

## **Basic Christian Doctrine**

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## **Introduction to Christian Doctrine**

### Basic Christian Doctrine 1

#### 1. Doctrine is Important.

This is the first of 50 studies on Basic Christian Doctrine. Each study will include 10 summary statements, explanations of the terms and topics covered, and the main Scripture verses to study. The Bible is our textbook, and it places a high value on doctrine. For example, God often says, “I want you to know” (I Cor. 11:3; Col. 2:1). God gave us the Bible so that we might know certain important things (I John 5:13). Sadly, too many Christians know very little about the Bible and Christian doctrine. They often know more about sports than about God’s Word. This series will study the basics for beginners, but also give teaching for those who are more advanced. It will cover Christian doctrine from the Bible, not the theories of philosophy, psychology, opinions, or false religions.

#### 2. “Doctrine” Means Teaching.

In the Greek New Testament, there are 2 words for doctrine: DIDACHE and DIDASKALIA. Both mean teaching, instruction, education, and explanation. Pro. 4:1-2 equates doctrine with “instruction and understanding”. A doctrine is a statement about a specific truth. It is a statement, not a command or a question. “Doctrinal” means “having to do with doctrine”. Jesus taught doctrine (Matt. 7:28, 22:33; Mk. 1:22, 4:2, 11:18, 12:38; Luke 4:32, etc.). One of the main characteristics of early New Testament Christians was that they followed “the Apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42).

#### 3. Doctrine Must Be True and Sound.

God says, “I give you good doctrine” (Pro. 4:2). Acts 13:12 calls it “the doctrine of the Lord.” True doctrine must come from God, not from mere men. Even the Lord Jesus said, “My doctrine if not Mine, but His who sent Me” (John 7:16). Paul placed a very high value on doctrine which is true and must be sound (I Tim. 1:3, 10, 4:6, 13, 16, 5:17, 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 1:3, 3:10, 16, 4:2-3; Titus 1:9, 2:1, 7, 10). 2 John 9-10 says that we are to ignore any so-called Christian who believes or teaches anything other than “the doctrine of Christ” (the doctrine from and about Christ).

#### 4. Sound Doctrine is an Anchor Against the Danger of False Doctrine.

You can’t fight something with nothing. We need true doctrine to fight and be defended against false doctrine. False doctrine is not only useless; it is dangerous. Eph. 4:14 warns us against the winds of false doctrine. Heb. 13:9, “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines.” Jesus warned of “the doctrine of Balaam” and “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans” (Rev. 2:14-14. Cf. vs. 24), “the doctrines of men” (Matt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7; Col. 2:22) and “the doctrines of demons” (I Tim. 4:1). Truth sets us free (John 8:32). God urges us to note those who cause divisions contrary to “the doctrine which you learned” (Rom. 16:17).

#### 5. There is No Substitute for the Good Knowledge of Bible Doctrine.

God desires to feed us to His Word, and we become spiritually malnourished when we do not graze in the pastures of His Word. We become imbalanced, anemic, confused, easily led astray, prone to doubt and backsliding. Some Christians do not recognize the hunger pangs they are suffering because they are not studying the Bible. Doctrine alone does not produce spiritual maturity, but there is no maturity without it. It is erroneous to say “I just want Christ, not doctrine.” Christology is the doctrine of Christ. Nor is it true that

“Doctrine divides”. False doctrine divides; truth unites.

6. A Disciple is a Student.

The New Testament regularly uses the word MATHETES to describe the followers of Jesus. The word means “disciple, student, learner.” To be a good student, one must be teachable. He must admit that he does not know certain things (cf. I Cor. 8:2). This is a school from which nobody ever finally graduates, for there is always so much more to learn. God then wants us to learn enough so that we can teach others, who in turn will teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). We are to be able to teach out children, new converts, and answer the objections of unbelievers. But some Christians have not learned enough to be teachers, though they have been saved more than long enough. They need to be students again (Heb. 5:12). A student should strive to become a teacher.

7. All Christians Should Know What They Believe.

A new Christian naturally hungers to be taught, like a new baby hungers and thirsts for milk (I Pet. 2:2). Too many Christians outgrow this and think they know enough. All Christians should know Bible doctrine, not just the preachers and theologians. Ignorance is no virtue. God often says, “I do not want you to be ignorant” (Rom. 1:13, 11:25; I Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:14. Cf. 2 Pet. 3:8). Willful ignorance is sin (2 Pet. 3:5). There are no acceptable excuses, such as “I’m too busy, I’m not a great intellectual, It’s not that important, etc.” Every Christian can and should have a strategic grasp of the Bible and basic Christian doctrine.

8. God Gave Us Minds and Expects Us to Use Them.

A mind is a terrible thing to waste. God created us with minds as well as bodies, and commands us to use both to His glory (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). The first and greatest of all God’s commandments is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matt. 22:37). It is ingratitude, laziness and selfishness to use our minds in such a way that we neglect learning what God really wants us to know. He also gives Christians “the mind of Christ”, the indwelling Holy Spirit so that we can spiritually learn (I Cor. 2:16. Cf. Eph. 1:18). It is dangerous mysticism that tells us to turn our minds off and go by our feelings (cf. I Cor. 14:15).

9. God Gave Us Teachers to Teach Us the Bible.

Jesus Himself was a teacher, a rabbi, a theologian. God has given many lesser teachers as gifts to His Church, to teach and instruct them (e.g., Eph. 4:11). The word for teachers is DIDASKALOS, related to the word for doctrine. A teacher teaches doctrine; he is a doctor of doctrine. We are to learn from those teachers which God has given to us, and ignore “false teachers” who teach contrary to the Bible (2 Pet. 2:1). The teachers are not as important as what they teach. God gave us a Book of words to learn and teach, not a book of pictures to look at. Teachers are to teach Bible.

10. Doctrine Must Precede Practice.

Both are important, but must be in the proper order. They also must not be separated. Doctrine without practice is dry, stale and useless, producing only pride. Practice without a valid doctrinal foundation can be legalistic or mystical. The more we know, the better we can live to God. The indicative statements precede the imperative commands. We must be willing to learn and obey (John 7:17). And the more good Bible doctrine we know, the more our faith grows and the better we can love and worship our God.

RECOMMENDED READING: R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Faith*; J.I.

Packer, *Concise Theology*; Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*; James Montgomery Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*; Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*.

## **Theology**

### Basic Christian Doctrine 2

#### 1. Theology is the Science of God.

The word “theology” comes from two Greek words: THEOS (God) and LOGOS (word, idea, thing, study, science). Theology is the science or study of God, just as biology is the science of life, anthropology is the science of mankind and zoology is the science of animals. Theology was once commonly called “divinity”, meaning the science of divine subjects. Theology is concerned with God, His Word and His works. True theology is based on the Word of God. Theology, then, is simply serious Bible study.

#### 2. Biblical Theology is the Theology of Individual Parts of the Bible.

The term “Biblical Theology” refers specifically to the study of the individual books and authors of the Bible. It is based on Exegetical Theology – the study of individual words and sentences. Each book has a distinctive contribution to the Bible, and can usually be summed up in single sentences (e.g., Mark 1:1, John 20:31, Romans 1:17). Even the four Gospels, which overlap in much of what they say, have distinctive emphases (Jesus as King of the Jews, Messiah, Son of Man, and Son of God). All these are links in the great Bible chain. All complement each other; there are no contradictions. Biblical Theology is also concerned with the chronological progression and development of God’s revelation and work in history, culminating in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-2).

#### 3. Systematic Theology is the Organization of Bible Doctrines into Categories.

Systematic Theology deals with the Bible as a complete entity. Just as a deck of cards can be dealt out numerically, it can also be categorized by suits. The “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) concerns the entire message of the Bible, and is more concerned with God as the one author than with the individual human authors. Serious study of Scripture shows that certain topics are repeated and developed. For example, Jesus engaged in systematic theology in Luke 24:27 when He took His apostles through the Bible on the theme of the Messiah and His work. The Bible contains a system of truth, sometimes called “that form of doctrine” (Rom. 6:17) or “the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13). This explains the harmony of all the parts, and shows the many inter-relationships of individual doctrines. God is a God of order (I Cor. 14:33, 40). Among the categories are Christology (science of Christ), Soteriology (salvation), etc.

#### 4. Historical Theology is the Development of Theology in Church History.

Just as Biblical Theology deals with the progression of revelation in history, so Historical Theology deals with the progression of the study of revelation among Christians. But the two are not equal in importance. Church history deals with Christians, events, dates, places, churches, etc. Historical theology deals with the theological controversies, theologians, books, councils, etc. Few heresies are really new. Truth and error have been debated repeatedly on a host of fronts. Certain truths were discussed and challenged at specific times in particular: the one true God (up to AD 200), person of Christ and Trinity (300-400), justification by faith (1500-1600), etc. Similarly, each Christian engages in his own personal historical theology as he grows in the study of the Bible.

#### 5. Practical Theology is the Application of Theology to Christian Living.

This form of theology shows the relationship between Biblical principles to personal practices. It explains the underlying reasons behind Biblical commands and examples.

Thus there is a theology of evangelism, prayer, church life, and many others. It is also called Theology of Spirituality.

#### 6. Tradition Is Oral Teaching.

Tradition can be good or bad. The word PARADOSIS is used in a good sense in 2 Thess. 2:15, 3:6 and possibly 1 Peter 1:18. The prophets and apostles and even our Lord Jesus spoke many things not written down in Scripture (cf. John 20:31, 21:25). But we have no authoritative record of that. The Jews had the idea that Moses passed on divine revelation orally to the elders, who in turn passed it on down orally to others down to the time of Jesus. But Christ rebuked their placing tradition on the same level as Scripture (Matt. 15). This Jewish tradition was later written down as the Mishnah. The Catholic Church repeated the same mistake. Oral tradition may be useful for a short time, but it easily becomes rumor, opinions and “the traditions of men” in contrast to the commandments of God (Col. 2:8, 22). Tradition, therefore, is not a solid foundation for theology. Only the Bible is.

#### 7. Religion is the Practical Theology of Worship.

Again, the word “religion: can be good or bad. James 1:26-27 gives both. The good sense is that Christianity is the true religion in that it alone provides the true way of worshipping God. All other religions are false. But religion, or the practical exercise of worship, must be based on theology and not the other way around. Christianity is more than rituals and ceremonies. Moreover, the elaborate Old Testament worship ceremonies were replaced with two simple ceremonies (baptism and Communion), and now the emphasis is more spiritual. True religion is neither magic nor superstition, but the worship of God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

#### 8. True Theological Method is Important.

Both the content and method of theology are important. There is a right way to “do theology” and many wrong ways (such as basing it on tradition, religion, philosophy, etc). True theology must be based on the Bible alone. And that is the basic principle of theological method. True theology presupposes the total truth of the Bible. Theology is received by revelation of God, not conceived by the mind of Man (Col. 2:8). God is the subject, not the object, of theology. That is, He Himself teaches us about Himself. Thus there are both similarities and differences between theological and natural science. Another important principle is seeing how the NT uses the OT. The Bible itself uses logic, but logic itself must be subject to the Word of God, else it becomes mere philosophy.

#### 9. Some Theological Truths are Explicitly Stated in Scripture.

The most important truths are explicitly stated, such as “God is love”, “God is light”, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”, “The Lord thy God is one Lord”, etc. These may be stated in only 2 or 3 words, or longer sentences. Some are given only once; others, many times. They are universal and absolute, undeniable and irrefutable (I Tim. 3:16). They are plainly stated, yet infinitely profound. They are like axioms, maxims and formulas.

#### 10. Other Theological Truths are Logically Derived from Scripture.

By comparing spiritual things with other spiritual things (I Cor. 2:13), we derive other great theological truths. The Trinity is not stated in any one verse of the Bible, but is the implicit teaching of Scripture, seen when we combine verses such as Deut. 6:4 and Matt.

28:19. The NT sometimes draws on underlying principles of certain OT verses and develops a new doctrine of practice (e.g., I Tim. 5:17-18). Thus, principles of theology are important. But we must be careful to observe the limits of this theological method, and stay close to Scripture and avoid speculation.



## Orthodoxy

### Basic Christian Doctrines 3

#### 1. Orthodoxy is Right Doctrine.

The word "orthodoxy" comes from two Greek words meaning "right doctrine." It is not used in the NT, but the idea is the same as "sound doctrine" in I Tim. 1:10 2 Tim. 4:3, Tit. 1:9, 2:1. We use it in English to refer to the right mainstream as opposed to the unusual fringe (such as orthodox medicine vs. alternative medicine). The Greek Orthodox Church once held to Biblical orthodoxy, but no more. The test of Christian orthodoxy is not antiquity, but Scripture. That doctrine alone is orthodox which is Biblical. In turn, orthodoxy must produce "orthopraxis", or right practice.

#### 2. Some Truths are Essential and Foundational to All Others.

All Bible truths are true, but some are "of first importance" (I Cor.15: 3-4). Heb. 6:1 calls them "the elementary teachings about Christ". They are the basics, the ABC doctrines. In theology we call this "dogma". Dogmatic theology is concerned with the essential truths of Christianity. Dogmatic doesn't mean stubborn or obscurantist; it means firm commitment to truth. Christian dogma is not defined by a church (as Romanism claims for itself), but by the Bible alone. One must believe these essential truths to be a real Christian. It is impossible for someone who rejects, substitutes or adds to these essential truths to be a true Christian. These are "sine qua non", or "that without which" Christianity is not Christianity. It is dangerously wrong to say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere."

#### 3. The Gospel is the Main Message of the Bible.

Among the essential doctrines is the Gospel. EUANGELLION means "good news" or "good message". It is a divine record of facts to be believed, not a command (that is Law). Specifically, I Cor. 15:3-4 sums up the Gospel as the truth about the person and work of Christ - the God-Man who died for our sins and rose again. There is only one true Gospel, but many false Gospels (Gal. 1:8-9). The OT preached the same Gospel in advance by prophecy (Gal. 3:8, Luke 24:25-26, 46-47). The true Gospel calls for only one response for salvation: faith and repentance (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21). To add good works or baptism to this is to preach a false Gospel. To preach the Gospel is simply to present the basic truths about Jesus Christ.

#### 4. Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism are Two Kinds of Orthodoxy.

Evangelicalism accepts the truth of the evangel (Gospel). But it does not always defend it strongly. A weak form is known as "Neo-Evangelicalism". It emphasizes peace and unity over truth. Fundamentalism is the term given to militant Evangelicalism. This is that kind of orthodoxy which fights to defend the essentials by exposing false kinds of Christianity. A key verse is Psalms 11:3, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" We need to believe and defend the fundamentals of the faith.

#### 5. Orthodoxy is Also Called The Faith.

Another term for this basic content of Bible Christianity is "The Faith" (I Tim. 1:19, 3:13, 4:1, 5:8, 6:10, 21, etc). It refers to those basic doctrines which are to be believed. Saving faith has a content, known as The Faith. Jude 3 calls upon us not only to believe it but to earnestly defend it. "The Analogy of Faith" (cf. Rom.12:6) means that we study the Bible with reference to this basic message. Any interpretation that contradicts the basic Gospel

is automatically a wrong interpretation. We need to see the harmony of the entire Bible's message, structured around this basic theme of orthodoxy, the Gospel, The Faith.

6. Heresy is False Doctrine.

Orthodoxy is true doctrine. Heterodoxy is false doctrine. The technical word here is heresy, meaning one's own views that divide from others. In practice, it produces wrong schisms. In general, all error is wrong and heretical. But in a more precise sense, heresy means the rejection of a fundamental truth. One can still be saved if he is in error on a secondary truth but still believes the essential truths. But rejection of any or all of the basics is heresy and theological poison. Scripture repeatedly warns against promoters of heresy as false prophets (Matt. 7:15), false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1) and false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26). God pronounces a curse on those who preach a false Gospel (Gal. 1:8-9). Heresy is no small thing. It attacks the very essentials of the faith. Those who believe heresy, do not believe in the fundamentals, and are not true Christians. It primarily refers to pseudo-Christianity, not non-Christianity.

7. Apostasy Occurs When a Person No Longer Professes Orthodoxy.

This is not the same as backsliding. True Christians backslide; but they do not lose their salvation. Apostasy occurs when someone who once professed the truth of the Faith now rejects it. This is what Heb. 6 is discussing. Judas is a good example. Apostasy is spiritual and theological treason. There are degrees of apostasy. One may reject only one essential doctrine but still profess the others, such as when someone goes from Evangelicalism to Roman Catholicism or Mormonism or other brands of pseudo-Christianity. Full-blown apostasy is when someone who once professed all the basic truths now rejects all of them, such as when one becomes an atheist. 2 Thess. 2:3 and I Tim. 4:1 predicted that there would be a great apostasy one day.

8. A Creed is a Short Summary of What You Believe.

After the time of the NT, early believers were challenged by the Romans and other pagans, "What do you believe?" The Christians replied by producing short summaries of the Faith. The word "creed" comes from the Latin word "credo", which means "I believe". A creed, then, is a short summary of the Faith, or orthodox fundamentals. Some passages in the NT hint at the idea (I Tim. 3:16). The earliest post-Biblical creed is known as the Apostles' Creed (2nd century), but was not composed by any of the Apostles. It meant that it was a summary of the Gospel preached by the Apostles. The Nicene Creed (early 4th century) amplified it a bit in order to emphasize the deity of Christ. The Apostles' Creed is popular with Protestants, the Nicene with Catholics. A third and longer early creed is the Athanasian Creed, based on the teachings of Athanasius in the 4th century. It mainly deals with the Trinity. A Christian ought to be able to summarize his own creed.

9. A Confession of Faith is a Longer Summary of Christian Doctrine.

Later, Christians expanded their brief summaries to include other doctrines. Some concentrate on specific truths which were debated at that time. Some are more theological, others more practical or ecclesiastical. If a creed is concerned with the primary doctrines of the Faith, a confession of faith expands it to include the secondary and other doctrines. Most churches have a confession of faith. The best and most well known ones are the Westminster Confession of Faith, the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, the Belgic Confession, and the 39 Articles. Many contain Scripture proofs.

10. A Catechism is a Confession of Faith in Question-and-Answer Form.

Catechisms were written mainly to instruct children and new converts. They are very useful for memorizing. The best ones are the Westminster Shorter Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism, Keach's Catechism (the Baptist version of the Westminster Shorter Catechism), and others. Creeds, confessions and catechisms are useful tools to study the Faith. But they must be tested by the Bible, for Scripture alone gives us true orthodoxy.

## Truth

### Basic Christian Doctrines 4

#### 1. God is Truth.

Truth is an important doctrine found throughout the Bible and is basic to the study of other doctrines. But truth is not an impersonal concept or idea. God is the final and ultimate truth. He is truth itself. He is "the God of Truth" (Psa. 31:5). He is "the true God" (Jer. 10:10). The Greek philosophers asked three main questions: What is justice, what is beauty, and what is truth? Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Jesus Himself is the incarnation of truth, for He said "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Truth is in Jesus (Eph. 4:21). God is the source of all truth, facts, existence, reality and law. All truth is God's truth. God is truth, speaks truth, defines truth. Someone said that God is the truth, the Bible is the truth about the truth, and fundamentalism is the truth about the truth about the truth. The Bible is the "Word of truth" because it is God's Word.

#### 2. There is No Such Thing as a Brute Fact.

Cornelius Van Til popularized the theological statement that there is no such thing as a brute fact. He was right. No "fact" just simply exists in and of itself. All facts are true because God made them so. Whatever is true finds its source in God. For example,  $1 + 1 = 2$ . Why? Not, "Well, it just does, that's all." No.  $1 + 1 = 2$  because God made it like that. God is higher than all facts. Even the laws of mathematics exist because of God. Gordon Clark meant this when he said "All the laws of science are false", meaning that they do not exist of themselves but because God made them so. God does not say something because it is true; it is true because God says so. Facts are but little glimmerings of what God makes true.

#### 3. Truth is Not Determined by Man.

Since God alone is truth, truth is not determined by Man, for Man is not God. Truth is not determined by human vote, opinion, observation, science or feeling. It is our job to discover truth, not invent it. Man has personal tastes and opinions, but these are merely subjective feelings. Humanism would make Man the measure of all truth. This is but to deify Man and de-throne God. How then does Man discover truth? By receiving it from God. God reveals truth through Nature partially and through Scripture definitively. . Man's part is to believe it on the basis of God's authority.

#### 4. Wisdom is Seeing Things as God Sees Them.

The first step is faith. We must believe whatever God says, otherwise we are calling God a liar (I John 5:10). To believe God is to submit our minds to Him (2 Cor. 10:5). It is to recognize that God is truth and He alone has the right perspective on His Creation. This is a truly awesome thing to do. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10). Because we are finite and sinful, we do not see things as they really are. We need God to teach us. God's Word makes us truly wise. The opposite of this wisdom is what the Bible calls folly - foolishness, insanity, nonsense. Sin is the very epitome of folly. It is spiritual insanity to believe one's own faulty perspective rather than God's.

#### 5. Discernment is the Ability to Distinguish Between Truth and Error.

One key aspect of wisdom is discernment. It is the ability to tell truth from error, good from evil (Heb. 5:14). Adam and Eve lacked it when they believed Satan and themselves rather than God. We need God's Word to be able to "distinguish things that differ".

#### 6. Truth and Error are Different.

Truth and error are opposites. They are irreconcilable enemies. They are as different as light and darkness. God is truth and light; in Him is no darkness or error (I John 1:5). Among other things, this means that a statement can be true or false, but not both. A statement cannot be true and false at the same time in the same way. We call this "The Law of Non-Contradiction". "A" cannot be the same as "non-A". God has made things the way they are and does not play tricks with us. It is not true to say, "The exception proves the rule" (exceptions disprove the rule, and show that the rule was faulty), God is not a God of contradiction. The Bible has no contradictions. It is Satan, not God, that is the father of error and lies (John 8:44). Modern Man greatly errs when he fails to see this difference.

#### 7. Truth is Reality.

The fundamental definition of the word "truth" is reality. A true statement is one that corresponds with reality. If we say, "The sentence, 'The dog is white' is true", we mean that the dog really is white. The Greek word is ALETHEIA. The Hebrew word is EMET, which also has the implication of trustworthiness, reliability. Truth makes sense. Error is non-sense. Truth is real. The so-called Christian Science cult denies all this by saying that "All is illusion". No, God has created things as real. It is sin that makes them illusions. We need to see things as they really are.

#### 8. Truth is Absolute, Not Relative.

Modern Humanism teaches that truth is relative. Each person invents his own truth. This is wrong, dangerous and sinful. It simply is not true that "You make your own truth." We are created, not creators. We cannot create reality. To say that we can is to say that we are gods, which is what the Father of Lies wants us to believe (Gen. 3). Truth is absolute, not of itself, but because it is rooted in God. God is the final absolute and He does not change. The angels laugh and weep at the utter folly and nonsense of modern Humanism's philosophical error that says, "That's your truth. Mine is different." Until all this is seen from God's perspective, we are lost in a jungle of Man-centered, sin-dominated blind insanity.

#### 9. Truth is Sometimes a Paradox.

Truth is not contradictory to itself, but to error. Nevertheless, we are finite and do not generally see all the relationships between the things God has said and made. God has revealed some things as paradoxes. A paradox is an enigma, like "He that loses his life shall find it, and he that would save his life shall lose it" (Mark 8:35). An antinomy is an apparent contradiction, or two statements which are equally true but we can't resolve how both can be true. For example, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both revealed truths, but we do not grasp how they are both true. There are also mysteries, or things partly revealed and partly hidden (cf. Deut. 29:29). The Trinity is the mystery of mysteries. We know there is only one God and that He has three persons or aspects. But we cannot fathom the depths of this great mystery.

#### 10. Profundity Lies in Simplicity.

One final thing about truth is important. The deepest theological truths are not the complicated ones, but the basic ones. A theologian once said that the most profound truth he ever learned was, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Often the deepest and most profound truths are stated in only a few words, like "God is love" or

"Christ died for our sins." So, truth is to be received by childlike faith, which has a kind of naive innocence to it. This is to be truly wise.

## **Apologetics**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 5

#### 1. Apologetics is the Defense of Christianity Against Non-Christian Attacks.

God not only wants every Christian to know WHAT he believes, but WHY he believes it. All believers must be able to give a good answer for their faith and hope (I Pet. 3:15). We call this apologetics, not in the sense of a wimpy apology for something wrong but a virile defence of something right. Every Christian, not just preachers and theologians, ought to be able to give basic answers to the objections and questions of unbelievers. It is especially useful in evangelism. If we don't know how to defend the Gospel, we'll lose every battle. We need to refute those who oppose us (Tit. 1:9). Apologetics specifically refers to answering the objections thrown at us by those persons and systems which do not claim to be Christian.

