come…. [21]then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. [22]If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened." (Matthew 24:9-13;21,22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      2) In his first advent, Jesus revealed signs of the times, great events that would indicate the coming end of this age and Jesus' second advent.
      b) "All Israel will be saved," i.e., "all God's true Israel, all of it that really deserves the name, will be saved," as Lenski exegetes Romans 11:26-27 and the context. (719) This conversion of true Israel will occur after the conversion of the full number of Gentiles. (Romans 11:25-29; 2 Corinthians 3:15)
      c) There will be a great apostasy and tribulation. (Matthew 24:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:3-4)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. [4]He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. [5]Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? [6]And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. [7]For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. [8]And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. [9]The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, [10]and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)
- "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, [3]but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. [4]You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:3-4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      2) Jesus revealed signs, great events, that will precede his second coming:
         d) The arrival of one called the antichrist will occur. Be on the lookout for him, and be very careful, but don't worry. He is dangerous, but he is <u>not</u> a peer of, and is no match for, the Lord Jesus Christ who is always with us. (Matthew 28:20; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 4:3)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. [4]He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. [5]Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? [6]And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. [7]For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. [8]And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. [9]The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, [10]and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-10)
- "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. [19]They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us. [20]But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. [21]I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. [22]Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. (1 John 2:15–22)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      2) Jesus revealed signs, great events, that will precede his second coming:
         d) The arrival of one called the antichrist will occur. Be on the lookout for him and be very careful, but don't worry. He is dangerous, but he is <u>not</u> a peer of, and he is no match for, the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 4:3)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Immediately after the distress of those days "'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'" (Matthew 24:29; cf. Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25-26)
- "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. [11]Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives [12]as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. [13]But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness." (2 Peter 3:10-13)
- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea." (Revelation 21:1; cf. 24-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      2) Jesus revealed signs, great events, that will precede his second coming:
         e) Signs and wonders will appear. (Matthew 24:29; cf. Mark 13:24-25; Luke 21:25-26; 2 Peter 3:10,12) Using apocalyptic language with its symbolism, the destruction of the elements by fire (a symbol of judgment), most likely refers to the elimination of all evil, i.e., purifying the earth, the refiner's fire. The good will remain. Notice the Greek in 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1, καινός (*kainos*), meaning new in nature or in quality, i.e., renewed, rather than brand new. In Revelation 21 see also verses 24-27. Peter and John would have used another word, νέος (*neos*), which means new in time or in origin, if they meant brand new. God values his creation, its history, and its continuity; he's restoring it, not destroying it and making a brand new, unrelated, world. Christ suffered, died, and rose to cleanse save his own original creation that he loves, which already exists.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:36)
- "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. [2]He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. [3]He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." (Revelation 20:1-3)
- "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)
- "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:44)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      3) The Word of God does reveal several aspects of the nature of Jesus' second coming.
         a) The time of his coming is known only to God the Father. (Matthew 24:36)
            1- Unbiblical concepts concerning the time of Jesus' second coming recur. Therefore, disregard and pay no attention to those who claim to know and predict when Jesus will come again. (Cf. Matthew 24:23-26)
            2- Biblically-based concepts concerning Jesus' second coming involve the three main interpretations of the 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:2-3.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end— the end of my life and the end of history?

Three main interpretations of the meaning of the term millennium, referred to but not used, in Revelation 20:2-3, have emerged since the apostle John wrote those words, the only passage in the Bible that refers to a 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ. The word, millennium itself, does not appear anywhere in the Bible.

a- *Amillennialism* (< a [not] + Latin *mille* [thousand]), the view espoused in this course, is based on the historic Biblical and literary hermeneutics (principles of interpretation), especially on those pertaining to context and literary genre. Since the apostle John wrote Revelation in the genre of apocalyptic literature, a highly symbolic literary form that in Revelation includes numbers as well as colors, names, natural portents, animals, and other phenomena (e.g., golden bowls of incense), we see the number 1,000, as the other numbers in Revelation, as being obviously symbolic, not only here but elsewhere in the OT and NT. Here, and elsewhere in the Bible (see the other loci, esp. Christology), the Lord is reigning now (cf., e.g., Ephesians 1:18-23).

The context of the term 1,000 years in Revelation 20:2-3, clearly indicates the symbolic aspect of the apocalyptic genre of the passage. For just one example, in 20:1-2, we read that an angel came down out of heaven with a great chain and bound Satan. Obviously, John did not intend that text to be taken literally; Satan is a spirit, and physical chains do not bind spirits, but God's omnipotent power, to which the chain refers, does bind spirits, including Satan. See below for more on this subject.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

a- *Amillennialism* Cont'd.: The millennium is going on now, between Christ's first and second comings. Jesus is reigning in heaven during these "1000 years," which term is only mentioned in the 20th chapter of the book of Revelation. Before we go further, it is important at this point to remember the historic principle of Biblical interpretation that no doctrine should be based on only one passage of Scripture. It is also necessary for the most accurate interpretation of a passage in the Bible, to ascertain whether the words are to be taken literally or figuratively. Here in Revelation 20 we observe that John is writing in the genre of apocalyptic literature, which was familiar to Christ's people to whom he was writing (as, e.g., sections of Daniel are written in this genre) and which employs much symbolism. Thus, the number 1,000 is a symbolic number, like all the other numbers in Revelation. What does it mean? The number 1,000 is the cube of 10, 10 being a round number symbolizing fullness and completeness, and the number three, a spiritual number, here of course representing the triune God, indicating that God (specifically the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ Jesus, [Ephesians 1:17-23]) is in full control, ruling over the whole time between his first and second comings, so the church does not have to worry about anything, even the harshest events it experiences between now and the Lord's return.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

a- *Amillennialism* Cont'd.: This was great and encouraging news to the church, which was being cruelly persecuted by the especially vicious tyrant, Domitian, the Roman Emperor in the mid-90s of the first century A.D., when John penned the book of Revelation from prison on the Island of Patmos, just off the eastern coast of Asia Minor (now Turkey) where the seven churches to whom he was writing were located. In fact, John wrote the whole book of Revelation to comfort the persecuted church, which makes it especially helpful now in these days, where the church is being persecuted more than at any other time in the history of the world, more Christians being martyred in the last 100 years than in all the previous 20 centuries combined!

