

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES

Teacher's Manual

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OBJECTIVES

At the end of this course, the participants should:

- Understand the importance of sound biblical doctrine
- Explain the essential doctrines of the Christian faith according to the Bible, as outlined in the Every Nation Statement of Faith
- Take the essential doctrines to heart and be encouraged to grow in their faith

OVERVIEW

Session 1: **The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures**

Session 2: **God's Attributes and the Trinity**

Session 3: **God's Sovereignty and Providence**

Session 4: **The Doctrine of Christ**

Session 5: **The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

- What are the basic and fundamental beliefs that constitute the Christian faith?
- How do they affect our lives as disciples of Christ?
- How important is sound doctrine as we share the gospel, make disciples and train leaders?

If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.

1 Timothy 4:6

It is necessary that Christians be taught sound Bible doctrine and that all doctrine be tested by the full context of the infallible word of God. Doctrine received, believed, and practiced determines a person's character, behavior, and destiny.

EVERY NATION STATEMENT OF FAITH

Today we will take a closer look at the Every Nation Statement of Faith because it summarizes what we believe, the reasons we believe, and the reasons we are part of this church.

We believe...

In the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

We believe...

In one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe...

In our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in power and glory.

We believe...

In the salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

We believe...

In the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe...

In the unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ.

We believe...

In the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life, they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Statement of Faith adopted from the World Evangelical Alliance as last modified on June 27, 2001.

We also embrace and adopt the Nicene Creed and Apostles' Creed (See appendices A and B).

Nicene Creed: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Nicene-creed.html>

Apostles' Creed: <https://www.gotquestions.org/apostles-creed.html>

BACKGROUND

The following nine sessions are a concise summary of the major points of the essential doctrines. The purpose of these sessions is to provide us with a deeper understanding of truth so that we will be more effective in winning the lost and training new believers.

SESSION 1 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

Session 1

The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

We believe in the Holy Scriptures as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

The Holy Scriptures is composed of the 66 books of the Bible – thirty-nine (39) books in the Old Testament and twenty-seven (27) in the New Testament.

EXPLANATION

The Holy Bible is a collection of 66 books is known as the “canon” of Scripture. That word comes from the Hebrew *kaneh* (a rod), and the Greek *kanon* (a reed). Among other things, the words referred equally to the measuring rod of the carpenter and the ruler of the scribe. It became a common word for anything that was the measure by which others were to be judged. After the apostles, church leaders used it to refer to the body of Christian doctrine accepted by

the churches.¹

The 39 books of the Old Testament form the Bible of Judaism, while the Christian Bible includes those books and also the 27 books of the New Testament. It was actually not until 367 AD that the church father Athanasius first provided the complete listing of the 66 books belonging to the canon. He distinguished those from other books that were widely circulated and he noted that those 66 books were the ones, and the only ones, universally accepted.²

1. Bibliology ⁽¹⁾ is the theological study of the Word of God. It includes the five interrelated topics of:

- Revelation
- Inspiration
- Inerrancy
- Illumination
- Interpretation

EXPLANATION

Bibliology – from the Greek word *biblios*, meaning “book”

2. The doctrine of revelation ⁽²⁾ teaches that God reveals Himself to mankind in such a way that we can know Him and fellowship with Him.³

EXPLANATION

“Nobody would know the truth about God, or be able to relate to Him in a personal way, had not God first acted to make Himself known.”⁴

There are two kinds of revelation: general and specific.

- General ⁽³⁾ revelation is God’s communication of Himself to all persons at all times and in all places.⁵

EXPLANATION

General revelation is so called because everyone receives it, just by virtue of being alive in God’s world. God actively discloses these aspects of himself to all human beings. This knowledge is discovered through natural means, such as observation of nature (the physical universe), philosophy and reasoning. (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; Romans 1:19-20; Psalm 19:1-6)

¹ <https://answersingenesis.org/the-word-of-god/why-66-books/>

² <https://www.biblica.com/bible/bible-faqs/how-were-the-books-of-the-bible-chosen/>

³ Holman’s Bible Dictionary

⁴ J.I. Packer, Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs

⁵ H. Wayne House, Charts of Christian Theology and Doctrine, p. 21

⁴⁵ . . . so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:45)

¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” (Acts 14:17)

¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. ² Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. ³ There is no speech, nor are there words, whose voice is not heard. ⁴ Their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them he has set a tent for the sun, ⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber, and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy. ⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them, and there is nothing hidden from its heat. (Psalm 19:1-6)

There are three manifestations of General Revelation: *nature*, *providence*, and *conscience*.

Nature reveals God’s glory.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:20)

Providence reveals God’s love.

“For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45)

Conscience reveals God’s holiness.

¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them . . . (Romans 2:14,15)

- Special ⁽⁴⁾ revelation is God’s authoritative Word conveyed objectively and propositionally through the exclusive medium of the Bible.

EXPLANATION

God has supplemented general revelation with the further revelation of himself as Savior of sinners through Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6; Heb. 1:1-3). This revelation, given in history and embodied in Scripture (Ps. 19:7-11), and opening the door of salvation to the lost, is usually

called special or **specific revelation**.⁶

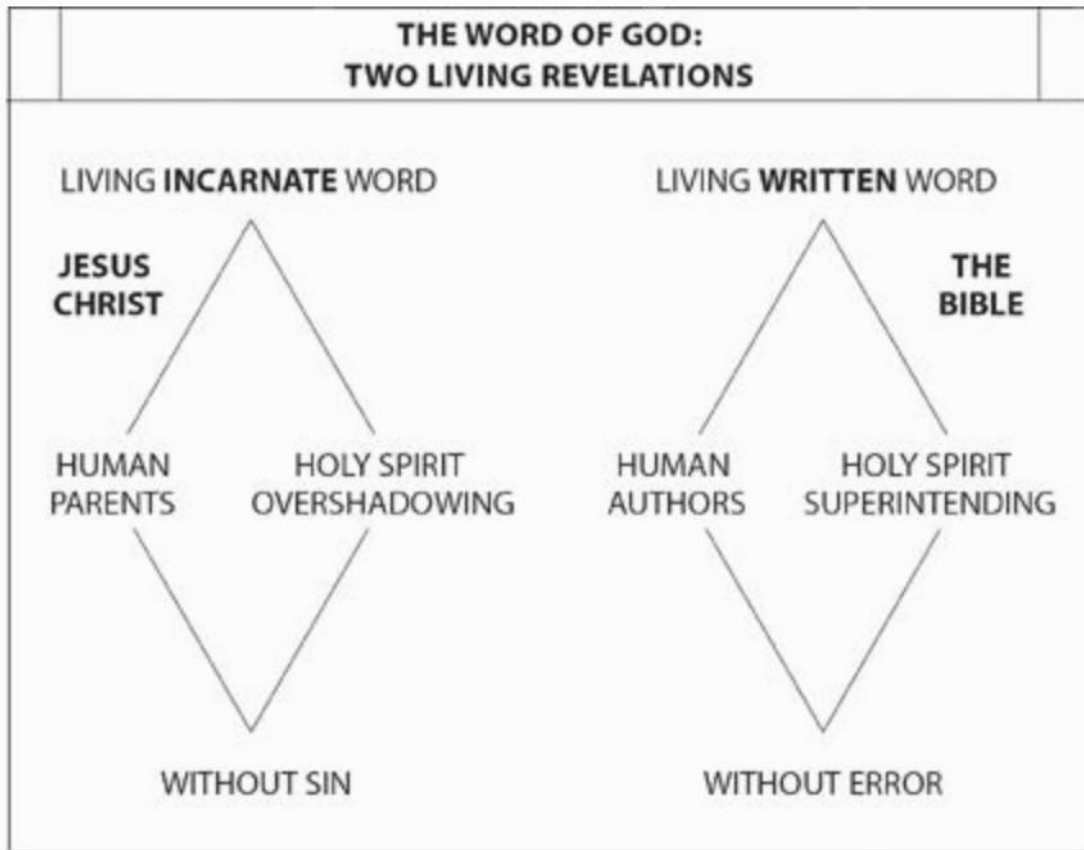
“Just as old men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God. This, therefore, is a special gift, where God, to instruct his church, not merely uses mute teachers of nature and conscience but also opens his own most hallowed lips.”⁷

Special Revelation is expressed primarily in the written words of Scripture. However, there are three other manifestations of Special Revelation. The first is *miraculous events*—God manifesting Himself in history. The parting of the Red Sea is an example of special revelation through a miraculous event. The second is *divine speech*—God revealing Himself through human language. Joseph’s dream to move his family to Egypt until the death of Herod is an example of special revelation through divine speech. The third is *visible manifestations*—God showing Himself in visible form. The Lord appearing to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre in Genesis chapter eighteen is an example of special revelation through a visible manifestation.

TYPES OF DIVINE REVELATION			
Type	Manifestation	Scripture	Significance
General Revelation	In Nature	Ps. 19:1–6	Reveals God exists. Reveals God’s glory.
		Rom. 1:18–21	Reveals God is omnipotent. Reveals God will judge.
	In Providence	Matt. 5:45	Reveals God is benevolent to all people.
		Acts 14:15–17	Reveals God provides food for all people.
		Dan. 2:21	Reveals God raises up and removes rulers.
	In Conscience	Rom. 2:14–15	Reveals God has placed His law within the hearts of all people.
Special Revelation	In Christ	John 1:18	Reveals what the Father is like.
		John 5:36–37	Reveals the Father’s compassion.
		John 6:63; 14:10	Reveals that the Father gives life to those who believe in the Son.
	In Scripture	2 Tim. 3:16, 17	Reveals all the doctrine, rebuke, correction, and guidance that the Christian needs for good living.
		2 Pet. 1:21	Reveals all that God has chosen to disclose through human authors directed by the Holy Spirit.

⁶ J.I. Packer. “General Revelation & Guilt,” from the book: *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs* <
http://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/585>

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.6.1



3. The Holy Scriptures are originally given ⁽⁵⁾ by God.

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

2 Timothy 3:16

EXPLANATION

The Greek word *theopneustos* is a joining of the words *theos* (God) with *pneustos* (breath) which conveys the idea that Scripture is inspired and breathed out by God, serving as an extension of God Himself.

God has revealed Himself through the written Word, the Scriptures. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humankind. The Bible is not merely the record of God's revelation, but is, itself, God's revealed Word in written form.

The Bible is not a collection of man's thoughts about God, but primarily God revealing Himself and His purposes to man.

4. The Holy Scriptures are Divinely inspired ⁽⁶⁾.

... knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. ²¹For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

2 Peter 1:20,21

EXPLANATION

Peter uses a fascinating maritime metaphor in verse 21, where the Greek word, *pheromenē*, is used of a ship carried along by the wind. The prophets raised their sails, so to speak (they were obedient and receptive), and the Holy Spirit filled them and carried their craft along in the direction he wished.⁸ Prophets spoke and wrote God's word as they were guided, driven, and moved by the Holy Spirit.

Inspiration is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit to the writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted to what they wrote being the actual Word of God.

Inspiration describes the process by which the revelation was recorded. Inspiration was the power that enabled the men of God to write divine revelation without error or defect.

The biblical authors were not passive instruments in the transmission of divine revelation. God used each author's personality and manner of expression in conveying His truth.

EXPLANATION

The entire text of Scripture, including the very words, is a product of the mind of God expressed in human terms and by human authors.

"Surrender the dogma of verbal inspiration and you are left like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea at the mercy of every wind that blows. Deny that the Bible is, without any qualifications, the very Word of God, and you are left without any ultimate standard of measurement and without any supreme authority."⁹

5. The Holy Scriptures are Infallible ⁽⁷⁾.

Every word of God proves true; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.

⁸ Michael Green. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: 2 Peter & Jude

⁹ Arthur W. Pink, The Divine Inspiration of the Bible, www.ccel.org

Proverbs 30:5

Biblical infallibility is the belief that what the Bible says regarding matters of faith and Christian practice is wholly useful and true.

To profess that the Bible is infallible is to acknowledge that the Scriptures are incapable of teaching any error. The prophets and apostles did not err; they could not err when writing Scripture as the Holy Spirit inspired them.

EXPLANATION

Infallibility means that we believe that the Bible is completely trustworthy as a guide to salvation and the life of faith and will not fail to accomplish its purpose.¹⁰

Psalms 18:30 likewise says, “As for God, his way is perfect: The LORD’s word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.”

6. The doctrine of Inerrancy⁽⁸⁾ teaches that the Bible is fully true in everything it teaches.

¹³⁷*Righteous are you, O Lord, and right are your rules.* ¹³⁸*You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness and in all faithfulness.*

Psalm 119:137,138

The Scriptures are a trustworthy guide for our relationships with God and with other people. They give truth about faith, worship, salvation, morality, and ethics.

EXPLANATION

Inerrancy is the doctrine that the Bible is fully truthful in all of its teachings. If the Bible is not inerrant, then our knowledge of God may be inaccurate and unreliable.¹¹

“The Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth”¹².