#### 2. Polemics is the Defense of Christianity Against Pseudo-Christian Attacks.

Polemics aims to refute and expose the various kinds of false Christianity. Our fight is not only with those outside the Faith, but with those who promote false gospels and heresy of the first order while still claiming to be Christian. One is outright war; the other is sabotage and treason. Both are dangerous. Too many Christians ignore this front of the battle for the sake of "peace" and "unity". But pseudo-Christianity is more dangerous and sly than outright non-Christianity. The Bible repeatedly warns against false prophets, false teachers, wolves in sheep's clothing, and such who creep into Bible-believing Christianity (2 Pet. 2:1, Matt. 7:15). Jude 3 commands us to "contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the saints". We are to be watchmen on the wall (Ezek. 33).

#### 3. Philosophy is Worldly Wisdom.

The word philosophy means "love of wisdom", but it is not God's wisdom. It is mere human wisdom, which is really foolishness. Col. 2:8 specifically condemns philosophy as the invention of Man; it does not come from God nor believe in Christ. I Cor. 1 also condemns it. Philosophy sprang from Greece. In Acts 17, Paul opposed the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers. The major Greek philosophers were Plato and Aristotle, and many others. In the modern era, others include Hegel, Marx, Kant, Hume, and many others. Philosophy emphasizes the use of human reason, the mind, rationality. If unchecked, it tends to become atheistic.

#### 4. All Non-Christian Religions are False.

Philosophy is not the only ancient enemy. There are dozens of non-Christian religions, mostly coming from the East. They emphasize the heart, not the mind. They tend to mysticism and pantheism. Some are closer to the truth than others, but they all lead to Hell. Even post-Biblical Judaism is a false religion, for it does not accept Jesus as the Messiah, denies the Trinity, asserts salvation by works, etc. The main false religions are Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Taoism, Sikhism, Jainism, and the general category of Animism, or spirit-worship.

#### 5. There are Three Main Kinds of Pseudo-Christianity.

The three main groups of false Christianity correspond to the three main groups of unbelieving Judaism at the time of Christ. Roman Catholicism is like the Pharisees - huge, works-salvation, tradition-bound, etc. Eastern Orthodoxy is the same. The second is Liberal Protestantism, similar to the Sadducees in their rejection of revelation, weak

ethics, etc. Then there are the many cults, like the Jewish cults of the Essenes, Herodians, Zealots, etc, exclusivist and esoteric. The earliest form of pseudo-Christianity was Gnosticism, opposed in Colossians, I John, and elsewhere. There are many pseudo-Christian cults around today.

6. We Must Use Spiritual Weapons to Defend the Truth.

2 Cor. 10:4 says that the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, not carnal (worldly). We use God's armor, not Man's (cf. Eph.6). You don't fight fire with fire, but with water. We are not to use the world's devices against them else we have already lost. We may not use force, violence, brainwashing, fleshly temptations, entertainment, or other such means. Honest questions deserve honest answers, as Francis Schaeffer said. We may not use "ad hominem" arguments (insults against persons), but be gentle and humble, however unwavering (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

7. Some Weapons Are Useful but Insufficient.

Other weapons are acceptable but insufficient. For example, some Christians argue from miracles, fulfilled prophecy, the endurance of the Bible and Christianity through centuries of persecution, the enormous popularity of Christianity, the many favorable words said about Jesus by important non-Christians, personal testimonies, logical proofs, empirical evidences and other such arguments. These all have their place, but are not our primary resources, for each can be challenged in one way or another by non-Christians. At best, such arguments can only get a stalemate, not a victory. Such is the approach of Christian Rationalism (e.g., John Gerstner, R.C. Sproul, Ronald Nash, etc) and Christian Evidentialism (e.g. Josh McDowell, John Warwick Montgomery, Norman Geisler, etc), and others.

8. The Bible Alone is Sufficient to Defend Christianity.

The Word of God is our main weapon (Eph. 6). Jesus turned to it, not as a last resort, but as His primary weapon in opposing Satan (Matt. 4), and so must we in fighting Satan's assaults through non-Christian and pseudo-Christian religions and philosophies. Our opinions mean nothing. God's Word is sharp and powerful, for God Himself speaks through it (Heb. 4:12). We do not use it as a magical or superstitious talisman, but rather by knowing and believing it and quoting and explaining it properly and appropriately in fielding the objections of unbelievers. Two key statements in this context: "That's not what God says" (pointing out the error of an objection) and "This is what God says" (as in "Thus says the Lord" or "It is written").

9. The Best Defence is a Good Offence.

Any team or army will tell you that defence is good, but you also need offence to win. We must know what our opponent is saying, and then we compare it with what the Bible says on that point. Don't bother with lesser details; stay with the essentials. Indeed, also challenge the underlying presuppositions of the argument. A presupposition is the underlying and often unconscious assumption of a system of thought.

"Presuppositionalism" is the kind of Christian apologetics that uses the Bible to refute the basic and erroneous assertions and assumptions of non-Christian objections. It has been popularized by Cornelius Van Til, John Frame, Greg Bahnsen and others. We must know the enemy (2 Cor. 2:11), and the weaknesses and inconsistencies of non-Christian views. It can help to show where such views logically lead. But mainly we are to show where they contradict what God says. Quote Scripture whether the opponent believes in the



Bible or not. It is also important to be as clear in your words as possible.

10. It is Better to Know More about Christianity than About Non-Christianity.

We need not know all the details of a pagan religion or worldly philosophy in order to refute it. Some Christians seem to know more about non-Christian theories than true Christian theology. Leave the detailed study to the experts and theologians. It is sufficient to know the basics of an opponent's views (ask him to sum it up for you or tell you where he disagrees with the Bible). Our job is primarily to know the Bible, for it is sufficient to enable us to believe and defend the truth (2 Tim.3:16-17).

## Revelation

### Basic Christian Doctrines 6

#### 1. God Has Revealed Himself.

God describes Himself as "the Hidden God" (cf. Isa. 45:15). He fills the whole universe, but does not show Himself in His full manifestation except in Heaven. To us, He is invisible, inaudible and intangible. He conceals Himself. But He also reveals Himself. God is so great and far above us, that we would know nothing at all about Him unless He chose to show us Himself - and He has chosen to do just that (I Cor.2:11-12). We come to know God only by God's initiative and revelation, not by our searching for Him by our own minds or efforts (Job 11:7).

#### 2. God Has Revealed Himself Only in Part.

God has revealed some things about Himself, and left far more concealed. Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and our children, that we may do all the words of this Law." What He reveals is true, but not exhaustive. His revelation includes truths about the universe, man, sin, and especially about God Himself. This revelation makes moral and ethical demands on us. Because only part is revealed, His revelation is often a paradox, a mystery, implying there is more to the facts. But it is never a lie or a contradiction. We may study His revelation, but may not pry into what is not revealed, such as the details of the future (Matt. 24:16; Acts 1:7; Dan. 12:8-9). It is God's glory to conceal these things and our responsibility to believe what He reveals (Pro. 25:2). We know only in part, but will know far more when the revelation is full (I Cor. 13:12).

#### 3. God Has Revealed Himself Gradually.

Heb. 1:1-2 states that God has been revealing Himself in a variety of ways over the course of human history. We call this "Progressive Revelation". God has been revealing Himself by stages and levels. Each one builds on the previous one. This is working up to a climax. God does this in actual history, not in mythological saga or make-believe, as many Neo-orthodox liberals suggest. God also reveals Himself in various ways in different times and to different people. Similarly, when God sets out to save a person, He gradually gives him more light until he is saved, and then gives him progressive illumination and growth in knowledge.

#### 4. God Reveals Some Things by Nature.

Psa. 19:1-4 says that the heavens (things in the sky) are God's handiwork that display God's glory in a non-verbal way. Rom. 1:18-20 adds that the Creation tells us much about the Creator's attributes. We call this "Natural Revelation". God reveals much about Himself in Nature. For example, God's power is displayed in lightning, His holiness in the sun, His peace in a quiet lake, His truth in the laws of science, His wisdom in the design of Man, His providence in the feeding of animals, His immensity in the vast number of stars, etc. All men everywhere have this revelation, and therefore are without excuse. Moreover, God also reveals some of this through conscience, the echo of God's voice (Rom. 2). Yet God does not reveal His special grace and salvation through Nature. All men know that God exists, but they do not know Him personally through Nature.

#### 5. God Revealed Some Things by Angels, Dreams and Visions.

God spoke or showed things to select people by dreams when they were asleep and

visions when they were awake. Sometimes they were transported "in the Spirit" to Heaven, in or out of their bodies (Rev. 1:10, 2 Cor. 12:1-4). These were not natural dreams like we have, but supernatural dreams. Angels also delivered personal messages to these select people, who as prophets were to pass on the messages to other people.

6. God Revealed Himself through Theophanies.

A Theophany was a visible (and sometimes audible or even tangible) phenomenon by which God personally revealed Himself. Examples: the Burning Bush (Ex. 3), the Pillar of Fire and Cloud, the fire and smoke and lightning of Mt. Sinai, etc. These were more direct than the other means of revelation, but still were not final. Still more direct were the Christophanies, or supernatural appearances of Christ in a sort of pre-incarnate human form, as in the "Angel of the Lord", the Captain of the Hosts of the Lord, the Man who wrestled with Jacob, the Son of God in the Firey Furnace, etc. There was also some sort of Theophany in Eden. Another form of Theophany was the "Bath Kol", the voice of God from Heaven, such as the still small voice (I Kings 19:12f.), the voice at Christ's Baptism and Transfiguration or in John 12, etc.

7. God Revealed Himself Verbally in the Bible.

The next highest form of revelation occurred when God not only spoke through these other means, but commissioned certain prophets and apostles to write certain words down. This is the Bible, the verbal revelation of God. Since Man's main means of communication is words (greater than gestures, facial expressions, pictures, music, etc), God used this means to communicate with us. He gave us actual words. These are the very words of God Himself. Hence, the Bible frequently describes itself as the Word of God, the words of God, and similar terms.

8. The Bible Has Several Names for Itself.

It is called the following: the Book of the Law, the Law, the Law of God, Book of the Law, the ordinances of God, the Law and the Prophets, the oracles of God, the Testimony, the Word of Truth, and many other such terms. Some terms point out that this verbal revelation was written, not just spoken: the Scriptures, the Holy Scriptures, the Scriptures of Truth, etc. We call it "The Bible", from the Latin word "biblia". The fact that God reveals Himself verbally teaches us, among other things, that God is personal and not an abstract principle. He speaks, therefore is wise. He speaks to us, therefore He cares. Human language is adequate for this level of revelation. God condescended to speak human language.

9. We Study the Bible to Know God.

It is through the Bible, not Nature, that we learn about salvation. This is how we know God personally. Special Revelation is superior to Natural Revelation, and is the means by which we correctly interpret Natural Revelation. God no longer reveals Himself through dreams, visions, angels, prophets, Theophanies, or the direct voice from Heaven. Our job is to diligently study this lasting revelation. To know God better, we read, study, understand, believe and obey the Bible. Special Revelation has ceased, but the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible continues. We call this Illumination, not Revelation. The light is on, but we need to have our eyes opened. This is how God now reveals Himself best.

10. Jesus Christ is the Greatest Revelation of God.

Heb. 1 tells us that Progressive Revelation led up to the greatest revelation of God: Jesus

Christ. Jesus Himself often said that to see Him was to see God. To know Jesus is to know God. He is the greatest of all revelations, because Jesus is God Himself. He is God in the flesh (John 1:14). He is called "The Word" because He is the greatest revelation of God (John 1:1). He is the personal, living Word of God. This does not demean the value of the Bible, but fulfills it. Jesus is now in Heaven. We can pray to Him and love Him, even though we do not see or hear Him directly. We hear Him when we read His Bible.

## Inspiration

### Basic Christian Doctrines 7

#### 1. The Bible is the Word of God.

The main title that the Bible has for itself is "The Word of God." This means several things. For one, it is, was and ever will be God's Word. It still is. Its essence and identity have not changed. Also, though God used many people to do the actual writing, it is primarily God's Word. It is not a collection of merely human books (I Thess. 2:13). It "is" the Word of God, in contradistinction to certain liberal theories that say it merely becomes, contains or bears witness to the Word of God. It is the Word of God already, whether we believe it or not. It is already perfect.

#### 2. The Bible Alone is the Word of God.

In Biblical days, God spoke through prophets, dreams, visions and angels. But that has ceased. See Heb. 1:1-2. The Bible continues as the only Word of God. Similarly, preaching is not the Word of God. Preaching should be based on the Bible, but is not the same as the Bible. Also, the Bible is qualitatively different from every other book ever written. It alone is the Word of God. It is not one of many divine books, as part of a supposed "Bible of the World" containing the Koran of Islam, the Pali Texts of Buddhism, the Rig Veda of Hinduism, the Book of Mormon, etc. Even the books of the Apocrypha contain only human wisdom. These are not God's Word.

#### 3. The Bible is the Written Word of God.

God was pleased to commit His Word to writing. Hence, it is called "the Holy Scriptures" (2 Tim. 3:15). It was inscripturated, or written down in human script. The finger of God directly wrote the 10 Commandments (Ex.31:18). God used the human authors of Scripture as His fingers to write the Bible. God did this so that we would have His Word in black and white, in a permanent form to read and study and consult. We need not depend on a series of priests who passed it on down the ages by word of mouth to be contaminated by fallible human memory. We have it in writing. Thus, when Jesus appealed to the Bible, He said "It is written". It stands written.

#### 4. The Bible is Inspired by God.

2 Tim. 3:16 says that all Scripture is "inspired by God". This is one word in the Greek, THEOPNEUSTOS. It literally means "God-breathed". God did not breath something into the Bible; God breathed the Bible out of His own mouth. Jesus referred to this in Matt. 4:4, "Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." When we speak, we exercise our lungs so that they expel air, vibrate our vocal cords, with our tongue, cheeks and lips moving to form sounds we call words. God sent forth the Holy Spirit, the very breath of God (John 3). He moved certain prophets and apostles so that they then put down in writing the exact words God wanted them to write. Technically, it is the Bible, not the writers, which is inspired. Also, it is inspired because of its source, not its effect. It is not inspired because we feel "inspired" when we read it. It is divinely inspired regardless of whatever effect it has on us.

#### 5. All of the Bible is Inspired by God.

2 Tim. 3:16 also tells us that all of the Bible is inspired. Some liberal translations erroneously render this as "Every Scripture which is inspired by God", which could imply that the Bible is but one of many inspired books. Rather, the text says that all of the

Scripture is inspired. This means that all parts are equally inspired. Ruth is as inspired as Romans, Joel as much as John. Therefore, it all carries divine authority and we should read all of it. All parts of it are profitable to our spiritual well-being.

#### 6. The Very Words of the Bible are Inspired.

God breathed out specific words, not just vague ideas or feelings which the human authors were left to interpret and write down. The Bible is verbally inspired. Jesus said "Every word that proceeds from the mouth of God". I Cor. 2:13, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches." Indeed, even the very letters of those words were inspired by God (Matt. 5:18). In Gal. 3:16, Paul appeals to the difference of only one letter in the original Hebrew of Gen. 22:18. God inspired the words of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. This does not refer to any translation into English or any other language. Still, the authority of the original language carries over to accurate translations.

#### 7. God Controlled the Writers of the Bible.

2 Peter 1:21 says that God "moved" certain prophets. The word means "to carry along, to overwhelm by force". They did not simply sit down and decide to write the Bible. God chose who would do the writing, then He worked miraculously in them so that He controlled what they wrote. It was not left to the fallibility of humans. Some parts of the Bible were directly dictated by an audible voice (e.g., Rev. 2-3). In most cases, God moved in a deep and mysterious way on their hearts and minds in other ways, such as by dreams and visions. They certainly knew that the words they wrote were not merely their own (I Cor. 14:37). These writers were the keys on God's typewriter, as it were. They were the pens in God's hand (Psa. 45:1).

#### 8. Inspiration is Not Illumination.

God gave them the very words, not an inner illumination of wisdom. Also, this special inspiration has ceased. What we need now is illumination to understand what has been inspired. The light is on; we need to have our eyes opened. Because of sin, the natural Man is incapable of understanding the true meaning of the Bible (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus said, "He that is of God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is because you are not of God" (John 8:47). The Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible chooses to illumine whom He will to understand the Bible. And He does this through the Bible itself, for "The entrance of thy word gives light," (Psa. 119:130).

#### 9. God Proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

Scripture carries with it certain marks of divine authorship. Among them are its high spirituality and morality, its enormous popularity in history, its durability against persecution, its record of fulfilled prophecy, etc. But these alone are insufficient to prove divine inspiration. The Holy Spirit Himself, who inspired Scripture, continues to speak through it (for example, note the present tense "says" in Heb. 3:7). The Spirit is the witness because the Spirit is the truth (I John 5:9). Even unbelievers are impacted by this power (cf. Ezek. 2:5). Like the men with Paul on the Damascus road, they hear the sound but do not know the voice.

#### 10. The Bible is Powerful.

The Word of God carries with it the very power of God. It is "living and active" (Heb. 4:12), sharper than any two-edged sword. It is compared to a hammer that breaks rocks, light that overcomes darkness, fire that cannot be extinguished, etc. It is "the power of

God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Just as God created all things by the power of His Word, so He changes lives today by that same power. God spoke to the prophets and through the prophets. He still speaks today through His Word. Let us listen and be transformed by this powerful book, the Holy Bible.

## **Authority**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 8

#### 1. The Bible is Absolutely True.

The Bible is true. It is also truth itself, for Jesus said, "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). Some other books may be true, in that their contents are correct; but only the Bible is truth itself. It is "the Word of truth" (Eph. 1:13). It is the only reliable guide to ultimate truth. Many editions of the Bible title it "Holy Bible", which is quite right, for 2 Tim. 3:15 refers to it as "the Holy Scriptures". Being holy, it is free of all impurity of error. It is "pure" (Psa. 12:6, 19:8). Indeed, "Thy word is very pure" (Psa. 119:140). "Every word of God is pure" (Pro. 30:5).

#### 2. The Bible is Inerrant.

The Bible is inerrant; it contains no errors. Truth and error are incompatible, like light and darkness. It is also infallible; it cannot fail to speak the truth. It does not and cannot err. Jesus said it "cannot be broken" (John 10:35), for even all of its individual words are true. Thus, Scripture has no contradictions between its parts, such as the four Gospels. They are complementary, not contradictory. The Bible also contains no myths. Scripture itself warns against myths (I Tim. 1:4, 4:7, Tit. 1:14). Parables are not myths. It contains deep mysteries and paradoxes, but no errors. Nor does the Bible contain any forgeries or frauds (cf. 2 Thess. 2:2).

#### 3. The Bible is Inerrant in All Areas.

The Bible is completely true, in whole and in part, in all details as well as in the general content. It is true whenever it speaks of things we could otherwise study or observe, such as history and science. It is true in all areas, not just the spiritual, religious and theological. If we do not believe God in the areas we could verify, how could we believe Him in the areas that we cannot verify? (John 3:12). Man can err; God cannot. But it is not true that to be human one must necessarily err. Adam did not err before the Fall, nor did Christ ever err, and they were fully human. The divine side of Scripture guarantees purity from error in the human side, just as the divine nature of Christ protected the purity of His human side. Yes, the Bible uses round numbers, hyperbole, figures of speech, symbols, and phenomenological language. But these are usual for human language and are not errors.

#### 4. The Bible is True Because God Cannot Lie.

God is truth and cannot lie (Tit. 1:2). The Bible is God's Word. What Scripture says, God says. Each sentence of the Bible could be prefaced with the phrase, "Thus saith the Lord." The Bible receives its essence and nature from God Himself. This is not to deify the Bible, as we are falsely accused of teaching. Rather, it is but to recognize what God says about His Word. To believe the Bible is to believe God. To believe God is to agree that God is and speaks truth (John 3:33). To charge the Bible with even one error is to disbelieve God and call Him a liar (I John 5:10). But let God be true and every man a liar (Rom. 3:4). It is dangerous and blasphemous to question the truth of God's Word. To judge it is to condemn oneself.

#### 5. The Bible is Our Final Authority.

God tells us to test all things (I Thess. 5:21). By what? By the Word of God, as the noble Bereans did in Acts 17:11. Anything that contradicts the Bible is automatically wrong.



(Isa. 8:20). We err if we do not know the Bible or if we contradict it (Matt. 22:29). God tells us "not to go beyond that which is written" (1 Cor. 4:6). God curses those who preach false gospels contrary to the one true Gospel (Gal. 1:8). Sola Scriptura - Scripture alone is our final authority in all areas, such as faith and practice. It carries with it the very authority of God Almighty Himself.

#### 6. The Bible is over Church Tradition.

In Matt. 15, the Lord Jesus confronted the Jewish religious leaders over the question of authority. They appealed to their tradition; Jesus rebuked them by appealing to Scripture. Church tradition must be subject to the Bible, otherwise it nullifies Scripture. Roman Catholicism repeats the same error as the Pharisees with their tradition. They say that the Church gave us the Bible, therefore the Church is in authority. But this is wrong. The Church is built on God's Words, not vice-versa (Matt. 7:24). All churches are under the authority of God's Word. That includes all creeds, confessions of faith, catechisms and church constitutions.

#### 7. The Bible is Over All People.

Men can and do err, but God cannot err. The Bible is therefore over the authority (even the delegated authority) of people who exercise some degree of influence and authority. While Scripture tells us to obey parents, preachers and politicians, we must obey God and not them if they ever go against the Bible (Acts 5:29). The words and books of theologians must be weighed by Scripture, as well as all sermons and Sunday School lessons. Any preacher, priest, pope or rabbi who sets himself up as an equal authority to God is automatically a false prophet, for the true prophets themselves were under the authority of the Word of God. No exceptions.

#### 8. The Bible is over Human Thought.

2 Cor. 10:5 tells us to submit all to God and take captive every human thought to the obedience of Christ. Thus, all philosophy, psychology, logic, reason, science and opinion are subject to the truth and authority of the Bible. Because of common grace, Man may learn and teach some truths. But if they contradict Scripture - whether implicitly or explicitly, whether in doctrine or in method - then they thereby condemn themselves as false. This applies to our own thoughts as well. Even Adam before the Fall was subject to the spoken Word of God. He fell into sin when he rebelled against that authority. The mind of fallen Man is still under the authority of God's Word. We dare not trust our fallen minds, which are prone to err.

#### 9. The Bible is over All Spirituality.

The Bible is inspired by the Holy Spirit. He never contradicts Himself, for that would be contrary to His nature as the Spirit of Truth. Some groups need to remember this in their zeal for the work of the Spirit. All spiritual feelings, impressions and intuitions must be subject to the Word. We dare not invent exceptions because we feel that the Spirit is leading us - otherwise we are no different from the fanatic who murders his neighbor with an axe because he said that God told him to. Nor can any pretended "new revelations" of the Spirit contradict or equal Scripture. Scripture is the authority over our whole being, including experience. Peter himself had heard the divine voice from Heaven, but stated that we have a "more sure word of prophecy" in the written Word of God (2 Pet. 1:19-21). We must "test the spirits", because there are many false prophets in the world (I John 4:1). The Holy Spirit never contradicts what He says in the Bible. For example, He never

says "Jesus is accursed" (I Cor. 12:3). "If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). The Bible alone is our source of all spiritual authority.

10. We Must Follow Scripture in All Things.

We must trust in God and His Word, even when we do not understand it. We must not lean on our own understanding or inclinations (Pro. 3:5). We ought to read it, study it, believe it and obey it. Our attitude to the Bible is to be the same as our attitude to God, for it is His Word. This means we are to love it, even as we love God. Love God, love His Word.

## **Bible Study**

### Christian Doctrines 9

#### 1. We Should Study the Bible.

God gave us the Bible to read and study. It is a textbook to study, not a picture-book to browse through. There is a big difference between simply reading a book and seriously studying it. One is leisure, the other is work. God wants us to study our Bibles, not use them for pressing flowers. To study the Bible is to research it to discover its meaning. It asks, "What does this mean?" The term "hermeneutics" is the technical term for the science of interpretation. "Exegesis" is the practice of correct interpretation, by which we draw out of a passage what is really there. The opposite is "eisegesis" or putting into a passage what is not there. That is putting our words into God's mouth, rather than vice-versa. Eisegesis is twisting the Scriptures to suit our preconceived notions (2 Pet. 3:16).