The Lord will reign on earth in the period of the new heaven and the new earth, when he returns to restore all things. This explanation has been called the amillennial view of eschatology. The word amillennial (no literal thousand year period), while correct in its denotation, can convey a misleading connotation that those of us who hold to that interpretation are negative and do not proclaim the joy of the realities expressed in God's Word especially pertaining to the reign of Christ already now. Far from it! For this reason, I prefer the term Anthony Hoekema presents in *The Bible and the Future*, "realized millennialism."

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The other millennial views all base their reasoning on the assumption that the text, and other related Bible passages, can be interpreted literally. Hence, they interpret the 1,000 years as a literal millennial reign of Jesus Christ here on earth.

b- *Postmillennialism* is the view that Christ's second coming will occur after a 1,000-year reign of Jesus that will take place sometime during this era. Adherents of this view hold that Christ's reign will not only be in the future, but it will also be here on the present earth, rather than already ongoing now in and from heaven as amillennialists maintain.

The underlying presupposition is that the spread of the Gospel of Christ will result in the gradual improvement of life here on earth to the extent of eventual righteousness, justice, peace, and much else, then Jesus will return to reign for 1,000 years prior to the final judgment. Some adherents who lack a well-formulated Biblical anthropology, see this gradual improvement coming from a natural evolutionary process.

The postmillennial view has lost much credibility in the last century in the perspective of two horrific world wars, a growing amount of international and domestic discord and immorality, and thus being unrealistic. For those who think carefully, postmillennialism conflicts with other Biblical teaching such as the great apostasy that will occur at the end.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The other millennial views all base their reasoning on the assumption that the Revelation 20:2-3 text, and related Biblical prophecies, can be interpreted literally. Hence, they interpret the 1,000 years as a literal millennial reign of Jesus Christ here on earth.

c- *Premillennialism* is the view that Christ's second coming will occur before a 1,000-year reign of Jesus that will take place sometime during this era. Adherents of this view, who differ among themselves on a number of details, hold that Christ's reign will not only be in the future, but it will also be here on the present earth, rather than already ongoing now in and from heaven as amillennialists maintain.

Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return at sometime during this present age, but after the great tribulation, the great apostasy, and the appearance of a human antichrist, to reestablish the kingdom of David and rule from his throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years. When Christ comes again, he will be joined in the air by resurrected believers who have been living in glory, and those still living who will be transformed and glorified, all of whom will accompany Jesus to earth for his 1,000-year reign.

Much of the historic premillennial view also conflicts with the Bible. For example, it portrays the kingdom of God as an earthly and national kingdom, whereas Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36; cf., Matthew 12:28; Luke 17:21; Colossians 1:13, *et al*.) The passage this view uses its main support, Revelation 20:1-6, portrays a scene in the present heaven and does not speak of the Jews or an earthly kingdom. The return of the glorified Christ and his people already glorified, nullifies the finality of their glorification. The premillennial view is not in accord with NT eschatology. The NT speaks of no third age between the present age or the age to come. On the contrary, when Jesus returns he will establish a new age and sit on his glorious throne (Matthew 25:31), not a millennial throne with sin and evil all around it. See more in Berkhof and Hoekema.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The non-amillennial views all base their reasoning on the assumption that the Revelation 20:2-3 text, and related Biblical prophecies, can be interpreted literally. Dispensationalists (below) argue also from another principle, i.e., Israel and the church are fundamentally, and always will be, distinctly different. Hence, they interpret the 1,000 years as a literal millennial reign of Jesus Christ here on earth.

d- *Dispensational Premillennialism* is the view that Christ's second coming will occur before a 1,000-year reign of Jesus that will take place sometime during this era. Adherents of this relatively recent view (beginning only in the latter 19th century), an offshoot of traditional premillennialism, hold that Christ's reign will not only be in the future, but it will also be here on the present earth, rather than already ongoing now in and from heaven as amillennialists maintain.

The word, dispensational, refers to the theological theory that God has divided up all of history into seven periods in which he distributes, or dispenses, grace in different ways (but only "by God's grace through the work of Christ that was accomplished on the cross and vindicated in his resurrection"). Anthony Hoekema quotes the definition in *The New Scofield Bible*: "A dispensation is defined as 'a period of time during which man is tested in respect this obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God.'" (Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 188)

Dispensationalists differ from historic premillennialism, and also are quite divided among themselves, on several other aspects of their eschatology, in particular pertaining to the timing of Jesus' second coming, i.e., whether he will come before (pretribulationists), during (midtribulationists), or after (posttribulationists) the tribulation. They believe that Jesus will return in two stages. They also hold to a fundamental and continuous distinction between Israel and the church.

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d- *Dispensational Premillennialism* Cont'd.: We should be careful to note that nowhere in the Bible does God mention seven different eras in which he is going to be dispensing grace and testing people in seven different ways. This concept is the result of a theological construct that has a relatively recent (late 19th and early 20th century) origin.

Here and in several other key aspects of their eschatology, dispensationalists err in their Interpretation of Biblical texts. For example, their teaching that God has a separate purpose for Israel and the church is in opposition to Biblical teaching which throughout both testaments reveals a strong covenantal continuity (*op cit*.) between Israel and the church. The view of a millennial restoration of the Jews to the promised land is contrary to the Bible. Explanation of these errors and much more about premillennialism follows and is also in Dispensationalists and Dispensational Premillennialism and other articles at From Acorn to Oak 12. See also Hoekema and the following critique by theologian Herman Bavinck. Note Bavinck uses the term chiliast, which comes from the Greek *chīliasmós* < *chī́li*(*oi*), 1000 + -*asmos* < *ismos, ism.* Thus, chiliasm means millenarianism.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

An Observation by Theologian Herman Bavinck

He who was once sacrificed to bear the sins of many shall appear the second time without sin to those who are expecting Him unto salvation (Heb. 9:28) This Maranatha [Aramaic for "our Lord come"] is the comfort of the church; He who loved the church from eternity and gave Himself up for her unto death, will return to take her to Himself and cause her to share His glory forever. The Savior and the Judge of the church is one and the same person.

