

“Basic Theology”

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The Bible

Revelation- the belief that God has made Himself known through creation and the conscience (*general revelation*) and through His Word (*special revelation*)

God has revealed general characteristics about His existence, power, holiness, beauty, and perfection, among others, through His created order and in the conscience of man.

- **General Revelation in Creation**

Psalm 19:1-2

(All that is around man in creation points to a Creator [the vastness of the universe, the smallness of atomic particles, the wonder of a sunset, the complexity of the human eye, the diversity and beauty of created things, etc.])

*“The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.”*

Romans 1:18-20

(Inside man is a knowledge of the power and eternal attributes of God.)

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

- **General Revelation in the Conscience**

Genesis 1:26-27

(The fact that man is created in the image of God means that he himself is a blueprint pointing to His Creator, in some ways even mirroring the characteristics of the Creator [ability to reason, exercise a will, appreciate beauty, create things, etc.])

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Ecclesiastes 3:11

(Man is aware that he is an eternal being.)

“He has made everything appropriate in its time He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.”

Romans 1:32

(Man is aware of God’s expectations of morality and of the consequences of not following His laws.)

“and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

- **Special Revelation in the Bible**

Hebrews 1:1-2

(God has spoken to man in ways other than creation and conscience. He has spoken through prophets, directly to the patriarchs of Israel, and then through Jesus to the disciples and apostles.)

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

Hebrews 4:12

(The Bible testifies of itself that it is the Word of God and very powerful.)

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

To best understand special revelation, there are some key terms that relate.

Inspiration- the belief that Scripture is literally God-breathed and from the mouth of God

- human authors were used, personalities were preserved, but all Scripture is written and constructed exactly as God intended it to be
- it was from the prompting and working of the Spirit and not as an act of human volition

- though a Scripture may have several layers of meaning or contain a prophetic element in addition to its immediate exhortation, there is always only one intended interpretation
- Scripture may have many applications, but it has only one true interpretation

2 Timothy 3:16

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness."

2 Peter 1:20-21 (ESV)

"knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

Inerrancy- in the original manuscripts, no errors of any kind were made (not grammatically, geographically, logically, historically, mathematically, etc.)

Matthew 5:18

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Revelation 22:18-19

"I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."

- if God wants to give man specific, direct, special revelation, then He can do it in consistency with His character of perfection, not making any mistakes

Deuteronomy 32:4

*"The Rock! His work is perfect,
For all His ways are just;
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,
Righteous and upright is He."*

2 Samuel 22:31

*"As for God, His way is blameless;
The word of the LORD is tested;
He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."*

Authority- Scripture is to stand in judgment of man, not man in judgment of it

-mankind is subject to the laws and principles given in the Word

Psalm 119:11

*“Your word I have treasured in my heart,
That I may not sin against You.”*

John 17:17

“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

Psalm 119:57

“The LORD is my portion; I have promised to keep Your words.”

Canonicity- the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are the only inspired books

-what books are inspired have been determined by God, and the church fathers only discovered which ones were indeed inspired; the books are not inspired because church fathers voted on them with much prayer and discernment but because God made them inspired

-inspiration was determined by the Holy Spirit sovereignly working through men of early church councils to discover accurately the inspired books

-most carry no doubt of their inspiration because they make claims of their own authority and inspiration

the apocrypha- those books not included in the Protestant Bible but in the Catholic Bible

-most have historical errors, they do not claim inspiration, they do not speak with authority about God and His message, they contain verses that contradict other Scriptural truths, and the New Testament writers do not quote from the apocrypha

-all Old Testament books are quoted from in the New Testament

Sufficiency- Scripture is the only infallible guide whereby one can evaluate scientific claims, tradition, and history; the others are useful but they are never to stand over the Word of God in authority; the preaching, reading, and applying of Scripture is sufficient for all matters of Christian growth, life, and behavior; Scripture can stand on its own- it does not need science, psychology, or other “ologies” to give it credibility

Colossians 2:3

“In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

1 Peter 1:25

“BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER. And this is the word which was preached to you.”

Psalm 119:105

*“Your word is a lamp to my feet
And a light to my path.”*

2 Timothy 3:17

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

The Trinity

Trinity- There is one God, eternally existing in three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal in nature, power and glory.

Scriptural Evidence for the Trinity

- **First, we must note that there are in fact three Members.**

Matthew 28:19

(This makes it clear that there are three members of the Godhead.)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Genesis 1:26-27

(This is further evidence of the plurality of the Godhead. God refers to Himself while in the creative act as "Us.")

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

Genesis 3:22

(Yet more evidence of plurality.)

"Then the LORD God said, 'Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.'"

That there is plurality to the Godhead is obvious throughout Scripture. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are referenced to over and over again. This is no surprise since the story of the world is all about God.

The sticky part comes when people try to say that, though there are three members, they are distinct and not one and the same. Correct Biblical belief is that they are one essence but have three different manifestations and roles. False belief is anything which says that the members of the Trinity are not all the one and same God.

- **Scripture makes it clear that Jesus is God.**

John 10:30

“I and the Father are one.”

This is as blatant of a claim of Deity as Jesus can make. The Jews, who considered Him a blasphemer for equating Himself with God, picked up stones to throw at Him (John 10:31). The Jews had no doubt as to what He was trying to say, and neither should we. In fact, the central message of the gospel of John is that Jesus was God.

John 1:1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

The literal translation is that “God was the Word.” In other words, John’s first statement is that God is Jesus. They are one and the same. This is John’s message.

Colossians 2:9

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”

This is another obvious statement as to the Deity of Christ. There is no question that Jesus was God in bodily form. He was fully God and yet fully man at the same time, another brain teaser. Yet this is what the Scripture indicates and certainly God could do it. Indeed, He did.

- **Scripture makes it clear that Jesus and God have different roles.**

The Father is clearly the final authority and master of the universe. At present, it is Christ’s job to “bring all things into subjection under His [the Father’s] feet” (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). Our minds might say, well if Jesus is one with the Father, aren’t they doing it together? In some mystical way they probably are, but it is also clear that they are not. Each is doing something separate. For example, the Father did not die on the cross, but “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” to die on the cross (John 3:16). There are different roles, but somehow when we have seen Christ, we have seen the Father also (John 14:9). It is a divine mystery, yet one we must embrace. Jesus is God, and yet Father and Son have different roles as well.

- **The Holy Spirit is also God.**

Scripture says that the Holy Spirit indwells each and every believer.

1 Corinthians 6:19

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

Yet, John 14:23 says that the Father and the Son make their home in the believer also.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’”

The conclusion is that the Holy Spirit also is God, one and the same in nature and essence. All three indwell the believer. It is an amazing truth, that the God who created the world indwells each of us. We are the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), a temple being put together in which He indwells (Ephesians 2:22).

- **The Holy Spirit has separate ministries and roles from the others members of the Trinity.**

For example, only the Spirit is described as “filling” the believer.

Ephesians 5:18

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Jesus actually says to the disciples that it will be better for them if He goes to the Father and the Spirit comes to minister to them (John 16:7). Couldn't Jesus do what the Spirit is sent to do? I imagine He could, but that is not His role. It is not the way God the Father ordained it. It is the Spirit's job to lead the disciples of God into all truth. Notice that the Spirit only speaks what He is told to speak. Who is telling Him what to say? Another member of the Trinity. There are different roles.

John 16:13

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

Here is one other example of the Spirit's distinct role, though there are many more. Only the Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

John 16:8

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

- **All three members of the Trinity, being one, all work together in unison.**

Romans 8:26-27

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

When we pray, the Spirit helps us. We, like in the rest of life, are totally insufficient in and of ourselves to be able to pray. The Spirit intercedes for us, guiding us into what we are to say. Jesus is described later in this chapter in verse 34 as the One who intercedes for the saints. Thus, here we can see that it is Jesus who searches our hearts and knows what the mind of the Spirit is. There is a tag team type of effort going on here when we pray. Yet both the Spirit and the Son are under the authority of the Father, guiding us to pray according to the will of God, so that we can have our prayers answered. All three members of the Trinity labor together to bring glory to the Father through our prayers. What a privilege it is that God would work in and through us to be part of accomplishing His will!

Side Note: Technically we ought to pray to the Father, since the Spirit and the Son are doing works of helping and interceding. Only a proper understanding of theology would allow us to know how to pray rightly, one of the most basic things that a Christian does. Theology is what undergirds everything. It cannot be minimized.

Conclusion

All the members of the Trinity are one. They are all the God of the universe, the God who created the world, and the God who will be with the believer forever in eternity. Each has a particular role. The Father is the supreme authority, the Son does the will of the Father, and the Spirit speaks only what He is told to speak. There is a clear authority structure. Yet they are all one essence, filling the universe (Ephesians 1:23) and holding all things together (Colossians 1:17). It is truly a mystery, but a wonderful mystery. The Trinity shows us how God is a relational God, a loving God, and a God of order and authority. He has chosen to involve us in His work, though keeping us in the proper place of dependence upon Him.

The Father

The Father is the ultimate authority. The Son submits to the Father as does the Spirit.