#### 2. It Takes Faith to Study the Bible.

When we study the Bible, we should set aside wrong presuppositions and preconceived ideas. We need to be teachable. We should pray before and during Bible study, and rely on the Holy Spirit in us to teach us what He says in the Bible. Faith comes to us by the Word of God (Rom. 10:17); more faith comes to us by more Bible study. Without faith, we can understand the Bible only in a natural way, not a supernatural way. Studying the Bible profits us nothing unless it is mixed with faith (Heb. 4:2).

#### 3. It Takes Work to Study the Bible.

We should be like the noble Bereans who "received the Word with all readiness and searched the Scriptures to find if these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Serious Bible study means to "search the Scriptures" (John 5:39. Cf. 7:52). Search and you will find. Dig deep and you will find new treasures of gold hidden in this field. Like the Bereans, we ought to study the Bible "daily" as well as "diligently". Alas, some Christians have not even read the entire Bible yet. Others try to read it through every year. It takes work, but the Holy Spirit enables us to understand (cf. I John 2:29). We should "prepare our hearts to seek the Law of the Lord" (Ezra 7:10). A lackadaisical attitude betrays low respect for the Bible and little faith in God. But serious Bible study is work which brings rest.

#### 4. The Bible is Understandable.

Though the Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, it is still understandable through reliable translations (not to mention the scholarly study of the original languages). We may profit from preachers and teachers who explain the Bible to us (Acts 8:30-31). But we are not held hostage to a priestly class of guardians who alone can study the Bible. The Bible is for everyone. Though some parts are harder to understand than others (2 Pet. 3:16), the basic message of the Bible is quite clear. Even a cursory study of the Bible will yield great results. No one can use the excuse, "I just can't understand it." The Bible uses basic human language. Even its occasional parables, types and figures of speech are not some kind of "hidden code" or esoteric allegory. We use the "Historical-Grammatical Method" of Bible study. We study the historical setting of Scripture (human author, original readers, date, geography, manners and customs, archeology, etc), as well as the normal meaning of the language (its lexical meaning, grammar, syntax, context, etc).

#### 5. We Should Study All of the Bible.

We should study all of it, not just our favorite parts. Read both testaments. Use a concordance and cross references to compare Scripture with Scripture. It has great variety. All Scripture is inspired and deserves our study.

#### 6. The Bible Uses Many Literary Styles.

Just as God used many human authors, so he used their backgrounds and a variety of literary styles. Much of the Bible is narrative of historical events (Genesis, Joshua to Esther, the Gospels, Acts, much of Exodus and Numbers, parts of others). Other parts are poetry, not prose (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, parts of others). In these, we find prayer and praise to God, and wisdom in dealing with life. Then other books are mainly laws (Exodus-Deuteronomy, parts of others). Some laws are straight-forward commands or prohibitions, while others are case laws. Then other books are mainly prophecy, recording direct messages from God, including accurate predictions of the future. There are three "major prophets" (larger books like Isaiah, Jeremiah/Lamentations, and Ezekiel), and twelve "minor prophets" (the last twelve books of the Old Testament). Some of these are mainly symbolic and "apocalyptic" (Revelation, much of Daniel, Zechariah and Ezekiel, parts of others). Lastly, there are the epistles of Paul and others. All these styles form a wonderful harmony.

#### 7. The Bible Centers on Christ.

One important principle of Bible study is knowing and noticing that Christ is the center of Scripture. The Old Testament pointed forward to Him, the New Testament pointed back to Him. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies, types and symbols of the coming Messiah (Gen. 3:15, Isa. 53, Psa. 22, etc). Jesus fulfilled these prophecies. Some are explained in the New Testament (see Luke 24:25-27, 44-46, Acts 10:43). And sandwiched between the Old Testament predictions of the future and the New Testament explanations of the past, we find the four Gospels which describe the person and work of Christ in a special way. They are "holy biographies" which concentrate on His special person, message and mission.

#### 8. The Bible Teaches Us Salvation.

Since it is a book about Christ, the Bible is therefore a book about how we may be saved from our sins through Him. It makes us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). This message of salvation is given through Special Revelation in Scripture, not through Natural Revelation in Creation (Rom. 1). Some parts of the Bible more directly discuss salvation, such as the four Gospels, Acts and Romans. But all parts of Scripture fit into this comprehensive entity. Thus, the Bible was given to us that we may know how to be saved and how to have the assurance of salvation (John 20:31, 1 John 5:13). We can also use it to tell other people the Gospel of salvation.

#### 9. The Bible is Spiritual Food.

The Bible is frequently compared to food. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). We ought to thirst for it like a baby thirsts for milk (1 Pet. 2:2). The basic message of the Bible is like milk; the additional details are like meat (Heb. 5:12-14). We need both. The Bible is the means that God uses to nourish His children. It gave us the new birth and sustains our new life. We grow spiritually anemic when we ignore it. So, we need to regularly read and study it, and meditate on it like a cow chews the cud. The more we do, the stronger we will grow spiritually.

10. The Bible Has Many Uses.

We study the Bible to learn about God. When we study it, we always need to find what God wants us to do in light of that passage. It teaches us how to live for God and helps us resist Satan and temptation, worship God in the way acceptable to Him, and witness in the world. It encourages us through its many promises, aids us in prayer, points out our sins and assures us of forgiveness, strengthens our faith, answers the basic questions we have for guidance, and so much more. So let us diligently read it, study it, believe it and obey it (cf. Matt. 7:24-25, 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

## **Bible Facts**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 10

#### 1. The Bible is a Unity.

Though it has many individual books in it, the Bible is a unity. It is both one book and many books. It has unity and diversity. It is basically one book, The Book. Though it has many human authors for its parts, it is primarily one book by God Himself. God used the many authors over a period of approximately 1500 years to write the Bible progressively, each building on what has already been given. Since it is an infallible unity, all parts agree. The individual authors and books ought not to be seen as contradictory, but complementary to each other.

#### 2. The Bible Has Two Testaments.

The most obvious and significant division in the Bible is that it has two large sections known as testaments. A testament is a covenant, or holy contract between God and Man. The first is the Old Covenant. It makes up about three-fourths of the Bible, of which about a third is by Moses. It revolves around the special covenant which God made with Israel, described in the first 5 books. The rest of the O.T. shows how Israel broke that covenant and how God was preparing for a new and better covenant. The Old Testament consists of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings or Psalms (Luke 24:44). The New Testament revolves around the New Covenant which Jesus instituted to replace the Old Covenant. The N.T. consists of the 4 Gospels, Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation. The O.T. looked forward to Christ and the New Covenant, the N.T. presents Him and it.

#### 3. The Bible Has Sixty-six Books.

The O.T. contains 39 books, the N.T. 27. Psalms is the longest, then Isaiah. Some books are in pairs (1 and 2 Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, and several of the epistles), only 1 is a set of three (1,2,3 John). Luke and Acts form a unique pair. There is occasional overlap of content and matter (Samuel-Kings-Chronicles, the 4 Gospels, etc.). The books of the Apocrypha are not part of the Bible. Though Romanism accepts them, neither the ancient Jews nor Protestants have ever accepted them. Nor are any of the books of the Pseudepigrapha in the Bible, such as the Book of Enoch. And of course, not the Book of Mormon, or other pretended books. The canon is closed. There are no "lost books" to be found which belong in the Bible.

#### 4. God Used Many Human Authors to Write the Bible.

Moses wrote more than any other individual, then David, Luke (Luke-Acts), Paul, John and Solomon. Other authors wrote only a single short book. Some of the most famous people in Scripture did not write a book in the Bible, such as John the Baptist, James the Apostle, Elijah, Mary, or the Lord Jesus. Some books are anonymous (such as Hebrews). All books were written by men, though two books are entirely about women (Ruth and Esther). The human authors were prophets, priests, kings, apostles, shepherds, generals, a doctor, court officials, and other occupations.

#### 5. The Bible Was Written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.

Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, the language of God's Old Covenant people Israel. Hebrew is a Semitic language written from right to left, each word based around three consonants, with a grammar and vocabulary very different than English, but

much in common with other ancient languages. Parts of Daniel and Ezra, and a few words and verses elsewhere, were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was the lingua franca of the ancient near east until superceded by Arabic. It was very similar to Hebrew. The N.T. was written in koine (common) Greek, more lofty in ideals. There are a few Latin words, too, and also a few Egyptian and others in Job.

#### 6. God Has Preserved the Original Bible Text.

The actual original parchments and papyri have long ago perished, but the inspired Word has been preserved by God through the ages. Jesus promised that His Word would never pass away (Matt. 24:35. Cf. 5:18, 1 Pet. 1:23-25). We call this Providential Preservation. There are no lost books, sentences, words or even letters. Nor will any yet be found, otherwise they would have been lost until now. Scripture is the means of salvation and the main means of revelation in this age. Its very nature requires its preservation. Satan has tried to destroy it, but the Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts and over 1000 Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, plus ancient translations and quotations.

#### 7. We Should Not Add to or Subtract from the Bible.

Since the Bible is a complete unity, it is very serious to tamper with it. God warns against this in Rev. 22:18-19, Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Pro.30:6. Some English translations are based on the minority of ancient manuscripts which are faulty. They tend to subtract portions such as Mark 16:9-20. A few ancient manuscripts tend to add to the real text, such as the Codex Bezae. But the vast majority of manuscripts agree almost in complete detail, so it is wisest to stick to the middle and neither add to on the right side or subtract from on the left side. Nor may we substitute other words.

#### 8. The Bible Was First Translated into Ancient Languages.

Probably the first translation was when Jews in Egypt translated the Old Testament into Greek sometime around 200 B.C. This is known as the Septuagint. Other Greek translations followed. The Jews also produced paraphrased translations of most of the O.T. into Aramaic, known as Targums. Most were done after the time of Jesus. The Samaritans translated the Pentateuch into their language, with alterations. In the early church, there were early translations into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Gothic, Armenian, Georgian, Ethiopic and Arabic. Some were better than others, and all are useful for study by scholars.

#### 9. There Have Been Many English Translations of the Bible.

There have been more translations of the Bible into English than into any other language. First there were bits and pieces by Bede and medieval monks. Then John Wycliffe translated the Bible from the Latin in the 14th century. William Tyndale translated the NT from Greek and was working on the OT during the Reformation. The 16th century saw many other fine translations, especially the Geneva Bible. The Authorized Version of 1611, known as the King James Version, has been the most popular one in history, even with its various slight revisions. Major revisions included the Revised Version, the American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, and the New Revised Standard Version. The New King James Version is a slight revision and is very good. Many have been weak paraphrases, such as the Living Bible, the Good News Bible and the New English Bible. The New International Version is now the best-selling translation. There have also been Jewish and Catholic translations.

Overall, over 100 translations have appeared.

10. The Bible is God's Word about Himself.

The Bible is the Book of God. It was inspired by God, written by God through the instrumentality of various human authors, and is primarily about God. It is God's verbal revelation of Himself to us. It talks about Man, salvation, animals, the cosmos and other topics, but mainly about God. Its ethics come from God. Its stories tell how God has worked in history. Its songs sing to and about God. Specifically, it is a book about Jesus, the only mediator between God and Man. Praise God for His Word.



## **The Existence of God**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 11

#### 1. God Is.

God is. He is there. He is the real God, the God who really exists. He says of Himself, "I am what I am" (Ex. 3:14). He is the great "I Am". God is God. He exists eternally without origin or change. He self-exists. He has necessary existence, not conditional or contingent existence. He really exists, in fact and not merely as a human thought or word. He has perpetual existence in and of Himself. He has pure existence, compared to whom everything else is but a shadow.

#### 2. God is Life.

God not only exists, He lives. A stone exists, a person lives. God is the living God, as opposed to the false and dead gods of pagan religions. He is life itself, self-life. He has life in Himself, not from another. He is the source of all life. He has aseity, or life in Himself (John 1:4, 5:26). He has permanent and perpetual life. God is pure life. Therefore He is immortal. One of the greatest blasphemies ever uttered was the 60s heresy, "God is dead." God cannot die. He had no birthday, therefore no father or mother; He has no death-day, therefore no undertaker.

#### 3. God is Uncreated.

God is the creator of everything else (Gen. 1:1). Creator of all, created by none. He is the first cause of everything else, but caused by nothing. God is certainly not the creation of Man. Man did not create God by imagination, nor by projecting himself to the cosmos, as atheists suggest. Nor is it true, "If God did not exist, it would be necessary to create Him." The non-existence of God is impossible. Nor is God self-created. He simply exists and lives of Himself.

#### 4. God is Not the Universe.

The Creator is not the Creation. Idolatry worships the Creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). He is separate from His Creation. The universe is not an extension of God's being, like an arm or leg. We are not part of God. Nor is pantheism true when it says, "God is all and all is God." Nor is pantheism true when it says that God is in the universe and the universe is in God. God is everywhere, but is not everything. He has a separate and divine substance that is fundamentally different from the universe. God is not an ethereal "Force" that permeates all things, as in the New Age Movement. Monism is also wrong to suggest that all things are one, i.e., God.

#### 5. All Men Know that God Exists.

Romans 1 and Psalm 19 state that God has made His existence known to all men. They automatically know God exists, by a "sense of the divine" kind of internal intuition as well as by external evidence. He is a fool who tries to deny this (Psa. 14:1). Therefore, there are no real atheists or agnostics. They already know God exists. They are merely lying in order to try to run from God. We do not have to try to prove God's existence to anyone, for they already know it. We merely build upon what God has already revealed about Himself in Natural Revelation by bringing Special Revelation. See Acts 17. Indeed, a God whose existence needed to be proved would not be the true God. It is an insult to God to attempt to prove His existence, for that doubts the fact that He has already made

His existence known. Man already knows God exists, but he must acknowledge this openly in order to come to know God personally (Heb. 11:6).

6. God is Personal.

God is not an impersonal force or thing (indeed, God is not a "thing" at all. He is God.). Liberals and philosophers think it unbecoming for God to be personal, so they denigrate Him to such things as "the Ground of Being" or "Raw Existence". But God is personal. Not exactly like we are personal, but more than we are. Specifically, as we shall see later, God is actually Tri-personal in the Trinity. God is a He, not an It. God is also a He, not a She. He is a Father, not the Mother Goddess of pagan religions, such as Mother Earth, Gaia, Sophia, Ishtar, etc. He is personal in that He speaks, feels, thinks, remembers, recognizes, etc.

7. God is Incomprehensible but Not Inscrutable.

God has told us He exists and also gives us the privilege of knowing Him personally. God is knowable. Agnostics and Deists are wrong to say God cannot be known. Yet we can never know everything about God. Finite Man can never know all about the infinite God, not even in eternal Heaven. It would take a second God to know God fully. His attributes are beyond full knowledge (Eph. 3:19). God is incomprehensible to us (Job 11:7-9, 36:26, 37:5, Isa. 40:28, 55:8-9, Rom. 11:33-34, Psa. 71:15, 139:6, 17-18, 145:3, 147:5). There will always be something about God that only God knows (Rev. 19:12). Nor will we know God as God knows Himself.

8. Knowing God is the Meaning of Life.

Man in sin does not know God (2 Thess. 1:8). God remains "the Unknown God" to sinners (Acts 17:23). The basic message of Ecclesiastes is that life has no meaning, only vanity, without knowing God. God created Man to know Him, and Man has a dreary existence without knowing God. God has allowed Himself to be known personally. This is only possible through Christ (Matt. 11:27). Knowing God is eternal life (John 17:3), in contrast with meaningless existence.

9. God is Perfect.

God is perfect (Matt. 6:48). He is complete in every way. He needs nothing. He does not need to be fed. He does not need Man. He lacks nothing in any way. He has perfect life and existence, and does not grow. He is absolute perfection. He is "actus purus", pure actuality, nothing potential or tentative or merely possible. Therefore, God is perfectly happy in Himself. God is not lonely. He did not create Man because He was lonely. There was perfect happiness, fellowship and love within the Trinity. Nothing outside of God is ever perfect in the sense God is perfect. Yet we find a degree of perfection when we are in the right relationship with God as we ought to be, lacking nothing, Happy at last.

10. God is Essentially Different from Us.

There are two truths, which must be kept in balance. On the one hand, God created us in His image (Gen. 1:26). Therefore we resemble God in part. God thinks, we think. God feels, we feel. Specifically, we are to imitate certain attributes of God, which we call the Communicable Attributes. We are to be holy, truthful and loving, for God is holy, truthful and loving. On the other hand, God's essence is different from ours. We do not nor ever can have self-existence, infinity, eternity, immutability, omniscience, omnipotence or omnipresence. These are Incommunicable Attributes. God is "wholly other" in His existence. God is not of the same quality as Man. He is not a "Big Man"; He is not a Man

at all. We greatly err in supposing that God is altogether such a one as we are (Psa. 50:21). Even our similarities with God point to the essential differences (we know, God knows; but we know by learning, God knows all things already perfectly, and so on). God exists as only God exists, which is to say God alone is God.

## The Names of God

### Basic Christian Doctrines 12

#### 1. God Can Be Described but Not Defined.

God cannot be defined. To define is to limit, but God cannot be limited. Specifically, when we speak or think about God, we cannot fully grasp Him. Therefore, we cannot define God. Yet we can still speak and think of God in part. That means we can describe God. To be precise, God describes Himself to us. He reveals part of Himself to us (description), but not all of Himself (definition). He condescends to describe Himself to us in human analogies, such as metaphors like fire, a fortress, etc. He also uses anthropomorphism, or speaking after the manner of Man. God does not literally have arms, legs, a head, etc. He even compares Himself at times with animals (wings of a hen, an eagle, a lion, etc). But God is not an animal, nor a Man. God also uses anthropopathy, or describes Himself in terms of human emotions such as love, grief or anger. But the emotions of God are far greater than ours. So, Biblical descriptions are valid. Philosophic definitions always leave something to be desired (e.g., God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived, etc.).

#### 2. God Names Himself.

God told Adam to name all the animals, but did not allow him to name God. Names carry a kind of identifying definition in them. But Man is not to name God, for that would mean that Man is to conceive of God, rather than receive God's revelation of Himself. Moses asked God's name, and God replied, "I Am who I Am", (Ex.3:15). Just as God swears by Himself because there is no one higher, so He describes Himself best by analogy with Himself. God is self-defined, He gives several names in Scripture. Some are used many times, others only rarely. Each is a short description of Himself. Often they are used together. And there is a name of God which only God Himself knows (Rev. 19:12).

#### 3. God is ELOHIM.

The most common name is ELOHIM, such as in Gen.1:1. It is the plural of a variety of short Hebrew words, such as EL (Ex. 34:14, Deut.4:24, etc), ELOAH (Job 4:17, 11:7, 19:26, 22:12, etc.), ELAH (the Aramaic for ELOAH, Dan. 2:27, etc.), and ELYON (usually translated Most High, Num. 24:16, Psa. 9:2, etc). ILLAI is a related Aramaic name (Dan. 4:24, etc.). All these indicate greatness, supremacy. ELOHIM is plural, but often used with a singular verb, indicating the Trinity. God is ELOHIM, the great God.

#### 4. God is EL SHADDAI.

Sometimes God uses the name EL with another one, SHADDAI. Sometimes He is simply SHADDAI. See Gen. 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3. SHADDAI means powerful, often translated as "The Almighty". Ex. 6:3 says that God used this name of Himself when revealing Himself to the early Patriarchs. There is a corresponding term in the New Testament in Rev. 1:8, It is the Greek word PANTOKRATOR, or One Able to Do Anything. It is also usually translated "Almighty." He is EL SHADDAI, PANTOKRATOR, the all-powerful One, God Almighty.

#### 5. God is JEHOVAH.

This is the most personal name of all, more a personal name than a title. In Hebrew, it is four consonants, YHWH. In older translations it was rendered JEHOVAH. It is probably

better pronounced as YAHWEH. It is often translated as "LORD" in capital letters. "The LORD is His name" (EX, 15:3. Cf. Isa. 42:8). Sometimes it is shortened to YAH (Ex. 15:2), as in "hallelujah" or praise the Lord. It speaks of God as the One who Is. It is His covenant name. The exact pronunciation isn't vital, nor is it used in the NT.

6. God is ADONAI.

The fourth major name in the Old Testament is ADONAI, as in Ex. 34:9, Job 28:28, Psa. 2:4, etc. Sometimes it is shortened to ADON (Psa. 136:3, Isa. 10:33, etc.). It is generally translated as "Lord", with only the first letter capitalized. It means lord, master, ruler, owner. "Great is our Lord and mighty in power" (Psa. 147:5).

7. God is THEOS.

Coming to the New Testament, we find several names as well. The most common is the Greek word THEOS. We get the word "theology" from it, the science of God. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, THEOS was the usual translation for ELOHIM. It corresponds to the Latin word DEUS. It was used in ancient Greek literature. But it is not the same as ZEUS, who was a specific Greek god. The true God may be THEOS, but is never ZEUS. Like ELOHIM, the word was used in a lesser way to speak of angels and civil rulers, much as the English speak of the House of Lords. But only the one true God is properly THEOS.

8. God is KURIOS.

This is the word in the Greek O.T. that usually translated JEHOVAH. It means lord, master, owner. In Greek it could mean sir or master when speaking of a dignitary. This would be like in Spanish, where a man is called "senor" (mister) and God is called "El Senor" (the Lord). There is only one God and only one Lord (I Cor. 8:6, Eph. 4:5). God is Lord of all. God is Lord of Lords, thus also King of Kings (1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 19:16). Two other similar words are used in the N.T. One is DESPOTES, or total ruler (Luke 2:29, Acts 4:29, 2 Pet. 2:1, Rev. 6:10). The other is DUNASTES, translated as "Potentate" in I Tim. 6:15. But the more common term is KURIOS, Lord. Unlike JEHOVAH, it is not all in capitals.

9. God is Truth.

God, then, reveals Himself in a variety of short names that describe Himself to us. All of these names are true, even as all of God's revelation is true. This is because God is true. He is the true God, in contrast to the many false gods. He is the real God. He is also Truth itself. He speaks truth. Indeed, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). He always keeps His promises. His Word is inerrant and infallible. He does not deceive. He is trustworthy and, dependable, solid and sure. He likens Himself to a rock.

10. God is Not the False God of Pagans.

There is only one God, and He is Lord over all. But that does not mean that He is to be identified with the gods of non-Christian religions. Romans 1 says that they worship idols of all sorts. Some are physical images of stone or wood. Others are mental conceptions formed by man's own imagination. All pagan gods are idols (Psa. 96:5). They are all false gods, not the true God. For example, Allah is not Jehovah. The word Allah means "great one", and is an Arabic word similar to the Hebrew ELOAH and the Aramaic ELAH. But this does not make Allah the same as the true ELOHIM. Similarly, Zeus is not the true THEOS. Even the Canaanites worshipped a false god named EL. What then are these false gods? On the one hand, negatively, they are no-gods, non-divinities, nothings. On

the other, they do have an identity. They are demons in disguise. See I Cor. 10:20, Lev. 17:7, Deut. 32:17, Rev. 9:20. Pagan religions are merely denominations of one world-wide Satanic religion. Vishnu is a demon, Krishna is a demon, Baal is a demon, Isis is a demon, etc. The Jews give lip service to the one true God, but in rejecting Christ they fall short of knowing the one true God. Through Christ alone we know God.

## The Trinity

### Christian Doctrines 13

#### 1. The Trinity is the Mystery of Mysteries.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the greatest mystery in the Bible. It is revealed, but not fully revealed. Nor will it ever be fully comprehended by Man even in Heaven. It is vastly deep and high, and inspires holy awe in those who approach it rightly. It has been accepted by evangelical Protestants, historical Roman Catholics, and the Greek Orthodox. But it has been rejected by many cults, some liberals, and even some Pentecostals, such as the United Pentecostal Church, not to mention Jews and Moslems.

#### 2. The Trinity is Taught in the Bible.

There is no perfect analogy to the Trinity in Creation, so the doctrine is taught by Special Revelation and not by mere Natural Revelation. Yet no one place in Scripture discusses it at length. It is learned by comparing text with text. Still, some places are of particular importance in setting forth the Trinity, such as the Baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3) and Christ's command to baptize "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt.28:19). All three members of the Trinity are sometimes mentioned together, such as 2 Cor. 13:14, Eph. 2:18, 3:14-16, I Peter 1:2, 2 Thess. 2:13-14, 1 Cor. 6:11, Gal.4:6, etc.