Brian Edwards wrote,

“The Holy Spirit moved men to write. He allowed them to use their own styles, cultures, gifts, and character. He allowed them to use the results of their own study and research, write of their own experiences, and express what was in their minds. At the same time, the Holy Spirit did not allow error to influence their writings. He overruled in the expression of thought and in the choice of words. Thus, they recorded accurately all God wanted them to say and exactly how He wanted them to say it in their own character, styles, and languages.”¹³

¹⁰ Donald K. McKim. The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, 2nd Edition

¹¹ Millard J. Erickson. Christian Theology, chap. 9: The Dependability of God’s Word: Inerrancy

¹² E.J. Young, Thy Word is Truth, p. 113

¹³ <https://answersingenesis.org/is-the-bible-true/why-should-we-believe-in-the-inerrancy-of-scripture/>

John wrote his Gospel in the simple style of an unlearned fisherman. Luke wrote his Gospel in the sophisticated vocabulary of an educated person. Paul's Epistles reflect the logic of a philosopher.

Inerrancy does not demand verbatim reporting of events. For example, the Gospel authors reported different aspects of the same event.

Luke (18:35) records that Jesus encountered the blind beggar as He *approached* the city of Jericho while Matthew (20:29) records that Jesus encountered him as He *left* Jericho. Who was right? They both were. There was a new city of Jericho and an old city of Jericho. Therefore, it was possible to leave Jericho at the same time you entered Jericho.

It is not always possible to provide solutions to all the apparent contradictions in Scripture. In some cases, the solution awaits the findings of the archaeologist or the linguist's research. The solution to some problems must be held in abeyance.

Inerrancy allows for the use of popular expressions, approximations, and the language of appearances.

EXPLANATION

"The inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as those do not contradict."¹⁴

The *language of appearances* means that the author uses language that describes what his senses are experiencing, not necessarily what is actually happening. For example, when the author of Joshua 10:13 said, "The sun stopped in the middle of the sky," he was describing what his senses experienced – regardless if it was the sun or earth that actually stopped.

Numbers 25:9 says that 24,000 died by the plague and 1 Corinthians 10:8 says that 23,000 died. Why the discrepancy? Because the purpose of the different authors allowed for approximations.

"Inerrancy means that when all the facts are known, the Scriptures in their original autographs and properly interpreted will be shown to be wholly true in everything they teach, whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, science, geography, geology, or other disciplines or knowledge."¹⁵

7. The Holy Scriptures are the Supreme ⁽⁹⁾ authority in all matters of faith and conduct.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple . . .

Psalm 19:7

¹⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, What You Should Know About Inerrancy, p. 16

¹⁵ Paul D. Feinberg, Inerrancy, ed. Norman L. Geisler, pp. 265-304

God has all authority, and we accept the Bible as the primary authority by which God communicates to us what He wants us to believe and to do.

The authority of Scripture means that all the words ⁽¹⁰⁾ in Scripture are God's words in such a way that to disbelieve or disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God.

EXPLANATION

One of the best acronyms for the Bible is—Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth. Life is like a college class. At the end there is a final exam. Those who pass the exam inherit eternal life and those who do not pass go to eternal punishment. The Bible is like the syllabus for the class. It gives us what is required in order for us to pass the “class” of life.¹⁶

ACTIVITY

1. How does the inerrancy, infallibility, and authority of the Scriptures encourage you concerning your faith and your personal Bible study?
2. Why do you believe the Bible? Isn't the Bible written by men, just like any other book? How do you know that you're reading the right books in the Bible?
3. What are the basic, fundamental beliefs that constitute the Christian faith? How do they affect my life as a disciple of Christ? How do they reflect as I preach the gospel, make disciples, and train believers?

FOR FURTHER STUDY OF THE TEACHER

1. For more info on Canonicity, you can go to this site - <https://bible.org/seriespage/6-canonicity>
2. Read Chapters 2 to 5 of *Systematic Theology* by Wayne Grudem
3. Read Chapter 18: Bibliology of *Moody Handbook of Theology* by Paul Enns
4. Bibliology: The Bible <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-bibliology-bible>

¹⁶ <http://myocn.net/bible-basic-instructions-leaving-earth/>

SESSION 2 – GOD’S ATTRIBUTES AND THE TRINITY

Session 2: God’s Attributes and the Trinity

We believe in one God, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“The doctrine of God is the central point of theology. A person’s view of God supplies the whole framework within which his theology is constructed and his life is lived.”

—Millard Erickson¹⁷

1. We believe ⁽¹⁾ in one God.

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.”

Deuteronomy 6:4

EXPLANATION

The *Shema* (Hebrew, “hear”) is the Hebrew word that begins the most important prayer (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) that is spoken daily in the Jewish tradition.

The word expresses not only the uniqueness but also the unity of God. As **one God** (or the “Unique”), when he spoke there was no other to contradict. The LORD was not merely first among the gods, as Baal in the Canaanite pantheon, Amon-Re in Egypt, or Marduk in Babylon; he was the one and only God and as such He was omnipotent, all-powerful Unique God who imposed on Israel the charge to love and obey Him.¹⁸

God is perfectly unified and one in essence. All three Persons in the Trinity possess all of the divine attributes and they do not act independently of one another.

The Old Testament emphasizes the unity of God while hinting at His triune nature.

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.”

Genesis 1:26

EXPLANATION

The Hebrew noun used for God here in Genesis chapter one is *Elohim*, which is plural in form, but it takes a singular verb. This speaks of plurality of persons within the nature of the one God. The pronoun “Us” also suggests in itself a plurality of persons (Gen. 3:22).¹⁹

¹⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, p. 75

¹⁸ Peter Craigie, *NICOT: The Book of Deuteronomy*

¹⁹ https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_688.cfm

And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

Isaiah 6:8

One reason the doctrine of the Trinity is not taught overtly in the Old Testament is because one of its primary concerns is to emphasize the oneness of God. They had to exert all their efforts to keep the people from idolatry and polytheism. Only when that idea was thoroughly secure could they introduce complex ideas like a God who is three-in-one. Augustine commented on this when he said: "The Old Testament is like a fully furnished room that is unlit. The New Testament is the light that reveals all the furniture that was already there."

Theology proper is the study of the nature and attributes of God.

Attributes of God

1. God is transcendent ⁽²⁾. He is above and beyond His creation and exists independent of it. (Isaiah 55:8,9)

EXPLANATION

⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8,9)

Because God is transcendent, He can never be fully known. Throughout all eternity, the glorified saints will continually marvel at some new discovery of God's character or nature.

Because God is transcendent, man can never become God. A philosophy professor at a major university had a poster on his office door featuring the cosmos in the background and this statement: "There are Two Principles for the Successful Study of Philosophy, Principle # 1: There is a God; Principle # 2: You are not Him."

2. God is immanent ⁽³⁾. He is within His creation. (Acts 17:28)

EXPLANATION

"For in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

Because God is immanent, He can be understood by finite people. While we cannot have *comprehensive* knowledge about God because of His transcendence, we can have *accurate* knowledge about God because of His immanence.

The two qualities of transcendence and immanence are mutually exclusive of one another. It is impossible for anything to be both above and beyond the creation, and within the creation at the same time – unless you are God. He said of Himself, "I dwell on a high and holy place (I am

transcendent), and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit (I am immanent) in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” (Isaiah 57:15)

If God were transcendent but not immanent, He would be the God of Deism, the One who set the Universe in motion and then opted out of any involvement with it. If God were immanent but not transcendent, He would be the God of the New Age, the mystical force within all Creation.

3. God is omnipresent ⁽⁴⁾. He is everywhere at the same time. (Psalm 139:7,8)

EXPLANATION

⁷Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? ⁸If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! (Psalm 139:7,8)

Because God is omnipresent, He can be worshipped anywhere.

Paul and Silas worshiped God in a prison. (Acts 16:23-25)

Because God is omnipresent, it is impossible to run from Him. Jonah tried and failed. And so has everyone else who has tried it. (Jonah 1:3,17)

4. God is omnipotent ⁽⁵⁾. He has all power. (Jeremiah 32:17)

EXPLANATION

“Ah, Lord God! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you.” (Jeremiah 32:17)

Because God is omnipotent, He can handle any situation imaginable.

Because God is omnipotent, He is also omniscient; He knows all things. *“Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit.” (Psalms 147:5)*

5. God is immutable ⁽⁶⁾. He never changes. (Malachi 3:6)

EXPLANATION

“I the Lord do not change.” (Malachi 3:6)

Because God is immutable, faith is possible.

6. God is holy ⁽⁷⁾. He is absolutely pure and untouched by evil. (Isaiah 6:3)

EXPLANATION

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.” (Isaiah 6:3)

Because God is holy, we can only relate to Him through holiness.

“ . . . without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

7. God is truthful ⁽⁸⁾. He cannot lie. (Titus 1:2)

EXPLANATION

“ . . . God cannot lie . . . ” (Titus 1:2)

Because God is truthful, there is no place for anxiety.

8. God is love ⁽⁹⁾. He manifests His love in acts of kindness. (John 3:16)

EXPLANATION

“For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son...” (John 3:16)

Because God is benevolent, His plans for us are always good.

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

“Whatever God felt about anything, He still feels. Whatever He thought about anyone, He still thinks. Whatever He approved, He still approves. Whatever He condemned, He still condemns. Today we have what they call the relativity of morals. But remember this: God never changes. Holiness and righteousness are conformity to the will of God. And the will of God never changes for moral creatures.”

— A.W. Tozer, *The Attributes of God: Deeper into the Father's Heart*

The Trinity

God eternally exists in Three persons ⁽¹⁰⁾, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

EXPLANATION

The word “trinity” is not found in the Bible, but the doctrine is. The doctrine of the Trinity says that there is one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

“Person” in this sense does not mean human, but it denotes a being that possesses a mind, will, and emotions distinct from the other persons of the Trinity. This makes them capable of a real relationship with one another.

So, for example, when Jesus is praying to his Father, we are seeing one real distinct person calling upon another for help. He is not simply talking to himself.

a. The essence ⁽¹¹⁾ of God is held in common by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

b. The three persons are co-equal ⁽¹²⁾, co-eternal, and joint partakers of the same majesty.

“In God there are not three individuals alongside of, and separate from, one another, but only personal self-distinctions within the Divine essence.”

- Louise Berkhof

There are distinct relationships within the Trinity.

There are different functions within the Trinity, but the three are equal in authority.

c. The New Testament reveals ⁽¹³⁾ the Trinity by referring to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as God.

... yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and through whom we exist.

1 Corinthians 8:6

But about the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever . . .”

Hebrews 1:8

³“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit? . . . ⁴You have not lied to man but to God.”

Acts 5:3,4

d. The New Testament reveals the Trinity in the baptism ⁽¹⁴⁾ of Jesus and in the baptism formula.

¹⁰And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.

Mark 1:10, 11

EXPLANATION

At Jesus’ baptism in Matthew 3:15-17, the second member of the Trinity is being baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River and is identified as the Son by the voice of the first member

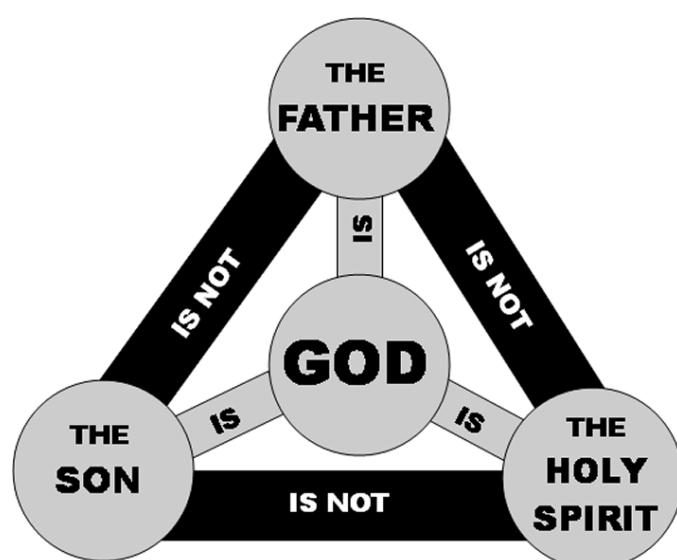
of the Trinity, the Father, from heaven. This is followed by the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, descending upon Jesus.

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

Matthew 28:19

EXPLANATION

The book of Matthew then closes with Jesus telling his disciples, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Notice the mention of three persons but only one name mentioned as a unity in the singular form.



- e. All simplistic attempts to understand the Trinity deny ⁽¹⁵⁾ one strand of the Bible’s teaching.

EXPLANATION

There were three major attacks on the doctrine of the Trinity in early Church history, all of which have since continued in various forms.

- Tritheism ⁽¹⁶⁾ teaches that there are three Gods related in a loose association.

EXPLANATION

This teaching abandons the unity within the Trinity with the result that there are three Gods rather than three Persons within one Godhead. The Mormons believe in a modern day version of Tritheism.

- Modalism ⁽¹⁷⁾ teaches that there is only one God with three modes of existence or three manifestations.

EXPLANATION

Modalism refers to the terms Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as different roles in the one person of Jesus Christ who acts at different times. They deny that the three persons are distinct from each other. They deny the self-identity of the three divine Persons.

A typical Modalist approach is to regard God as active in three ways: as Father in creation, as Son in redemption, and as Spirit in sanctification.

Oneness Pentecostals are Modalists—they believe in “Jesus only.”

- Arianism ⁽¹⁸⁾ teaches that only the Father is God, and that the Father created Christ.

EXPLANATION

An example of Arianism is seen in the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Jehovah’s Witnesses accept only “Jehovah” as God. They reject the deity of Jesus Christ, adopting instead the Arian view that He is a lesser god created by Jehovah.

The Nicene and Constantinople Councils contradicted the concept of Arianism.