For example, only the Father knows the hour of the return of Christ (Matthew 24:36). Christ Himself doesn't even know it. The Holy Spirit only speaks what is given to Him to speak; He does not speak on His own initiative (John 16:13). It is ultimately the Father who is in complete control over the affairs of the universe (Psalm 103:19).

The Father is spirit (John 4:24). He does not have a body as far as Scripture indicates. His likeness is seen in the person of Christ (John 14:9), but He Himself is spirit.

He has revealed Himself as "I Am Who I Am" (Exodus 3:14). He is the self-existent One, not even requiring a proper name. He is who He is, and He always was and always will be. He further revealed Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Exodus 3:15).

Other names of God as He continued to make Himself known to Israel include the following (all found in the Old Testament):

- *El Shaddai*: All Sufficient One, Lord God Almighty
- *El Elyon*: The Most High God
- *Adonai*: Lord, Master
- *Yahweh/Jehovah*: Lord, Jehovah
- *Jehovah Nissi*: The Lord My Banner; the Lord My Miracle
- *Jehovah-Raah*: The Lord My Shepherd
- *Jehovah Rapha*: The Lord that Heals
- *Jehovah Shammah*: The Lord is There
- *Jehovah Tsidkenu*: The Lord Our Righteousness
- *Jehovah Mekoddishkem*: The Lord Who Sanctifies You; the Lord Who Makes Holy
- *El Olam*: The Everlasting God, the God of Eternity, The God of the Universe, the God of Ancient Days
- *Elohim*: God, Judge, Creator
- *Qanna*: Jealous, Zealous
- *Jehovah Jireh*: The Lord will Provide
- *Jehovah Shalom*: The Lord is Peace
- *Jehovah Sabaoth*: The Lord of Hosts, the Lord of Powers

For further study on the names of God, see:

http://www.blueletterbible.org/study/misc/name_god.html

This is the God we serve. He is powerful, holy, jealous, all-sufficient, Master, and Lord. Praise God that He is also merciful, gracious, abounding in steadfast love, and a God of patience, forgiveness, and healing.

Here are some of the characteristics of God:

- Omnipresent- everywhere at every time (Psalm 139:7-10)
- Omnipotent- all-powerful (Job 42:2)
- Omniscient- all-knowing (Job 12:13, Colossians 2:3)
- Immutable- never-changing (Hebrews 13:8)
- Eternal- always existing (Deuteronomy 33:27)
- Perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- Holy (Leviticus 19:2)
- Righteous (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- Infallible (Deuteronomy 32:4)
- Cannot lie (Titus 1:2)
- Wonderful (1 Chronicles 16:24)
- Awesome (Psalm 66:5)
- Beautiful (Psalm 27:4)
- Love (1 John 4:7-8)
- Merciful (Psalm 145:8)
- Patient (2 Peter 3:9)
- Consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24)
- One to be feared (Psalm 67:7)
- Mysterious (Deuteronomy 29:29)
- Beyond comprehension (Isaiah 55:9)
- Sovereign- has everything under His control and supervision (Job 42:2)
- Jealous for worship (Exodus 20:5)
- Righteous Avenger; Just (Deuteronomy 32:35)

This is not a comprehensive list by any means. But it is a start.

The most wonderful thing about God is that He desires to be in relationship with mankind for eternity, if only man would choose to believe upon His Son. He wants to be known, loved, and worshipped. It is a precious thing that we can know and serve such a great and good God.

All of the characteristics that were portrayed by the Son are also those of the Father. No one in the universe has greater love than He does because He laid down the life of His Son. Those who have seen Christ have seen the Father, and those who have received Christ have received the Father (John 14:9).

Finally, the most remarkable thing of all is that, upon receiving Christ as Savior, this same God chooses to make His home in our hearts. He is never far away, and He will never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). He has made us His dwelling place (1 Corinthians 6:19). It doesn't get any better than that until we are with Him in eternity.

Jesus Christ

Jesus is the one and only Son of God.

John 3:16: "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."

He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. This is significant because it enabled Christ to be born without a sinful nature, as the rest of mankind is.

Matthew 1:18

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit."

Key term-

incarnation: the fact that God became flesh and took on the form of a man in the person of Christ

He possessed all of the attributes of God and yet was fully man, God in human flesh. The fact that Jesus was God is absolutely essential to understanding Who He actually is. Yet the marvelous thing is that He was also God in the form and likeness of man. Somehow, He was fully God and fully man at the same time.

Colossians 2:9

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form."

Philippians 2:6-7

"Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

Jesus was the only person ever to walk this earth and to die having never sinned. He was tempted in all areas and yet was without sin.

Hebrews 4:15

"For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

Thus only He could be the perfect sacrifice to God. We could never be holy, but He was holy. He suffered and died on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for sin.

Hebrews 10:12

"But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."

Key terms-

justification- the person who puts His faith in the sacrifice of Christ is declared righteous before God

Romans 5:9

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

imputation- the sin that was on our account is credited to Christ’s account, thus making Him guilty and having to bear the wrath of God on the cross; we are credited with the righteousness of Christ by faith, making it possible for us to be declared holy

2 Corinthians 5:21

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

He rose from the dead on the third day and ascended into heaven to be at the Father’s right hand.

Key terms-

Resurrection- the truth that Jesus rose from the dead in bodily form and appeared to the disciples and many others

Matthew 28:6

“He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.”

Ascension- the reality that Jesus was taken upward to heaven to be with the Father

Acts 1:9

“And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

He presently intercedes for mankind on behalf of the Father.

Romans 8:34

“Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

He will return soon to judge the world and rule.

Revelation 19:11-16

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame

of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'"

He will judge believers on the basis of their faithfulness and stewardship.

2 Corinthians 5:10

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." (see also 1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

Unbelievers, however, will face the Great White Throne judgment at which point their names will not be found in the book of life, and they will be cast into the lake of fire. Jesus as Judge is a key theme in the Scripture, and it is due to His obedience (Philippians 2:9-11).

Revelation 20:11-15

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has always existed, being God. His ministry in the Old Testament was to come upon those whom God anointed, filling them and empowering them to do the work of God. God would give the Spirit and take it away (Psalm 51:11), depending upon whether the person remained faithful to God.

There are numerous instances when the Spirit “came upon” various individuals in the Old Testament. (e.g. Judges 6:34, 2 Chronicles 20:14, 1 Chronicles 12:18)

There are also a variety of instances when the Spirit filled a person in the Old Testament. (e.g. Deuteronomy 34:9, Exodus 35:31)

Near the end of the Old Testament, the priests of Nehemiah’s time reflect upon the working of God. They refer to the Spirit having “instructed” (Nehemiah 9:20) the people of God and having “admonished them by the Spirit through the prophets” (Nehemiah 9:30).

The Spirit was actively involved in all of history, from the act of creation through the time of Christ and even at the present time.

During the time of Christ, His ministry was similar to that of the Old Testament. John the Baptist, for example, was filled with the Spirit while in the womb (Luke 1:15). The Spirit would fill various people and enable them to speak truth (Luke 1:41, Luke 1:67).

During His ministry, Christ begins to emphasize the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. For example, John the Baptist baptized with water but Jesus, John says, will “baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). John’s ministry emphasized repentance in preparing for the coming of Christ. Jesus’ ministry opened the door for the Holy Spirit to come and indwell believers, baptizing them in the fire of His power and cleansing from the inside out.

Jesus began to teach the disciples that the Spirit would give them what to say when they were delivered up for preaching the gospel (Mark 13:11). He told them that the Spirit would instruct them in all things and enable them to remember all that Christ taught them (John 14:26). He said that the Spirit would be their helper, their counselor and comforter (John 15:26). At one point, Jesus breathed on the disciples saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Shortly thereafter, this command and prayer of Christ would be answered as the Holy Spirit would come and empower them in a way that the watching world would notice.

This event happened dramatically at Pentecost. Acts 2 records that tongues of fire distributed themselves above each person, enabling the onlookers to hear the gospel message in each of their own languages. At this point they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This signified the beginning of a new phase of ministry for the Spirit. In Acts, the Spirit worked miracle after miracle through the apostles, healing, giving prophecies, and

enabling people to speak in tongues. The Spirit was responsible for doing exactly what Christ said He would in giving the disciples what to say when they were brought before religious tribunals. The uneducated disciples suddenly became a powerful force of preachers (Acts 4:13).

Eventually as the church became established, the sign gifts of tongues, prophesy, and healing diminished (1 Corinthians 13:8). The focus became the study and preaching of the completed Word of God. It is in this period that we find ourselves today.

Here are the ministries of the Spirit that the New Testament makes clear are still ongoing:

- Regenerating

John 3:5-6

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’” (see also John 7:38-39, Romans 8:11)

Central to the gospel message is the truth that people must be born again of the Spirit in order to enter heaven. This requires a faith in the truth that the old sinful man must die with Christ on the cross along with his sins so that a new holy creation in Christ can be generated, being raised to new life with and through Christ.