This comfort of the believers is, however, remarkably modified by the so-called Chiliasts, who are the proponents of the pre-millenial doctrine. They make a distinction in the return of Christ between a first and a second return. At the first return Christ will subdue the anti-Christian forces, will bind Satan, will raise up the dead of the believers, will gather the church, particularly the church of a penitent Israel and will then in and through this church rule over the nations. After this kingdom has existed for a longer or shorter time and Satan has again been loosed, Christ will return once more to raise up all men from the dead, to pronounce judgment on them, and to establish the perfected kingdom of God upon the new earth.

By this distinction between two kinds of Christ's return, the end of world history is postponed a long time. When Christ, then, returns upon the clouds of heaven, the end of the ages has not yet come, but only a preliminary period of lordship and power, of spiritual and material blessings, a period of which the Chiliasts themselves can only with difficulty form a definite idea, and concerning whose duration there is great difference of opinion among them.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

An Observation by Theologian Herman Bavinck

[EDS Comment pertaining to Chiliasm: What believer in Christ, who has been living in glory with the Lord in paradise, in heaven, would want to return to be exposed to the sin and evil on earth? Moreover, there is no Biblical evidence that such is in God's plan.]

The fundamental error of this Chiliastic departure from the truth lies in a mistaken conception of the relation between the Old and the New Testament. The choice of Abraham and his seed did not have as its purpose to place the people of Israel at some time in the future, or even in the perfected kingdom of heaven, at the head of all the nations, but rather to bless all the generations of the earth in Him who was the true seed of Abraham. (Gal. 3:15; Gen. 12:3; and Gal. 3:8 and 14) Israel was chosen not at the expense of mankind but for the benefit of mankind. Accordingly, when Christ appeared on earth, all the promises of the Old Testament began to be fulfilled in His church. Those promises are not throughout the dispensation of the New Testament merely lying there statically awaiting fulfillment, but they are constantly being fulfilled from the first coming of Christ to His return….His church is also the true seed of Abraham, the true Israel, the true people of God, the true temple, and the real Zion. All the blessings of Abraham and all the promises of the Old Testament accrue to the church in Christ and in the course of the centuries are carried out there. (Rom. 9:25-26; 11:17; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Gal. 3:14, 29 and elsewhere)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

An Observation by Theologian Herman Bavinck

…Nowhere does the New Testament open up to the church of Christ the prospect that they will once more in this dispensation enjoy power and lordship. On the contrary,…In the world they shall have tribulation (John 16:33)…What precedes the day of Christ is the great apostasy, the revelation of the man of sin, of anti-Christ (2 Thess. 2:3ff.)….

But by His appearance in glory (Rev. 19:11-16) Christ puts an end for good and all to the power of the beast out of the sea and out of the earth (Rev. 19:20), and also subdues Satan….Meanwhile the believers who have remained faithful to the testimony of Jesus and the word of God even unto death will live and reign with Christ in heaven as kings all the while (a period symbolically represented as a thousand years: Rev. 20:3,4,6-7), during which Satan has been driven from the nations among which the church is spread out [the binding of Satan to permit the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ and the spread of the church throughout the whole world]…. The first resurrection consists of this living and reigning with Christ; the other dead, who have followed the beast and his image do not live and rule, but the first kind do and these do not have to fear the second death, the punishment of hell; they are now already priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:6), and after the resurrection and the judgment of the world they are taken up as citizens into the New Jerusalem. (560-562)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, [2]for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. [3]While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. [4]But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. [5]You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. [6]So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6)
- "So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:44)
- "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:30)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      3) The Word of God does reveal several aspects of the nature of Jesus' second coming.
         a) The time of his coming is known only to God the Father. (Matthew 24:36)
            3- Jesus' return will be unexpected and be a surprise, and we are warned to be prepared and ready. (Matthew 24:37-44; 25:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Revelation 3:3)
         b) Jesus' return will be a glorious and triumphant coming. (Matthew 24:30; 2 Thessalonians 1:7,10; 1 Thessalonians 3:13)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end— the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)
- "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21]who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." (Philippians 3:20-21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      3) The Word of God reveals several aspects of the nature of Jesus' second coming.
         c) Jesus will arrive in his resurrection body. (Matthew 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13; Revelation 1:7)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- “Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt.” (Daniel 12:2)
- “But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’” (Luke 20:37; Exodus 3:6)
- “For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:40)
- “I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. [26]For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. [27]And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. [28]Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice [29]and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:25-29)
- See also 1 Corinthians 15:20-58.

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, “What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?”
      4) The purpose of Jesus’ second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
         a) Pertaining to the resurrection of the dead, we must discern very important differences between the resurrection of the body and other matters with respect to the body and views of the body.
            1- Resurrection is totally different from the concept of reincarnation. Reincarnation is an unbiblical (e.g., Hebrews 9:27), unrealistic, demonic (1 Corinthians 10:20-21; John 14:6; *et al*., *op cit*.), and thus untrue, pagan concept central to religions as Hinduism and Buddhism.
            2- The resurrection body is substantially different from bodies that have been raised from the dead, or resuscitated, but that remain in their original state while they yet live here on earth, e.g., Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8:41-56), Lazarus (John 11:41-44), and Tabitha (Acts 9:36-43).