#### 3. There is Only One God.

The first truth of the doctrine of the Trinity is that there is only one God. Perhaps the most important truth of the Old Testament was the "Shema" (Hebrew for "Hear") of Deut. 6:4, "Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is one." This truth is repeated over and over in both testaments. There has always been only one God and will always be only one God. The doctrine of the Trinity does not teach that there are three gods. The unity of God disproves polytheism (that there are many gods, such as in Hinduism) and henotheism (one favorite god among many others).

#### 4. All Members of the Trinity are Equal.

The Bible also teaches that there is something plural within God. We call them "persons". They share the same one divine nature, the same substance of deity. Thus, all are equal, for one infinite being cannot be larger than another infinite being. There is no hierarchy or subordinate natures within the Trinity. Each one is fully God and has all the attributes of full deity. Each one is God and with God (John 1:1-2). The Son is equal with the Father (John 5:18, Phil. 2:6). Theologians speak of the Trinity in two ways. The "Ontological Trinity" is what God is in-and-of Himself from all eternity. The "Economical Trinity" is the Trinity in relation to time, history and Man. The latter reflects and reveals the first.

#### 5. The Members of the Trinity are Not Identical.

The three divine members share the same nature, but have distinct persons. They are not three in the same sense that they are one, so there is no contradiction here. The Father is not the Son; the Son is not the Spirit; the Spirit is not the Father. There is only one Father, one Son, and one Spirit (Eph. 4:4-6). It was the Son, not the Father nor the Spirit, who became a man. It was the Spirit, not the Son nor the Father, who came at Pentecost. The atonement was presented to the Father, not to the Son or the Spirit. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17, not to Himself. The Father spoke to Jesus at His Baptism; this was no ventriloquism. Jesus called the Spirit "another comforter", therefore not Himself. Some

groups reject the idea of the Trinity but accept the deity of Christ, saying there is no difference between the three at all. This is Oneness, Modalism, “Jesus only”, or Patripassionism. But it is not Biblical Trinitarianism.

#### 6. The Father is God.

Matt. 28:19 specifies that the three members of the Trinity are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Scripture repeatedly speaks of God as the Father. This one is not just Father of Christians, but the Father of the Son. And He is eternally the Father of the Son, not just in the Virgin Birth. He was Father to the Son from all eternity. It was decided in the eternal Trinity that the Father would represent God in His dealings with Man, and so the name “God” by itself sometimes refers to the Father. “God” sent His Son into the world, meaning the Father sent His Son (John 3:18). The Father received the atonement from the Son, who represented Man.

#### 7. The Son is God.

The Second Person of the Trinity is the Son, God the Son. Later we will discuss the deity of Christ more fully. Over 100 Bible verses prove the deity of Jesus Christ (e.g., John 1:1, 20:28). He is the great “I AM” (John 8:24, 58). He was worshipped as God. Many Old Testament verses that speak of Jehovah are applied to Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus is God, but is not the only person in the Godhead, as taught by the advocates of the “Jesus Only” heresy. There are three divine persons, but only one is Son.

#### 8. The Son is Eternally Begotten by the Father.

The distinctive feature of the Second Person of the Trinity is that He alone is eternally begotten. He is God the Son within the Trinity. This eternal begetting is indicated in John 1:14, 18, 3:16-18. In theology, it is called Eternal Generation. It is eternal; there was never a time that He was not the Son. Some Evangelicals deny this. They say that the term “God the Son” is synonymous with “Son of God”, and that both refer to the incarnation. But Jesus was Son before the Incarnation. In fact, the Incarnation is the historical (or Economical) display of the eternal (or Ontological) nature of the Trinity. Just as a human father has the same nature as his son (e.g., John and Joe Smith are both Smith), so do the eternal Father and eternal Son share the same nature. The Father alone begets the Son. There is no divine mother, no, not even the Spirit.

#### 9. The Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the Trinity. He is “the eternal Spirit” (Heb. 9:14). There is only one Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:4). He is personal, for He speaks, feels, thinks, is grieved, has joy, etc. He convicts of sin, regenerates sinners into saints, indwells believers, etc. But first of all, the Holy Spirit is God. To lie to the Spirit is to lie to God (Acts 5:3-4), and to blaspheme the Spirit is unforgivable. The Spirit is God (Isa. 48:16, 63:10, Psa. 51:11, I Cor. 3:16, 6:11, 19, 12:4, 2 Cor. 3:17-18, etc.). He is every much eternally God as are the Father and the Son. All three are equal in power, glory and majesty.

#### 10. The Spirit Eternally Proceeds from the Father and the Son.

The distinctive feature of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity is what is called “Eternal Procession.” It is found in John 14:16, 26, 15:26, 16:13-15. It is not the same as the eternal generation of the Son, which comes from the Father, not the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit eternally proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The Greek Orthodox Church says the Spirit proceeds only from the Father. It is difficult to ascertain just what



this procession is. It is akin to eternal breathing, thus an eternal spiration. This was reflected in the Spirit coming in a special way on the Day of Pentecost. He reveals the Father and the Son, and stays in the background. Sent by Christ, He is the “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9, Phil. 1:19). He brings the elect to Christ, who brings them to the Father. All in all, the members of the Trinity work together for their mutual glory, which is a display of their perfect unity and diversity.

## **The Attributes of God**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 14

#### 1. God is Eternal.

God fills all time and dwells in the realm of eternity (Isa. 57:15). He is the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9). He is not only older than the universe, He is eternal. He never had a beginning. He has always been the great "I AM". He is from everlasting to everlasting (Psa. 90:2). He is, was and always shall be (Rev. 1:8). We cannot fully grasp just what eternity is, though, for we are not eternal. We are limited by time; God is not. God is eternal in His love and other attributes. He gives eternal life, which is not merely endless life but eternal in its quality.

#### 2. God is Infinite.

God is not limited by time; neither is He limited by space. He is infinite. He is omnipresent, or present everywhere at the same time. He is immense. God is not only big; He is sizeless. There is no place where God is not. He is a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere. The entire universe cannot contain Him (Acts 17:24). The universe, therefore, is not infinite, but God is. He is everywhere, but especially in Heaven. Also, He is imminent, or near all of us. He is also transcendent, or high above us (Isa. 57:15).

#### 3. God is Spirit.

God is spirit, not a spirit (John 4:24). This refers to His being, not the Holy Spirit. God has no material body. His substance is pure and uncreated spirit. He is invisible to us now, but one day we will see Him. Being pure spirit, He is one in being, not having parts. The attributes of God are not parts of God, but qualities of His whole being. The Mormons are wrong to say God has a physical body. No, but God the Son became a man and took on a fleshly body (John 1:14).

#### 4. God is Unchangeable.

God is perfect, and therefore never changes (Mal. 3:6). There is no shadow of change in His being (James 1:17). He is immutable. He cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect. Nor can He change for the worse, for that would mean He is not perfect. He is not growing, either. So-called "Process Theology" says God is changing and growing, but God already knows everything and is everywhere, so He cannot change to a fuller existence. This does not mean He is stagnant, though. He is perfect in life. And God does not change His mind or decrees. He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13:8). Everything else changes, but not God (Heb. 1:12).

#### 5. God is Holy.

God is holy. He is absolutely pure. "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5). He is absolutely morally pure. It is not that He became pure by purification, but is pure by nature. He is totally just. His will is Law for all His creatures, but there is no higher law to which God is subject. Also, because we are not holy, God is angry. He is filled with wrath and fury, far more than we can imagine. And it is a pure and holy wrath, not like losing one's temper. God is so holy that He cannot break His own Law. It is the height of blasphemy, then, for any mere sinful creature to accuse God of doing anything wrong. Being angry against sin, God will punish all unrepentant sinners in eternal Hell. Lastly, we are to pattern our ideas and lives after God, for He has said, "Be holy as I the

Lord am holy” (I Peter 1:16). We can never be as holy as God, but should strive to obey Him in all things without hesitation or question.

#### 6. God is Sovereign.

God is King of Kings. He is the absolute ruler of the entire universe. He is the just totalitarian potentate of everything, and is subject to nothing and nobody. He is absolutely free and independent. He does whatever He wants to (Psa. 115:3, 135:5-6, Job 23:13, Dan. 4:25). He owns everything and does whatever He wants to with it. He rules as King over all (Psa.93:1). He is the supreme judge, above whom there is no appeal. Therefore, no one can accuse God, for He is the potter and we are the clay (Rom. 9). Is it not His right to do whatever He wants to with His universe? (Matt. 20:15).

#### 7. God is Powerful.

God is omnipotent, or all-powerful. He is God Almighty. He has all power and strength. He has all life and energy within Himself, and supplies life and energy to His universe. Being omnipotent, there is nothing too hard for Him to do. It is blasphemy to even suggest stupid questions like, “Can God make a rock too heavy for Him to lift?” He is pure power. He never grows tired, nor sleeps. Even when He ceased creating all things, He was not resting. Being the highest and perfect God that He is, He has this infinite power from within Himself, not from outside Himself.

#### 8. God is Wise.

God is Omniscient. He knows all things. He knows every detail of everything that is, was, or ever shall be. He also knows every possibility of things that could be but never will be. He knows all answers to all questions. He makes no mistakes. He remembers everything. He never learns, for He has always known everything about everything. He knows the future. It is gross heresy to say that God “limits His knowledge”, as if God could choose to not know something He already knows. He says He “forgets” our sins by way of justice, not by way of omniscience. God is also perfectly wise. He knows what is best. He knows all relationships between facts and how they work out together for the planned end. Finally, God has perfect self-knowledge.

#### 9. God is Love.

God is love. First, God loves Himself. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all love each other perfectly. God is not lonely. But God expresses this internal love externally to His creatures. He has a general love for all things as creatures. But He also has a special love for His people, which is called election. Theologians speak of God's love of benevolence (love for the unlovely) and His love of complacency (love for the lovely). He has grace for the guilty, mercy for the miserable, kindness for the helpless. God is good. He is patient. God is generous. He is compassionate. He is forgiving. These and many other terms are used to say "God is love."

#### 10. God is Glorious.

God is all glorious within. He is the God of glory. Within the Trinity, there has always been an infinite splendor of light and glory that we have never seen or known. It is the glory of God. It is His plan to reveal this internal glory externally to His creation. This glory will one day be revealed and reflected in all things. His love will be displayed in His elect, His wrath in the non-elect. In turn, this revealed glory will be reflected back to God. In that sense, we are said to “give glory to God”. What is the glory of God? It is His splendor, His fame, His beauty. It is the revelation of what He is, all that He is, all His

attributes together in perfect harmony. It is often compared to light in all its various refracted colors, like the rainbow. It is living glory. And the focal point of it is the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom God reveals His glory to creation, and through whom He receives it back again.

## **The Plan of God**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 15

#### 1. God Has a Plan.

The universe is not a car without a driver, nor a driver without a map. There is a purpose behind everything. The Bible often speaks of this great plan of God. It is the “purpose” of that famous and favorite Bible verse, Rom. 8:28. God has planned out this purpose in advance. He thought it out, planned it in every detail, and carries it out “on purpose”. It is an absolute purpose, not merely a wish or command. In theology it is called the “decree”. God has decreed His purpose and it shall happen. See Rom. 9:11, Isa. 46:10-11, Eph. 3:11, Acts 4:28 and 2 Tim. 1:9.

#### 2. God Predestined Everything.

The plan of God is also called predestination. God pre-programmed everything that will come to pass (Eph. 1:11). Everything can be traced back to God's ultimate plan, for “from Him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). He not only created all things (Gen. 1:1), but drew up the blueprints for everything. He foreordained what will happen, and He did this in advance in eternity. He drew up the plan before He laid the foundation. He pre-determined what would happen, not merely what could or should happen. Then He set the ball rolling in a certain course, and it must follow the pre-arranged course.

#### 3. God Planned Every Detail.

There is a time for every purpose under Heaven, says Eccl. 3:1. God has planned out this great purpose to the smallest detail. This includes the exact timing when everything would occur. He also prepared every relationship with every other detail. Nothing was ignored. Even the smallest and seemingly insignificant detail was included, such as the number of hairs on our heads. He prepared this detailed inventory in advance, and the construction of the universe follows it perfectly, for God is the great architect and contractor who never makes a mistake. In theology, we speak of the great plan as the decree, the individual details as decrees.

#### 4. There is No Such Thing as Chance.

Since God has determined everything in advance, there is no such thing as chance. “Chance” was a concept invented by certain Greek philosophers, especially promoted among the Epicureans (opposed in Acts 17). It denies the existence of a personal and sovereign God who foreordains everything. Similarly, there is no such thing as luck, either good or bad. Nor is there any fortune or accidents. Even the roll of dice has been determined by God (Pro. 16:33). Conversely, there is also no such thing as blind fate, a concept promoted by the ancient Stoics. Whatever will be will be, only because God has determined it so. Coincidence is true only in the sense that two events may co-incide, or happen at the same time. But that is because God planned it like that.

#### 5. God's Plan is Inevitable.

This plan will, shall and must come to completion. It is inevitable because God is sovereign and omnipotent. Neither angel, demon, sinner or saint can stop it in any detail, for even their actions to stop it are part of the plan. Nothing can stop it. See Psa. 33:11, 148:3, Tit. 1:2, Pro. 19:21, Isa. 14:27, Heb. 6:17, and Job 42:1. It is God's plan and only God could change it. But God has sworn with an oath that He will not change it. He is not fickle like a man who can change his mind (Jer. 4:28, 23:20, 30:24, I Sam. 15:29). In

time, God interacts with us, and seems to change His actions, but this is all part of the great strategy. The plan is God's eternal purpose and God does not change His sworn intentions. He is not an Indian-giver or cheat. He keeps the oath He has sworn.

6. God Consulted Only With Himself in the Plan.

This should be obvious, since nobody else existed when God made the plan. He did not consult with the angels, for they are not on the same level as God. He consulted only with Himself within the Trinity (Eph. 1:11; Psa. 33:11). Who is able to serve as advisor to God on such things? (Rom. 11:34; Isa. 40:13-14). God did not consult with Man even by foresight, for He foresaw what He pre-determined would occur. When it comes to pass, then, only God can take the credit for the accomplishment of what was planned.

7. God Has Not Revealed All the Details of the Plan.

“The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those that have been revealed belong to us, that we may do the words of this Law” (Deut. 29:29). God has revealed that there is a plan, and has even revealed a few details of the plan. But He has not revealed it all, nor could we comprehend it all even if He did. We must not pry into things that have not been revealed, such as the date for the Second Coming of Christ. In theology, we speak of the plan as the “secret will of God”. On the other hand, God has revealed much to us about our responsibility. This is the “revealed will of God”. Though God is sovereign and has foreordained all our thoughts and actions, we are still accountable and responsible. The revealed will includes the Law and the Gospel.

8. God Uses Even Sin in His Plan.

Even sin is included among the details of the great plan. How could it be otherwise? Sin infects and affects so much of human existence, and much of the plan directly concerns Man. Therefore, God had to include sin in the great plan. He uses sin and sinners to carry out His purpose, even their own destruction (Pro. 16:4). We sinners mean sinful things for evil, but God means them for good (Gen. 50:20). God not only overrules sin, but includes it in a marvelous way as part of the plan. He planned to allow sin in order to reveal His holiness and justice in punishing it or to reveal His grace and mercy in forgiving it (Rom. 9). Even the crucifixion of Christ, the worst of all sins, was predestined by God (Acts 2:23, 4:28).

9. Christ is Central to the Plan of God.

The plan is Christocentric. Christ is the very apex of God's purpose, for it is through Christ that God reveals His glory and through Christ that God receives glory back from His creation. Col. 1 describes how Christ is pre-eminent above all things, prominent in the plan of God and the great pivot of all history. Phil. 2 also describes how Christ is the center of God's plan, specifically the plan of redemption. We are not saved merely to enjoy God forever; we are saved in order to give glory to Christ and through Him give glory to the Father.

10. God's Plan is to Reveal His Glory.

Rom. 11:36 says that all things are from God in predestination and Creation. They are also through Him in providence. But they are also to Him in the final accomplishment of the great plan. And the bottom line of this plan is just this: the glory of God. God does all things for His own glory. Everything that is, was or ever shall be will give glory to God (Psa. 46:10, 145:10). God will reveal His glory when it is time for the great consummation. He will show His glory - glory revealed. He will receive glory reflected

back to Him - glory received. God does not share His glory with another (Isa. 42:8, 48:11). Yet He does show His glory in part now and more fully in eternity. He will display the glory of His grace to the elect (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14) and the glory of His wrath to the reprobate (Rom. 9). And this glory will even be revealed to the angels, demons and inanimate objects. To God be glory forever and ever!

## Creation

### Basic Christian Doctrines 16

#### 1. God Created the Universe.

The first verse of the Bible states one of the most important truths in the whole Bible: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God is the Creator. He is our “Maker” (Isa. 54:5). The universe did not create itself; it was created by God (Psa. 100:3). God has revealed this great truth through the things which are created (Rom. 1). Each member of the Trinity was involved in creation (Gen. 1:1-2, John 1:3).

#### 2. God Created the Universe out of Nothing.

Before creation, God alone existed. When He created the universe, therefore He could create it out of Himself (which the Bible denies) or out of sheer nothingness (which the Bible teaches). He merely spoke it into existence (Gen. 1; Heb. 11:3). This is the power of His word and the word of His power. We say He created all things “ex nihilo”, out of nothing. We cannot comprehend this; there is no adequate analogy in Nature. When an artist paints a picture, he does not really create it as such. God created all things. But not at once. He did it in stages.

#### 3. God Created the Universe in Six Days.

Gen. 1 describes the period of creation as 6 days of “evening and day”. In the Hebrew way of speaking, sundown is the start of a new 24-hour day. While some Christians wonder if these were literal 24-hour periods or symbols of periods of much greater length, we point out several things. First, the Hebrew word YOM almost always means 24-hour days. Also, Gen.1 uses the normal description of evening and daylight markers. Perhaps most conclusive is that the time periods are equal in length - and Man was created on the 6th day. If the first 5 were millions of years old, then Adam would have to have been ancient indeed! Ex. 20:11 says that the 7th day became the pattern for the weekly sabbath.

#### 4. God Created Things on Different Levels.

Gen. 1 describes how God created things from the more simple to the more complex. First He created the raw stuff of the universe; matter, light, energy. Then He created inanimate things. Then plants, animals, and finally Man. There are variations and subdivisions within these categories, such as gases, sub-atomic particles, amoebas, etc. These levels display God's “order” (cf. I Cor. 15:39). We might add that Gen. 1 is describing the creation of the natural side of the universe, not the supernatural. God created the angels first, for they were witnesses of the creation of the natural or physical universe (Job 38:4-7). God alone created the universe. The angels may have been messengers or assistants in the work of the natural part, but they were not creators, but created beings.

#### 5. There is No Movement Between Created Levels.

The things on each level interact with each other, but there is no climbing the ladder of created levels. For example, a cow may eat grass, but grass does not evolve into cows. Man drinks water, but water remains water and does not evolve into Man. Hence, the idea of Evolution is quite wrong. Rocks don't become dogs, horses don't become humans, humans don't become angels. The New Age Movement, eastern religion and some aspects of Evolution theorize that all things are evolving upward along this ladder of existence, resulting in Godhood. This is very wrong. We were created by God, but not out of God. We were created for God, but not to become God. Reincarnation says we go up and down



this ladder, but that too is quite wrong. Of course, there is variation within each level, and some forms become extinct (such as the dodo-bird, dinosaurs, etc).

#### 6. Creationism Disproves the Theory of Evolution.

The theory of Evolution is not merely a scientific theory; it has religious overtones and implications for theology. Simply put, it contradicts Gen.1 and is therefore erroneous. It suggests that before a “Big Bang”, there was nothing. Then amorphous gas, space foam, or something like it. Then by mere chance, it developed by itself into the universe and has been growing ever since. That's not what God says. First, there is no such thing as chance. Second, God created things on several levels at the beginning and in a short period of time. Third, the order of Gen. 1 is different from the order suggested by all Evolutionists. Evolution is just a theory (and unscientific at that) whose main objective is to eliminate God. So-called “Theistic Evolution” is an erroneous attempt to say that God used Evolution in Creation. But this is also unbiblical on many points.

#### 7. God Ceased Creation After the First Week.

God rested on Day 7. This does not mean He was tired, for God has all power and had no less when He created the universe. He never tires. He ceased Creating, and so has not created any new levels. He began the work of sustaining His creation, which we call providence. Through providence, He keeps His creation in existence, develops it, guides it, and so on. But there are no new acts of creation, except in the spiritual realm. The new birth is called a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Even so, it is not creation out of nothing per se. It simply means that God does not save us by reforming the old man, but forming a new man within us by regeneration.

#### 8. Man's Sin Affected the Universe.

God created the universe and pronounced it very good. It reflected His glory and was free from sin. The sin of Satan had already occurred in the invisible, non-material supernatural side, but that did not affect the material universe - at least until he successfully led Adam and Eve into sin. This brought a curse on creation (Gen. 3:17, Rom. 8:20-22). This is why there are now storms, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanos, droughts, famines, wild animals, plagues, and death. None of these were part of the original creation. The levels of things below Man are incapable of sin, but suffer the consequences of our sin. Incidentally, Gnosticism wrongly said that matter itself is necessarily evil.

#### 9. God Sent a Worldwide Flood to Judge Sin.

Sin proliferated at a rapid pace after Adam and Eve. Then there was an invasion of demons in Gen. 6. It got so bad that the cup of its wrath was filled, and God judged the whole world. He started all over, as it were, by flooding the Earth and making it resemble Gen. 1:2. Only 8 humans were spared to start the human race again, but they brought sin with them into the Ark. Two of every kind of animal were brought on the Ark, so God did not begin creation entirely anew as in Gen. 1. This massive Flood covered the whole world and caused enormous changes in the Earth's landscape and weather, among other things. Thus, the Flood was unique. Such a Flood has never occurred since, nor ever will again. It was the greatest catastrophe since Creation.

#### 10. God Will One Day Re-Create the Universe.

The Flood was only a partial re-creation. Sin left the Ark and began to multiply again. The material universe was still cursed. God's glory in Nature is still marred by sin and its effects. But not for long. Jesus Christ came to save Man. Some men will be saved.

Through that redemption, the curse on creation is lifted. One day, at the Second Coming of Jesus, the effects of the curse will be erased in the "new heavens and the new Earth" (Rev. 21:1, Isa. 65:17, Rom.8:21, Acts 3:21). It will reflect God's glory perfectly, far greater even than in Gen. 1.

## Cosmology

### Basic Christian Doctrines 17

#### 1. God Created Time.

God is eternal and inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15). We cannot really grasp eternity as such, since we are not eternal. But we can understand it a little by contrasting it with time. It would seem that eternity is an “eternal now”, unlimited by the boundaries of time as we know it. It is more than time without beginning or end. God alone is eternal. He created time. This is implied in Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1. In the beginning of creation, God already existed. He was before time, and therefore created time at the beginning of the creation of the universe. Since by definition time is not eternity, time had a beginning, which is creation. Since God is the creator of all things created, God created time.

#### 2. The Universe is Relatively Young.

How old, then, is the universe? How long ago was “the beginning” of Gen. 1? As we saw before, the days of Gen. 1 were 24-hour periods, not eons of millions of years, let alone eternity. That is a major marker for our determining from the Bible how old the universe is. God also gave other useful markers in the Bible, especially the genealogies of Genesis, Chronicles, Matthew, Luke and a few other places. Many of these specify how old people were when they had certain children, and how old they were when they died. Other passages indicate the time periods of the Captivities in Egypt and Babylon, the desert wandering, and the period between the Old and New Testaments. Putting them all together, we discover that Creation occurred about 6000 years ago. The minor “gaps” in the genealogies were after Abraham, not before. A general chronology to remember would be this: Adam (4000 BC), Noah (3000 BC), Abraham (2000 BC), David (1000 BC), Jesus (2000 years ago). Also, there is no truth to the so-called “Gap Theory”, viz, that there was a gap of millions of years between Gen. 1:1 and 1:2. This was an unnecessary accommodation to Evolution, suggests there was death in the world before Adam (vs. Rom. 5:12), etc.