- Renewing

Titus 3:5

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

Renewing is a total renovation of the heart, mind, and soul. By God’s mercy, at the point of salvation, the Holy Spirit brings forth a new creation in Christ, leaving the old behind (2 Corinthians 5:17).

- Justifying

1 Corinthians 6:11

“Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

The Spirit is involved in our cleansing from sin through justification in Christ as we are declared righteous in Him.

- Baptizing

1 Corinthians 12:13

“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether

slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

John the Baptist used water baptism as a visible picture of repentance in preparation for the Messiah. Jesus, however, baptizes converts in the Spirit (Luke 3:16).

- Indwelling

Romans 8:11

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.” (see also 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Timothy 1:14)

The power of the God Who is bigger than the universe is working in us to sanctify us and bear eternal fruit. That extremely wonderful and very humbling truth ought never to grow old, but rather it ought to be a constant reminder of God’s presence and help.

- Empowering

Acts 1:8

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (see also Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 2:4, Ephesians 3:16)

We do nothing of true and lasting spiritual value on our own power but only by the Spirit’s. It is not by our might, wit, or strength but His alone.

- Teaching

1 Corinthians 2:13

“Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

That the Holy Spirit continually teaches us is a great comfort. When we don’t understand a passage or need instruction in the ways of the Lord, He is there. Without Him, we would be bound to perpetual ignorance, for only through Him can true wisdom be gained.

- Sanctifying

Romans 15:16

“To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, so that my offering of the Gentiles may become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.” (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:2)

The Spirit’s work does not end at salvation, for He continues to work in and through us to make us more like Christ throughout the rest of our lives. He does not sleep or slumber when it comes to our sanctification.

- Leading

Romans 8:14

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

For the true believer, there will always be an inner source of direction as to what God wants as opposed to what He does not want. As we yield to the Spirit’s direction more and more, we will see more evidence that we are indeed sons and daughters of God.

- Guiding

John 16:13

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”

There will be many times in life where we will need help bringing the truth of Scripture to bear upon various decisions and challenges in our lives. The promise from our Lord is that He has given the Spirit expressly for that purpose.

- Convicting

John 16:8

“And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”

The Spirit has never encountered a sinful heart that He can tolerate or ignore. He will unceasingly convict and create guilty feelings until a sin is dealt with. Unbelievers who blaspheme Him by spurning His convicting will never find forgiveness leading to salvation (Luke 12:10). Believers who have responded to the drawing of the Spirit will still find that His ministry of conviction is alive and well should they harbor sin in their hearts.

- Filling

Ephesians 5:18

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

Believers can be full of the Spirit when they are empty of serving their own fleshly interests and fleshly lusts. A heart fully surrendered and submitted to God is a heart that can be filled with power and strength to do God’s will.

- Interceding

Romans 8:26

“In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” (see also Ephesians 6:18)

Without the Spirit’s enabling and teaching, we wouldn’t even be able to pray as we ought. He is there to help us know what to pray for and how to pray. He will even take the intention of our words, poorly expressed as they might be, to God with utmost clarity and definition.

- Testifying

Romans 8:16

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God.” (see also John 15:26, Galatians 4:6)

Sometimes the devil will try to get us to doubt our salvation. It is the Spirit alone who can remind us that we are changed from the inside out, crying out with love and joy to our Father in heaven. Only believers have this love for God and His Word, and the Spirit reminds us of this when we need reminding.

- Helping

John 16:7

But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

The word translated “helper” could also be translated “advocate,” “comforter,” or “one who comes to another’s aid.” The Holy Spirit has been summoned of the Father to be the One Who aids us in our walk in Christ. No matter what we encounter, we are at an advantage because we have the Spirit.

- Reminding

John 14:26

“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.”

The Holy Spirit will remind us what we need to know from the Scripture when we need to know it as we walk by faith. The more we study and meditate upon the Scripture, the more there will be to recall to remembrance.

- Sealing

Ephesians 4:30

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (see also Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22)

God has given us the Holy Spirit as a pledge of our guaranteed future glorification and entrance into heaven. Since He has already given us His Spirit, we can be sure that He will give us heaven as well.

- Speaking

Mark 13:11

“When they arrest you and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but it is the Holy Spirit.” (see also Luke 12:12, Acts 4:31)

Not just any words of clever human wisdom will suffice when it comes to matters of the kingdom of God. The Spirit can be relied upon to give us the words that we need to speak so that God can accomplish His plan in and through us. When we don't know what to say but we need to say something, the Spirit is there to help.

- Rejoicing

Luke 10:21

“At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.’”

As we learn things by the Holy Spirit and see more and more the wonder and wisdom of God, we won't be able to help but rejoice in the Spirit. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit that, by definition, only those with the Spirit can possess.

- Freeing

Romans 8:2

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.” (see also 2 Corinthians 3:17)

Only through the grace of God can the shackles to sin and the devil be broken. The Spirit is there to remind us that we are indeed free and to empower us to live free. Life in the Spirit is not about earning God's favor but rather living as those who are favored, enjoying freedom, and walking according to His lead.

- Loving

Romans 15:30

“Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” (see also Colossians 1:8)

Only those who love the Lord can truly love as God loves (1 John 4:7-8). The Spirit blesses His people with the fruit of being able to love with a selflessness and freedom that the world desperately needs to know.

- Searching

1 Corinthians 2:10

“For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.”

The Spirit will give us access to everything that we need to know when we need to know it. He searches out all truth so that He can help us do the same.

- Gifting

1 Corinthians 12:7

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

The Holy Spirit purposefully gifts each member of the body of Christ with gifts for the use of serving others. As such, there is no reason to boast because, as we find our niche in God’s kingdom, we will see God’s power in our weakness all the more.

- Unifying

Ephesians 4:3

“Being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (see also Jude 1:19)

The Spirit does not bring division to the people of God. That is the devil’s work. The Spirit points His people to truth which unifies. This unification might require a removal of the chaff, but this is not division, rather cleansing leading to unification. Where there is unity, there can be peace, another fruit of the Spirit that only He can bring.

- Establishing, Defining, Proclaiming, and Advancing Truth

1 John 5:6

“It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.” (see also Matthew 12:18)

The Holy Spirit cannot and does not exist apart from being the truth. All that He does is to advance the truth and to guide people into it. It is because of a single absolute truth that unity, peace, joy, freedom, and sanctification even make sense and are possible.

The work of the Spirit is clearly a critical component of the life and ministry of a believer. Without His guidance and help, we are powerless to accomplish anything of lasting worth for the kingdom.

Creation

The Trinity created the world in six literal days by the literal spoken word of God. The theory of evolution had no part in the creative process, nor has it ever since.

The following is an analysis of the competing views of the creation account:

Evolution

Evolution in the strictest sense states that there was no creator (even going further than Darwin did). It argues that matter either always existed, or it came into existence spontaneously and by chance exploded into a universe. Life formed from non-life and gradually grew more complex, changing from one species to another. This would have taken billions of years and the process should still be ongoing.

Problems with Evolution

Life doesn't come from non-life, ever. Where do male and female species come from? Things go from order to disorder not from chaos to order. Where is evolution now? (They answer with the theory of *punctuated equilibrium*- that evolution happens in short spurts every billion or so years, so we are just in a lull). Where did the initial matter come from? Why did it explode? Evolution contradicts the Genesis account totally. Organisms don't change to survive (all genetic mutations are harmful). No intermediate species have ever been found that have not either been unclear or been proven hoaxes. Many more in-between forms should have been found if the theory was true.

Theistic Evolution

This is a view many professing Christians take, especially at supposed Christian universities. It is a supposed wedding of theism and naturalistic evolution, that the strongest survive and weak species are worked out of the existence or change to survive. Basically, theistic evolutionists argue that God used and oversaw the evolutionary process, helping it begin and complete. God is used to solve all of the problems discussed above in the evolutionary theory.

Problems with Theistic Evolution

It contradicts the Genesis account of "after their kind" and seven literal days. Since God is perfect and His ways are perfect, why would He use a chance process when Genesis plainly indicates that He spoke the world into existence (see also Hebrews 1:3 which states that He "upholds all things by the *word* of His power" [emphasis added]). Death didn't come until after sin. According to theistic evolution, plants and animals had been living and dying for billions of years until the strongest survived. Why doubt the Genesis account? Can we trust any other part of Scripture?

Progressive Creationism

This view argues that the universe is billions of years old, that stellar evolution is by natural process alone, that the stars were made before day four of creation (thus allowing for their light to reach the earth), and that the Big Bang was responsible for the “creation” of the world. Progressive creationists argue that the days of the creation process overlapped, and we are currently in the seventh day until the New Jerusalem. Death preceded the first sin; thus, the garden of Eden wasn’t really a paradise as meteorites and floods and other natural disasters including sickness and disease had been ongoing. Random, wasteful inefficiencies were used to “create” the world. The history of man is a minute fraction of the history of the earth and universe because the universe is so old. This view also seems to indicate that there were man-like mammals. Finally, it denies the worldwide flood of Noah. Many “conservative” evangelicals buy into this view.