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Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.'
[37]They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. [38]He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? [39]Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.'
[40]When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. [41]And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, 'Do you have anything here to eat?' [42]They gave him a piece of broiled fish, [43]and he took it and ate it in their presence.
[44]He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'
[45]Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. [46]He told them, 'This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, [47]and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [48]You are witnesses of these things. [49]I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'" (Luke 24:36-49)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
         a)3- Our resurrection body will be like Jesus' resurrection body with an amazing and presently unknown chemistry and physiological constitution.
            a- It will be physical and can be touched (Luke 24:37-40), and eat substantive food (Luke 24:41-42), but it can go through locked doors (John 20:26-29), though no locks will be needed in the new heaven and the new earth, because there will be no sin and evil.
            b- It will be recognizable (cf. Luke 24:30-31).
            c- It will be whole and complete, e.g., no need for eye glasses, crutches, or wheelchairs and no withered arms or prostheses.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. [14]We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. [15]According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. [16]For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [17]After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. [18]Therefore encourage each other with these words."
(1 Thessalonians 4:13–18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" [20]After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.
[21]Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." [22]And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.
[23]If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
[24]Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. [25]So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"
But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."
[26]A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" [27]Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
[28]Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
[29]Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:19-29)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
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            a- It will be physical and can be touched (Luke 24:37-40), and eat substantive food (Luke 24:41-42), but it can go through locked doors (John 20:26-29), though no locks will be needed in the new heaven and the new earth, because there will be no sin and evil.
            b- It will be recognizable (cf. Luke 24:30-31).
            c- It will be whole and complete, e.g., no need for eye glasses, crutches, or wheelchairs and no withered arms or prostheses.
         b) The bodies of all, believers and unbelievers, will be resurrected prior to the final judgment.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. [12]And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. [13]The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. [14]Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. [15]If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11–15)

- "'Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. [13]I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.'" (Revelation 22:12–13)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
         c) There will be a final judgment that will bring God's people into his eternal presence for his glory and pleasure and for our glorification and joy with no more sin or evil present among us. As Hoekema writes, "The final state will be one of either eternal misery or eternal happiness. All who are in Christ will enjoy everlasting blessedness on the new earth, whereas all who are not in Christ will be consigned to everlasting punishment in hell." (265)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The Meaning of Hades, Sheol, and Gehenna

Excerpts from R. C. H. Commentary on Revelation 1:18

…more must be said about hades, especially in view of 6:8 and 20:14. The word means "the unseen place." It is used as a general designation for hell. It should not be capitalized as is done in the R. V., for we do not capitalize heaven…. The fact to be noted well is that in 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14, "the death and the hades" appear *in conjunction*. In other words, Revelation uses ὁ ᾅδης [*ho hadēs*] as a name for the place into which "the death" delivers *the souls* of the human beings who are damned. Until judgment day hell functions only for the souls of the damned and is thus termed "hades," the unseen place. When hell is mentioned as receiving both the souls and the bodies of the damned, Jesus calls hell "the Gehenna" and "the Gehenna of the fire," and in Rev. 20:14, 15, "the lake of the fire," in 21:8, "the lake, the one burning with fire and brimstone, which is the death, the second."

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The Meaning of Hades, Sheol, and Gehenna

Excerpts from R. C. H. Commentary on Revelation 1:18

The word ᾅδης is used ten times in the New Testament: four times by Jesus in Matthew and in Luke, four times in Revelation, twice in Acts as a translation of the Hebrew *sheol*. The LXX had no other Greek word for *sheol*. Yet *sheol* is used in two senses in the Old Testament: "a place into which one descends, comparable to a belly,"…. In the first place, a study of all the Old Testament passages reveals the fact that *sheol* is used with reference to all the dead, they all pass into *sheol* at death. The context in which these passages occur shows that all the dead leave the earthly life, home, friends, possessions, pleasures, etc., and pass over into a state where these no longer exist. In the second place, in the Old Testament *sheol* is used with the reference to the damned; in these passages the context and the descriptions are terrible accordingly; they now picture hell. It is thus not the simple word *sheol* that is decisive but the description that goes with the use to which the word is put.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

The Meaning of Hades, Sheol, and Gehenna

Excerpts from R. C. H. Commentary on Revelation 1:18

Neither the Greek nor the English has a word that corresponds to the Hebrew *sheol*. Hence the translations given in the A. V. are of necessity interpretative. When *sheol* refers to the dead in general, the A. V. uses “grave.” When *sheol* refers to men who are damned, the A. V. uses “hell.” In the New Testament matters are far simpler, for the New Testament writers wrote Greek and used “hades,” and this only in the sense of the place for the damned, even in Acts 2:27, 31 where the Hebrew *sheol* is rendered “hades” (“hell”). This summarizes the linguistic data although more may be added.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. [12]And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. [13]The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. [14]Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. [15]If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11–15)

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
         c) Cont'd.: Those who deny eternal punishment present two unbiblical alternatives.
            1- Universalism: They say that eternal punishment is contrary to how a loving and all-powerful God functions—but they ignore the reality that God is also holy, indeed that he is holy, holy, holy and just and righteous.
            2- Annihilationism: They say that for the same wrong reasons, God will not permit evil people to suffer, so they'll simply be annihilated.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation **Meaning and Practical Benefits**



2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:12), which will be rendered by Christ Jesus, will be entirely gracious and merciful, while at the same time being completely just, righteous, and fair.

Notice this picture of an olive wood statue symbolizing Christ Jesus' first and second advents. His first advent is seen in his carrying a sheep, portraying his pastoral love that will also be operative in his second advent—yet clearly pointed to with the spear, not a shepherd's staff—thus referring to the judgment that will take place then.

In his first advent, he said he had not come to judge but to save. (John 3:17; 12:47)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation **Meaning and Practical Benefits**



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      4) The final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:12), which will be rendered by Christ Jesus, will be gracious and merciful, just, righteous, and fair.

At his second advent, he is coming for the promised judgment that will resolve all wrongdoing and evil, and forever restore his perfect creation, for which he said he would return. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10; Revelation 21:1-8)

FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR PERSONAL REFLECTION:

1. How can we explain to others why Jesus' judgment/justice and love fit together?
2. Do you notice any other Biblical teaching about Jesus that is depicted in this statue? If so, what do you observe?
3. What Biblical teaching about Jesus do you see depicted in this portrayal of his face?