#### 3. The Universe is Not God.

The universe is created ; it is not the Creator. It is not self-created (Psa. 100:3). It does not have a soul. It is not composed of divine substance, for God created it out of nothing and not out of Himself. It is not eternal; it is relatively young. It is not infinite. God alone is infinite and omnipresent. The heavens and earth cannot contain the infinite God, and so it is not infinite (I Kings 8:27). Contrary to philosophers such as Plato and Bertrand Russell, the universe is not eternal. On the other hand, the universe is real. It is not a figment of our imagination, as taught by Buddhism and Christian Science. It exists because God created it.

#### 4. The Universe Has Two Parts.

Col 1:16 says that the universe has 2 parts or sides: the natural (heavens and earth) and the supernatural. One is visible, the other invisible. One is subject to scientific observation through our 5 senses; the other is not. The Bible says that there are 3 heavens: the atmosphere around the earth, outer space, and the immediate presence of God. The first 2 are natural, the 3rd is supernatural. Angels live in the supernatural realm.

#### 5. God Created the Universe with Order.

God is a God of order and displays this order in creation. It is not chaos. There is still

order in spite of sin. He called the world "good". It is complicated, vast and wonderfully made. There are levels of order, and the glory of God is revealed in each in a wonderful manner.

#### 6. God Created Natural Law.

Part of the order which God has built into His creation is what is known as Natural Law. It includes what we call "the Laws of Science", but more. The Declaration of Independence refers to "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God". These scientific principles indicate God's moral order. This is that part of General Revelation in which God uses the scientific order to reveal morality. Thus, Rom. 1 says that homosexuality is not only sinful but "unnatural". It is against nature. Heterosexual fornication is wrong, but not "against nature" as such. In I Cor. 11:14, God says that it is unnatural and therefore wrong for men to have long hair like a woman. "Does not Nature itself teach you...?" This Natural Law overlaps with the Law written on our consciences (Rom. 2:14-15).

#### 7. The Universe is a Network of Spheres.

Theologians and scientists discussed this point for centuries, but it was Abraham Kuyper who made the major contribution to this observation. God created the universe as a network of overlapping and intersecting aspects which we might call "spheres". They would include things such as numbers, time, space, mind, life, matter, symbolism (such as language), value (such as money), justice, faith, ethics, beauty, etc. There are similarities and differences between them all. The more we study them, the more we are amazed at the complexity and wonder of them as parts of God's creation.

#### 8. God Delegated Authority to Man over the Universe.

Gen. 1:26-30 describes the "Cultural Mandate" which God gave to Adam and Eve and their descendants. God made us stewards over His creation. We have dominion over the earth. This was not abolished by the Fall, only made more difficult. Nor was it abolished or fulfilled by redemption. We are still to use the world which God created, for His glory. Thus, we can kill and eat animals, mine minerals and build buildings, start schools, etc. This is a "Cultural Mandate", to develop the culture of creation. We are to work and produce. The world does not exist for itself or for our own luxury. We may not despoil it, but must use it properly.

#### 9. Man is to Use the World to God's Glory.

The purpose of creation is to display God's glory. Unfallen man was to cultivate the world unaffected by sin for this end. The Fall made it more difficult, but not impossible. God grants us Common Grace to carry out this Dominion Mandate in part. The end is still the same: the glory of God. All we do is to be productive and to further the glory of God (I Cor 10:31). We are to work at our jobs as if Christ were our employer, for ultimately He is. We study at school for His glory, we raise our families for His glory, we are involved in society for His glory. The Bible is our guideline and grace is the enabler.

#### 10. We Must Worship the Creator, Not the Creation.

God created the world for His glory, and He does not share His glory with anyone or anything, even His creation. He displays glory in and through it, but we are to worship the Creator and not the creation (Rom. 1). It is the mark of idolatry to worship Nature rather than Nature's God. It is also idolatry to worship Nature as God, such as Mother Nature, Mother Earth, pantheism, etc. It is easy to admire the beauty of Nature, but we must not allow ourselves to forget that God put that beauty there as a glimmer of His beauty and

glory. We should see the glory and reflect it back to God. To ignore God in it is to fall into idolatry. God warned the Jews not to worship the stars of Heaven (Deut. 4:19). We should use Nature to worship Nature's God. Thus, worship is not only spiritual (e.g., prayer and Bible-reading), but material. We worship God at work when we do good work. To use Nature for ourselves is a form of self-idolatry. Let us worship the Creator in all we do with all He has made.

## **Providence**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 18

#### 1. God is Involved with His Creation.

Creation was the beginning, not the end, of God's involvement with the Universe. God takes an active interest and involvement with His Creation. He is not an absentee landlord, as suggested by 18th-century Deism. He did not wind it up like a clock and step back and let things take their course. He not only knows what is happening throughout the universe, but is involved in every detail and the relationships between everything. Sometimes He uses angels to carry on the work. Sometimes He acts normally, sometimes unusually. But He never is absent or ignorant. God is in charge.

#### 2. God Upholds All Things.

“Through Him are all things” (Rom. 11:36). God predestined and created all things, and guides them along every moment of the way along their foreordained ways to the final culmination of all things. Nothing goes astray from the pre-arranged plan. He also “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). Just as He created everything by His word of power, so He sustains everything by this same Word. He does not continue to create things, but keeps them existing so that they do not fall into non-existence. He sustains all things; in Him all things consist or hold together (Col. 1:17).

#### 3. God Provides for the Universe.

Everything depends upon God for existence and all the relevant details of space and time. He provides all energy for the atoms, lightning, electricity, magnetism, gravity, light, etc. He also is the source of all life. “He gives to all life, breath and all things ... for in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25,28). God feeds the animals (Matt. 6:26). He preserves all living things (Psa. 36:6) and provides life to all living Creatures (Neh. 9:6). He provides through Providence.

#### 4. God Allows Catastrophes.

God allows what we would call natural disasters and tragedies. For example, God is in complete control of the weather (Job 38:26-38). There is no “Mother Nature”. Even insurance companies refer to “an act of God” beyond the foresight or influence of Man. God allows floods, droughts, tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards, earthquakes, etc. Part of this is because of the curse on Creation due to the sin of Man. Some disasters are due to specific sins, others not. God allows airplane crashes, burning homes, birth defects, financial ruin and broken marriages. These are not outside His dominion. He cannot be blamed, however, nor should we ever even think of blaming Him when they strike us. God allows wars, revolutions and corrupt government. He allows all these to remind us of sin and warn us of future judgement.

#### 5. God Loves His Creatures.

God loves His Creation, especially the higher they are on the levels of Creation. He loves humans more than animals (Matt. 6:26). He has a general love for all people as His creatures, made in His image. This is part of Common Grace. In this sense, God loves everyone (Psa. 33:5). God created us out of love, and this continues even after the Fall in spite of sin. Thus it is Common Grace, not just a general love. God tells us to love our enemies, because God Himself loves His enemies (Matt. 5:44). This flows from God's very nature as love itself.

#### 6. God Sends Good to All His Creatures.

We must do good to all men, because God does good to all men (Matt. 5:44-45, Luke 6:35-36). He sends rain and sunshine on all people, regardless of whether they are Christians or not (Acts 14:17). Everything good in the world is a gift from God the Creator to His creatures (James 1:17, I Tim. 4:4, Gen. 1:31). He even gives good things to people that end up in Hell (Luke 16:25). He rarely is ever thanked for these gifts, for ingratitude characterizes fallen Man (Rom. 1:21).

#### 7. God Takes Special Care of His Children.

There is a general providence for all men and a special providence for the elect, before and especially after their conversions. God tells us to love and do good for all men, especially other Christians (Gal. 6:10). God does the same here. This is why God works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:28). It does not always appear such, especially in the midst of trials and afflictions and disasters. But we need to be patient and have faith. All will one day be explained to us. We need not fret because the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, for this is only temporary (Psa. 37:1-2). God is in complete control and takes a special interest in His children.

#### 8. God is Involved in Human Hearts.

God is totally sovereign in Providence, even in the hearts and wills of Man. Our will is not off-limits to God. He can intervene and interrupt at any time. Indeed, He regularly does this. He gives faith, He withholds faith. He overrules the plans and desires of our minds (Pro. 16:1, 9). He turns our hearts like rivers (Pro. 21:1). He puts things like joy in our hearts (Ezra 6:22, 7:27). He “works all things in all persons” (I Cor. 12:6). He is at work on our wills so that we will and do what He wants (Phil. 2:13). This is a deep mystery. God is sovereign, but we are still responsible. Theologians call this “concurrency”. God mysteriously guides our very thoughts and motives, good and bad, in such a way that He is sovereign and cannot be blamed, while we are still responsible.

#### 9. God Restrains Sin.

God is even in control of sin. Sometimes, He restrains us from sinning (Gen. 20:6). He prevents certain circumstances to arise and keeps us from even being tempted. Or He may pull us through those temptations. We need to pray that God “lead us not into temptation.” On the other hand, God also allows us to fall into sin. He takes the restraints off, and we give in to temptation. He gives us over to sin (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). He lets whole nations go their own way into heinous sin (Acts 14:16). He lets go and we fall into sin under our own weight (Psa. 81:11-12, Acts 7:42). We ought to pray that God restrains sin in us.

#### 10. God Works Miracles.

Most of what we have said so far has reference to God's general method of providence. Though still somewhat mysterious, there is a certain order to it. It is Usual Providence. But there is also Unusual Providence, in which God acts in a special way. In general providence, He acts indirectly. Here He acts directly. A miracle is not just an unlikely event. It is one that goes contrary to the Laws of Nature. But God is free to suspend those laws, for after all it is He that is at work in all things anyway. Miracles are relatively rare. God alone can work miracles. They are signs that God is God. Jesus was God and did many miracles to prove it. The two greatest miracles regarding Christ were the Virgin

Birth and Resurrection. Since then, the greatest miracle is the new birth and spiritual resurrection.



## Angels

### Basic Christian Doctrines 19

#### 1. Angels are Real.

Angels are real beings. They are not myths. They are not the product of over-active imaginations, hallucinations, mistaken identities or hoaxes. They are not fairies, genies, brownies or pixies. . They are as real as human beings. They are not “ghosts”, nor the spirits of dead people. They were created by God before He created Man, and they are higher than Man (more intelligent, stronger, older, never sleep, etc).

#### 2. Angels are Spirits.

Angels are frequently called “spirits” (Heb. 1:14). They do not have material physical bodies as we do (Luke 24:39). They live in the heavenly realm, but interact with us in the physical realm. They are invisible except for the rare times when God has let them become visible. They are personal. They have minds, memories, emotions, wills, consciences, morality, movement, can talk, etc. Unlike Man, their number is not increasing, for God is not creating any more of them, nor do they marry and reproduce (Mark 12:25). Though it is not stated that they are made in the image of God, in a sense they resemble God more than Man does: like God they are non-physical, holy, etc.

#### 3. Angels are Holy.

Scripture frequently describes them as “holy angels” (Mark 8:38, Rev. 14:10). It would seem that one third of the original angels fell into sin, leaving two-thirds as holy (Rev. 12). They never sinned and never will sin. Though they are moral beings with the capacity to sin, they never will fall. They always obey God (Psa. 103:20). Indeed, it is their highest delight to obey whatever God commands. This is what we should pray in the Lord's Prayer, “Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.” These holy angels are elect (I Tim. 5:21).

#### 4. Angels are Messengers of God.

The word “angel” in both Hebrew and Greek means “messenger, representative, one who runs an errand.” They speak on God's behalf. On some occasions, they worked miracles. They seem to have a place in the affairs of the universe in a variety of ways, such as involvement with the planets. They take orders from God alone. We cannot command them, nor even speak to them, let alone pray to them (for prayer is a form of worship).

#### 5. Angels Worship God.

Among the many duties of the holy angels is worship. Most of the glimpses into Heaven recorded in Scripture reveal the presence of angels involved in worship. Specifically, Isa. 6:3 and Rev. 4:6-9 describes how they sing and chant and fall down before the throne of God, saying “Holy, holy, holy.” They directly see God in His glory and reflect this glory back to Him. Though they are also given sight into what's happening here in the physical part of the universe, their main activity is that of worship. They are commanded to worship God, and they most willingly and swiftly obey (Psa. 29:1-2, 89:7, 103:20-21, 148:1-2). They worshipped Jesus at His birth (Heb. 1:6, Luke 2:9-14). We are forbidden to worship the angels (Col. 2:18, Rev. 22:8-9). One day, believers will join angels in the worship of God, but we will have a song to sing that even the angels cannot sing.

#### 6. Angels Have Rank.

Angels are sometimes described as “the host of heaven.” God Himself is “Lord Sabaoth”,

Lord of the Hosts. “Host” means soldiers in an army. The holy angels are God's heavenly army in the war against Satan's army of fallen angels. Thus, they have rank. Scripture describes these as principalities, powers, rulers, thrones, etc (Eph. 1:20, 6:12, Col. 1:16, 1 Pet. 3:22, Rom. 8:38). The Bible also describes some angels as cherubim (Gen. 3:24) and others as seraphim, or burning ones (Isa. 6:2).

#### 7. Angels Oppose Demons.

There is a war going on in the supernatural realm between the good angels and the evil angels. Rev. 12 and parts of Daniel describe it, and a few other places give brief clues as to what is going on. Michael the Archangel is the highest ranking angel on one side, Satan on the other. These are the only two angels called “archangels”, which means “chief angels”. Christians and non-Christians are also involved in this spiritual war, but we do not see it as clearly as the angels do. While some popular writers have exaggerated and sensationalized this spiritual conflict, we should not ignore or trivialize it. It is real.

#### 8. Angels are Powerful.

They are called “mighty ones” (Psa. 103:20) and “powerful angels” (2 Thess 1:7). 2 Pet. 2:1 says that they are more powerful than we are. Two of them blinded all the homosexuals in Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:11). One angel slew 185,000 Syrians in a single night. They are not omnipotent, nor omnipresent or omniscient. But they are more powerful than we are. The fallen angels lost their holiness but not their power, at least not all of it.

#### 9. Angels Serve Christians.

Heb. 1:14 says of the good angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” Several verses in Scripture indicate that there are indeed “Guardian Angels”, though it is difficult to say if this means that each Christian has one specific angel or many, whether they come and go, etc. Psa. 91:11-12 is perhaps the clearest text that speaks of this work of the angels. Angels also escort us to Heaven when we die (Luke 16:22). They will be sent by Christ at the Rapture to escort us to be with Him without dying (Matt. 24:31, 1 Thess. 4:16). Meanwhile, they protect us from seen and unseen dangers, such as from demons.

#### 10. Angels Serve Christ.

The good angels serve our Lord Jesus in a variety of ways. First, since He is God, they take orders from Him and worship Him. When He was here on Earth, the angels served Him in several ways. They ministered to Christ after the 40 days in the wilderness, probably bringing Him food and water (Mark 1:13). When Christ was in the agony of sweating blood in Gethsemane, an angel appeared and strengthened Him (Luke 22:43-44). Christ told His captors that He had authority to call down thousands of angels to rescue Him (Matt. 26:53). Christ is not an angel, but is their Commander-in-Chief, even higher than Michael. He is higher than the holy angels and is their head (Col. 1:16, 2:10, Eph. 1:20-21, 1 Pet. 3:22). He is not their mediator per se, so far as salvation is concerned, for they do not need salvation. And though the angels are higher than we are, we will be elevated higher than the holy angels. They are the servants of the King of Kings, but we will be the Bride of the King of Kings.

## **Satan**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 20

#### 1. Demons are Fallen Angels.

Demons are real. They are not the product of superstition or fanciful imaginations. They are not goblins, ghouls, ogres or banshees. Nor are they the ghosts of dead people come back to haunt us. They are angels who sinned and were expelled from Heaven. Rev. 12:4 indicates that about a third of the angels fell. Some are roaming around Earth invisibly, others are kept in chains in a part of Hades called Tartarus to await their final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6). There are many demons, but only one Devil.

#### 2. Demons are Evil.

They are frequently called “unclean spirits” (Matt. 10:1), in contrast to the unfallen angels who are called “holy angels”. They are “deceiving spirits” (I Tim. 4:1). They are far more evil than humans, for they fell from a higher estate and have had more time to accumulate sins and stew in their evil. They know that God exists (James 2:19), but they refuse to obey Him. But they submit to God when He stretches forth His authority. Demons are involved in all areas of evil in the world. For example, they are the true identity of the false gods of pagan religions (I Cor. 10:20).

#### 3. Demons Sometimes Inhabit People.

The word usually translated “demon-possessed” is literally “demonized.” Though all sinners are born as slaves to Satan, there is a sense in which demons indwell only some of them. Demon-possession is relatively rare. It is not the same thing as disease, epilepsy, mental illness, or other afflictions, though sometimes demons are involved in these. The most evil and influential people in history (Hitler, Mohammad, mass murderers, etc) were probably demon-possessed. In demonization, 2 spirits indwell one body - a human and a demon. It probably begins with deep involvement in the occult. The only cure is exorcism by the authority of Jesus Christ.

#### 4. Satan is Real.

Satan is also very real. He was not invented to scare little children. Nor is he the projection or personification of our nightmares and evil ideas. He is not a myth. He has several names and titles: the Devil (Matt. 4:1), the Serpent (Gen. 3:1), Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24), Belial (2 Cor. 6:15), the Dragon (Rev. 20:2), Abaddon and Apollyon (Rev. 20:2), and many others. Like the other angels, he was created before Man. He is called the god of this world because he has been allowed to exercise a degree of control over mankind through sin. He has a kingdom, inhabited by the whole world until a person escapes his clutches through salvation (I John 5:19).

#### 5. Satan was Once a Good Archangel.

The original creation and fall of Satan is recorded somewhat mysteriously in Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezek. 28:12-19. The preceding verses rebuke men, but the following verses could not refer to mere men but to Satan behind them. Satan was an archangel, evidently named Lucifer, or light-bearer. He was the first created being to sin and led others into sin (Rev. 12:3-4). He wanted to become God, perhaps to stage a revolution. He was filled with pride (I Tim. 3:6). Jesus saw him fall from Heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18). He is called the Prince of Demons (Matt. 12:24), for he led them into revolt and is still their leader.

#### 6. Satan is Evil.

One of the names for Satan is “the Evil One” (Matt. 6:13). He is also “the Wicked One” (1 John 5:19). He is the Prince of Darkness. He was the first one to sin and is the worst sinner in history. He is behind every evil thought, word and deed. He has sinned longer and deeper than anyone else. The extent of his evil is almost inconceivable to us. Humans are totally depraved, that is, sin fills their entire beings. But Satan has a larger capacity to sin. Yet he is not infinitely evil, for only God is infinite in any way. Satan is not the equal opposite of God. The universe is a battlefield, but not between equals. Satan is vastly smaller than God. It would seem that his equal counterpart is Michael the Archangel.

#### 7. Satan Tempts People to Sin.

Just as he led other angels into sin, so he leads people into sin. In a way, he already has them, since they are born in sin. Still, he wants to keep them. He does not relinquish any without a fight. He wants to multiply sin in the universe. He is called “The Tempter” (1 Thess. 3:5). He tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden, and tempted Jesus in the wilderness. He tempts us anywhere and everywhere. He advertises sin, makes it look desirable, entices us to commit sin. One of the major means he uses is the sin that is already inside us (James 1:14). God Himself tempts no one, but allows Satan to tempt us (James 1:13). That is how God tests us.

#### 8. Satan Disguises Himself.

Satan rarely, if ever, reveals his evil designs and real motives. He disguised himself as a snake in the Garden of Eden. He pretends to offer good things to us. He is a deceiver. Jesus called him “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). He cheats people in all sorts of ways. He lulls people into a sense of security, trapping them into ignoring their fate after death. 2 Cor. 11:13-15 says that he disguises himself as an “angel of light”, and sends false prophets as spies in disguise to masquerade as ambassadors of truth. We need to beware of Satan's methods.

#### 9. Satan Accuses Believers.

After he leads people into sin, he accuses them. Some of the accusation is true - they did sin. He uses this as an opportunity to kick fallen Christians and try to keep them from getting up. He also accuses us falsely. Satan is “the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). He accused Job before God (Job 1), accused God before Adam and Eve (Gen. 3), and accused the God-Man to His face (Matt. 4). Zech. 3:1-5 is a good example of how Satan accuses people, but the righteousness of Christ excuses them from all accusation. Christ is our Advocate to defend us from Satan's accusations (Rom. 8:33-34).

#### 10. Satan and Demons Will Be Punished in Hell.

Christ defeated Satan and the demons at the Cross. His death took away the power of Satan, who had the keys of death. See Col. 2:15 and Heb. 2. Christ overthrew the Prince of Darkness, and is bringing in the Kingdom of Light. One day Christ will return and will finish the job. Satan will be vanquished. He will be thrown into the Pit of Hell for 1000 years, let out briefly, then thrown into the Lake of Fire forever (Rev. 20:1-3, 6-10). Hell was originally prepared as the final place of punishment for Satan and the demons (Matt. 25:41). There is no hope for Satan. He knows his time is short (Rev. 12:12). Neither Satan nor the demons were elect. Christ did not die for them, nor is the Gospel preached to them. Christ Himself will preside at their execution.

## Man

### Basic Christian Doctrines 21

#### 1. Man Bears the Image of God.

Man is Man, and God is God, and the twain never meet except in Christ the God-Man. Nevertheless, Man is like God in some respects. God made us in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). We can know God and have a loving relationship with Him. The image was marred but not destroyed by the Fall. Because Man still bears the image of God, we may not murder or curse our fellow Man, for that would be an attack of God's image (Gen. 9:6, James 3:9). One day, the image will be restored to its pristine beauty in Christ (Rom. 8:29).

#### 2. Man is Not an Animal.

Man did not evolve from the animals, but was created higher than animals and lower than angels. Man has some things in common with both, but is neither. Like the animals, Man has a physical body, has instinct, is affected by sin, etc. Like the angels and unlike the animals, Man has a mind, a soul, a heart that can love, a conscience that tells him right and wrong, and a will that is subject to sin. Man has dominion over the animals and is not to treat his fellow Man as an animal. And no animal will ever be part of the Bride of Christ (nor will any angel).

#### 3. Man is Accountable to God.

God created us in a relationship of responsibility. We are accountable to God and will have to answer to Him one day (Rom. 14:12). We are culpable and guilty. We have the duty to fear and obey God (Eccl. 12:14). God holds us all liable for what we are, all we think, whatever we say, everything we do. Man is subject to the Law of God, and is more accountable according to how much more light he has been given. All are accountable; some are more accountable and more guilty. We will all one day face God in court.

#### 4. Man Has a Conscience.

God has put a certain mysterious quality within all of us that reminds us that we will have to account to God. It is called a conscience. Romans 2 is the clearest passage on the subject. It is the echo of the voice of God, as it were. It is not audible, nor a perfect guideline. Some men's conscience is hardened and very indistinct (I Tim. 4:2). Conscience both accuses and excuses, but mainly accuses. It "smites" us (I Sam. 24:5, 1 John 3:20). It is like an alarm clock telling us we are guilty.

#### 5. Man is Religious.

God created Man to worship Him, and therefore gave Man the capability to worship. Man is necessarily religious. He is a worshipping being. The trouble is, he worships the wrong thing. Instead of the true God, Man worships idols. John Calvin said that each Man's heart is an idol factory. This is why there are so many false religions and only one true one. All men worship something or somebody. Man is "homo religioso" - Religious Man. The need to worship is as much a part of Him as his own shadow. To be precise, it is part of the image of God. The image of God is meant to lead us to worship God, for we were created to resemble God so that we might know Him, love Him and worship Him. But because of sin, we love sin itself and will not worship the true God. Even the atheist has a religion, known as Humanism, the worship of Man. It is self-worship. It takes other less obvious forms. Even pagan religions are forms of this, for in them fallen man creates his

own false god in the image of Man. What a distortion of the image of God! The image was meant to be a mirror to point us to worship our Creator, but we distort it so that our false god becomes a reflection of our own selves. Man is religious, but it is a false religion.

#### 6. Man is a Dichotomy.

Does Man have 2 or 3 basic components? Arguing from passages like I Thess. 5:23, some feel Man has 3 parts (body, soul, spirit), each of which is quite different from the other. This tends to lead to mysticism, for it puts the mind in the soul and urges us to bypass it and use the spirit. Most orthodox Christians believe that Man is a dichotomy, not a trichotomy. Man has a physical side (a body) and a spiritual side. The spiritual side has various aspects, which are not "parts" as such but various aspects of what Paul calls "the inner man" (Eph. 3:16) as opposed to our physical "outer man" (2 Cor. 4:16). 1 Thess. 5:23 no more teaches that Man is 3 than Mark 12:30 teaches that Man is 4. Soul and spirit are somewhat synonymous (cf. Luke 1:46-47). Sometimes the soul refers to Man vis-à-vis Man, and spirit to Man vis-à-vis God.