Problems with Progressive Creationism

The Bible says that death was the result of sin, not that it preceded sin (Genesis 2:17). The Bible teaches that man was created at the beginning of creation, not much later as Mark 10:6 indicates saying, “But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’” It is a violation of text interpretation to assume that the days overlap. There is no way anybody reading the account with no Bible knowledge would conclude that the author is intending for the reader to understand that the days overlapped. As one ended, morning and evening, another began. There is no Biblical basis to assume that we are still in the seventh day. No Scripture gives ground to make such a statement; it is merely hypothetical. They do not believe that the universe was created with the appearance of age (Adam and Even were created as adults, for example, yet they were only a second old). There is no hard evidence for ape-men. Finally, in regard to Noah’s flood, why would God make Noah stay in an ark for so long if there was land elsewhere?

Day Age Theory

This view states that each day in Genesis 1 is actually millions or billions of years. Many supposed conservative Christians take this view, seeing it as some kind of compromise with “scientific evidence.” It is merely one way to try to reconcile the evolutionary account with the Genesis account. God doesn’t need anymore time than 24 hours. The verse quoted to give supposed credence to this view is 2 Peter 3:8 which says, “But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.” The curious thing is that the verse is not making a literal claim. It is saying that our view of time is different than God’s view of time when it comes to His delaying His return. Yet they take this verse literally and deny the literal interpretation of Genesis.

Problems with the Day Age Theory

It is dangerous because it undermines the authority of the Scripture. For example, why does the Genesis account emphasize the evening and morning of each day every time? The text gives no evidence of a drawn out evolutionary process for creating man. There is no reason to believe that when God said He created man in one day that it took him a thousand years. Where this view really wants to go is to allow millions and billions of years, which Scripture in no way grants. Many times, it is no more than a cleverly devised scheme to let theistic evolution creep in the back door.

Gap Theory

This view states that a primitive earth was created in Genesis 1:1, Satan fell and corrupted it, God flooded it, and a second earth was created in Genesis 2:2 out of corruption. This is an attempt to harmonize with the supposed “clear evidence” of the “ancient” geologic column. Sketchy scientific conclusions are held as more important than what the Bible plainly indicates (two creations and two earths?). They do not believe that God used evolution, but they do believe that the earth is indefinitely old. They try to take the Genesis account literally but feel compelled by science to read into it.

Problems with the Gap Theory

They assume that some scientific assumptions and conclusions are grounds to be forced to doubt the Word of God when there are plenty of contradictory scientific claims to uphold it. This view jeopardizes confidence in the written Word by adding to it, a dangerous thing to do and condemned by God. That there was a previous creation with evil, sin, corruption doesn't square with the perfection indicated in the Garden of Eden. Death came only through Adam's sin (Romans 5:14).

Old Earth Creationism

This is the view that the earth is millions or billions of years old. Supposed scientific results such as the expansion of the universe and the speed of light from distant stars supersedes the value of taking the Genesis account literally. (Of course, God could have created the earth with light already reaching the earth and the universe already having expanded beyond a mere ball of matter.) This view is typically accompanied by progressive creationism or theistic evolution. It typically holds to uniformitarianism which states that the geologic changes on the earth happened gradually over billions of years rather than quickly through a catastrophic worldwide flood. Thus, a worldwide flood is typically denied, also denying a literal interpretation of Scripture.

Young Earth Creationism

This is the view that the Genesis account is to be taken as an historical account with every word being taken literally. They believe (and I) that God created the world in six literal 24 hour days and rested for a literal 24 hour seventh day. The Garden of Eden was a paradise because death happened only *after* Adam and Eve sinned, as the Bible seems to plainly indicate when it says that death came through Adam. The earth was changed

rapidly during a worldwide flood (no more water under the earth or above it), so therefore the geologic column is not uniform across the face of the earth, which is indeed indicative of a catastrophic event. The earth is likely 6 to 10 thousand years old as the genealogies of the Old Testament would seem to indicate. There never was no every will be any in-between species because evolution never did occur nor will it again in the future. There is plenty of scientific evidence to support this view (no inbetween fossils, no evolution has happened in the history of man, geologic columns are mixed up from a flood, etc.). see article for more evidence

Problems with Young Earth Creationism

None

Mankind

Man was created by God in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). This meant that Adam and Eve were created without sin, though they had the capacity to choose to sin. They had the ability to reason, to enjoy beauty, to converse with God and with one another, to experience emotion, and to be able to tend the garden. Man is the crowning point of God's creation, the final thing that He made. He called man good, though it was not good for him to be alone. Woman is the complement of man, a helper suitable for him (Genesis 2:18).

Man is not a cosmic accident or merely a bundle of cells and neurons. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Only God could think up three dimensional vision, the supercomputer called the brain, language, and DNA, just to name a few of His fingerprints on this special part of the creation. Yet man is but dust (Genesis 2:7), and to dust he will return. Man is dependent upon the Creator for life and breath (Genesis 2:7).

The original plan of God was for man to live forever. The tree of life was available for them to eat in the garden so that they could live forever. Yet they chose to eat from the one tree that they were told not to eat from, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Perfect bliss was to be ignorant of evil and just be good and do good all the time. God's plan was for joy and pleasure, but Satan's was for pain and death. The penalty for man's disobeying God was that sin came into the world, man would die, childbirth would be painful, and work would be toilsome. Even creation has been marred and stained, thus it cries out for its renewal (Romans 3:22). Things aren't as they always were, how they ought to be, or how they will be when God creates a new heaven and earth.

Man's purpose was and still is to enjoy God and bring Him glory, but the first man, Adam, disobeyed God and fell into sin. The consequence of Adam's sin is that all men, except for Christ who was born of the Spirit, inherit a sinful tendency (Romans 5:14). In addition, all men are subject to physical death and deserving of the wrath of God (Romans 6:23). All mankind is born with a sinful nature and, left to himself, he is unable to please God by making himself holy.

Key terms:

The fall- when man first sinned and brought the curse of God on to the world (Genesis 3)

original sin- man is born with a corrupt nature, bent toward evil and rebellion (1 Corinthians 15:22, Romans 3:23)

Man clearly is in a fallen, problematic state. He, by nature, is more prone to evil than good. As Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?" Man's desires and longings are not for good but for evil. He is helpless to do good consistently or to love as Christ loved. Man by nature is selfish, chasing after the wind by always comparing himself to his neighbor. As

Ecclesiastes 4:4 says, "I have seen that every labor and every skill which is done is the result of rivalry between a man and his neighbor. This too is vanity and striving after wind." Since somebody always has something more or does something better, no one ever arrives or becomes what they want to be. Man falls short of the glory of God because of his sin (Romans 3:23).

Man is part material (since he is made from dust) and part immaterial (since dust cannot live forever). The material will die (the first death) and the immaterial will also be doomed to eternity in hell (the second death described in Revelation 21:8). Man's hope is not in finding a way to make the material last forever, for that is impossible. His hope is not in trying to get all that he can out of his vain seventy or eighty years on earth. His hope is that his immaterial being will live on in eternity. Yet he is grossly misled about how to live forever and in where to place his hope (the work of his deceitful heart). Man is the master of self-justification, always believing that he is good enough that God will accept him. He is always able to make himself look good by finding somebody worse to whom he can compare himself.

The material part of man is simply his body. The immaterial part of man is made up of soul and spirit. The spirit is the part of man that lives forever, and the soul includes the mind, will, personality, and emotions. Some say that the soul and spirit are separate, while others say that they are the same. I tend to believe that there are three parts: body, soul, and spirit given passages like 1 Thessalonians 5:23 which list all three.

Key terms:

Old man- the essence of our being before knowing Christ; it is corrupt, fallen, sin-stained, and prone to evil

New man- that which is a new spiritual creation; includes a heart that is not fundamentally evil, has a heart indwelt by Christ, and is able to progressively take dominion over sin and the flesh

Colossians 3:9-11

"Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all."

Flesh- anything that is of ourselves and not of faith or by the work of Christ in us; that which makes us still vulnerable to sin; we can walk either after the flesh or after the Spirit (see Galatians 5)

Heart- the center of our being; the real us; the seat of our deepest loves and affections (Proverbs 4:23, Psalm 37:4)

Man is born with a sinful self and nature. Upon being saved, the old nature (old man) is put to death. As Romans 6:6 says, "Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, confirming this truth, that "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." The old man had a heart that was set on sin and desperately sick, deceitful, and wicked. God gives us a new heart by creating within us a new man with a new nature that has the capacity to love God and others fully as Christ does. The new man is not enslaved to sin. The Christian has the ability by the grace of God to resist the devil and to choose not to give into temptation. Yet there are hidden sins that we don't even know about that the Holy Spirit must reveal to us so that we can repent of them (Psalm 90:8). Fortunately, the sacrifice of Christ has justified us so that we don't have to pay the penalty for sin that we are unaware of. We can trust God to show us how we ought to change and to reveal secret sins to us so that we can grow up into maturity in Christ. The goal is that we do not continue sinning despite our imperfection. As 1 Peter 4:1-2 says, "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." When we sin, we are to repent of it immediately.