In 325 AD, the Nicene Council formalized what the historic Church had always believed: that **Christ** is God. “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ...true God of true God, not made, of one substance with the Father.” (The Nicene Creed)

The first Constantinople Council (381 AD) also formalized what the historic Church believed: **the Holy Spirit** is God. “... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who is worshiped and glorified together with the Father and the Son.” (Athanasian Creed)

ACTIVITY

1. The lesson lists eight attributes of God’s nature. Which of the eight is the most difficult for you to understand? Explain.
2. How does an understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity affect your personal relationship with God?
3. Why do you believe in God? Who is God? Is there one God or three?

ASSIGNMENT

Search the New Testament for passages that describe the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Determine which passages give us the clearest insight into the Trinity.

FOR FURTHER STUDY OF THE TEACHER

1. Read Chapter 14: God in Three Persons: The Trinity of Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem
2. Does *Elohim* in Genesis 1:1 mean God or gods? <https://bible.org/question/does-ielohimi-gen-11-mean-god-or-gods>
3. Robert Bowman, Jr.: The Biblical Basis of the Doctrine of the Trinity https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/bowman_robert/trinity/trinity.cfm

SESSION 3 – GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY AND PROVIDENCE

Session 3: God’s Sovereignty and Providence

Sovereignty

1. God is the supreme authority and is in complete control ⁽¹⁾ of the universe. His dominion is total; no one can interfere with His purpose or thwart His plans.

³⁴ . . . for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ . . . he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, “What have you done?”
Daniel 4:34,35

EXPLANATION

The **Sovereignty** of God refers to His ultimate lordship and rule over the universe so that the divine will is supreme over all else (Eph. 1:11; Rev. 4:11).²⁰

There is absolutely nothing that happens in the universe that is outside of God’s influence and authority. As King of kings and Lord of lords, God has no limitations.

2. Sovereignty contains two ideas: authority ⁽²⁾ and power.

Authority refers to a sovereign’s rights; power refers to a sovereign’s ability. God has both the right to rule over all creation and the ability.

There is no authority higher than God’s in the universe, and all authority that exists is derived from and dependent upon God’s authority. All other forms of authority exist either by God’s command or by God’s permission.

EXPLANATION

The word *authority* contains the word *author*. God is the author of all things. He owns the universe, and His ownership gives him certain rights. He may do with His universe what is pleasing to His holy will. That is why the topic of Sovereignty follows the topic of Creation in most theology textbooks. God is sovereign because He is creator.

“If something could come to pass apart from God’s sovereign permission, then that which came to pass would frustrate his sovereignty. If God refused to permit something to happen and it happened anyway, then whatever caused it to happen would have more authority and power than God himself. If there is any part of creation outside of God’s sovereignty, then God is simply not sovereign. If God is not sovereign, then God is not God.” (R.C. Sproul, Chosen By God, p.16)

²⁰ “The Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms, Second Edition: Revised and Expanded.”

The Scripture continually affirms that God reigns on His throne as king of the universe exercising dominion over everything. (1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6:1; Psalm 11:4; 45:6; 47:8-9, to cite just a few passages)

Providence

EXPLANATION

The word providence is not used in Scripture, but the doctrine is on every page. **Providence** is the natural outworking of God's sovereignty.

The following table helps us understand the multi-faceted doctrine of providence.

DESCRIPTION	HEADING	SUMMARY STATEMENT
Providence is the work of God in which He upholds and preserves all His creation	Continual Involvement	God is working out His plan
Providence teaches that God directs all things to their appointed end	Ultimate Destination	Everyone and everything serves God's plan
Providence teaches that God is actively involved in all that happens in the world	Absolute Control	God is always in control of His plan

1. God is actively related to and involved in the creation ⁽³⁾ at every moment. He upholds all creation. (Psalm 136:25; 145:15; Nehemiah 9:6; Acts 17:28; Hebrews 1:3)

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:17

EXPLANATION

. . . he who gives food to all flesh, for his steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:25)

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. (Psalm 145:15)

"You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you. . ." (Nehemiah 9:6)

. . .for "In him we live and move and have our being"; ⁴as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring." . . ." (Acts 17:28)

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. . . (Hebrews 1:3)

The universe only continues in existence because Christ keeps it in existence. If He were to cease His preserving activity, everything would cease to exist.

God causes all things to maintain the properties with which he created them. This is the basis for science.

EXAMPLE: I can be confident that gasoline will make my car run today just as it did yesterday, not simply because “it has always worked that way,” but because God's providence sustains a universe in which created things maintain the properties with which he created them.

2. God directs all things to accomplish His purpose ⁽⁴⁾. Everything is leading toward the conclusion He planned long ago.

. . . in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

Psalm 139:16

EXPLANATION

The Lord did more than design and form our bodies; He also planned and determined our days. His purpose probably includes the length of life (Job 14:5) and the tasks He wants us to perform (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:12–13). This is not some form of fatalism or heartless predestination; for what we are and what He plans for us come from God's loving heart (Ps. 33:11) and are the very best He has in store for us (Rom. 12:2).²¹

²⁷. . . *for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,*
²⁸*to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.* (Acts 4:27, 28)

Westminster Confession: “The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

Events in creation are not the result of chance, nor fate, but by God, who is the personal and infinitely powerful Creator and Lord.

3. God is in complete control of the universe. Everything ⁽⁵⁾ that happens, happens for His purpose.

The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

Psalm 103:19

EXPLANATION

“Nothing happens unless God wills it to happen; He either permits it to happen or He brings it about Himself. God does everything He wills; He does not will anything without doing it, but what He wills He does, and what happens does not ever happen apart from His will. In a

²¹ Warren Wiersbe. The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament

wondrous, indescribable way, even that which is done against His will is not done without His will.” (Augustine, quoted in Reformed Dogmatics, Herman Bavinck, p.60)

4. God’s providence overrules ⁽⁶⁾ human action as a means to His own goals. A person takes action—yet God overrules. (Genesis 50:20)

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” (Genesis 50:20)

Choices that are made and actions that are done may go against God’s will of command (sometimes called His moral will or His revealed will)—yet they fulfill His will of events (sometimes called His providential will or His secret will).

There have been two historic challenges to this doctrine.

5. If God controls all things, how can our actions ⁽⁷⁾ have real meanings? The Bible teaches that although God controls all events, we are accountable for our actions.

EXPLANATION

“... this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:23)

The word “purpose” (Gk. boule) stresses the predetermined will or decision of God. Christ died because of the decision of God in eternity. However, Peter held the people responsible for killing Christ.

Scripture affirms that we really do cause events to happen. Our choices are real choices and have significant effects. Exactly how God combines his providential control with our significant choices, Scripture does not explain.

In eight places the Bible affirms that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh. In four places the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his heart. This is a picture of providence and human choice working together.

This doctrine does not encourage us to sit idly and await the outcome of certain events.

6. If God controls all things, does He cause evil ⁽⁸⁾? The Bible never blames God for evil; it always blames man. (James 1:13)

EXPLANATION

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (James 1:13)

The Bible never shows God taking PLEASURE in evil; He always abhors it.

The devil is the AGENT of all evil. (God allows the devil to work, God limits the devil's work, and God overrules the devil's work.)

7. There are at least four proper responses to the doctrine of providence:

- Worship ⁽⁹⁾: We stand in awe of His greatness. (Romans 11:33-36)

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

Our pride is humiliated because our reason cannot attain to this doctrine.

- Trust ⁽¹⁰⁾: We yield our entire life to His control. (Ephesians 1:4)

. . . even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. (Ephesians 1:4)

God does not make up plans suddenly as he goes along. He knows the end from the beginning, and he will accomplish all his good purposes. This should greatly increase our trust in him, especially in difficult circumstances.

- Peace ⁽¹¹⁾: We rest in the knowledge that God is in control of all things. (Ephesians 1:11)

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, . . . (Ephesians 1:11)

The result of God's sovereignty is that His purpose will be achieved. Nothing can thwart His plan; history will be worked out according to the predetermined will of God.

- Obedience ⁽¹²⁾: We obey in holy fear knowing that our actions have real consequences.

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. ¹⁴For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)

We are never left alone in the grip of chance or fate. God is in charge of His universe, and nothing can thwart His plans. Each event in our life comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice, knowing that God works all things after the counsel of His will.

ACTIVITY

1. What aspect of the doctrine of providence do you find the most encouraging? Why? What aspect is the most difficult for you to understand? Why?
2. Which of the four responses to the doctrine of providence is the most relevant to your life right now? Why?
3. Why do you think that accepting the doctrine of providence can be difficult for us?

SESSION 4 – THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Session 4: The Doctrine of Christ

We believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, His virgin birth, His sinless human life, His divine miracles, His vicarious and atoning death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension, His mediatorial work, and His personal return in power and glory.

Christology ⁽¹⁾ is the theological study of the person and work of Christ.

The Incarnation of Christ

1. The word incarnation means “in flesh” ⁽²⁾ and denotes the act whereby the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took to Himself an additional nature, humanity, through the virgin birth. The result is that Christ remains forever unblemished and undiminished deity, but He also possesses true, sinless humanity in one person forever (John 1:14; Philippians 2:7,8; 1 Timothy 3:16).

EXPLANATION

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

⁷... but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:7,8)

Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Jesus is true God and true man. This is called the **Hypostatic Union**. “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:9)

Hypostatic Union is a theological term that expresses the revealed truth that in Christ one person subsists in two natures: the Divine and the human. Hypostasis means: that which lies beneath, or the basis or foundation. Hence, it came to be used by the Greek philosophers to denote reality as distinguished from appearances.²²

Jesus' two natures, human and divine, are inseparable. Jesus will forever be the God-man, fully

²² Pace, Edward. "Hypostatic Union." The Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 7. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910 <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07610b.htm>>.

God and fully human, two distinct natures in one Person. Jesus' humanity and divinity are not mixed, but are united without loss of separate identity. Jesus sometimes operated with the limitations of humanity (John 4:6, 19:28) and other times in the power of His deity (John 11:43; Matthew 14:18-21). In both, Jesus' actions were from His one Person. Jesus had two natures, but only one personality.²³

2. Christ took on a human nature. He did not simply dwell ⁽³⁾ in a human person. (John 1:14)

EXPLANATION

"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

"The Word" refers to him who is God. "Became" is in the aorist tense, and indicates action at a point of time. "Flesh" is a strong, almost crude way of referring to human nature. John does not say, "the Word became man," nor "the Word took a body." He chooses that form of expression which puts what he wants to say most bluntly. It seems probable that he was confronted by people who were ready to think of Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God but who denied the reality of his humanity. They thought of him as only appearing to live a human life. Since God could not, on their premises, defile himself by real contact with humankind, the whole life of Jesus must be appearance only. But John's strong term leaves no room for such misconceptions. He is clear on the deity of the Word. But he is just as clear on the genuineness of his humanity.²⁴

The two natures of Christ are inseparably united without mixture or loss of separate identity. He remains 100% God and 100% man, two distinct natures in one Person forever.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) said it this way: "We confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary; acknowledged in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ."

"The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the man Jesus is truly divine; the doctrine of the Incarnation declares that the divine Jesus is truly human. Together they proclaim the full reality of the Savior."²⁵

3. The virgin birth guaranteed Christ's true humanity ⁽⁴⁾ without inherited guilt. It made possible the uniting of full deity with full humanity.

²³ <https://www.gotquestions.org/hypostatic-union.html>

²⁴ Leon Morris. The Gospel According to John (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

²⁵ J.I. packer, Concise Theology: A guide to Historic Christian Beliefs

EXPLANATION

If Jesus was not a man, then His death on the cross was an illusion and He could not represent fallen humanity.

If Jesus was not God, then the death on the cross had no salvific power.

The virgin birth was foretold in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament. (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:34-35)

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:34-35)

4. Both natures are necessary for redemption ⁽⁵⁾. As a man, Christ could represent man and die as a man. As God, the death of Christ could have infinite value, sufficient to provide redemption for the sins of the world.

EXPLANATION

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! . . .” (John 1:29)

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. ¹⁶For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (Hebrews 2:14-17)

The willful sin of Adam and Eve subverted God’s original plan for human nature. Humans cannot pay the enormous debt they owe to God. According to Anselm of Canterbury (c. 1033 – 1109), a God-Man was required to make payment for human sin. The payment for sin must be more valuable than all creation, and so could not be from creation itself. If the payer of human debt must offer something “of his own to God,” then this payer must be greater than all creation, that is, God himself. However, this one also must be human, since “none but true man owes” the debt of human sin. Hence, the need for the God-Man—Christ.²⁶

(The following section is for your own reference as the teacher. It is included here because it may help prepare you to teach this session. It is not likely you will share this information with the class.)

²⁶ <http://www.theologian-theology.com/theologians/god-man-anselm/>

SIX HISTORICAL CHRISTOLOGICAL HERESIES

It is necessary to study the historic Christological heresies for two reasons: they still exist (usually with different names), and they help to clarify the true doctrine.

1. The **Docetists** (1st Century) denied Christ's genuine humanity—Jesus only appeared human.

But if Christ was not fully human He could not redeem mankind.

Docetism was an early Christian heresy that affirmed Jesus had only an apparent body. The doctrine took various forms: some proponents flatly denied any true humanity in Christ; some admitted His incarnation but not His sufferings, suggesting that He persuaded one of his followers—possibly Judas Iscariot or Simon of Cyrene—to take His place on the cross. Others ascribed to Him a celestial body that was incapable of experiencing human miseries.