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? [4]Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? [5]But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. [6]God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' [7]To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. [8]But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. [9]There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; [10]but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [11]For God does not show favoritism." (Romans 2:3-11)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
         c) The Bible is clear: there will be a final judgment, and Jesus, our Savior and our Lord, will be the judge.
            3- For Christians, this is not a day to dread, because our decision to follow Jesus Christ will be vindicated. Since we belong to Jesus, he knows us. As Lenski comments on Matt. 12:32, "The only judgment…to come is that pronounced at the last day, and in its verdict this is identical with the judgment pronounced on every man at the time of his death." (484)
            4- There will be a separation of the "sheep from the goats."

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. [14]For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)
- "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)
- "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

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            4- There will be a separation of the "sheep from the goats."

Christology: Who is Jesus Christ; what is he like; and what is he doing?

Jesus' Second Coming, Consummation

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. [32]All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. [33]He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. [34]Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:31-34)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?" 4)c)

      4- Jesus' separation of the sheep and the goats and final judgment will be victory and vindication for us who have believed in and followed him, having remained faithful in spite of enduring scorn, ridicule, put downs, and other, much worse, forms of persecution.

      - Keeping this coming victory and vindication in mind during such times of abuse, is another way God provides great comfort and encouragement.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. [14]For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (Ecclesiastes 12:13–14)
- "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)
- "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- "Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' [23]Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matthew 7:22–23)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.
      c) The Bible is clear: there will be a final judgment, and Jesus will be the judge.
      5- Those who have rebelled against God, his Word, and his will, will receive what they want, eternal separation from God and eternity in hell, including false and lying prophets. (Cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; Matthew 24:24; Deuteronomy 13:1-3)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

See R. C. H. Lenski on Matthew 25:34 in the light of Jeremiah 31:34/Hebrews 10:17 and the major motif of memory (in the Hebrew mind, an entity exists only as long as it is remembered):

- "In the final judgment (Matt. 25:34) not a single sin is mentioned in connection with a single believer; but look at those who did not believe—all their sins are there."
- "…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." (Romans 10:9)
- "He [Christ] will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 8:3)
- See R. C. H. Lenski commentary on 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 (*op cit*.).

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The purpose of Jesus' second coming is to introduce the future age through two major events: the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. The final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:12), which will be rendered by Christ Jesus, will be gracious and merciful while at the same time being completely just and fair.
         d) We will have to give account for our sins, including for every careless word we utter. (Matthew 12:36) Further, unlike when have to give account to authorities now here on earth, we will not be able to get away with making excuses for wrongdoing. (Cf. Acts 19:23-41, esp. v. 40). While we can sometimes "get away with" excuses now, by such means as deception, telling half truths, and blaming others, as some U. S. Capitol rioters did (one saying, "They made me do it. In that riot at the Capitol, I just became overwhelmed in the moment and couldn't help myself; I was powerless to do anything."), that won't work with Jesus who is all-knowing. We are responsible for our behavior, and we will have to give account for it.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

See R. C. H. Lenski on Matthew 25:34 in the light of Jeremiah 31:34/Hebrews 10:17 and the major motif of memory (in the Hebrew mind, an entity exists only as long as it is remembered):

- "…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." (Romans 10:9)
- "He [Christ] will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 8:3; cf. Titus 2:13)
- "So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. [10]For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:9–10; Colossians 1:10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) The final judgment (2 Corinthians 5:9-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:12), which will be rendered by Christ Jesus, will be gracious and merciful while at the same time being completely just and fair.
         e) We can face the final judgment without worry. Contrary to other religions, including cults and sects such as Seventh Day Adventism with its doctrine of the investigative judgment (*op cit*.), Romans 10:9 and other Bible texts give us clear assurance of what God requires. See also the recurring statement throughout the whole letter of John "that you may know." Cf. Hebrews 11:1.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28)
- "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? [3]Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2–3)
- "To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—" (Revelation 2:26)
- "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Revelation 3:21)
- "I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Revelation 20:4)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and for the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4) Jesus Christ will render the final judgment.
         f) Christ's believers will participate with him in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
            1- Lenski comments well on 6:2-3: "We judge the world now. Paul does it when he calls the world 'unrighteous.' Whoever has the Word of God and rightly uses that Word thereby judges the world, and judges it truly. And in the final judgment at the last day the saints shall be Christ's associate judges. This is a part of their royal rule as crowned kings." (236; cf. 1 Peter 2:9)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

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      4) Jesus Christ will render the final judgment.
         f) Christ's believers will participate with him in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
            2- Lenski continues on 6:2-3: "What a tremendous act—to judge the world! What lofty dignity for those to whom such judgment is committed! Paul always hurls the full power of fact against wrong thought and wrong action; he overwhelms and never merely moves a little. And now some foolish church member in Corinth presumes to think that the saints who judge the world are 'unworthy' to adjudicate in some trivial affair between himself and a brother? The very idea is ridiculous. And he must rush off to some pagan judge who stoops before idol shrines to have his case tried. This multiplies the absurdity." (236–237)
            3- And Christ's faithful believers will participate with him even in judging angels.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? [3]Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2–3)
- "His [God's] intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, [11]according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Ephesians 3:10–11)
- "And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day." (Jude 6)
- "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place at the end of history?"
      4) Christ's believers will participate with him in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
         f) Christ's believers will participate with him in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
            3- And Christ's faithful believers will participate with him even in judging angels. Lenski, citing another Biblical scholar, Osiander, offers an insightful and wise interpretation of 6:3: "The Word by which the saints judge extends also to the angels. Osiander writes: 'Just as we find a law of mediation in the ministration of grace from man to man although the Lord remains supreme, so we find the same law of mediation in the final ministration of justice, the believers judge the world including the angels, yet the Lord is always supreme. In what this judging consists, in promulgating or confirming the verdict or in otherwise assisting, we must leave until the great act takes place.'" (238)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

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Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      4)f) Christ's believers will participate with him in the judgment. (1 Corinthians 6:2-3)
      3- Christ's faithful believers will participate with him even in judging angels.

      - What an exalted position God has given us! What dignity, worth, and honor he has bestowed upon his people who bear his image in Jesus Christ!