The Christian is not part old man and part new man. He is all new man which is still in a sanctifying process to be made into total conformity to Christ. When the Scripture tells us to put off the old man and put on the new man, this is simply referring to a reckoning of what has already been done to actually be true in our present time, circumstance, and situation. The old man is dead, and we must believe that and act accordingly, putting on Christ, Who is our life (Colossians 3:4).

The new man still has flesh, which means that even believers have the capacity to sin (not a novel revelation). The Christian still has areas that need to be brought into subjection to Christ. His mind needs to be transformed to be like Christ (Romans 12:1-2). The Holy Spirit needs to be more and more at home in our hearts as He conforms all of our wants and desires to His own (Ephesians 3:17). The Christian is not perfect, though He will be one day be perfect in heaven.

The objective for the Christian is to daily deny the passions of the flesh and any selfish desires and lusts. He must remember that he has crucified the flesh with all of its passions and desires when He was saved (Galatians 5:24). The old man is dead, but the flesh still hangs on. Operating after the flesh is anything that we do to feed ourselves rather than drawing from the resources of Christ. We walk after the flesh when we sin and when we don't trust Christ. Whatever is not from faith is sin (Romans 14:23). Only when we are taken to be with Christ will the flesh be removed. It is a reminder of whom we used to be. Yet, because of Christ in us, we do not have to go on letting sin and the flesh tell us how we ought to live (Romans 6:12). We do not have to give into its lusts. Romans 13:14 tells us "to make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts." We aren't forced to yield to the flesh, but we are able to make a choice to go against the Spirit, grieving Him, and choosing to give in to temptation. Sadly, we can and do sometimes choose to give in

to temptation, feeding the flesh, which otherwise would have had no power over us. We sin when we are carried away by our own lust (James 1:14). Each day we can choose to live for self or for Christ. We can let Him reign in our mortal bodies, or we can let sin reign in our members. 1 Peter 2:11 tells us that we need to abstain from fleshly lusts “which wage war against the soul.” Sin mars our ability to think right, to make right choices, and to feel the proper feelings. Giving into lust will corrupt the soul and keep us from bearing fruit for the kingdom and being made like Christ. Fortunately, we can have victory through Christ (Romans 5:17), who provides a way out of temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The unbeliever indulges the flesh by promoting self, loving self, and protecting self. The Christian is concerned about promoting Christ, loving Christ, and looking out for the welfare of others, even at the expense of self. If this isn't the case, one needs to evaluate the status of his relationship with Christ. There ought to be at least some fruit (Matthew 7:20) which gives evidence of being born again and being made a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Man is made for relationship with God and without it, He can never find fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11). He can have feelings of happiness and pleasure, but the deepest longings of his heart and soul can never be met outside of Christ. In heaven, man will be doing what he was made to do, praising God without any sin nature or flesh holding him back. Our mortal bodies which are perishable will be exchanged and transformed into that which is imperishable, so that we can be with our Lord and worship Him forever (1 Corinthians 15:52-54).

Salvation

The salvation message begins with the nature of God. Life is not about us, but it is about God. Thus, any view of salvation that is man-centered and focused on strengthening self (i.e. the flesh) and not on conforming to the standards and plan of God must be discarded.

We must know three things about God.

First, God is holy. This means that He is utterly perfect in every way and totally free from any sin and corruption. He is so holy and so perfect that nothing short of perfection can live in His presence in heaven. His holiness is intimidating and frightening, which is part of its purpose. As Jesus says in Luke 12:5, “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!” We are meant to see how perfect God is so that we can see how far short of that standard we are. His holiness is to give us hopelessness about our being holy like Him. Unfortunately for mankind, being holy is exactly what He expects. He says, “Be holy as I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Man is in a real predicament.

Second, God is love. He desires to have a relationship with man. He created man not because He needed Him but so that He could let man share in His love, wonder, glory, and majesty. Like a parent who wants to lavish his or her love upon a child, God wanted to have a creation to love. He deeply cares for man. But as we said, He is holy. He cannot love man into His presence because of His holiness. This brings us to the third characteristic of God.

Third, God is just. This means that according to His perfect holiness and perfect love, He must punish sin. To love sin and evil would compromise His holiness. If God didn't judge sin, then He would be evil. Yet He wouldn't be in the wrong to judge man for being evil because He made us good, and we choose to rebel and do evil.

This brings us to some truths about man.

First, man is not holy. He need only to listen to his conscience, for God has seared morality upon it. Romans 1:32 says, “and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.” Man knows that he is not holy. He tends to rationalize his error and justify his own goodness, but deep down he knows that he is not perfect like God. The law of God shows us our sin. Likely we have lied, stolen, and made other things more important than God, just to name a few violations. If we still think we succeed at being perfect, we need only to ask ourselves if we love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The bottom line is that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Man has a holiness problem because he has a sin problem. Ever since Adam sinned, man has inherited this propensity to sin. Man has a nature that makes sin natural, and he has a heart that is desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There is no way that man can be holy. As such, God cannot let us into His heaven.

Second, man cannot justify himself or make himself holy. Man is really in the negative when it comes to morality. Yet there is no amount of positives that can be done to outweigh the negatives. Perfection is the standard, so if a sin has been committed, the game has already been lost. This puts man in a bad place because Romans 6:23 says that “The wages of sin is death.” The consequences of our sin is death and eternity apart from God in hell. This is the bad news.

Fortunately, God is indeed a God of love. He cannot violate His holy standard which requires that justice be meted out. Thus, somebody must die. Somebody must bear the death penalty that we all deserve. Yet in order for the penalty to be paid, the one who bears the judgment of God must Himself be perfect. Unless God does something, man is doomed. Praise God that He did something in sending His Son. The second half of Romans 6:23 says, “But the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” What man could not do, God did, by sending His own Son. Jesus, though still fully God, became man and dwelt among us. He lived the perfect life, and having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, He was not born in sin like the rest of us. Thus, He was qualified to be the perfect sacrifice. He died to bear the penalty of our sin, but the fact that He was God enabled Him to conquer death and come back to life. Thus, He has made a way for us to be freed from the penalty of sin and to enjoy eternal life with Him in heaven forever.

It works like this. God has extended His hand to us in Christ with an invitation to be restored to relationship with Him. There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve it. It is free. God did it of His own initiative despite the fact that mankind had rejected Him by sinning. As Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” **It is up to us to respond to His invitation.**

We must:

- **Trust in Jesus’ death on the cross and subsequent resurrection as the sufficient means to make us holy and righteous before God.**

Romans 10:9-10 says, “that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”

- **Repent (turn from) our sins and turn toward Christ (declaring Him as our Savior and Lord).**

Acts 17:30-31 “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

- **Ask God to forgive us of our sin which we readily acknowledge.**

Ephesians 1:7-8 says, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us."

There is nothing we can do to save ourselves. Ephesians 2:8-9 summarizes the work of salvation: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Grace doesn't allow us to take credit or to boast, as if salvation is something we did, accomplished, or deserved because of some merit in and of ourselves. We could not gain God's approval, but God reached out toward us in love with a free gift through Jesus Christ. **Salvation is a free gift by grace through faith and due to the merits of Christ alone.** We share in Christ's righteousness only in that we receive by faith the righteousness that He accomplished on our behalf. Works are a result of salvation, not a means of it. Thanks be to God for His great and perfect mercy.

The Church

The church is not a discriminatory body. It is open to all people, male or female, slave or free, and Jew or Gentile. As Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christ died for all men and desires all men to come to repentance and to a knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:9). Yet sadly many do not choose to do this. Only those who respond to the call of Christ are the elect of God, chosen to be part of His body. The church is described in Scripture as the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), where Christ is the head. It is described a temple being fitted as a dwelling place of God, with Christ being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). It is also described as the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The church is not a place that people go, but rather the church is the people of God. There are local churches with lots of different names, associations, and denominations. Yet the true church transcends denominations and associations, for it is made up of all of those who hold to the true confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Only those who have been born again are members of the church. Being on a church's membership role does not dictate entrance into the kingdom.

Christ says that He will build His church on the rock (Matthew 16:15-19). This likely is in reference to Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Conversions happen as God grants faith, and they require a message to go forth which gives birth to salvation. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus, it is a body of knowledge, a collection of propositional truth, that is the rock on which the church is built. This is why antichrist, when he comes, will cast truth to the ground (Daniel 8:12). The church fundamentally is called to be a support of the confession of faith pointing to Jesus as Messiah and Savior of the world. Peter, James, and John did this effectively, and they were called "pillars" (Galatians 2:9). They were upholding the truth of their confession no matter what the level of persecution became. The church is defined by what it believes. Christ says that the gates of hades will not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). In other words, no amount of persecution will destroy the church. People will always get saved, and no one can stop a person from choosing to love Jesus Christ. God will continue to draw men and women to himself, and the church will live on forever. Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire, but believers will not (Revelation 20:14).