This denial of the human reality of Christ stemmed from dualism, a philosophical doctrine that viewed matter as evil.

Docetism did not fully develop until the 2nd and 3rd centuries, when it found an ally in Gnosticism. It occasioned vigorous opposition by early Christian writers, beginning with Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus early in the 2nd century. Docetism was officially condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.²⁷

2. The **Ebionites** (2nd century) denied Christ's genuine divinity in order to maintain a strict monotheism.

But if Christ was not fully God He could not redeem mankind.

The Ebionites believed in one God and taught that Jesus was the Messiah and the true “prophet” of Deuteronomy 18:15. However, they rejected the Virgin Birth, saying that He was the natural son of Joseph and Mary. They believed Jesus became the Messiah because He obeyed the Jewish Law. They themselves faithfully followed the Law, although they removed what they regarded as interpolations in order to uphold their teachings, which included vegetarianism, holy poverty, ritual ablutions, and the rejection of animal sacrifices. The Ebionites also held Jerusalem in great veneration.²⁸

3. **Arius** (4th century) denied Christ's genuine divinity – Christ was the first and highest created being.

But if Christ was not fully God He could not redeem mankind.

In 318, Arius quarreled with Bishop Alexander over the fundamental truth of Christ's divine Sonship and substance. While many Syrian prelates followed him, he was condemned at Alexandria in 321 by a synod of one hundred Egyptian and Libyan bishops. Deprived and excommunicated, he fled to Palestine, where he published songs for sailors, millers, and travelers, in which his creed was illustrated. At Nicea, his writings and followers underwent the

²⁷ Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002

²⁸ Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite

anathemas subscribed by more than 300 bishops. He was banished into Illyricum and his books were burnt.²⁹

4. The **Apollinarians** (4th century) denied the completeness of Christ's humanity—the divine logos took the place of the human mind.

But if Christ did not have a human mind, He was not fully human and could not fully redeem mankind.

The Apollinarians were zealous to maintain the divinity of Christ and were convinced that a human mind would have made Him less than God.

5. The **Nestorians** (5th century) denied the unity of Christ's person—two separated persons existed in one body. They believed that Christ could not die because He was God; therefore, the human Christ was distinct from the divine Christ.

But if the death of Jesus was the act of a human and not of God, it could not redeem mankind.

Nestorians stressed the independence of the divine and human natures of Christ and, in effect, suggested that they were two persons loosely united. In modern times they are represented by the Church of the East, or Persian Church, usually referred to in the West as the Assyrian, or Nestorian, Church. Most of its members—numbering about 170,000—live in Iraq, Syria, and Iran.³⁰

6. The **Monophysites** (5th century) denied the distinction of Christ's natures—the human nature was swallowed by the divine and created a new third nature.

But if Christ was neither a man nor God, He could not redeem mankind.

The Monophysites wanted to emphasize the unity of Christ's nature.

The Atonement

1. Atonement is “the act by which God restores ⁽⁶⁾ a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings.”³¹

EXPLANATION

The English word atonement comes from the two words “at” and “onement,” suggesting reconciliation.

The Hebrew word for atonement is “kipur” with the verb form being “kaphar” and means “to cover, purge, make reconciliation” and “to cover with or coat with pitch.”

That last definition is very interesting because the same Hebrew word used for pitch is “kaphar”

²⁹ William Barry, The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume I

³⁰ Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite

³¹ Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary

and that is what the Ark was covered with. When God commanded Noah to build an Ark to save him, his family, and many of the animals from the coming judgment of the flood, he was commanded to cover the Ark with pitch or “kaphar” which is to cover, make reconciliation with, or to purge. Since the floodwaters were indicative of the judgment of God on fallen, sinful mankind, it is not ironic that God used the word “kaphar” in telling Noah to cover the Ark with pitch. Thus, the Ark is seen as symbolic of God’s salvation, and the atonement or covering from God’s judgment (of the floodwaters) is seen in the pitch that Noah applied to the outside of the Ark whereby God spared Noah and his family from the judgment of sin by an atoning, reconciling covering or cover that the pitch was known for. This is indicative of salvation being fully a work of God and not of man (Eph. 2:8-9).³²

2. Only Jesus, with the three qualifications of perfect deity ⁽⁷⁾, perfect humanity, and perfect sinlessness, could pay the price for sin and meet the three needs of mankind. (1 John 2:2)

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

In 1 John 2:1–2, John explains the provision that Christ has made for sin. Christ is an “advocate” (Grk. *parakletos*) for those who sin. In this context, advocate means a defense lawyer in a legal case. The believer has Christ as his defense attorney at the divine bar of justice. Moreover, John says Christ is the “propitiation” (Grk. *hilasmos*) for the sins of the world. The word is used only here, in Romans 3:25, and in 1 John 4:10.

Propitiation means Christ atoned for sin by paying the price and thereby assuaging (appeasing and satisfying) the wrath of God. Propitiation is Godward and suggests that while sin had offended the holiness of God, through the death of Christ God the Father is satisfied and is free to show mercy and forgiveness to the believing sinner. John indicates the propitiation is “for our sins ... but also for those of the whole world.”³³

3. The atonement includes the following three ideas that answer each of man’s specific needs.
- Man deserves to bear God’s righteous wrath ⁽⁸⁾ against sin (Romans 1:18).
- God’s answer in the atonement is called propitiation ⁽⁹⁾ (appeasement), the sacrifice that turns aside God’s righteous wrath against sin (1 John 4:10).

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)

³² Jack Wellman. What Does Atonement Mean? Bible Definition of Atonement <
<http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-does-atonement-mean-bible-definition-of-atonement/>>

³³ Paul Enns. The Moody Handbook of Theology

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

- Man is separated ⁽¹⁰⁾ from God by his sins (Isaiah 59:2).

God's answer in the atonement is called reconciliation ⁽¹¹⁾, the re-establishment of relationship between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

. . . but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

¹⁸All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19)

- Man is in bondage ⁽¹²⁾ to sin and the kingdom of Satan (John 8:34).

God's answer in the atonement is called redemption ⁽¹³⁾, the purchasing back of a sinner out of the slave market of sin by payment of a ransom (Ephesians 1:7,8).

"Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.'" (John 8:34)

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight . . . (Ephesians 1:7,8)

Redemption (Greek, *apolutrosis*) is deliverance or a releasing effected by payment of ransom.³⁴

The sacrifice is thus the means of redemption which is the forgiveness of our trespasses. Sin involves the bondage of mind and will and members, but forgiveness is freedom, and *aphesis*, the Greek word used here for forgiveness, means literally the loosing of a person from that which binds.³⁵

The Resurrection

1. The resurrection of Christ is the foundation ⁽¹⁴⁾ upon which the truth or falsehood of Christianity depends. It is either the greatest miracle in history or the greatest delusion.

³⁴ <http://classic.net.bible.org/strong.php?id=629>

³⁵ Francis Foulkes. TNTC: Ephesians

The miracle of the resurrection and the truth of Christianity are so closely connected that they must stand or fall together. *“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”* (1 Corinthians 15:17)

2. If Christ was raised from the dead, then all His other miracles ⁽¹⁵⁾ are sure, and our faith is impregnable. If He were not raised from the dead, He died in vain and our faith is futile, and we are still unredeemed and under the power of sin (1 Corinthians 15:12-17).

¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. (1 Corinthians 15:12-17)

“A gospel of a dead Savior would be a contradiction and wretched delusion.”³⁶

“If the Resurrection is not historic fact, then the power of death remains unbroken, and with it the effect of sin; and the significance of Christ’s death remains uncertified, and accordingly believers are yet in their sins, precisely where they were before they heard of Jesus’ name.”

- W.J. Sparrow-Simpson

3. Christ’s resurrection ensures our salvation ⁽¹⁶⁾ (1 Peter 1:3), gives us power over sin (Romans 6:4), and secures our glorification (Philippians 3:21).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead . . . (1 Peter 1:3)

We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)

. . . who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Philippians 3:21)

We have a living, joyful, and confident expectation of our eternal salvation that has its foundation on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

ACTIVITY

1. Critics constantly attack the theological belief in the virgin birth. Why is this particular doctrine so important?

³⁶ Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, volume I, p. 172-173

2. Why was Jesus uniquely qualified to both pay the penalty of sin and to restore the relationship between God and man? How would you explain this to an unbeliever?
3. Why does it matter if the resurrection is a historical fact and not a metaphor, as many scholars believe?

ASSIGNMENT

Choose one of the following texts and explain how Jesus' actions tell us clearly who He is claiming to be. How would the Jewish audience have interpreted what Jesus did? How should we respond to this today?

- Matthew 9:1-8
- Matthew 21:8-17
- Luke 4:14-22
- John 8:48-59

SESSION 5 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Session 5: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit, by whose indwelling the believer is enabled to live a holy life, to witness and work for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pneumatology ⁽¹⁾ is the study of the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? What is His significance in the life of a believer?

The Person of the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit is a person, not a force ⁽²⁾ or spiritual principle. He has all the attributes of personality including knowledge, emotions, and volition (1 Corinthians 2:10,11; 12:11; Ephesians 4:30).

¹⁰For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10,11)

"All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and He gives them to each one, just as He determines." (1 Corinthians 12:11)

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)

"Spell this out in capital letters: THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON. He is not enthusiasm. He is not courage. He is not energy. He is not the personification of all good qualities, like Jack Frost is the personification of cold weather. Actually, the Holy Spirit is not the personification of anything . . . He has individuality. He is one being and not another. He has will and intelligence. He has hearing. He has knowledge and sympathy and ability to love and see and think. He can hear, speak, desire, grieve, and rejoice. He is a Person."³⁷

Early in Church history, Arius denied the personality of the Holy Spirit. He said the Holy Spirit was only an influence emanating from the Father. He was condemned at the Council of Nicaea, AD 325. His teaching continued to the present time in Unitarianism and the cults, such as Jehovah's Witnesses."³⁸ For example, a Watchtower publication (Jehovah's Witnesses) asserts, "The holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will."³⁹

³⁷ A.W. Tozer, The Counselor, <http://www.spirithome.com/spirpers.html>

³⁸ Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 245

³⁹ Wayne Jackson, False Ideas About the Holy Spirit, www.christiancourier.com

“The Bible makes clear in several ways that the Holy Spirit is a person and possesses all the qualities which that implies.”⁴⁰

2. The Holy Spirit should be worshiped ⁽³⁾ as we worship the Father and Jesus.

“God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24)

The Holy Spirit can be grieved by our actions and attitudes. *“Yet they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit.”* (Isaiah 63:10)

3. All the attributes ⁽⁴⁾ of the Father and Jesus are also attributed to the Holy Spirit.

ATTRIBUTE	FATHER	SON	HOLY SPIRIT
Omniscience	Psalms 139:1-6	John 4:17,18	1 Corinthians 2:10-12
Omnipotence	Genesis 1:1	John 1:3	Job 33:4
Omnipresence	Jeremiah 23:23,24	Matthew 28:20	Psalms 139:7-10
Eternity	Psalms 90:2	John 1:1	Hebrews 9:14
Holiness	Leviticus 11:44	Acts 3:14	Matthew 12:32
Love	1 John 4:8	Romans 8:37-39	Galatians 5:22
Truth	John 3:33	John 14:6	John 14:17

EXPLANATION

Various references to the Holy Spirit are interchangeable with references to God (Acts 5:3-4).

³*But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”* (Acts 5:3,4)

The Holy Spirit performs works that are also ascribed to God. (For example: creation, providence, regeneration, illumination, etc.)

The Holy Spirit is associated with the Father and Jesus on an equal basis. *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.”* (2 Corinthians 13:14)

⁴*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.* (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

⁴⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, p. 262

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .” (Matthew 28:19)

The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. The Holy Spirit was at work in creation ⁽⁵⁾ (Genesis 1:2).

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (Genesis 1:2)

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:30)

2. The Holy Spirit is at work in salvation ⁽⁶⁾ (John 3:5-8).

⁵*Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:5-6)*

. . . he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . . (Titus 3:5)

3. The Holy Spirit is at work convicting the world of sin ⁽⁷⁾ (John 16:8).

“And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment . . .” (John 16:8)

4. The Holy Spirit is at work bringing the assurance ⁽⁸⁾ of salvation (Romans 8:16).

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God . . . (Romans 8:16)

5. The Holy Spirit was at work inspiring ⁽⁹⁾ the writers of the Bible (2 Peter 1:20,21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

EXPLANATION

²⁰*Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were **carried along** by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20,21)*

The English phrase “carried along” is translated from the Greek word *phero* which signifies that “they were impelled by the Holy Spirit's power, not acting according to their own wills, or simply expressing their own thoughts, but expressing the mind of God in words provided and ministered by Him.”⁴¹

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness . . . (2 Timothy 3:16)

The Old Testament writers were aware of the influence of the Holy Spirit in their writing. “*The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.*” (2 Samuel 23:2) “*David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared . . .*” (Mark 12:36) “*The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet . . .*” (Acts 28:25)⁴²

6. The Holy Spirit is at work helping us in prayer ⁽¹⁰⁾ (Romans 8:26,27).

²⁶*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* ²⁷*And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.* (Romans 8:26,27)

7. The Holy Spirit is at work empowering us for service ⁽¹¹⁾ (Acts 1:8).

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

⁷*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.* ⁸*To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,* ⁹*to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit,* ¹⁰*to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.* ¹¹*All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.* (1 Corinthians 12:7-11)

8. The Holy Spirit is at work sanctifying and transforming us to the Image of Christ ⁽¹²⁾ (1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:29).