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46)
- "God 'will give to each person according to what he has done.' [7]To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. [8]But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger." (Romans 2:6-8)
- "…when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. [8]He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9]They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power [10]on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and for the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      5) The Final State, no longer now the intermediate state, takes place following the last judgment. The final state consists of eternal punishment for those who are committed to evil and of eternal blessedness and glory for those in Christ.
         a) The punishment for those who follow evil is an eternal separation from God who is most holy and who will not permit in his presence evil that offends him and harms those he loves. Those committed to evil do not want to be with God.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:46)
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- "…when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. [8]He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. [9]They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power [10]on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and for the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      5) The final state consists of eternal punishment for unrepentant evildoers and glory for those in Christ.
         a) Those committed to evil do not want to be with God and his holy ones in such an environment as heaven. Their decision to choose hell instead of heaven will result in much anguish and feel like being in a lake of fire, because they will be with others committed to evil that will then be unrestrained, unlike in this phase of life where the Holy Spirit is restraining evil. The Spirit will not be in hell to help them.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2]I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3]And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4]He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

  "[5]He [(Greek) sitting] on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" (Revelation 21:1-5)
- "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and for the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?"
      5) The final state consists of eternal punishment for unrepentant evildoers and glory for those in Christ.
         b) Those in Christ will dwell in the new heaven and the new earth. (Revelation 21:1-5; 24-27) Since all Christ's people by their faith have been credited with his righteousness, we will share in his glory with him in eternal life in God's service, including in his worship and wonderfully blessed presence, forever!

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. 2…the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. 3Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 18No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise. 19The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. 20Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. 21Then will all your people be righteous and they will possess the land forever. They are the shoot I have planted, the work of my hands, for the display of my splendor. 22…I am the LORD; in its time I will do this swiftly." (Isaiah 60, sel.)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end of the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology teaches what the Bible reveals about the end of history.
      5) The Final State is revealed for those in Christ.
         b) The new heaven and the new earth will be glorious! (Revelation 21:1-5,24-27)
            1- We see several indications of a continuity of the present with the new heaven and the new earth but sans evil.
               a- Compare Isaiah 60 with Revelation 21:1-5 and 24-27. The new heaven and the new earth will be significantly, but not totally, different. The main and most important difference is that we will be in the very presence of our triune God in glory and with no sin or evil any more…not ever! Providentially, there will be continuity with the good in this phase of life. (Cf. Job 19:26-27)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- [1]"Then I saw a new [*kainos*] heaven and a new [*kainos*] earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away… [4][God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. [5]He [(Greek) sitting] on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" (Revelation 21:1a and b, 4, 5)
- "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. [25]On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. [26]The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. [27]Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:24-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals the end.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology reveals the end of history. 5), b), 1-
      b- As we saw previously in our study of the covenant, the Greek word translated new in Revelation 21:1 and 5 is also καινός (*kainos*), which means new in nature or in quality, i.e., <u>renewed</u>, **<u>not</u>** new in time or origin, νέος (*neos*), i.e., <u>brand new</u>. The new heaven and the new earth will be God's perfect creation restored and much more, without the sin, evil, corruption, and disharmony that Adam's and Eve's disobedience brought to God's original creation and that we are now enduring until Christ Jesus returns.
      c- Thus, as we reconnect with our spouse (though no longer married [Matthew 22:30]), family, other loved ones, and friends in and with Christ, we will remember and cherish the good in the previous part of our relationship with them in this age, but we will not remember our sins and other unpleasant aspects of our time together in this phase of life here on earth. And there is more:
      d- The continuity denoted by *kainos* has powerful implications for both phases of life as explained by Anthony A. Hoekema.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Having explained the significance of the word, *kainos*, as mentioned on the previous slide, Anthony Hoekema, in his excellent book, *The Bible and the Future,* states that in Revelation 21:3 with no sin on the new (*kainos*) earth the dwelling place of God will be with his people, thus the new (*kainos*) heaven and new (*kainos*) earth will be united, "Since," Hoekema continues, "where God dwells, there heaven is, we conclude that in the life to come heaven and earth will no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be merged. Believers will therefore continue to be in heaven as they continue to live on the new earth." (Pp. 284-285)

He then makes this encouraging and compelling application:

"The doctrine of the new earth should give us hope, courage, and optimism in a day of widespread despair. Though evil is rampant in this world, it is comforting to know that Christ has won the final victory. Whereas ecologists often picture the future of this earth in gloomy terms, it is encouraging to know that some day God will create a glorious new earth on which the ecological problems which now plague us will no longer exist. This does not imply that we need do nothing about these problems, but it does mean that we work for solutions to these problems, not with a feeling of despair, but in the confidence of hope.

"…there will be continuity as well as discontinuity between this age and the next, and between this earth and the new earth. This point is extremely important. As citizens of God's kingdom, we may not just write off the present earth as a total loss, or rejoice in its deterioration. We must indeed be working for a better world now. Our efforts to bring the kingdom of Christ into fuller manifestation are of eternal significance. Our Christian life today, our struggles against sin—both individual and institutional—our mission work, our attempt to develop and promote a distinctively Christian culture, have value not only for this world but even for the world to come.

Continued…

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

"As we live on this earth, we are preparing for life on God's new earth. Through our kingdom service the building materials for that new earth are now being gathered. Bibles are being translated, peoples are being evangelized, believers are being renewed, and cultures are being transformed. [Cf. Revelation 21:24-27] Only eternity will reveal the full significance of what has been done for Christ here.