Each local church ought to be sovereign over its affairs, being all the while under the authority of the Scriptures. The church is not an organization led by men. It is led by the Spirit of God, and able men who meet Scriptural qualifications are chosen to shepherd the local flocks. Their job is to preserve the confession, to teach the full counsel of God, and to lead and protect the believers under their care as the Spirit leads them. Though some are called to lead, every believer has been equipped with a spiritual gift and has been called and commissioned to serve in God's church. The church is built up and only is what God intends it to be when everyone contributes according to their gifts (Ephesians 4:16). The gathering together corporately is important because of the mutual encouragement it provides and because believers need to be taught and trained in righteousness, among other things (Hebrews 10:25).

If a believer is caught in sin, the church has the right and responsibility to discipline such a one by putting him out of the fellowship if he continues in sin and is unwilling to repent (Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:11-14). The goal is that they will come to their senses and repent. Reconciliation and restoration is always the goal (Galatians 6:1).

Ordinances

The Bible teaches that we are to observe two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper (also known as the Lord's Table and communion). These are not things that we do to earn God's favor, and they are not conduits of God's grace. They are merely acts of obedience in response to God's grace having worked and continuing to be at work in our lives. We know that baptism doesn't save anyone. If it did, then we would have to infer that Christ wasn't saved until He was baptized, which is obviously not true. Baptism doesn't save anybody, but it is a sign to the watching world and the body of Christ of what has happened to the person born into Christ. We are baptized into Christ when we receive His gift of salvation by faith. Christ baptized with the Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16). This is the salvation experience. The purpose of baptism was never to save, but to function as an outward sign of an inward reality. Circumcision in the Old Testament never saved anybody, yet it served as a sign to point to the truth that a person was a Jew, belonging to God. In the same way, the Lords' Table and baptism point to the fact that we are indeed the Lord's.

There is no record in the entire Biblical account of infant baptism. The baptism that was done in the Scriptures and in the early church was after the salvation experience. Circumcision doesn't save anybody and neither does being baptized as an infant. Christ was baptized as an adult, and all of the accounts of baptism in the book of Acts are following salvation. In fact, baptism often happened immediately following a person's decision to trust in Christ for their salvation. Christianity is not something to be hidden under a bushel. The early Christians made a statement in public that they were followers of the risen Christ, risking persecution from the Jews (and later the Romans) and ridicule from even their own friends and family members.

Baptism by immersion is the only recorded method of baptism in the Scriptures. It has spiritual symbolism attached to it which only makes sense for a person who has chosen of their own volition to follow Christ (something an infant could not do). The symbolism is recorded in Romans 6:4 which says, "Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." Our old sinful self, upon trusting in Christ for salvation, is buried with Christ, and a new self is born to walk in newness of life. The immersion process represents sin being washed away (John the Baptist's baptism of repentance) but more importantly the death of the sinner who is raised a saint (the baptism of Christ). We are totally immersed (which is literally what baptized means in this context) in the death of Christ that we identify with it fully in order that we might partake in it by repenting from our sin and letting our old self die. Christian baptism is a sign of this event in the life of the believer. The believer goes under the water, representing identification with the death of Christ, and he is raised above the water, symbolizing new life in Christ.

Baptism is a public declaration of a commitment to Christ and of salvation. In Muslim countries, professing Christians are not considered much of a threat until they take the step of being baptized publicly. Then the Muslims know the person means business. They

will soon be disowned and in some cases be sentenced to death. Not being baptized publicly could be a sign of either a lack of understanding of what the ordinance means, or it might show that a person is not really interested in taking the step of obedience and being identified publicly as a believer. We must show new believers and those who have been saved for some time but who have not been baptized why obedience in this area is important. We need to take a public stand of faith for our own confidence as believers but also for the purpose of giving a testimony to those around us. The world will watch us to see if we have changed, and the church should embrace us to keep us on the straight and narrow path of sanctification.

The second ordinance is the Lord's Supper. The wine and bread are symbolic representations of Christ's body which was beaten and of His blood which was spilled. Its purpose is for us to regularly recall the sacrifice of our Lord and the salvation of our souls (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). The Lord's Supper is never a means of gaining the grace of God. It is rather a reflection of the grace that was given to us once and for all through the sacrifice that was once for all for all the saints. As Hebrews 10:10 says, "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Christ does not have to be re-crucified so that grace can continue to be poured out. The work of the cross, as Jesus said, "is finished" (John 19:30). There is no Biblical reason to believe that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ. Christ was actually there in person when He instituted the practice, breaking a literal piece of bread and passing a literal cup of wine (Luke 22:19-20). 1 Corinthians 11 says that we ought to participate at the Lord's Table "in remembrance" of Christ. Its purpose is to proclaim the death of Christ until He comes. We are to continue to recall the most important truth of our lives, and those who watch might ask what it is about. This provides a teaching moment for the salvation message.

There are several serious exhortations surrounding the Lord's Supper. One, it must be taken seriously and not combined with other casual meals and gatherings. 1 Corinthians 11:27 says, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." Second, it is only for believers because a person who is not saved cannot look back and remember the blood and body of Christ as relevant to their own lives. They never partook of Him in faith, so they are not to partake of the symbols of His sacrifice in remembrance. The Lord's Table, like baptism, is a sign that points to the salvation of the participant, ultimately drawing all attention back to the work of Christ on the cross. There must be a work of the cross for the person to look back to; otherwise, they are not welcome to share in remembering His body and blood. Third, partaking of the Lord's Table, must be preceded by a time of serious introspection to judge ourselves to see if we have any unconfessed sin. Consequences of not confessing before partaking include sickness and death (1 Corinthians 11:30). We cannot approach the table of our Lord in sin, in a casual and irreverent manner, or without Him residing in our heart. To do so is to drink judgment to ourselves for not having judged our bodies rightly (1 Corinthians 11:29). God takes the death of His Son seriously, and we must do the same.

Satan and Evil

Satan is the archenemy of God. Yet he is not equal to God in any way because he is a creation of God. He is a powerful angel, having formerly ministered in the very presence of God. Satan is not the red, devilish cartoon character with horns, a spiked tail, and pointy pitchfork. He is much more diabolical and deceiving than that.

Ezekiel 28:11-19 is a rebuke to the literal king of Tyre, but the prophecy extends to the ultimate power behind all evil, Satan himself. It says,

11 "Again the word of the LORD came to me saying,

12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald;
And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.

On the day that you were created
They were prepared.

14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you there
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

15 "You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created
Until unrighteousness was found in you.

16 "By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.

17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.

18 "By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.

Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
19" All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever."''''

We get a great deal of insight into who Satan is from this passage. Here is what we learn:

- Satan was given incredible wisdom. Thus, it ought to be no surprise to us that his extreme shrewdness gone bad is the source of extremely intricate lies and elaborate temptations, each tailor-made for each individual. It should also give us insight as to why so much of the world is deceived by him and living in darkness in ways unpleasing to God. He is the ultimate villain (v. 12).
- Satan is a created being. Thus his power is limited. Since God created Him, God can (and will) also destroy him. This also shows us that God had a plan in allowing him to exist in the first place, knowing that he would sin and turn against him (v. 13).
- Satan was a high ranking angel having the very fullness of beauty. All of the precious stones are said to have been his coverings. Looking at him must have been as awe-striking as looking at a perfect, colorless diamond or at a breathtaking nature scene. Gold, it is said, was the very workmanship of what held him together. We see great strength implied in the beauty as well (v. 11-13).
- Satan was given a very special place of ministry and service right up close to God's very presence. Like the cherubs spoken of in the Old Testament as being those which were adjacent to the mercy seat and within the inner sanctuary of the temple (Exodus 25:18-22), Satan also was a cherub adjacent to the presence of the perfect holiness of God. While we learn in the Old Testament that any man who saw the face of God would die, Satan was right in God's throne room. Perhaps it was God's design that the foremost of His creation, Lucifer (Satan's other name meaning "shining one") would be that which would most proficiently and profoundly reflect God's glory and image. His makeup in the likeness of all of the precious stones would perfectly reflect, refract, and demonstrate all of the wonders of God, who has revealed Himself as being Light. As a diamond sparkles and a prism reveals the full spectrum of colors, so Lucifer would show forth God's incredible wonder and beauty more perfectly than any other created being at that time (v. 14).
- Satan was blameless and perfectly righteous initially. This is why He could stand and minister in the Almighty's very presence. He was the lead cherub, the model for all of the other angels (v. 15).
- Satan's downfall was pride and jealousy. In Isaiah 14:14 we read that he wanted to be "like the Most High." He began to envy God's authority and power. After all, he was quite wise and powerful and beautiful himself. This desire to move from number two to number one was what forced God to throw him out of heaven

with one third of the angels that he tricked into following him (Revelation 12:4). These fallen angels are referred to as demons, the helpers and ministers of Satan. Satan is not everywhere at one time like God, so he must rely on his helpers. That he was able to trick one third of the angels who had it made being in heaven is quite a testimony to his power of deceit and trickery. They now are fallen with no hope of redemption and destined, like Satan, for eternity in a fiery hell (Revelation 20:10) (v. 16-17).