“ . . . who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit . . . ” (1 Peter 1:2)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

⁴¹ Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words

⁴² Paul Enns, The Moody Handbook of Theology, p. 258

9. The Holy Spirit is at work revealing truth ⁽¹³⁾ to us (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 have said to you.” (John 14:26)

. . . these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10)

¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. . . . ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13,15)

10. The Holy Spirit is at work indwelling ⁽¹⁴⁾ us (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own . . . (1 Corinthians 6:19)

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us transforms us into the image of Christ.

ACTIVITY

1. Who is the Holy Spirit? What is His significance in your life as a believer?
2. Why is it important for us to see the Holy Spirit as a person and not as a force or a spiritual concept?
3. The lesson contains a list of ten ways the Holy Spirit is at work. Which one is very important to you in your life right now? Why?

ASSIGNMENT

Describe in detail the picture that Jesus gives us of the Holy Spirit in John 14–16. How does Jesus relate to the Holy Spirit? How does He instruct us to relate with the Holy Spirit?

SESSION 6 – THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Session 6: The Doctrine of Man

We believe in the salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from works, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Anthropology is the theological study of the doctrine of man.

1. Man was created in the image ⁽¹⁾ of God and possesses characteristics that separate him from the rest of creation. He has the ability to think and reason, and to distinguish between right and wrong. He has a longing for purpose and a relationship with God. (Genesis 1:26,27)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26,27)

The main impact of the image is that God endues man with some of his divine attributes, thereby separating and making him different from the animals. What are these special Godlike qualities which man is permitted to share? We can mention six: language, creativity, love, holiness, immortality and freedom. You will probably be able to add to this list. All of these can be summed up by saying that man, like God, has intelligence, or its own mind.⁴³

2. The Bible makes a distinction between the material (body) and the nonmaterial part (soul/spirit) of man. There are two primary views concerning the purpose of the body.

EXPLANATION

The material or outer part of man (the physical body) was created from the dust of the ground, . . . *the Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground. (Genesis 2:7)*

The word 'man' is translated from the Hebrew word 'adam.' The word 'ground' is translated from a related word 'adamah.' The similarity between the two words was to remind man of his origin: he is of the earth.

Two primary views concerning the **purpose** of the body:

- The body is the prison ⁽²⁾ house of the soul.

EXPLANATION

The ancient Greek philosophers taught that there was a dichotomy between the body and soul. The soul was nonmaterial and good, but the body was material and evil. A significant number of the early Church Fathers were influenced by these ideas and incorporated them into their concept of the flesh and the spirit. The result was an unhealthy asceticism (see note below on

⁴³ <https://answersingenesis.org/who-is-god/creator-god/man-the-image-of-god/>

asceticism) that often took extreme forms. This false view of the body is what Paul refers to in Colossians:

²⁰If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—²¹“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”²²(referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings? ²³These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh. (Colossians 2:20-23)

“Asceticism is the practice of self-denial and renunciation of worldly pleasure in order to attain a higher degree of spirituality. It often requires abstinence from food, drink, or sexual activity, as in fasting or celibacy. It may also require physical pain or discomfort, such as endurance of extreme heat or cold or self-punishment. It may require withdrawal from the material world to a life of meditation.” (Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2002)

- The body is the partner ⁽³⁾ of the soul.

EXPLANATION

This is the proper scriptural view. The body is the temple of God and the means of glorifying God. (1 Corinthians 6:19) The body is not to be in control so that the believer caters to it in self-indulgence, nor is it to be an enemy that needs to punish. The body must be submitted to God (Romans 12:1) in order that Christ may be glorified through it. (Philippians 1:20) This view of the body legitimizes physical pleasure, but always in the proper moral context. The Song of Solomon, for example, is a celebration of sexual love in the proper moral context of the marriage covenant.

3. There are two views on how many parts man has: dichotomy ⁽⁴⁾ (body and soul/spirit) and trichotomy ⁽⁵⁾ (body, soul, and spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Both views have scriptural backing, and it is best to emphasize the holistic view of man without overanalyzing his components.

EXPLANATION

While there are Bible verses that use the terms soul and spirit interchangeably (Matthew 10:28; Luke 1:46–47; 1 Corinthians 5:3; 7:34), other biblical passages do not present the soul and the spirit as precisely the same thing. There are also passages that hint at the separation between the soul and spirit (Romans 8:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12). Hebrews 4:12 states, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit.” This verse tells us two things: (1) there is a dividing point between the soul and spirit, and (2) the dividing point is only discernible to God.

Those who believe that human nature is a trichotomy typically believe the following: the physical body (flesh, 5 senses) is what connects us with the physical world around us; the soul (mind, will, emotions) is the essence of our being, and the spirit (devotion, intuition, conscience) is what

connects us with God.⁴⁴

The arguments for **Dichotomy** are:

In many places Scripture uses the word “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably.

“Now is my soul troubled . . .” (John 12:27)

After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in His spirit . . . (John 13:21)

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” (Luke 1:46,47). (This is an example of Hebrew parallelism, the poetic device in which the same idea is repeated using different but synonymous words).

People who have died and gone to heaven or hell can be called either “spirits” or “souls.”

. . . the spirits of the righteous made perfect . . . (Hebrews 12:23)

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God . . .

(Revelation 6:9)

At death, Scripture says either that the “soul” departs or the “spirit” departs.

But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required of you . . .” (Luke 12:20)

And as her soul was departing (for she was dying) . . . (Genesis 35:18)

Remember Him before . . . the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecclesiastes 12:6,7)

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59)

Man is said to be either “body and soul” or “body and spirit.”

For as the body apart from the spirit is dead . . . (James 2:26)

Fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

The arguments for **Trichotomy** are:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

What should we believe?

We should reject the ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM of excessive trichotomy. Loving God with the mind honors God.

We should reject the ANTI-SPIRITUAL view of excessive dichotomy. Partnering with the Holy Spirit honors God.

⁴⁴ <https://www.gotquestions.org/trichotomy-dichotomy.html>

We should reject the potential DUALISM of both views that elevates the spirit or the mind over any part of the man.

The Doctrine of Sin

1. God is not the author ⁽⁶⁾ of sin (Job 34:10).

“... far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.” (Job 34:10)

2. There is a difference between original ⁽⁷⁾ sin and committed sin.

EXPLANATION

Original sin is the result of Adam's one transgression. It is the inheritance of all Adam's descendants and is the root of all sins. *Committed sin* is the specific and personal result of the moral choices of an individual.

3. The first sin was rebellion ⁽⁸⁾ against God's authority and an expression of man's self-will (Genesis 3:4,5).

EXPLANATION

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” (Genesis 3:4,5)

The original sin was motivated by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life. (Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:16)

“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.” (Genesis 3:6)

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” (1 John 2:16)

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represented **God's authority**. (Genesis 3:1-3)

¹*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”* (Genesis 3:1-3)

Without a command to obey or disobey there could be no moral choice for Adam to make. Therefore, God's command to refrain from eating the tree in the middle of the Garden was an expression of His authority.

4. Man's fall produced a change in human nature ⁽⁹⁾ (Genesis 6:5). It led to separation between man and God (Isaiah 59:2), guilt (Genesis 3:7), strife with other men (Genesis 4:8), and the disruption of the created order (Romans 8:20-22).

EXPLANATION

"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5)

The fall corrupted every part of man's nature, including his mind, will, emotions, and physical faculties. Man is unable to turn to God without the influence of grace. This is the doctrine of total depravity.

... but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. (Genesis 3:7)

Adam's guilt drove him to work out his own solution for his nakedness. Since the fall, man has sought a refuge for his guilt through his own self-contrived religious works.

"And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him." (Genesis 4:8)

"For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God." (Romans 8:20-22)

5. Man sins by breaking ⁽¹⁰⁾ God's laws and by failing to attain to His moral standards (Romans 3:23). He is a slave of sin (John 8:34), spiritually dead toward God (Ephesians 2:1), and helpless to correct his condition or to provide for his spiritual needs. He needs a Savior (Romans 5:6).

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin." (John 8:34)

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. (Romans 5:6)

ACTIVITY

1. What separates man from the rest of creation? How does man's unique relationship with God have ramifications on the rest of creation?
2. Why is the sinful nature of man one of the most critical cornerstones of systematic theology? What would change in our life if we believed that man was born good?

SESSION 7 – THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Session 7: The Doctrine of Salvation

We believe in the salvation of lost and sinful man through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ by faith apart from work, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation.

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Salvation is the sum total of all God's work for man in delivering him from his lost condition in sin. The several parts that make up salvation are regeneration, conversion (faith and repentance), justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification.

1. Regeneration is the act of God in which He imparts ⁽¹⁾ new spiritual life to us.

This is the term that generally corresponds to the phrase: born again.

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:3

EXPLANATION

"Regeneration is a New Testament concept that grew out of a parabolic picture-phrase that Jesus used to show Nicodemus the inwardness and depth of the change that he must undergo if he was to see and enter the kingdom of God. Jesus pictured the change as being 'born again.' Regeneration is a transition from spiritual death to spiritual life." (J.I Packer)

Regeneration is ultimately a work of God.

. . . he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit . . .

Titus 3:5

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. . . . ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us . . . ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved . . . (Ephesians 2:1,4,5)

2. Conversion is our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely ⁽²⁾ repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.

- The word conversion means "turning" ⁽³⁾. The turning from sin is called repentance and turning to Christ is called faith. Neither one can occur without the other, but they must occur together when true conversion takes place (Mark 1:15).

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
(Mark 1:15) This was Jesus' first sermon.

4. Faith ⁽⁴⁾ is trusting in Jesus as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. Repentance is a heartfelt ⁽⁵⁾ sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.

EXPLANATION

Faith requires knowledge about the facts of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (intellectual), approval of the facts (emotional), and a decision to trust in Jesus for salvation (volitional).

Repentance requires knowledge that sin is wrong (intellectual), a sorrow for sin and a hatred of it (emotional), and a personal decision to turn from it (volitional).

It is contrary to the New Testament to speak about saving faith without repentance for sin. It is also contrary to the New Testament to speak about the possibility of someone accepting Christ as Savior but not as Lord.

Sometimes faith alone is named as the thing necessary for salvation.

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31).

Sometimes repentance alone is named as the thing necessary for salvation.

"Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations." (Luke 24:46,47)

The New Testament authors understood so well that genuine repentance and genuine faith had to go together that they often simply mentioned repentance alone with the understanding that faith would also be included, because turning from sins in a genuine way is impossible apart from a genuine turning to God.

"The primary issue in the Protestant Reformation was a dispute with the Roman Catholic Church over justification. If we are to safeguard the truth of the gospel for future generations, we must understand the truth of justification. A true view of justification is the dividing line between the biblical gospel of salvation by faith alone and all false gospels of salvation based on good works."

3. Justification ⁽⁶⁾ is an instantaneous judicial act of God in which He thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us (Romans 3:24-28).

²⁴ . . . and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. ²⁶It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. ²⁷Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. (Romans 3:24-28)

Justification is something that God does Himself entirely by grace and not on account of any merit in us (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; 3:11).

For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

EXPLANATION

Justification is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense. The person is entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law.

Before leaving office, former US president Bill Clinton exercised the right of his office and granted a presidential pardon to Marc Rich, a billionaire commodities trader self-exiled in Switzerland since the early 80's to avoid prosecution for income tax evasion and racketeering. The pardon was not based on the merit or righteousness of Mr. Rich; the law was not fulfilled – it was set aside. This was the act of a sovereign and not a judge.

By contrast, the *doctrine of justification* declares that the law is fulfilled completely and totally. The subsequent benefits conferred upon the individual are based on their perfect obedience to the law. Justification is not the forgiveness of a man without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness, which perfectly and forever satisfies the law.

There are two aspects of justification: forgiveness of sin, and imputation of righteousness.

He declares our sins are forgiven—past, present, or future.

But if God merely declared us to be forgiven from our sins, that would not solve our problems entirely, for it would only make us morally neutral before God. We would be in the state that Adam was in before he had done anything right or wrong in God's sight—he was not guilty before God, but neither had he earned a record of righteousness before God. However, we must move from a point of moral neutrality to a point of having positive righteousness before God, the righteousness of a life of perfect obedience to him.

He declares us to be righteous in His sight. *“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)*

“I look to the Old Testament and I see certain blessings appended to the Covenant of Works and I say to myself by faith, ‘Those blessings are mine, for I have kept the Covenant of Works in the Person of my Covenant Head and Surety. Every blessing which is promised to perfect obedience belongs to me, since I present to God a perfect obedience in the Person of my great Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ.’” (Charles Spurgeon, from the sermon, The Tenderness of Jesus)

“Why did God choose faith as the means by which we receive justification? Faith is the exact opposite of depending on ourselves. It is the attitude that perfectly fits salvation that depends not at all on our own merit but entirely on God's free gift of grace.” (Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology)

That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants. (Romans 4:16)

In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family.

4. Adoption is an act of God whereby He makes us members of His family (Galatians 4:4-6). The word adoption means placing as a son and describes the rights ⁽⁷⁾ and privileges ⁽⁸⁾, as well as the new position, of the believer in Christ. The word is taken from Roman custom where, in a legal ceremony, the adopted son is given all the rights of a natural-born son.