"At the beginning of history God created the heavens and the earth. At the end of history we see the new heavens and the new earth, which will far surpass in splendor all that we have seen before. At the center of history is the Lamb that was slain, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Someday we shall cast all our crowns before him, 'lost in wonder, love, and praise.'" (Pp. 286-287)

- Notice the application for our work urging Christians to engage the public square, in particular the importance, rationale, encouragement, and eternal outcomes of our doing so. *Our work now has eternal significance! God will not only remember and reward but use the good work we do here in this first phase of our lives on the original earth but also in the new heaven and the new earth.*
- How's that for a solid basis for establishing an unshakable sense of self-worth?! At this writing the four top problems people face are stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Think about how the Biblical worldview Hoekema explained would lift the spirits of those who are struggling with these as well as the other problems of this age and give them great hope! Consider the implications for teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and serving God in the public square.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- [1]"Then I saw a new (*kainos*) heaven and a new (*kainos*) earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away… [4][God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. [5]He [(Greek) sitting] on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.'" (Revelation 21:1a and b, 4, 5)
- "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. [25]On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. [26]The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. [27]Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Revelation 21:24-27)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?" 5), b), 1-
      d- Thus, the continuity denoted by *kainos* with its powerful implications for both phases of life—on the first earth now and in the new (*kainos*) earth and new (*kainos*) heaven—as explained by Hoekema, gives great meaning and hope to our lives, for those of us who believe in and follow Christ!
      e- Pertaining to the resurrection, we see Biblical evidence of continuity, as Herman Bavinck explains on the next slide.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Pertaining to the resurrection, Bavinck insightfully observes,

"In that resurrection the unity of the person, both according to soul and body, is preserved... [However],many teach the immortality of the soul only in the sense that the spirit of man lives on, but without any preservation of the unity of his consciousness. But this is to forfeit immortality altogether, for if self-awareness and memory are completely broken off at death, the person who lives on is no longer the same as the one who lived on earth."

This self-consciousness of the human being, however, includes the possession of a body as well as a soul. The body is not a prison of the spirit, but belongs to the essence of man. That is why it is redeemed just as well as the soul by Christ, the perfect Savior. The whole man was created after the image of God and the whole man was corrupted; hence the whole man is redeemed from sin and death by Christ, is recreated after God's image, and is ushered into His kingdom. But the body which the believers receive at the resurrection corresponds to the earthly body, not in external form, in accidental characteristics, in material quantity, but only in essence. It is not a natural, but a physical body. It is raised above sexual life (Matt. 22:30), above the need for food and drink (1 Cor. 6:13). It is immortal, incorruptible, spiritualized, and glorified (1 Cor. 15:42-44), and it is conformed to the body of Christ as it was after His resurrection (Phil. 3:21)." (563)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "And he [God] made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, [10]to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." (Ephesians 1:9-10)
- "For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him [Christ Jesus], [20]and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made [Greek, aorist (past) tense: historical, once for all, permanent and to be brought to completion in Christ's second coming] peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven." (Colossians 1:19–20 NASB)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

2. Future Eschatology reveals what will occur at the end of this phase of life for individuals and the world.
   b. Corporate/cosmic eschatology answers the question, "What will take place for the whole world at the end of history?" 5), b),
      2- We thus see history moving toward a purpose, as Hoekema writes, "toward the goal of a finally restored and glorified universe. This does not mean we can always see exactly how every historical event is related to the goal of history….
      "It does mean, however, that as we read the headlines, listen to the news, and read the news-magazines we are to believe that the God of history is always in control, and that history is moving steadily toward its [his] goal."
      3- Therefore, again, ***do not be afraid***! (Cf. John 14:1,27)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

3. Interpretation of more eschatological Bible passages and hope for the persecuted church

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
[2]The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him…
[3]and he will delight in the fear of the Lord…
[4]but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
[5]Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
[6]The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them." (Isaiah 11:1-6; cf. 7-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

a. At Advent and Christmas, we celebrate the focal point of God's just resolution of our human plight in the life and work of the Messiah. Passages such as Isaiah 11:1-9, actually refer to both his first and his second advent, the latter being the time where he will judge with righteousness and with justice and bring a new heaven and a new earth, where "the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together…[and where he] will wipe every tear from [our] eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things [will have] passed away." (v. 6, Revelation 21:4)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. [29]Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30]For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)
- "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33; cf. Revelation 3:12 and other related passages.)
- "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. [17]For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. [18]So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16–18)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

b. In the John 16:33 passage, noting the meaning of two Greek words is helpful. The word for "world," κόσμος (*kosmos*), means the whole world, including with all its evil. The word Jesus used for "overcome," is νενίκηκα (*nenikēka*) and means "I have conquered." Jesus has conquered Satan and the demonic forces generating the evil that we are battling daily in the spiritual war in which we're involved. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20) How comforting it is to know that our Lord has won the war! The current battles are just the "mopping up phase." Everything is under his control and we know the final outcome.

   - For added joy: memorize these comforting words! Be sure to read a portion of God's Word and pray every day.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

"God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
[2]Therefore we will not fear,…" (Psalm 46:1-2a)

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
[2]The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him…
[3]and he will delight in the fear of the Lord…
[4]but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
[5]Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
[6]The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them." (Isaiah 11:1-6; cf. 7-9)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

c. In the meantime, "God is a very present help in the time of trouble…" directly in the lives of those involved and through his church, the body of Christ. What good news!

d. Christ's first coming is the greatest demonstration of God's goodness and his true love which is just and righteous (Isaiah 11:1-3a; John 3:16),

e. and his second coming will eternally eliminate evil from the lives of his people. The theodicy question is not only answered; it is resolved forever! (Isaiah 11:3b-9; Revelation 21)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2]I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. [3]And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. [4]He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" (Revelation 21:1-4)
- "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. [25]On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. [26]The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it." (Revelation 21:24-26)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

f. What a huge joy it is to know that our greatest blessings are still to come including being in God's very presence and service with our loved ones in Christ, together with all God's other people, forever!

g. With this great comfort we shape our worldview and the perspective in which we view everything in this phase of life, all of which gives us great hope—Biblical hope never being a fanciful wish but always rather—a realized expectation firmly on our faith's strong basis in the risen and reigning Christ Jesus, faith being "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Hebrews 11:1)

h. This wonderful revelation of God's will and plan for his people's future frees us from fear of death and other worries. Contrary to most people, who cannot think about their death and what follows, we believers in and followers of Jesus Christ can make early distributions ourselves and plans such as a will, or even a living trust, so our family knows our wishes and precisely what to do when we die. The transition all goes smoothly and relieves them of a burden in managing the final distribution of our estate and the proper completion of our responsibilities.

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Doctrine of the Last Things, Consummation

NOTE: All the words translated "new" in the verses that follow are *kainos* in the original Greek.