#### 7. Man Has a Body.

Like the animals, Man has a physical body. It has senses (sight, hearing, feeling, smell, taste). It moves, grows, feels pain and pleasure, reproduces itself, etc. It was perfect in Eden, but is now mortal due to sin, and will be made immortal at our resurrection (I Cor. 15). It is either male or female. One important part of the body is the blood, for in it is the very essence of physical life. Death comes when our spirit leaves our body (James 2:26). Men can kill the body, only God can kill both body and soul in eternal Hell (Matt. 10:28). Our bodies belong to God (Rom. 12:1, 1 Cor. 6).

#### 8. Man Has a Mind.

Man has a mind. The Greek word is NOUS. With our minds, we are able to think and reason. We can analyze, cogitate, compare. We use it to learn, gather information, store in our memory. Man's mind, however, is not a blank tablet. God has put within our minds the knowledge that God exists (Rom. 1-2). We all know that God exists. This is where the mind overlaps with our conscience. It is questionable that we have a so-called subconscious or unconscious side of our minds, at least as Freud said. Still, our minds are sometimes more awake than at other times, and is asleep at night. Our minds have a sense of time past and future, so we can remember and plan. We also use our minds to communicate thoughts with others, especially through the wonderful means called language, which is a sort of symbolic verbalization of thoughts. Animals do not do this. Our minds are affected by sin. We are to use our minds for God.

#### 9. Man Has Emotions.

Man has the capacity to feel. This produces emotions. Sometimes this is merely an inner reaction to the stimuli of the body. Some emotions are primarily inner, others outer. Generally, our emotions are of two sorts: pleasure and pain. Pleasurable emotions include joy, peace, thrill, fun, satisfaction, exhilaration, delight. Painful emotions include grief, worry, fear, anguish, confusion, loneliness. These have been greatly affected by sin, and so Christians are not to trust their feelings. God acts upon the emotions through the conscience to produce conviction of sin, and also works in them through redemption to produce true spiritual emotions. In Heaven, there is only pleasure; in Hell, only pain.

#### 10. Man Has a Will.

Deep within us is our heart. In some contexts, it is where we think. In others, where we feel. In still others, where we decide. We sometimes call the deciding aspect the “will”. God calls on us to choose properly (Josh. 24:15, Deut. 30:19). Our deepest affections cause us to choose or reject. The order is this: our nature, our mind, our choice.

## **The Family**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 22

#### 1. God Created Man as Male and Female.

God created Adam as the first man. Out of one of his ribs, God created Eve, the first woman. There are thus only two sexes. It is unnatural and ungodly to suggest a third or fourth, such as in homosexuality (a female man) and lesbianism (a male woman). And so God abominates homosexuality. God also created man and woman to be different in several ways, reflecting the roles God has for each. Men are stronger, more aggressive, more analytical, brave, able to lead. Women are weaker, more protective, more intuitive and instinctive, able to nurture and follow.

#### 2. Adam and Eve Were the First Two Humans.

Gen. 1 and 2 clearly teaches that Adam and Eve were individuals, not mere half-animal Neanderthals. Nor was there any kind of “pre-Adamic race”, as suggested by weird esoteric theories, as in some extreme forms of the Gap Theory. The first man was every bit as human as any man today. This is more important than some Evangelicals think. Deny it, and the arguments in Romans 5, 1 Cor. 15 and I Tim. 2 collapse.

#### 3. All Men are Descended from Adam.

Adam was the father of all mankind. All were “in Adam” (I Cor. 15:22). Even Eve was taken out of him. This is denied by Evolutionists, who say we came from all sorts of half-humans in several places. Acts 17:26 says God made all peoples everywhere from this one man, and we share the same life-giving essence of blood. We are all related to each other. Though there are differences of race, language, intellect, customs and history, we all have more in common than we have in distinction. We were in Adam physically, in that his seed produced and reproduced descendants. Adam was also our “federal head”, or representative in Eden. When he fell, we fell. We inherit his human nature and also his sin.

#### 4. God Ordained Marriage.

God created Eve out of Adam in order to re-unite them in the special bond of matrimony. It was God's idea, not Adam's. Gen. 2 shows the main reasons for marriage then and now: companionship, to reproduce the race, to serve God better in the work God gives, and to serve as an example of spiritual relationship with God. Marriage is a Creation ordinance, and so is applicable to all men, not just Christians. God's rule is 1 man, 1 woman, 1 lifetime. God does not permit polygamy, incest, homosexuality, and other such things. Though most people do marry, it is somewhat optional. God wrote the basic laws for marriage in Nature, and more explicitly in the Bible. It works when done right, fails when done wrong.

#### 5. God Commands Husbands to Love Their Wives.

There are several important rules and principles that God has laid down for marriage. One is that couples must follow God's Word. Another is that they are to serve and love Him first and foremost. God has also given specific rules for husbands and wives relative to their roles. They are all summed up in 1 rule for each. The main duty of a husband is, “Husbands, love your wives” (Eph. 5:25, Col. 3:19, 1 Pet. 3:7). He is to sacrifice his wants for her needs, even willing to die for her as Christ died for the Church. He is to protect and provide for her, lead her, be gentle and courageous, and cherish and nourish



her. He should imitate Christ in His dealings with the Church, not imitate the views of the world. God has fitted men for this and it is their prime duty.

6. God Commands Wives to Submit to Their Husbands.

The major duty of wives is: “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph. 5:22, Col. 3:18, 1 Pet. 3:1-6). She is to obey him, respect him, follow his lead. She must submit to his authority when he exercises it within the God-ordained circle, and of course, must not follow him if he goes outside that boundary. Marriage is thus a hierarchy of rank, not an egalitarian democracy. The wife is also to learn from him in silence (I Tim. 2:11-12). All this is very unpopular and quite politically incorrect, but it is right and true. Indeed, the success of a marriage can be gauged by the extent to which both husbands and wives do their respective duties. All breakdowns in marriage can be traced back to either or both not doing what God tells them to do.

7. God Commands Couples to Have Children.

Gen. 1 and 2 state very explicitly that one of the major reasons for marriage is the reproduction of mankind. God forbids us to do it outside of marriage. Children are a blessing from the Lord. Procreation is not an optional luxury left to the whims of husbands and wives. Of course, God sometimes providentially withholds children from some couples for a variety of reasons (that they may serve him in a different way, for example). But the Bible does not permit us to make the choice by means of birth control and the like. On the other hand, God does allow adoption, especially for couples who cannot have children by themselves. Finally, parents are to raise their children by the Bible, in the instruction of the Lord, with love and firmness, with appropriate discipline and patience.

8. God Commands Children to Obey Their Parents.

The major duty of children is to obey their parents. They do not have authority with or over their parents. God does not allow voting, “kids' rights”, or other such Humanistic ungodliness. Parents must teach, children must learn. Parents must chasten, children must submit to it. Children are under their parents' authority until they marry and leave the home, or until both parents die. If parents raise their children correctly, they instill in them lifelong habits and character, though they cannot guarantee that they will be saved. If the children grow up wild and wicked, they have to answer to God - and so do the parents.

9. God Allows for Divorce for Two Grounds.

God ordained marriage, but He also permits divorce - but for only two grounds. He does not permit it for mental cruelty, incompatibility, wife-beating, failure to financially support a family, drunkenness, lost affections, irreconcilable differences, etc. The first ground is an unrepentant act of adultery (Matt. 5:32, 19:9). It must be an act, not merely a thought, a look, a word, etc. It would include homosexuality. It must also be unrepented of, for if the guilty party repents, the other must forgive (Eph. 4:32). Either party may divorce the other. The second ground is in I Cor. 7:12-15. If a non-Christian spouse deserts and divorces a Christian, the Christian need not resist. It does not appear that the Christian can initiate this divorce, and this desertion ground does not apply except in a Christian/non-Christian marriage. A Biblical divorce frees the innocent party to remarry.

10. The Family is to Serve God.

Let us not forget the main reason God ordained marriage and children: to serve God. God

gave Eve to Adam to help him serve in the Garden. Families must serve God together in church and in the specific ministry that God has called them to. They form a team which can generally serve God better than they could as individuals. God blesses and uses families who follow His directions. And Satan hates and wishes to destroy them.

## Society

### Basic Christian Doctrines 23

#### 1. All Aspects of Human Society Are to Be Under God.

“One nation under God” is a good Biblical motto. Individuals are under God's rule, and so are all relationships between individuals (families, government, employment, churches, etc). Indeed, all aspects of society are also to be submitted to God's rule, for God's glory. This would include work, entertainment, business, education, art, communication, literature, science, and many others. This is part of the Cultural Mandate God gave to Adam in Gen. 1:28. The great Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch Calvinist theologian who became Prime Minister, said: “There is not one square inch in the universe of which Christ does not say, ‘Mine’.”

#### 2. God Commands Man to Work.

Part of this Cultural Mandate is the command to work. Note that God gave this work-order to Adam before the Fall. He was to till the Garden. After the Fall, God did not annul this order, but made it harder. The curse of sin means that we must sweat and toil to do our work. It is a life sentence at hard labor. Eve was to help him, and today both individuals and couples are to work to use the Creation to glorify God. Man's main place is outside the home, the woman's in the home (Tit. 2:5). We are to rest 1 day, but that means we are to work the other 6. Laziness is frequently condemned in Scripture. God blesses us in several ways for good work, such as the satisfaction that comes from a job well done. The early Protestants, especially the Calvinists, developed what is termed the Protestant Work Ethic, which is the basis for the modern Free Enterprise system. It involves the principles of hard work, thrift, re-investment, honest dealings, and generous charity to those in need.

#### 3. God Ordained Private Property.

“Thou shalt not steal” means that some things belong to some people and not to others. All things belong to God, but He has given them to people by way of delegated stewardship. Theft is wrong (robbery, burglary, wrongful lawsuits, deceptive advertising, etc). But extortionate taxation is also a form of stealing, for the Bible teaches Christian capitalism, not Socialism. We are to use our belongings by the rules of the Bible, both individually and collectively in our dealings with others.

#### 4. God Created Human Government.

Just as God ordained the family and the church, so God also ordained the State. Romans 13 is the main passage on this. Rulers are ordained by God. God raises them up and brings them down. He uses even ungodly rulers to carry out His purposes. Government was not Man's idea, and today it is not left to Man to think up what is the best kind of government. God has told us what is the general outline for all governments to follow.

#### 5. Israel Was Meant to Serve as a Model Society.

One of the several reasons God raised up Israel as a nation was for it to serve as a model society. On the one hand, it was given certain laws and blessings that were not applicable to Gentile nations. For instance, Israel alone was given a direct and explicit land grant. On the other hand, in other ways Israel was to be a model society. The ideal was not for a monarchy, but for a theocracy. This applies to Gentiles in that they must submit their government and society to God. Judges, not kings, are closer to the ideal. There is no

direct theocracy outside of Israel. But even today, we can learn much from its laws and system - and from its mistakes.

#### 6. Government Should Be Righteous.

God holds all individuals responsible to obey Him - He also holds all governments and persons in authority responsible. God judged Gentile nations in the Old Testament for failure to obey Him, and He still does. Think of Sodom and Gomorrah, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Rome. The standard of righteousness is not majority opinion, advice from the intellectual elite, whatever is new, or other concoctions of Man. Rather, it is the Bible. Rulers cannot guarantee the salvation of its people, any more than parents can their children. But they can punish evil-doers and reward good-doers, and thus instill a kind of national character. God has two kingdoms, as it were: the State and the Church. Both are under God. One has the sword, the other the sacraments. They are related, but not identical. But both are under God and should follow the Bible.

#### 7. Christians Ought to Be Good Citizens.

Just as Adam was to work in the Garden for God's glory, so Christians are to be involved in all aspects of society to God's glory, including the State. Christians may vote, serve on juries, join the military, serve as elected and appointed officials, etc. They should analyze the nature of their government and compare it to God's ideal in Scripture, then act wisely to help bring it into conformity with God's Word. Naturally this is difficult. We are to be good citizens, and God uses our presence to influence the world, restrain sin, prepare for the spread of the Gospel, bless families, and so forth.

#### 8. God Condemns Both Tyranny and Anarchy.

God's ideal is the "Righteous Republic" of judges, not kings. Democracy is similar, but is rooted in Greek philosophy rather than Biblical revelation. Tyranny is the idea that one man at the top is the law. He himself is above the law. We see this in Nazism, Caesarism, Pharaohism, etc. Even some of Israel's kings became dictators. A monarchy is better, but can be good or bad. Saul was a poor king, David a good one. There is no "divine right of kings" in the Bible. That was invented by medieval kings in cahoots with the Papacy to reinforce their authority. On the other hand, God does not approve of pure democracy, libertarianism, or outright anarchy. In a way, the worst government is better than no government. Israel swung to both extremes in the Book of Judges.

#### 9. God Ordained the Sword.

God gave the sword to the State and in a lesser way to individuals. The Church has the power of the Word to convert, not the sword to punish. The State can and must use force to punish and protect. This principle, among many others, means that the State may wage just war, execute some criminals, arm the police, and so on. Individuals have a limited use of the sword, but this does not allow for vigilantism or personal revenge. God ordained the police and the military, as well as judges and elected officials. They must use the sword as God allows.

#### 10. No Human Government Will Ever Be Perfect.

We should pray for our leaders (I Tim. 2), and be like salt and light in society. We can effect much good. We should obey the Cultural Mandate as well as the Great Commission. Yet, for all our efforts, there will never be the perfect society until Christ returns. Men are still sinners. Even on an island populated by Christians, we also still have sin - and a new generation always replaces us. Most societies and governments have

been very evil and corrupt, unjust and wicked, adding to Man's sin and misery. This is not an excuse to hide, but an incentive to work, pray and evangelize until Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom.

## Sin

### Basic Christian Doctrines 24

#### 1. God Permitted the Existence of Sin.

God predestined and foreordained everything that will ever happen (Rom. 11:36). Therefore, God predestined sin. Sin is not an accident; it is part of God's overall plan to glorify Himself. God foreordained sin so as to further glorify His holiness and love. God is glorified in His wrath by punishing sin and in His grace by forgiving it. The first one to sin was Satan, but that was not the whole beginning. It was planned. God predestined it negatively and by permission, rather than positively or actively, as He did in predestinating good.

#### 2. God Cannot Be Blamed for Sin.

Though God predestined its existence, God cannot be blamed or accused. In this sense, God is not the author of sin, nor its approver, essential source or promoter. God is holy. He does only that which is holy. God does no evil or wickedness. Nor does He tempt people to sin (James 1:13). This is a deep mystery. But it is sufficient for us to remember Rom. 9:19-20. Sinful Man cannot blame the sinless God. The faultfinder is at fault and cannot find fault in God.

#### 3. God Put Adam and Eve in a Covenant of Works.

Adam and Eve were created holy and innocent, not neutral. But it was a kind of naive innocence. It needed to be tested. So God put them on a conditional standing. If they obeyed, fine. They would be granted immortality. Otherwise, they would die. We call this the Covenant of Works. They did not earn or merit salvation. Rather, they were tested to see if they would maintain their loyalty to God. Adam was the Federal Head, or representative, for all mankind. If he passed, they passed; if he failed, they failed. Some think the test was for a short probationary time; others say it was perpetual. Either way, it was conditional.

#### 4. Adam and Eve Disobeyed God.

They failed the test and broke the Covenant of Works. It took only a single act of disobedience. This was the first sin on Earth, and through it entered sin and death to the rest of humanity (Rom. 5:12). Eve was actually the first one to sin, and unlike Adam, she was deceived while Adam went into it deliberately (I Tim. 2:14). Their sin involved more than eating the Forbidden Fruit, whatever it was. It included unbelief in God's Word, making themselves the test of all truth, obedience to Satan, idolatry, selfishness, greed, putting tangible pleasures before spiritual duties, disregard for the glory of God, and many other sins. They were punished with immediate spiritual death, eventual physical death, banishment from Eden, and loss of fellowship with God. Adam was cursed with having to sweat hard in his work, and Eve was cursed with labor pains in childbirth and the tendency to rebel against Adam.

#### 5. Sin is Disobedience to God's Law.

The Bible, not psychology or majority opinion, determines what sin is. God defines sin as the breaking of His Law (I John 3:4). God's Law is summed up in the 2 love commandments and in the 10 Commandments. Sin is when we fail to do what God tells us to do or when we do what God tells us not to do. We call these sins of omission and commission (cf. James 4:17). One word for "sin" means failure to hit the mark. A

trespass is when we do what ought not to do, like trespassing where we ought not to go. A transgression is an act of disobedience to a known Law. An iniquity is an inequality in our dealings with God and Man.

#### 6. There Are Many Kinds of Sins.

There are many catalogs of sins in the Bible, and also many examples. There are also various kinds of sins. Some sins involve the body, others the mind (Eph. 2:3). Some are internal only, others involve external acts. We sin in thought, word and deed. Some sins are new, others old. Some are habits, or besetting sins (Heb. 12:1). We are born in Original Sin and later commit individual acts of Actual Sin. Some sins are civil crimes, others not. Some are against ourselves (vice), others are against other people. Some are mortal, others non-mortal (I John 5:16-17) The list goes on and on. And all are evil, wicked, black and despicable.

#### 7. Some Sins Are Worse than Others.

All sins deserve punishment, but some deserve more punishment than others. Some are crimes which deserve punishment here on Earth, either by civil law or by God's direct act. Judas had a "greater sin" than Pilate (John 19:11). Sin is determined by knowledge of God's Law, and some have the Law only in conscience and Nature while others have it in the Bible. A willful and deliberate sin is worse than a sin of ignorance. An external sin is worse than one which is only internal, for it involves both. A repeated sin is worse than a new sin. Sins directly against God (such as blasphemy or sacrilege) are worse than those directly against Man (such as hatred). Murder is worse than hate. Some deserve more punishment in Hell than others. But even the smallest sin is far worse than we think.

#### 8. There is an Unpardonable Sin.

Unless a person is forgiven, he will be punished in Hell. But there is a unique kind of sin mentioned in Matt. 12:31-32 that is unpardonable both in this life and in the next. It is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. It is very rare and confirms that a person is reprobate and will never repent. A person commits it when he is convinced that the special work of God is real, but he attributes it to Satan rather than to God. This is similar to the extreme form of apostasy in Hebrews 6. Apostasy is when a person renounces his profession of faith in Christ and the Gospel, showing that he never was truly saved to begin with. In some cases, this involves the unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

#### 9. There is No Excuse for Sin.

Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed Satan. Adam even blamed God. We try to shift the blame onto others, such as friends and family, our environment, etc. But we can blame no one but ourselves. We cannot blame Adam for Original Sin, for we were part of Adam. We cannot say, "Someone tempted me" like Eve did, nor "I couldn't help it". Nor can we blame God in any form or fashion. Though God foreordained sin, we alone have the guilt. God tests us by allowing us to be tempted by Satan, but He Himself does not solicit to sin (James 1:13). Indeed, God always provides a way of escape from temptation if we would only listen (I Cor. 10:13). Sin is no small thing. It is no laughing matter. Only fools scoff at sin or make excuses.

#### 10. Sinners Deserve Punishment.

Sin brings guilt. We are responsible to God, and culpable for our every thought, word and deed. Every person deserves to be punished. God is angry with all sinners and everyone deserves to be punished in Hell forever, no matter how many sins they have committed or

of what kind. Rom. 6:23, “The wages of sin is death”, meaning we have earned it. The thief on the cross spoke rightly when he said, “We are getting what we deserve.” In repentance, we admit that we have no excuse and have only ourselves to blame. Confession means we admit that we deserve to be punished in Hell. Conviction of sin is when we finally know it.



## **The Consequences of Sin**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 25

#### 1. All People Inherit Adam's Sin.

Romans 5 teaches the great doctrine known as Original Sin. It does not refer to the first or original sin of eating the Forbidden Fruit, but to how we were in Adam and have inherited sin. We were in Adam in essence and by representation. When he sinned, we sinned. When he sinned, his soul died and was thrown into a state of rebellion with God. We are born in that state. Eph. 2:3 says we were all “by nature children of wrath.” The image of God is defaced in our nature, but we bear a close resemblance to Adam (cf. Gen. 5:3). Original Sin refers to our nature, what we are. Actual sins flow from it. We have the nature of sin and the necessity of sinning. It is as much a part of us as our fingerprints or DNA code.

#### 2. We Are Born Guilty.

Pelagians deny Original Sin. Semi-Pelagians and Arminians agree that we inherit something from Adam - they say we inherit the tendency to sin, but not the sin itself, and certainly not the guilt. The Bible teaches that we inherit the sin and the guilt. It is not that we are guilty of something we did not do. Rather, we were in Adam doing it, and he was our representative. We were born in sin, born evil by nature (Gen. 6:5, 8:21, Psa. 51:5, 58:3, Isa. 48:8, Pro. 22:15). And born guilty, too, for how can there be sin without guilt? We were born sinful, guilty, condemned.

#### 3. Dying Infants Go to Heaven.

Scripture seems to teach that all dying infants go to Heaven. This is apparent from passages like Matt. 19:14, David's dying baby, etc. They died before the age of a formed consciousness, what some call the Age of Accountability. This does not mean they were innocent, however. Rather, it would mean that God has elected all dying infants to be saved. That they die proves they are guilty; that they are saved proves they are elect. They are incapable of faith, and their Original Sin deserves Hell. But God graciously saves them by grace and they are given faith as they enter Heaven. But the point is that they needed to be saved.

#### 4. All Have Sinned.

Since all people are descended from Adam and inherit his sin and guilt, it follows that all of them eventually commit individual acts of sin. There are many, many verses that teach that everyone everywhere has sinned against God, of which Rom. 3:23 is the most well-known. There are no exceptions, except for the Lord Jesus Christ, who was not descended from Adam (because of the Virgin Birth). Some sin more than others, but everyone is sinful and guilty before God. In fact, we were born in the state of sin and have never known innocence. Adam and Eve were the only two humans (except Christ) who ever knew what it was to be innocent, and their innocency was temporary.

#### 5. Sin Infects Every Part of Our Being.

We are all totally depraved. Sin affects and infects all persons and all parts of every person. Isa. 1:5-6 compares our being to a sick body which is infected by disease literally from head to toe. Sin indwells us in our body, mind, soul, heart, conscience, emotions, will, memory, down to the smallest part. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Calvinists alone teach this awesome doctrine. Arminians and others say that our minds or

maybe our wills are not affected, or if affected are not totally affected. But the Bible is clear: we are one seething mass of sin.

#### 6. Man is Evil, Not Good.

To answer the old philosophical and religious question, "Is Man basically good with some evil or evil with some good?", the Bible teaches something more drastic. Man is bad, bad, bad. Bad to the bone. Not even a little good is left in him. Rom. 7:18, "nothing good dwells in me." Jesus said in Matt. 7:11, "you who are evil" and in vs. 16-18 He added that we are like bad trees bearing bad fruit. Because of Original Sin, there is no good but only bad in us. Indeed, we are sons of the Devil (John 8:44). The difference between us and Satan is quantitative, not qualitative.

#### 7. Man Does Not Have Free Will.

Man is responsible to obey God, but is no longer able to do so. His will is dead and therefore incapable of doing what only a live will could do. We are born slaves to sin (John 8:34, Rom. 6:20, 2 Pet. 2:19) and slaves of Satan (2 Tim. 2:26). We are willing slaves, too, who do not want to be free. We sin to assert our pretended freedom from God. Our wills are dead, not merely sick (Eph. 2:1, 5, Col. 2:13). If it is so frequently said to be dead and a slave, how can anyone say it is alive and free?

#### 8. Man is Unable to Obey God.

Fallen Man does not have the ability anymore to obey God, or to believe, repent, love God, or anything else of virtue. This is the doctrine of Total Inability. We are unable to come to Christ because we are bound in sin (John 6:44, 65). It is not that we want to but can't; rather, we cannot want to. Our natures and wills must be changed before we are able. Matt. 7:18, "A bad tree cannot bear good fruit." Rom. 8:7-8, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." But this inability does not negate our responsibility. It does not lessen our guilt, only compounds it.