- Satan is the father of iniquities. All that is vile and unrighteous is what he stands for and promotes vigorously. Never does he take a break from corruption, pollution, trickery, lying, and deception. Anything that is not of God or for God is of and for Satan (Mark 9:40) (v. 17).
- His doom is sure, and there is nothing he can do to stop it (v. 18).
- Those who recognize and acknowledge Satan for who he really is are repulsed by him. For the Christian, he is our enemy. We hate him and everything he does and everything he stands for. His work is always against us. He tries to bring us down and attack our faith. Satan's work is destruction, division, and evil. To this we are appalled (v. 19).

What are his primary techniques and strategies?

Ephesians 6:11-12 makes it clear that we battle Satan and his forces. It says, "Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." Satan, like a general of a vast and powerful army, has his troops stationed everywhere, working 24-7 to disarm, distract, deceive, divide, and destroy the people of God. This is why we, like soldiers of the cross, must put on the armor of Christ so that we can resist him. Faith guards our heart and mind, the assurance of salvation protects us from despair, and truth guards our path so that we are able to continue to attack with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Our mission is to declare the gospel of Christ, and we have laced up our shoes so that we can take it to the world (Ephesians 6:10-17). Above all, we must guard our heart for righteousness' sake. When we sin, we become powerless and useless to the kingdom.

Since this enemy is prowling, seeking to devour us (1 Peter 5:8), we need to be alert, prepared to encounter his schemes and being prepared to stand against them. Satan's techniques and strategies are limitless because he is constantly crafting new ones specifically for each one of us and specifically for our current state of being. Let's examine three categories of his attacks and how to endure and resist them: lying, deceiving, and oppressing.

- **Lying**

In John 8:44, Jesus says to the self-righteous religious leaders of the day, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in

him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.”

We can be sure that Satan will never tell us the truth. He may use the truth of the Bible but apply it incorrectly or misinterpret it. He is the ultimate liar, the best and most creative. Every component of the gospel he will attack and deny in an effort to keep us from God. But the lying doesn't stop after we do find God. He will tell us that God will love us only if we behave good. He will draw attention to our weaknesses and insufficiencies and tell us that Christ cannot really forgive those or will not help us overcome them. He will try to get us stuck in the mire of sin.

His objective in lying is to make the truth look like error and the error look like truth. For example, if he can make the church live in sin and look like hypocrites and if he can make the world look civilized and moral, very few will be able to find the truth because truth looks like error and error looks like truth. He will also try to make sin look good and justified and following God look overly difficult or impossible.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” We must identify Satan's lies and replace them with the truth of God's Word. We need to know the Word, or we will believe falsehood.

- **Deceiving**

Revelation 20:1-3 says, “And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he should not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”

This passage clearly teaches that the work of Satan is to deceive. Deception is when we are doing the will of Satan, and we are unaware of it. It is not a deception to steal when the person knows stealing is wrong. It is when a person really believes that evolution is true because the textbook says it is. He never hears the truth and is led astray by those craftier and more deceived than he.

Satan does not only deceive individuals but nations. A whole nation can act sinfully and be caught up in following an evil leader. Obvious examples would include Germany following Hitler and the Soviet Union following Stalin. In the last days, Satan will deceive most nations, but he will be destroyed. First, his earthly schemes will be thwarted by Christ, and then he will be bound for a thousand years. After that time he will be allowed to deceive for awhile, only to be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone himself. This is where the cartoons and comic strips lie to us again. Satan will not be the boss of hell tormenting the visitors. He will be in hell himself. All of those who do not turn to Christ are his children and will burn with their father, the devil.

The really sad part about deception is that some who mix with the church of Jesus Christ are such people. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They talk big and know the Bible well, but the result of their actions and labor is meaningless discussion, stealing of money or dignity, and division. But the difficulty in identifying them is that they disguise themselves as one of us. Look at 2 Corinthians 11:13-15: "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan himself disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds." Remember that Satan was created without sin. He knows how to play the role of righteousness and so do his followers.

1 Timothy 6:3-6 is a guidebook for identifying deceivers. Satan is invisible so we do not often sense his trickery. But we can see his tangible attacks and strategies. The passage says, "If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain." Here are the characteristics of false teachers in list form:

- Advocate a different doctrine (get involved in groups, studies, books, trends, and activities that sound biblical but really are far from the truth; this tends to be a sort of subculture which places itself above other Christians as having figured out some sort of hidden revelation or secret truth)
- Does not agree with sound words (when confronted with Biblical thinking, there is a refusal to listen to what the Bible has to say because a judgment has already been made that everybody else is wrong and out to get them and their real truth)
- Inability to see how the erroneous thinking is impacting their efforts to live in a godly manner (the deviant thinking creates enormous pride and a severe lack of interest in seeking reconciliation)
- Conceited and understanding nothing (this person gets extremely proud and self-righteous; thinking they are wise, they become fools; even sound teaching begins to pass by their heart and mind)
- Morbid interest in controversies and meaningless debates (these people come up with questions that sound intelligent, truth-seeking, and humble, but which are really meant to make themselves look good; the questions distract from what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach and much precious time is wasted in meaningless discussion about specific words, terms, and insignificant issues)

- Create within the body of Christ envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth (the result is division and a lack of peace and order; by now many people are off course and not pursuing discipleship and evangelism but some other irrelevant idea; the deceivers who have the depraved mind pull those who lack a strong biblical foundation down into sin and less important matters; those who already are depraved because of some sin enslavement are especially vulnerable)

Anyone who teaches a false doctrine about Christ and is unwilling to repent ought to be publicly denounced and removed from the church (Revelation 2:20).

Understanding deception is so important for any believer, but especially for the new believer. Satan's temptations are not always obvious. Sometimes we fall into them without realizing it. We must recognize the fruit of deceivers and not be taken by them.

- **Oppressing**

Oppression is a falling head over heels into deception and believing a high quantity of Satan's lies. It is a bombardment of difficulties, lies, temptations, deceptions, and even physical problems. It is an all out attack on a person, trying to bury them before they can maneuver their way out. It is like blitzing in football. You send several extra defenders at the quarterback so he is buried under a pile of bodies before he can even react to throw or hand off the ball. Satan blitzes us as well.

In the story of Job in the Old Testament, Satan approaches God, and God points out that He has a faithful and righteous follower in Job. Job is very well off, prosperous in every way. Satan, with God's permission, takes all of that away in an effort to see if Job will still follow God. He believes that Job is only a follower of God because God has blessed him. Job still follows God even after the loss of all of his children and all of his possessions. God then allows Satan to go after Job himself, afflicting his health to a point of agony and near death. Satan tries to deceive Job through Job's friends who tell him that he is afflicted because he has sinned. Job knows that he is blameless before God, but even his friends betray him. Yet he serves God. In the end God Job learns a valuable lesson that God is in charge and must be trusted no matter what. God, being gracious, does give Job back more than what he had had previously. The point is that Job was oppressed. All that he had he lost in a series of rapidly successive catastrophic events.

This happens to people today in different forms. A job is lost. A spouse's health deteriorates. A child rebels or runs away. The house burns down. The spouse leaves. The stock market crashes. The needed money for prescribed drugs is gone. These types of things happen, and many times all at once. This is Satan's move to discourage and bury

the believer before he can rationally respond to the situation and place his faith in God. Many people do not persevere through such a barrage of difficult events. But God is always there and will carry us through. We have to trust Him with a relentless trust perhaps even to the point of death.

Honoring God through a period of oppression is hugely glorifying to Him. God is pleased by our faith in His goodness and such faith may have to go against all that our brain tells us in such times is true about God. We must believe what His Word says and trust Him that He knows better than we do what is best for us. God is love, and all that comes into our lives will of necessity be the kindest and wisest and best thing for us because of God's love.

Response to Evil

So where does this leave us? It leaves us with the knowledge that our faith will be under attack. It leaves us hopefully more equipped to deal with Satan's strategies and temptations. And it should give us comfort that we have a God who can be trusted. Three things to remember to encourage ourselves amidst the daily battles:

1. God will never tempt us.

James 1:13 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."

2. God will give us the strength to resist, endure, and escape temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it."

3. God will reward us for persevering under trial.

James 1:12 says, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."

Being tried and tested by God so that we can give Him glory and so that we can see what we are made of is one of God's ways to help us grow to become more like Christ. Often in God's trials, God will allow Satan to tempt us to give up or give in along the way. But we must stand firm. As James 1:2-4 which says, "Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Summary

Satan and his demons hate man because God loves man. Unsaved man is prisoner to Satan (2 Timothy 2:26), and saved man can be tempted, oppressed, and deceived by

Satan. Yet we believe that God is faithful and provides a way of escape from temptation, and we believe that God is in complete control and totally sovereign. Satan can only do what God allows. Christ gives us the victory to resist the devil and to ward off his attacks, so we need not fear him or be preoccupied with him or with demons. We need to be aware that we fight a spiritual battle ultimately, and as such we must fight with the Word of God, prayer, and appropriating the strength and blood of Christ.