- "'The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'" (Hebrews 8:8, quoting Jeremiah 31:31 [38:31 in the LXX])
- "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. [2]I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God," (Revelation 21:1-2; Isaiah 65:17; 66:22 [LXX]; cf. Job 19:26-27)
- "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it." (Revelation 2:17)

Meaning and Practical Benefits

i. For a firm foundation for a constant bright and optimistic perspective on the future, keep in mind the continuity between the good of the present and the glory of the future that is denoted by *kainos*, the renewed realities we enjoy to a limited extent already in Christ that will be glorified in the new heaven and the new earth. Consider the examples that follow.

1) The new covenant (Hebrews 8:8, quoting Jeremiah 31:31 [38:31 in the LXX, the Greek translation of the OT])
2) The new heaven and the new earth (Isaiah 66:22; Revelation 21:1)
3) New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2)
4) The new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
5) A new name (Revelation 2:17)

Eschatology: What will occur at the end—the end of my life and the end of history?

Consummation

Doctrine of the Last Things

In Christ Jesus' first and second advents we see the beginning and the conclusion, respectively, of what the Bible and Christian theology call the end time or the end of the ages. (Hebrews 9:26) This is the consummation of God's plan to restore his creation.

Jesus' first advent reveals his perfect divine-human and sacrificial love. That love will also be operative in his second advent. In his first advent, he said he had not come to judge but to save. (John 3:17; 12:47)

At his second advent, he is coming for the promised judgment that will resolve all wrongdoing and evil, and forever restore his perfect creation, for which he said he would return. His love is seen in providing a new (*kainos*) heaven and a new (*kainos*, i.e., not brand new [*neos*] but renewed [*kainos*] and fulfilled, having continuity with the good in the original) earth in which God will again dwell with his faithful covenant believers in eternal glory where there is no more sin, evil, death, mourning, crying, or pain. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 21:1-8,24-27)

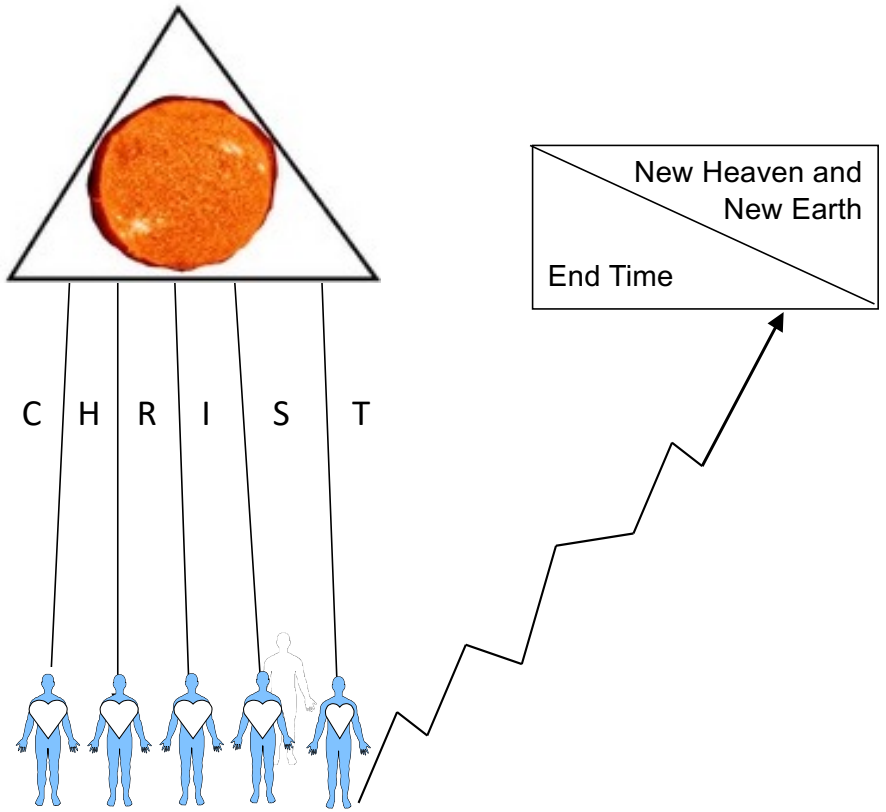
Meaning and Practical Benefits



Eschatology: What are some of the practical implications and applications of this doctrine?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Cite some very practical blessings for God's people in the doctrine of eschatology.
2. What do you personally find most helpful about the Biblical doctrine of eschatology?



[If time: Start in groups of four, then debrief in the large group. If time is short: begin in dyads, then ask for volunteers to share with the whole group what they think.]

The Six Main Themes of the Bible

A Matching Task

A helpful way to teach students the six main loci of historic Christian systematic theology is to use an activity, where their minds and actions are engaged. It can even be made into a game.

1. As a simple activity for yourself or for individuals, make copies of the chart at the right and ask the students to draw lines connecting the theme with its correct meaning.
2. To use this task as a game, divide the class into groups of four, and give each group of four one of these charts. Ask them to tear the chart into 12 cards and spread them out on a table but keeping them mixed up. Tell them that when you say "Go!" they are to line up the theme cards in their correct, logical, system order and then match each meaning card with its correct corresponding theme card.
3. Use this activity as a pre-course and post-course activity, the former to introduce the course and as an indicator of how much the class already knows about the subject, and the latter as a review and as an assessment of how well the class learned.

Correct matches: 1E, 2D, 3B, 4F, 5C, 6A.

Theme	Meaning
Theology 1	What the Bible teaches about the end of our personal life and about the end of history A
Anthropology 2	What the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ B
Christology 3	What the Bible teaches about the church, whom God has called to be holy to Him C
Soteriology 4	What the Bible Teaches about human beings D
Ecclesiology 5	What the Bible teaches about the triune God, who He is, what He is like, and His purposes E
Eschatology 6	What the Bible teaches about the application of Christ's redemption for salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit F

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Further information on each of the subjects in this presentation is available on my Websites at www.fromacorntooak12.com or www.edwardseely.com and https://seelyedward.academia.edu/ on the Christian Theology page.

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