#### 9. Man Loves Sin and Hates God.

Because of the extremely black state of Man's heart in total depravity and inability, it manifests itself in two basic ways. First, Man loves sin. He is addicted to it and enjoys sin. He loves sin as sin. This is not always conscious, but by nature and choice. Second, fallen Man hates God. See John 3:19-20, Matt. 6:24. No man is neutral to God; he is either for him or against him. The man in Adam is against God and for sin; the man in Christ is for God and against sin. Fallen men hate God and therefore also hated Christ (John 7:7, 15:18). They still do.

#### 10. Man Cannot Save Himself.

Some people don't know they are lost, and they don't care. Others sense they are lost and care enough to try to do something about it. They invent all sorts of religions, all false. Some try building bridges to God by their own good works, such as charity and philanthropy. Others try to keep the Golden Rule, the Sermon on the Mount or the Ten Commandments. Still others think that they can be saved from the wrath of God against sin by being baptized, taking Communion, going to church, singing in the choir, reading their Bible or putting money in the offering basket. These are good things, but none of them can save anyone. Why? Because no one can be saved by his good works (Rom. 3:28, Gal. 2:16, Eph. 2:8-9, Tit. 3:5). For one thing, fallen Man cannot even do a real good work or if he could, he could never do enough. We are not saved by having more good works than bad, as many think. Man can no more give himself life than a corpse

can. He cannot earn salvation for himself, let alone for anyone else. He cannot change his fallen nature (Jer. 13:23). He is dead, lost, doomed, damned, utterly without hope of himself. And unless God alone does something, he'll go to Hell.

## **The Offices of Christ**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 26

#### 1. Jesus Was a Real Historical Person.

Throughout Christ's ministry, people kept wondering who He was. Jesus asked His own disciples and received various replies (Luke 9:18-20). Our eternal destiny hinges on what we believe about Jesus Christ. The first point is that Jesus was a real person. He lived at a certain time and place. History is measured B.C. and A.D. around Him. He was not a myth and the Gospel accounts of Him are true. Most liberals say that there are so many myths about Jesus in the N.T. that we can know only very little about the real Jesus. They say, "The Jesus of history is not the Christ of faith." They are wrong. We do not need to "demythologize" the Biblical Jesus. We need to believe in Him as a real person exactly as recorded in God's infallible Word. Also, He was not a fairy tale, the figment of an hallucination, or other such nonsense.

#### 2. Jesus is the Center of God's Dealings with Man.

Col. 1:18 says that Jesus has the "pre-eminence in all things." He is the conduit through which God has all His dealings with Man, yes, even the whole cosmos. God is revealed personally only through Jesus (John 1:18). God created the entire universe through Jesus (John 1:2-3). He is the means by which He reveals and receives glory (Heb. 1:1-3). This is a Christocentric universe. Christ is the apex, the hub, the center, the ultimate reference point in everything between God and us.

#### 3. The Name Jesus Means Jehovah Saves.

When He was about to be born, the angel told Joseph that He was to be named "Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:13). In Greek, it is IESOUS. In Hebrew, it is YESHUA, or Joshua. As pointed out in the Book of Hebrews, Joshua took the Israelites into the Promised Land after Moses; so Jesus saves from sins which the Law cannot save. Jesus is the Savior. In fact, as we shall see, He is God Himself coming in human flesh to save His people. God did not merely send a Savior - He came as a Savior.

#### 4. Jesus is the Messiah.

The angel gave Jesus a second name (Emmanuel), which is more like what we would consider a middle name. "Christ" is not His last name, but the title of one of His offices. Christ in Greek is CHRISTOS. In Hebrew, it is MASIACH, or messiah. Both words mean "anointed one". Just as O.T. prophets, priests and kings were anointed with oil when they were ordained to their offices, so Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit in His ordination at His baptism. This had to do with His office regarding His work, not His person. He was the Son of Abraham (the one who inherited the promises to Abraham, Gal.3) and the Son of David (heir of Davidic throne, Psa. 89). He is Messiah for Jews and Gentiles.

#### 5. Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies of the Messiah.

Long before He was born, Jesus' coming had been promised and predicted by God through His prophets. Gen. 3:15 was the first such prediction, and in some ways is the most important. The O.T. is filled with dozens of others, some clear (Psa.22, Isa. 53), some not so clear. In a way, the whole O.T. spoke about the coming Messiah (Luke 24:25-26, 44-46, Acts 10:43, 1 Cor. 15:3-4). The Four Gospels, especially Matthew, point

out how Jesus fulfilled them. Some are to be fulfilled at His Second Coming. These were tangible proofs that Jesus was who He claimed.

#### 6. Jesus is the Great Prophet.

Moses predicted a prophet greater than himself would come one day. It was Jesus (Deut. 18:15-19, Acts 3:22). The prophets who were merely human said, "Thus saith the Lord". Jesus said, "I say to you." They said, "The Word of the Lord came to me". Jesus is the Word of God come to us in Person. He is called the LOGOS (Word) in John 1:1, 14 and Rev 19:13. (Cf. I John 1:1). This refers not so much to the words which Jesus spoke, as to His very person and office as God's personal and highest revelation of Himself (Heb. 1:1-3). Some people then and now think Jesus was only a human prophet. No. He was the Great Prophet. Islam claims that Mohammad was the Prophet. They are sorely wrong.

#### 7. Jesus is the Great High Priest.

Evangelicals, especially Calvinists, have noticed that Scripture often speaks of the three main offices of Christ: prophet, priest and king. No one person in the O.T. was ever all three, and Jesus is all three in a unique sense. In each, He is greater than those which came before Him (Matt. 12:6, greater than priests; 12:41, greater than prophets; 12:42, greater than kings). The Book of Hebrews especially explains the High Priestly work of Christ. He is greater than Melchizedek and Levi. He brought a greater sacrifice, typified by all the animal sacrifices. He Himself is the Lamb of God, the great and final sacrifice. The great Shepherd-Priest became a lamb in order to sacrifice Himself.

#### 8. Jesus is Lord.

The third major office is King, or Lord. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord of Lords, King of Kings (Rev. 17:14, 19:16; I Tim. 6:15). He is the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2) and the "ruler of the kings of the Earth" (Rev. 1:5). He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36, Rom. 10:12). Over and over the N.T. states, "Jesus is Lord" (e.g., I Cor. 12:3). He is Lord in two ways. First, He is Lord by virtue of His eternal deity. Second, He is Lord in a special sense by virtue of His becoming the God-Man who humbled Himself to the lowest depths and was exalted to the highest heights (Phil. 2:5-11). He already is Lord now, and will be recognized as such at the Second Coming and the Last Judgment, and forever by all.

#### 9. Jesus is the Second Adam.

Romans 5 and I Cor. 15 speak of yet another related office of the Lord Jesus. He is the "Second Adam" and the "Last Man". Just as Adam was the father and federal head of a race of humanity, so the Lord Jesus is the father and federal head of a new race of humanity. This new race is not biologically new, but is taken out of the first race by election and salvation. Jesus succeeded where Adam failed.

#### 10. Jesus is the Only Way to God.

Since He is what He is and occupies all these offices alone, especially as the unique conduit between God and Man, it follows that Jesus is the only way to God. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by me" (John 14:6). He is the only door (John 10:9). There is salvation in nobody else (Acts 4:12). He is the only mediator between God and Man, for He alone is both God and Man (I Tim. 2:4). We will die in our sins unless we believe in the person of Jesus (John 8:24). But we will live in Him if we believe the truth about Him. Through Jesus alone we can know God (John 17:3), for Jesus alone knows God perfectly and personally, and it is He who determines who will be granted a personal introduction to His Father (Matt. 11:27).

## **The Deity of Christ**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 27

#### 1. Jesus Christ is Explicitly Called God.

There are over 100 proofs of the deity of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Several verses explicitly call Him "God". John 1:1, "The Word was God." John 20:28, "My Lord and my God." I Tim. 3:16, "God was manifested in the flesh." 2 Pet. 1:1, "our God and Savior Jesus Christ". Titus 2:13, "our great God and Savior Jesus Christ". Matt. 1:22, "God with us." 1 John 5:20, "He is the true God." Heb. 1:8, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." Isa. 9:6, "the mighty God." Jesus Christ is 100% God. He is not part God, a lesser god, one of many gods, etc. He is God.

#### 2. Jesus Said that He Was God.

Each of the four Gospels records Christ's assertions of deity, but especially the Gospel of John. Note how often Jesus used the special name of Jehovah "I Am" of Himself. Sometimes it was "I AM the Bread of Life", the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth and the Life, etc. Sometimes it was simply "I AM" (John 8:24, 58). The Jews knew that He claimed to be God (John 5:18, 10:33). In the last book of the Bible, Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, First and the Last" (Rev. 1:8, 21:6, 22:13). He was either a liar, a lunatic or Lord. The truth is that He was exactly what He said He was.

#### 3. Jesus Did Not Become God.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus did not become God at a certain time, but was God from all eternity. He is eternal and divine, for God alone is truly eternal (John 1:1, 15, 8:58, 17:5, Col. 1:17, Isa. 9:6). He was not a man who somehow became God, as the Mormons and others teach. Rather, He was God who became a Man.

#### 4. Jesus is Equal to the Father and the Holy Spirit.

John 1:1 says that Jesus was "God and with God." This is the Trinity. He was God and with the other two members of the Trinity. All three are equally divine. His equality with them is taught in John 5:18, 10:33, and especially Phil. 2:6. Only God could be equal to God. Since there is only one God, this means the Trinity. Jesus has the same nature as the Father and the Spirit, not merely a similar nature, let alone a different nature. When He became a Man, He humbled Himself, and in that state He could say that the Father was greater than Himself. But that referred to the Incarnation and the state of humiliation, not to His eternal essence as deity.

#### 5. Jesus is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient.

Jesus possessed the unique qualities of deity, such as these three attributes of God. No mere man or angel has ever or could ever possess any of them, and Jesus has all of them. He is omnipotent and can do all things, for He is "God Almighty" (Rev. 1:8, 5:12. Cf. Isa. 9:6, "the mighty God"). His omnipotence is also taught in 2 Pet. 1:16, Phil. 3:21, and Matt. 8:27. Second, Jesus is omnipresent. He fills all things and is with His people everywhere (Eph. 1:23, 4:10, Matt. 18:20, 28:20). Thirdly, He is omniscient. He knows everything, even the secret thoughts of men (John 2:24-25, 4:29, 6:64, 16:30, 21:17).

Furthermore, Jesus is also immutable, or unchangeable, in His deity (Heb. 1:12, 13:8). He did not cease to be God when He became a man, and His humanity does not possess these attributes of deity. But that He has them proves that He is also God.

#### 6. Jesus is the Perfect Revelation of God.

Nobody has ever seen God, who is invisible. God became visible by becoming a human. Therefore, to see Jesus is to see God (John 14:9). Jesus has revealed God (John 1:18). He is the visible image, or means of revelation, not merely a reflection (Col. 1:15, 2 Cor. 4:4). He is the perfect full revelation of God in all His nature and attributes (Heb. 1:3). He veiled His glory for most of the time He was on Earth, except for the brief moment on the Mount of Transfiguration. But He revealed God in other ways by what He did and said. And He continues to do this today, primarily in salvation.

#### 7. Jesus is Not a Created Being.

Contrary to what the Jehovah's Witnesses say, Jesus was not a created being, but the Creator Himself (John 1:2-3, 10, Col. 1:16, 1 Cor. 8:6, Heb. 1:2, Rev. 3:14). Nor was He an angel, which are created beings. Heb. 1:4-14 explicitly says that Jesus was not an angel. Angels worship Christ. Heb. 2:7-16 denies that Jesus became an angel to save angels. He was God who became a man to save men. Jesus created the angels (Col. 1:16). The human nature of Christ was created, but not His divine nature.

#### 8. Jesus Worked Miracles.

While prophets and apostles worked miracles by the power of God and not their own power, Jesus worked miracles by His own divine power. He healed sicknesses, raised people from the dead, cast out demons, stopped storms. The theme of Mark's Gospel is, "Who is Jesus?" He gave them clues in His miracles, until finally people realized by faith that this one was God. He did what only God could do. They responded like the magicians in Egypt who said, "This is the finger of God." Jesus worked miracles in conjunction with the Father and the Spirit, but not in the way that the apostles did. Jesus frequently claimed to do them by His own power and that they were "signs" that proved just who He is.

#### 9. There is No Salvation for Those Who Deny the Deity of Christ.

According to the Bible, we are saved by believing the Gospel of who Jesus is and what He did. He died and rose for us. Who is He? God and Man. To be saved, one must believe that Jesus Christ is God. Therefore, those who deny His deity are not saved, and they will never become saved until they acknowledge that He is God. John 8:24, "You will die in your sins unless you believe that I AM". The deity of Christ is no secondary doctrine; it is of the very essence of Christianity and salvation.

#### 10. Jesus Deserves Our Worship.

Being God, Jesus deserves our faith. Dying for us, He deserves our love. And He also deserves our worship, which is reserved for God alone. He deserves more than our respect and admiration; He deserves worship. He demands it and His people willingly give it to Him, The angels worship Him. All sinners will bow the knee to Him at the Last Judgement and confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2). People came in faith to Christ on Earth and worshipped Him, starting with the Wise Men (Matt. 2:2,8,11). We find example after example of this in the Gospels (e.g., Matt. 8:2, 9:18, 15:25, 20:20, 28:9, Mark 5:6). They did this in His very presence and He did not stop them - indeed, He was pleased with it (Matt. 14:33, 28:17). Peter (Acts 10:25-26), Paul (Acts 14:11-18) and angels (Rev. 19:10,

22:8-9) strictly refused such worship. Spurgeon said, "You will never be ready for Heaven unless you are prepared to worship Jesus Christ as God." We begin to worship Him as God now, and will worship Him as God forever and ever in Heaven.



## **The Humanity of Christ**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 28

#### 1. Jesus Became a Man.

Jesus Christ was eternally God. At the appointed time, He became a Man by being born of a woman (Gal. 4:4). He “came into the world to save sinners” (I Tim. 1:15). He was not eternally human, nor was He human when He appeared in various manifestations in the Old Testament. He “became flesh” (John 1:14). This is called the Incarnation. He took on a human body and soul, and became the God-Man. He is still the God-Man. He became a male, started as a baby, and grew through the stages of life.

#### 2. His Deity Was Not Confined to His Humanity.

When He became Man, He did not cease being God. Deity is omnipresent; humanity is not. There was and is still something “extra” outside of His human nature, namely, His deity. This is sometimes called the “Extra Calvinisticum”, because Calvinists believe in it and Lutherans do not. When His human nature was on Earth, His divine nature was still everywhere including Heaven (John 3:13 in most translations). His human nature was limited to only certain places, such as when the angel said at the empty tomb: “He is not here.” The ocean cannot fit into a teacup. He is now with us everywhere in His deity, but His humanity is in Heaven.

#### 3. Jesus Was Born of a Virgin.

Matt. 1 and Luke 2 teach that Jesus had a human mother and a divine Father, but no human father and no divine mother. Mary was a virgin at the time, even up to the time Jesus was born. Jesus was conceived in her womb by the special miracle of the Holy Spirit. This is the only virginal conception and birth in history, a unique miracle. It guaranteed that Jesus would be both God and Man, and would be sinless.

#### 4. Jesus Had Two Natures in One Person.

The Lord Jesus was unique in several ways. He was the only time God became a Man, and He was the only Man who was also divine. He had two natures. We call this the Hypostatic Union. It is an incomprehensible mystery, worthy of awe and wonder. His deity was not humanized, nor was His humanity deified. The two natures were not mingled or confused, nor was there a third hybrid produced. The two natures are distinct but not separate. He has only one person, not two. He was thus fully God and fully Man, not half-God and half-Man.

#### 5. Jesus Had a Human Body.

Jesus became the Second Adam (Rom.5, I Cor.15). He took on a body of flesh and bone. He was not a mere spirit (Luke 24:39). Deity is a pure Spirit, incapable of death. Jesus took on a body so that He could die for us. He did not take on an angelic nature to save angels, but a human body and soul to save humans (Heb. 2). “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14). Many of the early Gnostics denied this; they said flesh is necessarily evil and so Jesus was but a ghost. I John 4:2-3 rebuked this as antichristian and demonic heresy. Jesus had a body the same as ours, except for the effects of sin. His body was never sick and had no scars until the crucifixion. Yet He grew, had haircuts, ate, drank, slept, grew tired, etc. It was a tangible body that could be seen, touched and heard (1 John 1:1-2). Of special note is the fact that His body had blood untainted by sin, with which He made the atonement.

#### 6. Jesus Had a Human Soul.

Some early heretics say Jesus had a human body and a divine soul, and no more. Actually, Scripture says He had a human soul in all its various parts and aspects. He had a human mind. Since humanity is limited, His human mind grew in knowledge and was not omniscient. He did not know the time of His Second Coming (Mark 13:32). He also had human emotions. He knew joy and grief. He wept for Lazarus and for others. He had a human will. He submitted it to the divine will: "Not My will, but thy will be done." He had a memory, a conscience, a heart. He was fully human.

#### 7. Jesus Was Sinless.

Two things differentiated Jesus from us: He was divine and He was sinless. Since He had no human father, He inherited no Original Sin (Luke 1:35). Adam and Eve were only temporarily innocent; Christ was permanently sinless. In fact, He was also perfectly sinless. He was impeccable. Though He was tempted in all points as we are, He did not sin. And He could not sin. The union of His deity and humanity was such that all temptations could only fail, for deity cannot sin. He was not only sinless and innocent, but perfectly and uniquely holy, even in His humanity. He was a perfect Man. He had a perfectly pure conscience.

#### 8. Jesus Veiled His Deity.

Though He was still divine, Jesus cloaked His deity under the veil of His humanity. Thus, most people saw just a man. Some saw a good man, others a bad man. Even His relatives, except Mary, only thought He was just another Jew. Phil. 2 describes the stages of Christ's humbling Himself. One was the Incarnation. Another was the humiliation of not being recognized and worshipped as was His rightful due as God. This is the great quality of the humility of Jesus. Yet, God the Father and the Holy Spirit knew who He was, as did the angels and demons.

#### 9. Jesus Was Our Example.

The Lord Jesus served as the perfect example for us in many ways. He did not sin. He did not fight back, lose His temper, slander others (I Pet. 2:21-23). The great passage in Phil. 2 begins by calling on us to imitate Christ's attitude of humility. A famous book developed the theme of how we should always pause and ask ourselves in every situation, "What would Jesus do?" Of course, there were some things in Him that cannot be fully imitated. We cannot die as a propitiation for sin, do miracles by our own power, be worshipped, etc. But those generally refer to His divine attributes. His perfect humanity is the example to follow in all things good and godly, such as love (John 13:34).

#### 10. Jesus Had a Unique Family.

Joseph was his step-father. Jesus was raised by him and followed him in the family carpentry business. Joseph was a "righteous man", but not perfect. He was justified by believing in his step-son. Jesus honored Joseph and Mary and kept the Fifth Commandment. Evidently Joseph died before Jesus began His ministry, for we never read of him after Luke 2 except in the past tense. And Jesus committed Mary to the care of John. Mary was a virgin in the incarnation and birth, but was not a permanent virgin, as Catholicism teaches. Nor was she sinless; she too needed a Savior. She did not ascend into Heaven physically. Jesus had 4 half-brothers and at least two half-sisters, born to Joseph and Mary (Matt. 13:55-56), who did not believe in Him until after the Resurrection. Jesus never married nor had children. But all true believers are His brethren

(Matt. 12:50), His children (Heb.2:13), and His Bride (Eph.5).

## The Atonement

### Basic Christian Doctrines 29

#### 1. Jesus Obeyed the Law for Us.

Our Lord Jesus was perfectly innocent, pure and sinless. By obeying the Law of God and never sinning, He was thus uniquely able to provide the only sinless sacrifice to His Father. The O.T. sacrifices could not have any blemishes or faults. Moreover, Christ also obeyed the Law in our stead. We call this the “Active Obedience” of Christ, and also His vicarious obedience. Romans 5 says that the disobedience of Adam brought sin and death into the world; the obedience of Christ brought righteousness and life.

#### 2. Jesus Was Crucified.

He came to die. After 30 years waiting and working, and 3 years of ministry, Christ was betrayed by Judas and was falsely condemned by two unjust trials. God ordained that He die by crucifixion. It was a Roman method, not a Jewish one, and extremely cruel and painful. Jesus was “hung on a tree” (Deut. 21:23, Gal. 3:13), not by ropes but by nails in His hands and feet. It was a public and shameful execution, recorded in all 4 Gospels. Hung up between Heaven and Earth, the Lord Jesus was fastened to the Cross like the animals were tied to the altar in the Temple, for the Cross was His altar. I Pet. 2:24 calls the cross a tree, referring to Deut. 21:23 and the tree motif in the O.T. (Garden of Eden, etc).

#### 3. Jesus Took our Sins upon Himself.

I Pet. 2:24 says that Jesus took our sins upon Himself. Isa. 53 says He carried them on Himself like a heavy burden. God laid our sins upon Him, treated Him as if He were the sinner. 2 Cor. 5:21 says that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we could be made the righteousness of God in Him.” This was the first part of what is called the “divine exchange”. Our sins were imputed to Christ; His righteousness is imputed to us. This does not mean that Jesus was literally made sin or a sinner, but treated “as if” He were sin. The second part of this awesome process was that, being made sin, He was then “made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). God looked at Him as sin, and the thrice-holy God cursed Him and unleashed the floodgates of divine wrath against Him.

#### 4. Jesus Suffered for Us.

“Christ also suffered for us” (I Pet. 2:21). He suffered the ignominy of not being recognized and worshipped for 33 years. This intensified to the very end. He agonized in Gethsemane, even sweating drops of blood. He was laughed at, mocked, beaten with sticks, whipped. The crucifixion itself was excruciating. But the internal pains were even greater. He suffered the very wrath of God in His soul. He drank the cup of wrath and internalized it. By so doing, His sacrifice was the propitiation that appeased the Father's wrath. It was the only thing that could satisfy all the requirements of the Law. God accepted the sacrifice.

#### 5. Jesus Shed His Blood for Us.

The animal sacrifices in the Temple were types of Christ in several ways: alive and suffering, and shedding blood. But Jesus was no animal - He was a human sacrifice. He shed His blood as a special part of the sacrifice. Without this blood, there could be no atonement or forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). It was sinless, “precious” blood (I Pet. 1:19),

infinite in value. One drop alone was worth more than a thousand universes. God gave blood to us to be life in the flesh, and for Christ for sacrifice (Lev. 17:10)

#### 6. Jesus Paid the Price for Our Redemption.

Jesus bought us (I Cor. 6:20). He paid the ransom price to free us from sin and the wrath of God. The price was not paid to Satan, to whom it was not due, but to the Father, whose wrath was over us. Christ “gave His life as a ransom” (Mark 10:45). The price was His life and His death. Our sins incurred an infinite debt, not because they are infinite in number or quality, but because they are committed against an infinitely holy God. We owed an infinite debt, which only the infinite God could pay. But Man must pay it. So God became Man to pay it to Himself. This is the great doctrine re-discovered by Anselm.

#### 7. Jesus Died as a Substitute.

Jesus had no sins of His own, and therefore did not have to die. He would still be alive on Earth today had He not done what He did. But He died in our place. This is called the “vicarious atonement”. He stood in our place, He took what we had coming. And He did this voluntarily. Nobody took His life from Him. He laid it down of His own accord (John 10:18). He could have called down thousands of angels to stop the crucifixion (Matt. 26:53), but He didn't. “Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

#### 8. Jesus Died for All Men, But Especially the Elect.

God loves all men, and especially the elect. Just as a husband loves all people but especially His wife, so Christ died for all people but especially His bride. On the one hand, there is a general sense in which Jesus died for all men everywhere (2 Cor. 5:14, 1 Tim. 2:4-6). This is the basis for the free offer of the Gospel. But Jesus also died in a special sense for the elect (Eph. 5:25, John 10:15-18, Isa. 53:8). He died for all, but not equally for all. He made salvation possible for all, but He made it definite for His people in particular. He bought some blessings for all men, and all blessings for some men.