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:4-6)

The Privileges of Adoption

ADOPTION GIVES US THE PRIVILEGE OF . . .	SCRIPTURE REFERENCE
. . . speaking to God and relating to Him as a loving Father	When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Romans 8:15,16
. . . being led by the Holy Spirit	<i>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.</i> Romans 8:14
. . . receiving God's discipline	<i>For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.</i> Hebrews 12:6
. . . sharing both in Christ's sufferings and subsequent glory	<i>. . . heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.</i> Romans 8:17

The Privileges of Adoption

5. Sanctification ⁽⁹⁾ is a progressive work of God that makes us more and more free from sin and live more like Christ. God and man each have distinct roles in the process.

Differences Between Justification and Sanctification

JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
Legal standing	Internal condition

Once for all time	Continuous throughout life
Entirely God's work	We cooperate
Perfect in this life	Not perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others

Differences Between Justification and Sanctification

There are three stages of sanctification.

- Sanctification begins at regeneration ⁽¹⁰⁾, increases ⁽¹¹⁾ throughout life, and is completed at death ⁽¹²⁾ and when the Lord returns.

EXPLANATION

A definite moral change occurs in our lives at the point of **regeneration**. Once we have been born again we cannot continue to sin as a habit or a pattern of life because the power of new spiritual life within us keeps us from yielding to a life of sin. *"But you were washed, you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."* (1 Corinthians 6:11)

This initial step in sanctification involves a definite break from the ruling power and love of sin, so that we are no longer ruled by sin. It involves a reorientation of our desires so that we no longer have a dominant love for sin. This is Positional Sanctification, which is the state of holiness we were given at the moment of our salvation.

Although we can get increasingly like Jesus in this life, sanctification will never be completed in this life.

- Sanctification is a work of God and man together ⁽¹³⁾.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12,13

EXPLANATION

This is not meant to imply that man and God have equal roles in sanctification. Certainly the work God does is greater. But it does mean that man has a role in the process and that God expects us to cooperate. Sanctification is primarily a work of God, and man's role is subordinate.

Our sanctification flows out of our justification.

"When we are justified, it is as though a doctor has just administered a sure and certain remedy for a fatal disease. Though the patient may still endure a temporary struggle with the residual

effects of his illness, the outcome is no longer in doubt. The physician pronounces the patient cured even though a rehabilitation process must still be carried out.” (Martin Luther)

6. Glorification ⁽¹⁴⁾ says that Christ’s work of redemption will not be complete until our bodies are entirely set free from the effects of the fall and brought to that state of perfection for which God created them.

The redemption of our bodies will occur when Christ returns ⁽¹⁵⁾ and raises our bodies from the dead. The entire creation will be renewed along with the glorified saints.

EXPLANATION

⁵¹*Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.* (1 Corinthians 15:51,52)

²⁴*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death.* (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

Our new bodies will be “imperishable,” they will not wear out, grow old, or ever be subject to sickness.

Our bodies will be raised “in glory” and “in power.” *“It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”* (1 Corinthians 15:43)

The word “glory” is frequently used in Scripture of the bright shining radiance that surrounds the presence of God. This suggests that there will also be a kind of brightness or radiance surrounding our bodies that will be an appropriate outward evidence of the position of exaltation and rule over all creation that God has given to us.

Jesus’ body, which is our pattern, was a physical body that had been made perfect. This provides a clear affirmation of the goodness of God’s physical creation.

¹⁹*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. . . . ²¹that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²²For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. ²³And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* (Romans 8:19, 21-23)

In this renewed creation, there will be no more thorns or thistles, no more floods or droughts, no more deserts or uninhabitable jungles, no more earthquakes or tornadoes, no more poisonous snakes or bees that sting or mushrooms that kill. There will be a productive earth, an earth that will blossom and produce food abundantly for our enjoyment.

ACTIVITY

1. What is the significance of the theological belief that “salvation comes by grace through faith”? How should this truth affect every aspect of your life?
2. What is the relationship between our works (what we do for God) and our salvation (what He does for us)?

SESSION 8 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Session 8: The Doctrine of the Church

We believe in the unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ.

The theological study of the order and operation of the church is called ecclesiology ⁽¹⁾.

The word **Ecclesiology** comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means a member of an assembly or a called out one.

1. In Scripture, the word church ⁽²⁾ refers to the entire community of genuine believers in all places and at all times and also to a specific congregation in a particular geographical area. The first is called the universal Church (Ephesians 1:22,23; Matthew 16:18). The second is called the local church (Romans 16:5).

EXPLANATION

²²“And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”
(Ephesians 1:22,23)

“... and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”
(Matthew 16:18)

Greet also the church that meets at their house. (Romans 16:5)

2. Historically, Christians have made a distinction between the visible ⁽³⁾ church and the invisible church.

EXPLANATION

This distinction was made as early as Augustine, but first clearly enunciated by Martin Luther. It was Luther's way of dealing with the apparent discrepancies between the qualities of the church he found in Scripture, and the characteristics of the Roman Catholic church he saw on earth.

“Both Martin Luther and John Calvin were eager to affirm this invisible aspect of the church over against the Roman Catholic teaching that the church was the one visible organization that had descended from the apostles in an unbroken line of succession. The Roman Catholic church had argued that only in the visible organization of the Roman church could we find the one true church, the only true church.”⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, p. 855

The Visible Church	The Invisible Church
Membership: saved and lost	Membership: saved only
Only the currently living	Both dead and living in Christ
Many local churches	Only one universal Church
Differing denominations	One body

The **visible church** is the outward structure and appearance (church buildings, clergy, etc.) of those who claim to be Christians. The invisible church consists of those who were truly born again and are new creatures in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The visible church consists of the manifestation and appearance of those who identify themselves as Christians. This outward appearance consists of the denominations, buildings, pastors, elders, church attendees, and ceremonies like preaching, communion, and baptism. It is what is visible to anyone and everyone. However, not all who attend physical churches are truly Christians.

The **invisible church** consists of those who have been redeemed and are truly Christians. They are born-again, made new creatures, and are indwelt by God (John 14:23). They are the ones who have trusted, by faith alone, in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross and have repented of their sins.⁴⁶

Can a person who is *not* a part of the visible church be part of the invisible church? Yes, but God's will is that every member of His body be joined to a particular spiritual family. (Psalm 68:6: God sets the solitary in families)

Can a person who is a part of the visible church *not* be part of the invisible church? Yes, unfortunately it is a common occurrence.

3. The New Testament likens the church to a bride ⁽⁴⁾ (Ephesians 5:25-27), a family (Galatians 6:10), a temple (Ephesians 2:21,22), a pillar (1 Timothy 3:15), and the human body (1 Corinthians 12:24-27).

²⁵*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* (Ephesians 5:25-27)

So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

²¹*. . . in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* (Ephesians 2:21,22)

. . . if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

⁴⁶ <https://carm.org/what-is-the-difference-between-the-visible-and-invisible-church>

²⁴ . . . But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, ²⁵that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. ²⁷Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:24-27)

This image of the Church as the body of Christ emphasizes that the Church is the locus of Christ's continuing activity now, just as His physical body was during His earthly ministry.

4. The church exists to worship God (Ephesians 3:21), evangelize ⁽⁵⁾ the world (Mark 16:15), train believers (Ephesians 4:11,12), and uphold the truth in a world of lies (1 Timothy 3:15).

. . . to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21)

And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15)

¹¹*And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . .* (Ephesians 4:11,12)

*This is the church of the living God, which is the pillar and support of the truth.*⁴⁷ (1 Timothy 3:15)

5. Throughout history, four distinct models of church government have emerged:

- Episcopal ⁽⁶⁾: Authority resides primarily in the bishop.

This is the form of church government favored by the Roman Catholics, High Anglicans, and Methodists. There are usually varying degrees of episcopacy, or a number of levels of bishops. The bishop is the key person to the proper functioning of the church.

The authority of the bishop transcends that of the local pastor; as God's representative, he governs a group of churches rather than just one congregation.

- Presbyterian ⁽⁷⁾: Authority resides primarily in the elders of the church.

This is the form of church government favored by the Presbyterians and Reformed churches.

⁴⁷ The New Living Translation

The key officer in the church in the Presbyterian structure is the elder, a position that originated in the Jewish synagogue. In the Old Testament, the elders were the ones who had the ruling and governing roles. They held their authority because of their age and experience.

The presence of elders is seen throughout the New Testament (Acts 11:30, 14:23, 20:17, 1 Timothy 3:1, 2, Titus 1:7). The term elder occurs in the plural, suggesting that the authority of elders is collective rather than individual.

- Congregational ⁽⁸⁾: Authority resides primarily in the individual church member.

This is the form of church government favored by the Baptists, Congregationalists, and Lutherans.

There are two concepts central to the congregational scheme: local church autonomy and democracy. Autonomy means there is no external power that can dictate the action of the local body. Democracy means that every member has an equal say in the governing of the church. Authority is not the prerogative of bishops or elders, but of the individual through majority vote.

- Non-government ⁽⁹⁾: Authority resides primarily in God.

This is the form of church government favored by the Quakers and the Plymouth Brethren.

Christians who advocate this system emphasize that the church does not need a concrete, visible form of government. They view the church in its essence as an invisible body of people redeemed by Christ.

The stress is on the inner working of the Holy Spirit as He guides individual believers directly, rather than on organizations or institutions. The presidency of the Holy Spirit is the ruling force, and the goal is to remove as much structural organization as possible.

A fifth model of church government has developed over the last number of years. It is called **Apostolic Presbyterian**, and in this form of government authority resides primarily in the local church elders and the apostolic team. The Apostolic Presbyterian system recognizes the role of the New Testament apostle as he functions together with the local church elders. The apostolic team is primarily responsible for planting new churches, guarding against doctrinal heresy, developing leadership, ordaining ministers, and mediating leadership conflicts. The local elders are primarily responsible for the direction, specific strategy, and daily operation of the local church.

6. A sacrament ⁽¹⁰⁾ is a formal religious act conferring grace on those who receive it.⁴⁸ Sacraments function both as a declaration of faith and as a means of grace.

⁴⁸ WordNet ® 2.0, © 2003 Princeton University

Protestants believe in the sacraments, but they do not believe in Sacramentalism.

Sacramentalism is the doctrine that participation in the sacraments is required for salvation, and that such participation results in saving grace.⁴⁹

“The sacraments are to put a visible difference between those that belong to the church and the rest of the world, and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word.”⁵⁰

7. Christ instituted two rites for His followers: Baptism ⁽¹¹⁾ and Communion ⁽¹²⁾. Baptism is a public declaration that we have renounced the world and submitted to Christ's lordship (Galatians 3:27). Communion is the proclamation of the Lord's death, and our participation in the benefits of it (1 Corinthians 11:26).

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Both of these rites have Old Testament counterparts: **circumcision** as a rite of initiation and the annual **Passover** as a rite of remembrance.⁵¹

The Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches recognize five additional sacraments:

1. Last Rites
2. Confirmation
3. Holy Orders
4. Penance
5. Matrimony

They view the sacraments as the means by which God imparts saving grace.

BAPTISM:

The recommended mode of baptism is immersion. This is evident for the following reasons.⁵²

First, subjects in the New Testament were immersed in water and then brought back up. “As Jesus was coming up out of the water...” (Mark 1:10) “Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water...”⁵³ (John 3:23) “As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?’ And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water...” (Acts 8:36, 38, 39)

⁴⁹ Some denominations prefer to use the word *ordinances* to distinguish between the Roman Catholic view of the sacraments and the Protestant view.

⁵⁰ Westminster Confession XXVII.1

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² The following information was adapted from Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 967, 968

⁵³ It would not take “plenty of water” to sprinkle people, but it would to immerse them.

Secondly, the Greek word *baptizo* means “to plunge or immerse.”

And finally, the identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection seems to require a total immersion and not a sprinkling. (Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12)

³*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?* ⁴*We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.* (Romans 6:3,4)

... having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. (Colossians 2:12)

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

Baptism confers grace upon the person who receives it by faith. (Colossians 2:11,12) The grace imparted in baptism is not saving grace. We are not advocating Sacramentalism.

¹¹*In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,* ¹²*having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.* (Colossians 2:11,12)

COMMUNION:

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

In Communion we proclaim the unity of the Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:16,17)

¹⁶*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ¹⁷*Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* (1 Corinthians 10:16,17)

ACTIVITY

1. What is the difference between the universal church and the local church? Can you be a part of one without being a part of the other? Why or why not?
2. Which of the New Testament metaphors for the church best helps you understand what it is and how it works?
3. Why do you go to church? Isn't faith personal? Can't you just believe and worship God on your own? Which church is the “real” church?

SESSION 9 – THE DOCTRINE OF THE END TIMES

Session 9: The Doctrine of the End Times

Eschatology ⁽¹⁾ is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind. It includes death, resurrection, judgment, hell, and the Second Coming of Christ.

Eschatology is the study of “the last things.” It includes, death, resurrection, judgment, hell, and the second coming.

The study of future events that will happen to individuals is sometimes called “personal eschatology.” (Death, resurrection, Heaven and Hell)

The study of major events that will affect the entire universe is sometimes called “general eschatology.” (Return of Christ, Final Judgment)

Judgment and Hell

1. Everyone will die and face a personal judgment ⁽²⁾ of either damnation or salvation.

EXPLANATION

Therefore, life is not cyclical, and we do not get multiple chances through reincarnation. “*Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.*” (Hebrews 9:27)

Reincarnation is the passing of the soul at death into a new body or new form of being. The idea of reincarnation is popular because it removes the inevitable judgment that awaits all mankind.