End Times

Imagery from Daniel 7

- **First beast (Babylon)**

This was concerning Daniel's time. Nebuchadnezzar is seen in Daniel 7:4 in that it speaks of wild animals which also had the mind of a human. He was insane like a wild animal and then was returned to his rightful mind upon repenting (Daniel 4:33-36).

- **Second beast (Medo-Persian empire)**

There will be three more kings for the Persian empire, and then Greece will devour it. This is seen in the fact that there are three ribs in beast's mouth (Daniel 7:5). This account is given similarly in Daniel 8:1-3, 20. It speaks of a goat (Greece) which crushes a ram (Persia) quickly (Daniel 8:4-8, 21-22).

- **Third beast (Greece)**

Alexander the Great dies very young, and four generals rule in his place. These are the four heads referred to in Daniel 7:6. The imagery of the leopard implies a quick conquest of Persia and surrounding territories.

- **Fourth beast (Rome)**

Rome was the next major world empire, absorbing the Greek and Hellenistic culture and territories. Daniel 7:7, 23 describes Rome as that which treads down the whole known world and has iron teeth (speaks of strength; it is interesting that Rome came to be in power on the tail end of the Iron Age).

Out of Rome ten kings will rise and another will rise after them, namely the antichrist.

He arises from a kingdom of ten kings (probably some kind of middle eastern/southern European alliance) and subdues three of them (probably three who are somewhat sympathetic to Israel and/or Christianity).

Characteristics of the Antichrist

- He utters great boasts (Daniel 7:8).
- He wages war with the saints and overpowers them (Daniel 7:21) but only "until the Ancient of Days comes" (Daniel 7:22).
- He speaks out against the Most High, and he seeks to make changes in times and laws (new religious and political systems). The saints are given into his hand for three and a half years (Daniel 7:25).
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 refers to him as the "man of lawlessness" and "son of destruction." It says that he will exalt himself above all objects of worship and gods, and he will take his seat in the temple of God. He will come with signs and

- false wonders, including having an apparent fatal wound that will heal and cause many to be deceived (Revelation 13:11-12).
- He will be accompanied by a false prophet who will propagate the false religion and evil empire. He will cause all people to get a mark on their right hand or forehead in order to be able to buy or sell. His number is 666. He will force people to worship the beast and the images of the beast, both of which have power to rain fire on those who refuse (Revelation 13:13-17).
 - He will have no regard for the desire of women (Daniel 11:37), which could mean that he is homosexual, that he kills children and women without remorse, that he is repressive toward women, or that he is celibate. His god is war, and as such, men are more valuable than women because they are stronger fighters (v. 38)
 - His doom is sure. Daniel 7:10, 22, 26 records the judgment rendered which says that the beast will be put into the eternal fire.

Timeline

70 seven year periods are allotted to make up for Israel's neglect of the Sabbaths. From the time the temple is rebuilt to the advent of Christ as Messiah on Palm Sunday are 7 sevens plus 62 sevens, a total of 483 years. One seven year period is left, which will be antichrist's rule, with the second three and a half years being the great tribulation (Daniel 9:24-27).

Antichrist will arrive on the scene, signaling the beginning of the seven year period. He will feign kindness and peace, making peace with Israel. After three and a half years of peace (Revelation 12:6), he will break the treaty, entering Israel, defeating it, and desecrating the temple (implying that one will have to be rebuilt before this time), setting himself up as God (Matthew 24:15, Daniel 9:27).

He has forty-two months or 1,260 days (Revelation 13:5) before his end. Daniel 12:11 says 1290 days, which may just allow 30 days for the judgments before the official start of the millennium. Daniel 12:22 says that those who wait and get to the 1335 days are blessed. Presumably, this accounts for the remaining events involved in setting up the millennial kingdom. A few might actually live through this, thus they are waiting for it.

Signs of antichrist coming include an increase in knowledge and people moving to and fro (easy travel) (Daniel 12:4). There will be famines, earthquakes, wars, rumors of wars, many false messiahs, many false prophets, much lawlessness, love growing cold, and the gospel having been preached to the whole world (though this continues during the tribulation and may have its completion there) (Matthew 24:1-14).

The second three and half year period is the time of trouble, the great tribulation. Prior to this, the true believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. I believe that believers will be raptured even before the final seven year period because of the fact that the final seven years is mainly concerning Israel, not the church. Revelation 3:10 says that the believers who persevere will be kept from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole earth. That didn't happen just for the Philadelphian church; it has to have farther

reaching implications, namely toward the Great Tribulation. The dead in Christ rise first and then believers who are alive and remain meet Him in the air to be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-58). That there is a “rapture” before the tribulation is over makes sense given that believers appear to be represented in Revelation 4 as the 24 elders. This makes sense given that they rule jointly with Christ (they have thrones- Rev. 4:4), they have crowns (Rev. 2:10), and they have white garments (Rev. 3:18).

Seven seal judgments follow (Revelation 6), and then seven trumpet judgments occur (Revelation 8-11). These are brutal, killing much of the life on the earth (Revelation 14:14-20).

There will be testimony to Christ during the tribulation period. Apparently, during the tribulation, 144,000 Jewish witnesses are sealed and testify to the coming of Christ. These may well be the firstfruits of Israel who will turn to Christ (Revelation 14:4). During the last three and a half years, two witnesses will prophesy. They will witness to the truth of Christ and His return, having power to call fire down from heaven. They will eventually be killed, the world will celebrate, they will rise from the dead, and they will ascend into heaven (Revelation 11:1-13). Those who turn to Christ during the tribulation and are subsequently killed for their faith are called blessed (Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5, 13)

Finally, the bowl judgments occur (Revelation 15, 16). The final judgment culminates with the gathering of all the nations to the valley of decision, called Armageddon. Antichrist will have defeated the king of the south and the north. News from the east and the north will trouble him as armies gather around Palestine. He will annihilate many, but his end will come as Christ returns. Having set up his camp near the holy city, it will be there that Christ will slaughter him along with all the armies of the earth with the word of His mouth (Daniel 11:40-45, Revelation 19:15, Zechariah 14:12-15).

A remnant of Israel will be saved (Zechariah 14:1-3) as Christ arrives on the same Mount of Olives where He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:11, Zechariah 14:4). When Christ returns all will see and know it (Matthew 24:27). Remnant Israel will repent and become servants of God in the millennial kingdom (Micah 5:3-5). Revelation 16:18-20 and Zechariah 14:5, 10 indicate that earthquakes will seriously alter the earth’s topography, making it ready for the millennial kingdom. Jerusalem’s topography is improved while all other cities are destroyed. Babylon, the evil world empire, falls, and the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 17-19).

Then comes the first resurrection of believers (Revelation 20:5-7, Matthew 24:31). This includes the tribulation saints who had been killed. They join the other believers to reign (Revelation 20:4, 7:9-17). Following the first resurrection is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7).

Satan is bound for the one thousand years of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-3). Those not in the book of life stay in the place of the dead (Hades/Sheol) until the thousand years is over (Revelation 20:13-14). Believers reign with Christ during the 1000 years (Revelation 2:26). Saints will possess and inherit an eternal kingdom ruled by Christ (Daniel 7:18), and all kingdoms under heaven will be put under the rule of the saints and Christ (Daniel 7:25). That believers will reign is also seen in 1 Corinthians 6:2 and 2 Timothy 2:12.

There will be a sacrificial system and a temple during the millennium (Ezekiel 40-48). Some unsaved Gentiles who survived the Great Tribulation will live during the millennial kingdom, which will still be on this earth. Those who got to the kingdom to sacrifice to God will get rain, those who don't will not. Sin and rebellion are still possible (Zechariah 14:16-18). Isaiah 65:17-25 indicates that people will live to be as old as trees live, and animals will get along with one another and not have to be feared.

Immediately following the millennial kingdom, Satan is released. He deceives the nations from the four corners of the earth. The armies are referred to as Gog and Magog. They surround the camp of the saints and Jerusalem, and fire comes down from heaven and devours them (Revelation 20:7-10, Ezekiel 38, 39).

The devil is thrown into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet already are (Revelation 20:10).

Next comes the second resurrection, which is for the unbelievers who are judged at the Great White Throne and who are then sentenced into eternity in the lake of fire along with the devil and his demons. Death and Hades had been holding the dead unbelievers, but they give them up and death and Hades itself enters the lake of fire along with the unsaved (Revelation 20:11-15).

Daniel 12:1-3 emphasizes that some are raised to life and some to judgment. This is the first and second resurrection. This passage also shows that Israel's seventieth week is over, and God will call them back to Himself (Romans 11:1-2).

A new heaven and a new earth are made. There will be no more pain, sorrow, death, or crying. The New Jerusalem, which is the dwelling place of God and of the saints, will be there, measuring 1500 mi in width, length, and height. It is made of all kinds of beautiful jewels. God will have made His dwelling among His people. God Himself is the temple and the light. All nations will be represented by the redeemed. There will be no more curse, God will be served, and believers will reign with Christ forever (Revelation 21-22:5).

NOTE: The subject of the end times is an extremely complex and difficult study. As such, I don't pretend to have mastered the study of the end times, but this is hopefully a good resource for further study nonetheless.