Death is the cessation of this present life, but existence will not cease at death; death marks a transition to another state of existence.

According to the Bible, there will be a great final judgment of believers and unbelievers. They will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and hear his proclamation of their eternal destiny.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

¹¹*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.* ¹²*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* ¹³*And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the*

dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:11-15)

The doctrine of Hell is the most difficult doctrine in the entire Bible.

In the Filipino context, according to a nationwide survey conducted by SWS in December 2007, 81 percent of Filipino adults believe in life after death.

There are more Filipinos who believe in heaven (93 percent) than in afterlife (81 percent). Tabulations show that 77.7 percent believe in both afterlife and heaven, 15.1 percent believe in heaven but not afterlife, and 3.6 percent believe in afterlife but not heaven. The rest believe in neither afterlife nor heaven.

Rationalizing the fact that some believe in heaven but not in afterlife calls for a theory about beliefs. Dr. Mangahas surmises that some Filipinos think that there is a heaven for good people, who deserve an afterlife; but also think that they themselves, for some reason, do not deserve an afterlife.

Among Filipinos, 64 percent say they definitely believe in hell, and 17 percent say Probably Yes, or a total of 81 percent, to believing in hell (*impiyerno*). Only 9 percent say Definitely/Probably No, or can't choose.⁵⁴

2. The Bible teaches that hell is an eternal ⁽³⁾, conscious, torment (Matthew 25:41, Luke 16:23,24).

EXPLANATION

ETERNAL:

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:41)

CONSCIOUS and TORMENT:

²³"... and in Hades, being in TORMENT, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'" (Luke 16:23,24)

Every false view concerning Hell denies one or more of these concepts.

The statements that follow summarize the biblical teaching concerning hell:

- Hell is clearly included in the teaching of Jesus ⁽⁴⁾.

⁵⁴ Heaven and hell? Yes also By: Mahar Mangahas - Philippine Daily Inquirer/November 12, 2011
<<http://opinion.inquirer.net/17087/heaven-and-hell-yes-also>>

Almost all the biblical teaching about hell comes from the lips of Jesus.

Jesus taught about hell more than all other biblical authors put together.

The word Jesus uses for 'hell' is 'Gehenna,' a valley in which piles of garbage were daily burned as well as the corpses of those without families who could bury them. In Mark 9:43 Jesus speaks of a person going to "hell [Gehenna], where 'their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'" Jesus is referring to the maggots that live in the corpses on the garbage heap. When all the flesh is consumed, the maggots die. Jesus is saying, however, that the spiritual decomposition of hell never ends, and that is why "their worm does not die."

- Hell is the final destination ⁽⁵⁾ of those consigned to eternal punishment at the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:41-46; Revelation 20:11-15).

EXPLANATION

Jesus warns of everlasting **punishment** in the age to come, and he also explains the nature of that punishment, as do Paul and John among others. It is the second death, the wages of sin. It is everlasting destruction, at the hands of God who is able to destroy both soul and body. To undergo this punishment is to perish—eternally and entirely, fully and forever—and to forfeit eternal life, the gift of God that throughout the New Testament always stands as the blessed alternative to death, destruction and perishing.

Capital punishment is the highest level of punishment possible in the USA, but not because it ranks highest on a pain meter. The person who is executed suffers physical pain for only a few minutes at most, arguably far less than the cumulative pain sustained by a person who spends ten years in a penitentiary, where other inmates and rogue guards regularly harass, sometimes beat, and occasionally commit murder in a variety of ways designed to inflict maximum suffering.

The second death is indeed punishment. It is the punishment of everlasting destruction, the punishment only God can mete out, for only He alone is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.⁵⁵

- It is described as a place of fire ⁽⁶⁾ and darkness (Jude 7, 13), of weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; 13:42,50).

EXPLANATION

The lake of **fire** is obviously a place that envelops sinners from which they cannot escape. The imagery of fire and sulphur is intended to show extreme pain and suffering that extends to all the senses, even smell. The punishment is evidently eternal, continual, and conscious ("tormented day and night for ever and ever") (cf. Revelation 20:10).⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Edward William Fudge. *The Fire That Consumes: A Biblical and Historical Study of the Doctrine of Final Punishment*. (Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011)

⁵⁶ Daniel B. Wallace. Hell: Spiritual or Physical or Both? < <https://bible.org/article/hell-spiritual-or-physical-or-both>>

Jesus uses the term “outer **darkness**” in the parable to describe a condition of great sorrow, loss and woe. It stands in vivid contrast to the brightly lit and joyous celebration attended by those who accepted the king’s invitation. Interpreting the wedding feast as heaven, the “outer darkness” must be the place of eternal punishment.⁵⁷

3. There are two challenges to the traditional doctrine of hell:

- Universalism ⁽⁷⁾ is the belief that everyone will eventually be reconciled to God without exception.

EXPLANATION

UNIVERSALISM:

Universalism is sometimes called Universal Reconciliation or Trinitarian Universalism. Some Evangelical Universalists avoid using the word "Universalism" to describe their beliefs, perhaps because of the negative connotations of this word among conservative Christians. Alternative terms that are in use among Evangelical Universalists include the "Larger Hope" or "Blessed Hope" and the "Victorious Gospel."

The view in Universalism is that God is the loving Parent of all people, and all sin is ultimately paid for and everyone turns to God. The most noted contemporary proponent of this view is Rob Bell. “At the heart of this perspective is the belief that, given enough time, everybody will turn to God and find themselves in the joy and peace of God’s presence. The love of God will melt every hard heart, and even the most ‘depraved sinners’ will eventually give up their resistance and turn to God.” (Rob Bell, Love Wins, p.107)

- Annihilationism ⁽⁸⁾ is the belief that sinners are destroyed, rather than tormented forever in hell.

ANNIHILATIONISM:

Many who believe in **annihilationism** also hold to the reality of final judgment and punishment for sin, but they argue that after sinners have suffered for a certain period of time, bearing the wrath of God against their sin, they will finally cease to exist. The punishment will therefore be "conscious" but it will not be "eternal."

4. Their main arguments are that unending suffering is inconsistent ⁽⁹⁾ with the love, the justice, and the glory of God.

EXPLANATION

These are the main arguments against the traditional doctrine of hell:

⁵⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/outer-darkness.html>

1) **Unending suffering is inconsistent with the love of God.** The central revelation of God in the New Testament is that God is love (1 John 4:8,16). His anger endures for a moment, but his mercy endures forever (Psalm 103:8-14). How is this consistent with the view that God's wrath burns eternally toward the wicked? Would we call a human being good who retaliated on his foes with this sort of unmitigated, insatiable vengeance? The saints' joy in heaven would be marred by knowing that some continue under merited retribution.

2) **Unending torment is inconsistent with the justice of God.** How can God punish someone eternally for a finite crime? For God to visit punitive retribution endlessly on the lost would be disproportionate and unjust. An eternal place of torment is morally repugnant, and an unfair punishment for allegedly finite sins.

3) **Unending torment is inconsistent with the victory of God.** The teaching that people and fallen angels will be tormented throughout eternity contradicts the Bible's teaching that God is altogether victorious at the end of history. How can we affirm that Christ shall be over all (Ephesians 1:10, 21,22) and that God shall be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28) when a dimension of reality shall perpetually oppose God? "Christ remains on the cross while one sinner remains in hell."

5. In response, the Bible teaches the following:

- The amount of time ⁽¹⁰⁾ spent in wrongdoing is often irrelevant in determining the sentence. It is not necessarily the duration of the crime that determines the duration of the punishment. What is considered is the nature of the crime.

You can kill a human being in under a minute. Would that suffice as an appropriate punishment?

God is infinitely worthy of man's love, obedience, and honor, and man's failure to do so is an infinite evil.

- God alone has the ability to determine the true nature ⁽¹¹⁾ of sin and of the punishment that would be appropriate.

EXPLANATION

"The doctrine of hell stands as a massive refutation of . . . self-justification. Non-Christians will always see the horrors of hell as an indictment of God, but as Christians who know God to be perfectly just and righteous, we must understand that the horrors of hell are actually an indictment of us. We may want to minimize our sin, or excuse it, or try to argue our consciences down. But the fact that God has declared that we deserve eternal torment for those sins should remind us that they are not small at all. They are enormously evil." (Greg Gilbert, Why Hell is Integral to the Gospel)

No sinner is competent to judge the heinousness of sin. The Bible makes it plain enough that human concepts of justice and equity, distorted as they are by the sinfulness of fallen human nature, are deceptive and unreliable. Why is it that when people think about hell, they always

conclude that God must be at fault and not themselves? You can see how the doctrine reveals our hearts: when we consider our own sin, our first inclination is always to minimize it, to protest that it's not that bad and that God is wrong to say it deserves punishment.

"If we could see sin as it appears to the all-discerning eye of the Eternal, we should be more shocked at the sight of sin than by a vision of Hell—for there is in Hell something which purity approves—the vindication of righteousness. It is Justice triumphant—but in sin, itself, there is abomination, and only abomination! It is a something out of joint with the whole system of the universe! It is a mist dangerous to all spiritual life—a plague—dangerous to everything that breathes. Sin is a monster, a hideous thing, a thing which God will not look upon—and which pure eyes cannot behold but with the utmost detestation. Sin, indeed, is Hell—Hell in embryo, Hell in essence, Hell kindling, Hell emerging from the shell—Hell is but sin when it has manifested and developed itself to the fullest." (Charles Spurgeon, *The Universal Remedy*)

- There is no repentance ⁽¹²⁾ in hell, and so man's sin continues throughout the duration.

Since punishment itself never produces repentance, justice requires it to go on for ever.

God's punishment of sinners is not something done in a fit of temper; it is the outcome of His perfect love and unchanging hatred of evil.

The Return of Christ

1. There will be a sudden ⁽¹³⁾, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

2. Even though we do not know when Christ will return, we should eagerly ⁽¹⁴⁾ long for it (Titus 2:13; 2 Timothy 4:8).

The practical result of this is that anyone who claims to know specifically when Jesus is coming back is automatically to be considered wrong.

*...waiting for our blessed hope, the **appearing of the glory** of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. . . (Titus 2:13)*

"Appearing" is epiphany, an appearing or arrival. The appearing of the glory is the Lord Jesus Himself. He appeared on earth in a human body. He left this earth by resurrection but He will appear again in the Second Coming. We look forward to the manifestation of the glory of Christ. We saw the glory of Christ in His first coming (Jn 1:14) where he revealed His glory by miracles. He veiled His full glory in the incarnation. One day His glory will lift and we shall see Him as He

is (1 Jn. 3:2). It will be an epiphany. God will ultimately manifest His glory to the fullest when Christ comes.⁵⁸

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:8)

3. Although all evangelicals agree on the final results ⁽¹⁵⁾ of Christ's return, there is disagreement over the details of future events—especially over the nature of the millennium.

Eschatological passages and events concerning the future are open to many interpretations. There is no clear indication of either their timing or sequence. Some Christians believe that "millennium" does not mean a time interval of exactly 1,000 years. Rather it refers to a long interval of time. Some Christians interpret events mentioned in the Christian Scriptures as descriptions of real happenings in our future; others interpret them symbolically and/or as events that have already occurred millennia ago.⁵⁹

ACTIVITY

1. What do you believe happens after death? Will everyone go to heaven? Why or why not?
2. Death is always near the top of any culture's list of fears. Why? What is the Bible's answer to this fear?
3. Why does eschatology matter? Why is this topic so fascinating to people? How should our understanding of the end affect how we live today?

ASSIGNMENT

Read Matthew 24. How does Jesus advise us to respond to His return?

⁵⁸ Grant Richison <<http://versebyversecommentary.com/titus/titus-213/>>

⁵⁹ <http://www.religioustolerance.org/millenni.htm>

APPENDIX A: NICENE CREED

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

APPENDIX B: THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son Our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Amen.

APPENDIX C: CANONICITY

Canonicity refers to the process whereby the early church determined which books were divinely inspired and had the seal of divine authority. The word “canon” derives from the Greek word signifying a “measuring rod.” The terms “canon” and “canonical” thus came to signify standards by which books were measured to determine whether they were inspired.

The following factors led to the final development of the canon:

1. The proliferation of false documents claiming inspiration

There were many Gnostics documents in the second and third century that claimed to be the work of the original apostles. A few examples are: the Gospel of Philip, the Acts of Peter, and the Acts of Thomas.

2. The attack on the genuine writings

The second century heretic Marcion completely rejected the Old Testament from his canon. He removed all New Testament writings except ten of Paul's letters and parts of Luke's Gospel.

3. The need to determine which apostolic writings should be used in public worship

In 303, the Emperor Diocletian declared that all sacred books must be burned. After his edict, Christians wanted to know which books were divinely inspired and therefore worth dying for.

The canon developed slowly over the first centuries of the Church, but the Synod of Hippo (393) finally affirmed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

There were at least four tests used to determine canonicity:

1. **Apostolicity:** Was the author an apostle or did he have a connection with an apostle? For example, Mark was not an apostle but he wrote under Peter's authority. Luke was not an apostle but he wrote under Paul's authority.
2. **Acceptance:** Was the book accepted by the church at large? By this rule, false books were rejected. However, this rule also delayed the recognition of some legitimate books. For example, James, Jude, 2 Peter, and Revelation were some of the last books accepted into the canon because not all the churches initially recognized their inspiration.
3. **Content:** Did the book reflect consistency of doctrine with what had been accepted as Orthodox teaching? For example, the false "gospel of Peter" was rejected because of this principle.
4. **Inspiration:** Did the book reflect the quality of inspiration? The Apocryphal writings were rejected because they did not meet this test. The book should bear evidence of high moral and spiritual values that would reflect a work of the Holy Spirit.

APPENDIX D: THE APOCRYPHA

Reasons the Apocrypha does not belong in the Bible

(Taken from https://carm.org/reasons-why-apocrypha-does-notbelong-bible#footnote4_4iybfiz by Ryan Turner)

Catholics and Protestants disagree regarding the exact number of books that belong in the Old Testament Scriptures. The dispute between them is over seven books, part of what is known as the Apocrypha: 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Wisdom (Wisdom of Solomon), Baruch, Tobit, Judith, and additions to Daniel and Esther⁶⁰. However, there are a number of reasons why the Old Testament Apocrypha should not be part of the Canon or standard writings of Scripture.

Rejection by Jesus and the Apostles

There are no clear, definite New Testament quotations from the Apocrypha by Jesus or the apostles. While there may be various allusions by the New Testament to the Apocrypha, there are no authoritative statements like “thus says the Lord,” “as it is written,” or “the Scriptures say.” There are references in the New Testament to the pseudepigrapha (literally false writings) (Jude 14,15) and even citations from pagan sources (Acts 17:22–34), but none of these are cited as Scripture and are rejected even by Roman Catholics. In contrast, the New Testament writers cite the Old Testament numerous times (Matthew 5; Luke 24:27; John 10:35) and use phrases such as “thus says the Lord,” “as it is written,” or “the Scriptures say,” indicating their approval of these books as inspired by God.

Jesus implicitly rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture by referring to the entire accepted Jewish Canon of Scripture, From the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:8) to the blood of Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20), who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation (Luke 11:51; Matthew 23:35).

Abel was the first martyr in the Old Testament from the book of Genesis while Zechariah was the last martyr in the book of Chronicles. In the Hebrew Canon, the first book was Genesis and the last book was Chronicles. They contained all of the same books as the standard thirty-nine books accepted by Protestants today, but they were just arranged differently. For example, all of the twelve minor prophets (Hosea through Malachi) were contained in one book. This is why there are only twenty-four books in the Hebrew Bible today. By Jesus’ referring to Abel and Zachariah, He was canvassing the entire Canon of the Hebrew Scriptures which included the same thirty-nine books as Protestants accept today. Therefore, Jesus implicitly rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture.

Rejection by the Jewish Community

The “oracles of God” were given to the Jews (Romans 3:2) and they rejected the Old Testament Apocrypha as part of this inspired revelation. Interestingly, Jesus had many disputes with the Jews, but He never disputed with them regarding the extent of the inspired revelation of God.⁶¹

⁶⁰ See http://www.catholic.com/library/Old_Testament_Canon.asp for a list of the books that the Roman Catholic Church accepts. Also see, Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, third edition, New Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 4, for a list of the Apocrypha. Interestingly, Catholics refer to these extra books as the Deuterocanonical books while Protestants refer to them as part of the Apocrypha.

⁶¹ Some scholars debate whether the exact Canon of the Old Testament Scriptures was discovered by the Jews until around 100 A.D. so Paul may not be referring to some authoritative list of books. However, the principle of the “oracles of God” still holds. The Jews rejected the Apocrypha as being part of the oracles of God.

While the Dead Sea scrolls contain copies of several books of the Apocrypha, they contain far more copies of pseudepigraphal books like 1 Enoch that even the Roman Catholic church admits are clearly not inspired. What is important to note here, however, is that owning copies of a book does not imply belief in that book's inspiration. The Dead Sea Scrolls contain a variety of community rules, historical documents, festival calendars, and other uninspired documents that the community found useful. The scrolls do not contain commentaries on the Apocrypha as they do for the Jewish Old Testament books, and they do not cite the Apocrypha authoritatively as Scripture. This probably indicates that even the Essene community did not regard the Apocrypha as highly as the Jewish Old Testament books.

Many ancient Jews rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture. Philo never quoted the Apocrypha as Scripture. Josephus explicitly rejected the Apocrypha and listed the Hebrew Canon to be twenty-two books.⁶² In fact, the Jewish Community acknowledged that the prophetic gifts had ceased in Israel before the Apocrypha was written.

Rejection by many in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has not always accepted the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha was not officially accepted by the Catholic Church at a universal council until 1546 at the Council of Trent. This is over a millennium and a half after the books were written, and was a counter reaction to the Protestant Reformation.⁶³

Many church fathers rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture, and many just used them for devotional purposes. For example, Jerome, the great Biblical scholar and translator of the Latin Vulgate, rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture though, supposedly under pressure, he did make a hurried translation of it. In fact, most of the church fathers in the first four centuries of the Church rejected the Apocrypha as Scripture. Along with Jerome, names include Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Athanasius.

The Apocryphal books were placed in Bibles before the Council of Trent and after but were placed in a separate section because they were not of equal authority. The Apocrypha rightfully has some devotional purposes, but it is not inspired.

False Teachings

The Apocrypha contains a number of false teachings.

(To check the following references, see <http://www.newadvent.org/bible.>)

⁶² There are various divisions of the Hebrew canon. The Protestant Old Testament Canon contains 39 books while the Hebrew canon has 22 or 24. These are the exact same books as the Protestants have, but they are just arranged differently and some of the books are combined into one. For example, Kings is one book. There is not 1st Kings and 2nd Kings. Also, all of the 12 minor prophets (Hosea through Malachi) are one book in the Hebrew Canon.

⁶³ It is true that the Catholic Church accepted the Apocryphal books at earlier councils at Rome (A.D. 382), Hippo (A.D. 393), Carthage (A.D. 397), and Florence (A.D. 1442). However, these were not universal Church councils and the earlier councils were influenced heavily by Augustine, who was no Biblical expert, compared to the scholar Jerome, who rejected the Apocrypha as part of the Old Testament Canon. Furthermore, it is doubtful that these local church council's decisions were binding on the Church at large since they were local councils. Sometimes these local councils made errors and had to be corrected by a universal church council.

- The command to use magic (Tobit 6:5–7).
- Forgiveness of sins by almsgiving (Tobit 4:11; 12:9).
- Offering of money for the sins of the dead (2 Maccabees 12:43–45).

Not Prophetic

The Apocryphal books do not share many of the characteristics of the Canonical books: they are not prophetic, there is no supernatural confirmation of any of the apocryphal writers works, there is no predictive prophecy, there is no new Messianic truth revealed, they are not cited as authoritative by any prophetic book written after them, and they even acknowledge that there were no prophets in Israel at their time (1 Maccabees 9:27; 14:41).

APPENDIX E: ESCHATOLOGY

The Return of Christ in the New Testament

1. God's rule is continuously advancing throughout history. It will culminate in the final establishment of His kingdom at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

... "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

The coming of God's kingdom is the theme that runs throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The emphasis in scripture is not on times, dates, or specific world events, but on God's unfolding plan to establish His kingdom rule on earth.

2. The New Testament refers to the second coming in numerous places.

²⁶"And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven." (Mark 13:26,27)

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

⁷Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains.

⁸You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. (James 5:7,8)

3. The second coming will be glorious. Jesus will come to completely establish His reign and to destroy all sin and evil.

"Then the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne." (Matthew 25:31)

The Book of Revelation emphasizes God's sovereignty and glorious victory. It is filled with references to God's victory over His enemies. This should be the message that occupies our minds as we go to disciple the nations. God is in control of history and His victory is assured.

4. We do not know when Christ will return.

"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." (Mark 13:32)

The Millennium

¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ²And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while. ⁴Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and thousand years. ⁵The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. (Revelation 20:1-5)

Throughout the history of the church, there have been four major views on the time and nature of the millennium:

Amillennialism

1. There is no future millennium yet to come. The expression "thousand years" is simply a figure of speech for a long period of time. Christ's reign in the millennium is not a bodily reign here on earth but rather a heavenly reign.
2. The Millennium passage in Revelation 20 describes the present church age in which Satan's influence over the nations has been greatly reduced so that the gospel can be preached. Those who are referred to in the text as reigning with Christ are the Christians who have died and are already reigning with Him in heaven.
3. The present church age will continue until the time of Christ's return. There will then be a resurrection of both believers and unbelievers and the final judgment.
4. This view has a long history.

Premillennialism

1. The present church age will continue until a time of great tribulation and suffering comes on the earth. The tribulation in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 does not refer to the fall of Jerusalem but to the end of the world.

2. After the tribulation, Christ will return to earth to establish a literal one thousand-year kingdom. Believers will be raised from the dead (with glorified bodies) and will reign with Christ on earth. Many unbelievers will turn to Christ and be saved during this time.
3. The devil will be bound and will have no influence on the earth during the millennium. But after the thousand years, he will be loosed and initiate a battle against Christ. But he will be defeated. There will then be a final judgment and believers will enter into the eternal state.
4. This view is sometimes referred to as Historic Premillennialism to distinguish it from the third view. It dates back as far as Justin Martyr in the second century.

Dispensational Premillennialism

1. Dispensational premillennialists believe all the ideas of the above view, but add several more. (This is the view of the Left Behind series and most of the people who make predictions about the end of time.)
2. Christ will return before the tribulation and millennium to secretly take believers out of the world. This is referred to as the rapture. There are different views here. Some hold to a pre-tribulation rapture, others to a mid-tribulation rapture, and still others to a post-tribulation rapture.
3. There will be a great tribulation on the earth for seven years ruled by the Antichrist. During this time, all the Jews will be saved.
4. After seven years, Christ will return with his saints to reign on the earth for one thousand years.
5. Satan will be bound and have no influence on the earth during the millennium. But after the thousand years, he will be loosed and initiate a battle against Christ. But he will be defeated. There will then be a final judgment and believers will enter into the eternal state.

Postmillennialism

1. We are in the millennium now—the period in between the first and second coming of Christ. “Postmillennialism holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace” (Boettner *The Millennium*, p. 14).
2. The progress of the gospel will gradually increase and will encompass a larger proportion of the world’s population. There will be significant Christian influences on society. Society will more and more function according to God’s standards. The thing that distinguishes the biblical postmillennialist, then, from Amillennialism and Premillennialism, is his belief that Scripture teaches the success of the great commission in this age of the church.

3. Christ will return after the millennium. Then the dead will be raised, the final judgment will occur, and there will be a new heaven and new earth.
4. Postmillennialism is optimistic about the power of the gospel to change lives.

Prophecy

There have been four approaches to interpreting prophecy in the history of the church.

Historicism

1. In Historicism, Bible prophecy reveals a panoramic view of all of church history from apostolic times until the present. The interpreter examines the prophetic literature and attempts to find parallels within the events of history (For example, the breaking of the seals in chapters 4-7 symbolizes the fall of the Roman Empire. The Trumpet judgments in chapters 8-10 represent the invasions of the Roman Empire by the Vandals, Huns, Saracens, and Turks. Among Protestant historicists of the Reformation, the antichrist in Revelation was believed to be the papacy. Chapters 11-13 in Revelation represent the true church in its struggle against Roman Catholicism. The bowl judgments of Revelation 14-16 represent God's judgment on the Catholic Church, culminating in the future overthrow of Catholicism depicted in chapters 17-19). Therefore, prophecy gains relevance throughout time as history unfolds.
2. This view was popular with the Reformers who saw Rome and the Pope as the apostate antichrist. They interpreted the Roman church to be the whore of Babylon.
3. The weaknesses of this view are:
 - a. It fails to take into account the fact that the book of Revelation was written to a particular people in a particular time.
 - b. No one has been able agree on the specific individual fulfillments. The interpretations are therefore very subjective.

Synchronism

1. In synchronism (sometimes called idealism or symbolism), prophecy is not intended to predict specific historic events; it is only symbolically fulfilled. Each prophecy can have fulfillment in any age. There may be a primary historic fulfillment for some prophecies, but most interpretations are more general in nature speaking of a spiritual concept applicable to all Christians at all times. Revelation is viewed as primarily devotional in nature and not forth telling. (For example, the spirit of anti-Christ is in every age. There are tribulations in every age.) Synchronism means the prophecies of the Bible synchronize with all of time and with every experience in every age.
2. This is a very ancient view dating back to the second generation of Christians and it has been held and widely taught in every generation from that time with no major interruptions.
3. The weakness of this view is that it spiritualizes texts plainly intended to be historical.

Futurism

1. In futurism (sometimes called chiliasm), most Bible prophecies still await some measure of future fulfillment. The prophecies are actual, historical events yet to be realized.
2. This view had some proponents in the early church, but it became to gain popularity beginning in the 1800s. A large number of prominent evangelicals hold this view.
3. The weaknesses of this view are:
 - a. The target AUDIENCE is a very limited one: only those living in the last days.
 - b. It uses language and exegetical techniques in a very loose way and violates the best standards for exposition.

Preterism

1. In preterism, prophecy is mostly fulfilled but continues to have meaning today. This position asserts that the book was written to the churches (in Revelation) and had specific meaning for them. It was preparation for what was to come—especially the destruction of Jerusalem and the persecutions to come.
2. The primary view of preterism is that the gospel of the kingdom succeeds. Ultimately the work of the kingdom grows and the whole world is filled up with the gospel. It is an eschatology of victory and triumph.
3. The weakness of this view is: if Revelation was written later than 70 AD then the whole system collapses.