#### 9. Jesus Defeated Satan.

There many aspects of the atonement. In the Godward direction, it was propitiation. It satisfied God's wrath. In the Manward direction, it was expiation. It took away sins. But there was a third aspect. Satanward, it defeated the Devil. Jesus came to die, and His death secured the defeat and overthrow of Satan (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8). It also defeated the demons (Col. 2:14-15). Gen. 3:15 predicted when Christ would crush Satan's head by incurring injury to Himself. He slew the great Dragon and freed the fair maiden, the Church. He overthrew the Prince of Darkness (John 12:31). He did not negotiate with Satan. He resisted all Satan's temptations and tricks, for Satan had nothing in or on Him.

#### 10. Jesus Displayed the Love of God.

No man can show greater love to a friend than by dying for Him (John 15:13). Christ died for His friends while they were still His enemies (Rom. 5:10). “God demonstrates His love for us, in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Christ showed us just how much He loved us, by dying for us (I John 3:16). This is the greatest display of love imaginable, that God would let His only Son die in the place of enemies (I John 4:9-10; John 3:16). Surely if God loved us enough to give us the greatest gift of all (Christ), then He will give us everything else (Rom. 8:32). Just as the love of God itself in an unfathomable ocean of undeserved goodness, so the work of Christ is awesome and overwhelming. It alone can finally break these hard hearts of ours and melt them into

hearts of loving gratitude.

## **The Resurrection of Christ**

Basic Christian Doctrines 30

### 1. Jesus Was Buried.

After He was crucified and died, Jesus was taken down from the Cross and buried in a borrowed tomb. He was not cremated (the Bible does not condone cremation), nor was He frozen, embalmed or destroyed. He was buried. This proves, among other things, that He really was dead. If, as some have suggested, Jesus merely fainted on the Cross, He would certainly have died when placed alone without medical attention in the tomb. He was put there hastily because the Sabbath was approaching, so there was no time for the women to use the burial spices. I Cor. 15:3 places great importance on the burial of Christ, as a sort of bridge between crucifixion and resurrection. Once in the tomb, a seal was placed on the stone covering it, not to be disturbed upon penalty of death. Armed guards watched it.

### 2. Jesus Descended to the Underworld.

Where was Jesus before He arose? His body was in the tomb, but His spirit was in the spirit world. The Apostles Creed says, "He descended into Hell (or Hades)". I Pet. 3:19 refers to this. He did not go and suffer in Hell, as some heretics have suggested. Rather, He went and made a proclamation of His victory over the forces of evil. He proclaimed the defeat and doom of the demons and sinners already in Hell. He did not preach the Gospel to them, for there is no second chance after death. Second, He then went to Paradise and comforted the spirits of saints there, and proclaimed His victory for them. See Luke 23:43. So, Jesus did not disappear or disintegrate into nothingness during that interval.

### 3. Jesus Rose Physically from the Dead.

Jesus did not stay dead. Being the source of life, it was impossible for Him to stay dead (Acts 2:24). He is the Prince of Life. The whole Trinity was involved in raising Jesus: the Father (Heb. 13:20), the Spirit (Rom. 8:11) and Jesus Himself (John 10:18). It was a real physical body, too, not a ghost (Luke 24:39). It was tangible (John 20:27). It still had the scars of the nails and the spear. It was a real resurrection, not a resuscitation, metaphor, or mistake. Throughout the book of Acts, the early Christians boldly proclaimed that Jesus rose from the dead. The Resurrection is a cardinal, essential doctrine of the Christian faith.

### 4. The Body of Jesus Was Glorified.

In one sense, the body of Jesus was the same. It was not less than physical. It had the same finger prints and DNA code. But in another sense, it was different. It was more than physical. It had new properties. For example, it could go through doors, de-materialize, disappear, travel great distances. In a moment, change appearance, etc. Each of the Four Gospels records instances of these. It was not only perfect and free from sin, as it had been before, but now was the door to a new kind of human existence. It was the bridge to the next world.

### 5. God Vindicated Jesus.

Rom. 1:4 says that God declared Jesus to be the Son of God by the Resurrection. God proved that Jesus was who He said He was and vindicated Him. Everything Jesus said and did up to then hung on whether He would rise from the dead. It was a sort of gamble,

as it were, so far as others were concerned. If He stayed dead, then He wasn't the Messiah; but if He rose, then He was. He was both victim and victor. God accepted the atonement, and showed it by raising Jesus again. Jesus triumphed over death and Satan. If He did not, Christianity is a fraud (I Cor. 15).

#### 6. Jesus Appeared to Many Witnesses.

Each of the Gospels record how Christ appeared to witnesses: the Apostles, the women who brought spices, (especially Mary Magdalene), the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, etc. We are not told if He appeared to His mother Mary, but this is probably true. Judas had already committed suicide, so He witnessed neither the death nor resurrection of Christ. In fact, Christ appeared only to His followers. This strengthened their faith. He did not appear to the Pharisees. He did, though, appear to James and His brethren, which converted them. He appeared to 500 people at one time. Paul was the last one to witness the resurrected Christ. Stephen, John and others had special visions of Jesus in glory, but we have no license to expect such visions today.

#### 7. Jesus Was the Firstfruits of Resurrection.

God had raised others from the dead before Christ (Lazarus, Jairus' servant, the little girl, a few in the O.T.), but they later died. The point is that Christ was the first to be raised in a perfect body suitable for Heaven. I Cor. 15:20 says He is the "firstfruits", or prototype of our future resurrection. We will be raised in the same kind of body He had. We will live because He lives. Nobody else has received this kind of body yet. It will happen at the Rapture.

#### 8. Jesus Returned to Heaven.

After 40 days with His people, Jesus returned to Heaven from where He came. This is what we call the Ascension. He ascended from where He had descended 33 years earlier (John 3:13, Eph. 4:9-10). This was to complete the Heavenward direction of the Resurrection. Acts 1 tells us that the Ascension was witnessed by the 11 Apostles, and that it was physical and visible, and occurred through a cloud. The Second Coming will be like this in reverse. I Tim. 3:16 says He was "received up in glory". His humanity went up and is not with us, but His deity is everywhere. Thus, He gave the Great Commission of Matt 28, telling us to go every where because He will be with us everywhere, though He is also in Heaven. Enoch and Elijah ascended, but not in this same manner. The Catholic Church errs in saying that Mary also ascended.

#### 9. Jesus Was Crowned Lord of Lords.

Jesus had always been eternally God. But His humanity began at the Incarnation, and had always lived in humility. Now, the God-Man was glorified in His fullness. He was rewarded for His great work of coming down, dying, and rising. Phil. 2 is the great Bible passage on this wonderful theme. He was crowned as Lord in a special way. For one thing, He now sits on the throne with God the Father. Also, the Father has given all judgement to the Son, the God-Man. This is part of the reward and honor bestowed upon Him at the Ascension. No doubt the angels in Heaven sung a new song of worship, as did the saints who were there. We too often overlook the significance of this great event.

#### 10. Jesus Now Intercedes for Us in Heaven.

Between the Ascension and Second Coming, there is the Heavenly Session of Christ. He reigns, answers prayer, and mediates in all things between God and us. He is still the God-Man. He did not cease to be God at the Incarnation, and did not cease to be Man at



the Ascension. He is our Mediator, the only Mediator (1 Tim. 2:4-5). He always lives in Heaven to intercede for us at the bar of God (Heb. 7:25). He prays for us. We daily sin, so we need His daily intercession. He died once, lives forever. We have access to God now through Him (Eph. 2:18). Since there is but one such Mediator, we may not pray to anyone else. And we ought to regularly worship Him and pray to Him.

## Grace

### Basic Christian Doctrines 31

#### 1. No One Deserves Grace.

“Grace” is one of the most beautiful words in the Bible. It is that part of God's love that deals with our guilt. In Hebrew, it is HESED; in Greek, CHARIS. It is free and undeserved. Nobody has or can merit this grace. Grace is the undeserved love of God for sinners. Unfallen angels (like Adam before the Fall) know love, but not grace. Fallen sinners can never earn God's grace. By its very definition it is unearned, not by our works (Rom. 11:6). We earn death by our sin, but grace is a free gift (Rom. 6:23).

#### 2. We Are Saved by Grace Alone.

Salvation is completely “sola gratia” (by grace alone). It is not partly by God's grace and partly by our efforts. "By grace you have been saved" (Eph. 2:5, 8-9). It is solely by God's free, unmerited mercy to us (Tit. 3:5). There is no exception; anyone ever saved has been saved by free grace. And grace comes from God, not from Man. Grace being free does not make it cheap or worthless. Quite the opposite. It is beyond cost. We could never earn it in a million years. This is why it is so amazing, matchless, and wonderful. In fact, the original meaning of CHARIS was “that which produces joy”, something delightful and beautiful.

#### 3. God Gives Grace to Whomever He Wills.

Since it is undeserved and free, God is not obliged to give it to anyone. Indeed, He could have justly withheld it from everyone. But He chose to bestow it on some. It is sovereign grace, or sovereignly bestowed on whomever God is pleased to give it. God said, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy” (Ex. 33:19, Rom. 9:15. Cf. Rom. 9:18). The word “will” here means “choose”. God chooses to give His grace away, and chooses the ones to whom He will give it. Is it not His sovereign prerogative to give it to whomever He chooses? (Matt. 20:15). Therefore, God is magnanimous when He gives it to some, and cannot be blamed if He decides to withhold it from others. Neither deserved it anyway.

#### 4. God Has a Special Love for Some Men.

God chose to set this special love on some sinners, and not on others. He decided to give His free grace to some, but not all. We have already seen in these studies that God has a general love for all men as His creatures (Matt. 5:44-45, Psa. 33:5, 145:9). That is Common Grace, the love which God has for all men in common. It is His universal benevolency. But then there is also Special Grace, also known as Particular Grace. It is a greater and different kind of love. It is extraordinary, not common. Just as a man loves all people, but especially his wife, so Christ loves all people but especially those He has chosen to be His wife (Eph. 1:4, 5:25). God loves all men with some love, but He loves some men with all love. It is a distinguishing and directed love.

#### 5. God Chose Some Sinners to Be Saved.

Out of this special grace, God chose some sinners to be rescued from their sins. This is the doctrine of election. It happened in eternity past (Eph. 1:4, 2 Thess. 2:13, 2 Tim. 1:9). God sovereignly chose some sinners to be saved from their sins and not to be punished for them (1 Thess. 5:9, 2 Thess. 2:13). They were chosen to receive grace, not wrath. They were chosen individually by name, and their names were written in the Book of Life

(Rev. 13:8, 17:8, Luke 10:20). God chose us; we did not choose Him (John 15:11). He chose us solely by consulting with His own counsel, not by foreseeing our choice (Eph. 1:11).

#### 6. God Made a Covenant to Save the Elect.

Back in eternity, God made a covenant within Himself. The Father chose some sinners to be saved, and gave them to the Son, who agreed to die for them (John 17:2, 6, 9, 24). We call this the Covenant of Redemption. We did not even exist at the time, nor was that necessary. It was only necessary that we would exist in time. God sealed this covenant with an oath, thus guaranteeing that we would most definitely be saved at the right time. And in time, God worked out this Covenant through Christ, which we call the Covenant of Grace. Special grace was thus given to us in eternity “in Christ” (2 Tim. 1:9). We were chosen in Christ, by Christ and for Christ. It is definite and sure, not merely possible.

#### 7. God Calls the Elect in a Special Way.

Just as God loved all men but especially the elect, so He calls all men to be saved, but especially the elect. God invites all men; we call this the General Call or the Free Offer. It is what we do in evangelism. But God also gives a Special Call, which is given only to the elect. The parable of Luke 14:16-24 illustrates this. First God invites everyone, then He sends and compels some of them to come in. The General Call is given by men; the Special Call is by God alone. The first is audible, the second is inaudible to the natural ear. It is the Good Shepherd calling His sheep; the others do not hear His voice (John 10:3, 16, 26-27). It is given through the General Call, not in some mystical inner voice. “Many are called [general], but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14).

#### 8. Saving Grace is Irresistible.

This Special Call is by grace. The General Call is resistible - indeed, sinners always successfully resist it. But the Special Call cannot be successfully resisted, for God overcomes all resistance. He exerts His omnipotence and overwhelms the sinner’s will. He makes us willing in the day of His power (Psa. 110:3). He “compels” us to come in (Luke 14:23). He “drags” us in (John 6:44). But it is not raw force, but a holy violence and a sweet wooing. He draws us with the irresistible song of grace (Jer. 31:3, Song 1:4, Hos. 11:4). It is heavenly romance, for Christ irresistibly wins the hand of His bride. God thus changes our wills, and we come willingly (Psa. 65:4). This is Irresistible Grace.

#### 9. God Left the Rest of Sinners in Their Sins.

Back in eternity, God sovereignly chose some sinners by His free love. But He did not choose to bestow this grace on all men. He withheld it from some. He owed them nothing but wrath, and left them under that wrath. Therefore nobody can argue that it was not fair. This is the doctrine of Reprobation. In eternity, God divided the lump of sinful mankind into two parts, like a potter with clay (Rom. 9). He left some in their sins. He did not write their names in the Book of Life (Rev. 13:8, 17:8.). He never knew them in special love (Matt. 7:23). He thus predestined them to be punished for their sins (I Thess. 5:9, Pro. 16:4).

#### 10. God Hardens the Reprobate's Hearts.

God softens the hearts of the elect by His grace, but He hardens the hearts of those He has not chosen. He hides the light of the Gospel from them (Matt. 11:25) and blinds them (Rom. 9:18, 11:7, John 12:39-40). He fattens them up for the slaughter they deserve. They do not resist, but willingly comply, for they love their sins even unto death and Hell.

Election and reprobation are two parallel lines running from eternity past to eternity future, ending in Heaven for some and Hell for others. One glorifies God's grace, the other His wrath.

## **The New Birth**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 32

#### 1. Man Must Be Born Again to Enter Heaven.

The Bible uses a number of terms and analogies to describe salvation. One of them is regeneration, or the new birth. John 3 is the classic chapter on the subject. Unless one is born again, He cannot see or enter Heaven. The word can be translated “again” or “from above”. Both are true. We must be born a second time, from Heaven. We enter this world by physical birth; we are made ready for the next one by spiritual rebirth. We are dead in sins and need this new life to be saved. Those who are not born again do not go to Heaven, but to Hell. Those who are born once will die twice, but those who are born twice will die once.

#### 2. Regeneration is Not Reincarnation.

The new birth is not a physical one. We do not re-enter our mother's womb, nor that of another mother, whether human or animal. Hinduism and Buddhism both teach the error of reincarnation. But this is not to be confused with the Bible doctrine of regeneration. We are born physically once, we die physically once. See Heb. 9:27. There are no after-death experiences, as sensationally reported. Some of the Jews evidently were influenced by pagan ideas when they thought that Jesus was the reincarnation of John the Baptist, Jeremiah or other prophets (Matt. 16:14). Also, we will be resurrected in the future in new and better bodies, but not reincarnated in different bodies. Regeneration is a grand truth, while reincarnation is a dangerous heresy.

#### 3. God Convicts a Sinner Before Conversion.

Just as a physical birth has birth pains, so does the spiritual birth. It is called conviction of sin. The Holy Spirit does this as He prepares us for the new birth. He takes the holy Law of God and burns it into our consciences in a deeper way than ever before. We do more than feel guilty; we know we are lost and doomed. The Puritans used to call this a Law-work (not to be confused with a work of the Law). It is painful and devastating. We resist it, and the more we fight it the worse it becomes. It is painful to kick against God's work (Acts 26:14). God thus breaks open the soil to plant the seed. Conviction is the needle of the Law piercing us, in order to pull the thread of salvation. No conviction, no conversion. But God turns the pain to joy in time.

#### 4. The Holy Spirit Alone Gives the New Birth.

John 3 says that we must be born by the Spirit. Our parents gave us natural life, but they cannot give us supernatural life. Our spirits must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. John 1:13 tells us that this new birth is not produced by parents or even our own wills. God Himself gives the new birth (James 1:18). God never says, “Regenerate yourself”. A dead man cannot give himself life. Jesus raised Lazarus. Man is totally passive in regeneration. It is solely the work of the Spirit.

#### 5. Baptism Does Not Produce Regeneration.

One of the most damnable and popular heresies around is baptismal regeneration. It is taught by the Catholic Church, Greek Orthodoxy, Lutheranism, Methodism, Church of Christ, Christian Church, Disciples of Christ, Episcopalianism, and others. It manufactures false Christians, whether as infants or adults. But water does not produce regeneration. Baptismal water is not magic “holy water”. Cornelius was regenerated

before baptism (Acts 10). The dying thief was never baptized. Simon Magus was baptized, but died unregenerate in his sins (Acts 8).

6. The Word of God is the Means of Regeneration.

If water is not the means, what is? The Bible. God compares it to a seed (Luke 8:11). We may plant it by telling people the Gospel, and another person may water the seed by explaining the Bible to him. But it lies dormant in the sinner's dead heart unless God germinates it (I Cor. 3:6). God works on the seed by special grace, causing it to break open and produce life in the sinner's heart. The Bible is thus the means of irresistible grace producing the new birth (James 1:18, 1 Pet. 1:23). Those who never get this seed will never be saved. Nor does God work this miracle in everyone who does hear the Gospel. Nor does God produce regeneration without this seed.

7. Regeneration Precedes Faith.

A dead man cannot move, speak, walk, etc. A dead sinner cannot do anything that requires spiritual life, such as believing. He must first be given life, then he can believe. Lazarus was raised before he could walk out of the tomb. God gives the new birth and then the gift of faith. That is the order. He that believes already has eternal life (I John 5:1). There is no time lag or interval between them. It is merely a matter of which logically precedes and produces the other.

8. Regeneration Changes Our Basic Nature.

When we are regenerated, we do not become angels. We remain humans. But our nature as humans changes. Sin still dwells in us, but now so does grace. The point is that we now have spiritual life. We become a "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17). It is a spiritual resurrection. It is a radical transformation. Sin affected us totally in every part; now grace affects and changes us in every part. Our new nature is basically regenerate, good, Christlike, spiritual. We have remnants of the old, like a swimmer has seaweed clinging to him as he emerges from the sea. It is not a sinner with some good attached, nor equally good and bad, but primarily regenerate and new with remnants of sin in us till we die.

9. Regeneration is an Instantaneous Miracle.

It is a miracle of God, not an act of self-reformation or resolution by Man. God prepares the heart for it by conviction and other things, but regeneration itself occurs in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. It is not gradual or progressive, but instantaneous and sudden. Nobody is half-regenerate, nor more regenerate than someone else. If one dies before regeneration, he goes to Hell; if after, Heaven. In physical birth, there is a gestation period of 9 months following conception. This might be paralleled in the spiritual realm by the process by which God gradually prepares one for regeneration in a moment.

10. Only Born-Again People are Real Christians.

All Christians are born-again and all born-again people are Christians. There are no born-again Moslems. Nor are there any Christians who are not born again. "Born-again Christian" could be a misnomer, if it is taken to mean that some Christians are not born-again. One becomes a Christian by being born again; there is no other way. "You must be born again" (John 3:7). But, of course, not everyone who says he is a Christian really is a Christian. This is sad and tragic. Most Americans say they are Christians, but it is highly unlikely that more than 1 or 2% really are. Saying that you are doesn't make it so. It is not whether we say it, but whether we are in fact. And likewise, not everyone who says he is born again really is regenerate (Catholics and other heretics claim to be). It is vital to

discern if we really are.

## Faith

### Basic Christian Doctrines 33

#### 1. Faith is a Duty.

All men are required to believe in God as their Creator. They already know He exists; they are called on to agree and submit. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Whoever comes to God must first believe in God (Heb. 11:6). Whatever is not based in faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). This is a general duty imposed on all men as creatures. Those who hear the Gospel are further required to believe in Jesus Christ. "Believe in God; believe also in me" (John 14:1). Sinners are commanded, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 16:31). It is a duty. In that sense, it is a work (John 6:29). It is something that God commands of us as a duty.

#### 2. We are Saved by Faith Alone.

The Reformers boldly protested against Romanism's faith-and-works system by proclaiming, "Sola fide!" (faith alone). Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9). That is, by grace alone as the source, and faith alone as the response. Rome, following the Galatian Judaizers, says that we are saved by faith, but not by faith alone. By faith we receive the sacraments, they say, in order to receive grace that enables us to do enough good works to produce a righteousness in us so as to merit God's approval. This is poisonous heresy. Good works follow faith and salvation, as Eph. 2:10 shows. The Catholic and Galatian order is this: faith - works - justification. The Bible's order is this: faith - justification - works. We are saved by faith without good works, for the unregenerate sinner is incapable of producing even one good work.

#### 3. There is No Merit in Faith.

Though faith is a duty, there is no merit in it. We do not earn salvation because of the value of our faith. We do not buy salvation with the coin of faith. Salvation is by grace and cannot be bought by us in any form or fashion, not in whole or in part. To try to buy that which is of infinite value is an insult to God. Faith is the instrument of receiving salvation. The value is in the gift, not the hand that receives it. We are not saved on the basis of our faith, but on the basis (or ground) of the work of Christ.

#### 4. Faith Agrees with the Gospel.

What is faith? Faith has 3 necessary elements: knowledge, assent, trust. The first means that faith is not blind. It has an object, a content. It is not faith in faith, blind optimism, a positive mental attitude, the power of positive thinking, etc. Second, faith agrees with the true content. The content is the Word of God, specifically the Gospel. "Believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). A believer believes "that" certain things are true. He gives his mental agreement. He is enlightened by the Spirit. He may not understand all the ramifications and implications, but he knows and sees the Gospel as true. His heart says, "Amen", which is the Hebrew word for faith.

#### 5. Faith Trusts in Christ.

The third and crucial element of faith is trust. The believer trusts Christ personally from the heart (Rom. 10:9-10). The Bible speaks of believing in, into, and upon Christ, or simply believing Christ Himself. It is not faith in self; it is faith in Christ. It takes Him at His Word, trusts in His trustworthiness, and commits to Christ personally.



#### 6. Faith Submits to Christ as Lord.

Saving faith also has the element of submission in it, which is part of trust. We are to submit to Christ as a wife is to submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22-24). In conversion, the believing heart accepts Christ's hand in marriage by saying "I do". I do accept and submit. I surrender. I hand Christ the reins, the key, the throne. I bow. They are in serious error who suggest that one may be saved merely by believing in your mind that Jesus is Lord without submitting to Him as Lord. This part of faith differentiates true believers from false.

#### 7. Repentance is Part of Faith.

Repentance is a requirement of salvation (Luke 13:3, Acts 3:19). But it is not really a second condition, but actually part of faith. Faith has 3 elements; so does repentance. First the sinner is convicted of sin and mourns for it as sin (not just because he was caught). He grieves for it (2 Cor. 7:10). Second, he changes his mind about it. He then turns from it. It is more than a change of mind; it is a change of direction from sin to God. Thus, repentance is linked with faith (Mark 1:15, Acts 20:21). It is associated with the word "convert", meaning to turn (Acts 3:19). Unless we turn, we will burn.

#### 8. Faith is a Gift of God.

Faith is a duty, but no man can do that duty. So God gives us the faith that He commands. The Bible often says that faith is a gift (2 Pet. 1:1, Phil. 1:29, John 3:27, 6:65, Rom. 12:3, 1 Cor. 3:6, 4:7) It is given through the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith is not merely offered to us; it is actually bestowed. It is not held out to be accepted by us if we ask, for James 1 says that we receive nothing unless we ask in faith. So God must sovereignly give us that faith. And it is not given to all. Also, repentance is a gift that God gives (2 Tim. 2:25, Acts 5:31, 11:18).

#### 9. Assurance is Part of Faith.

The Catholic Church denies that anyone can have assurance, but I John 5:13 says otherwise. All believers can know that they have eternal life. Moreover, in one sense, all believers have some degree of assurance. They know the Gospel is true. They also know that Christ died for them and that His promise is sure. They have some assurance from the very first moment of faith. But they are not perfected in faith. They still have doubts. So we need to grow in faith and assurance to the "full assurance of faith". We grow by exercising our faith and feeding on the Word of God, which is the source of faith. The three main tests that confirm faith and produce assurance: belief in the true Gospel, the evidence of a changed and obedient life, and the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit. These are the tests in I John that I John 5:13 refers to.

#### 10. True Faith Produces Good Works.

"Faith works by love" (Gal. 5:6). "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). True faith is a mark of regeneration, and will produce works. Life in the root will produce fruit on the branch (Matt. 7:17). Those who do not have good fruit will have only bad fruit, and thereby show that they are still unregenerate. A Christian still sins, but he will not stay in permanent sin. He will keep bearing fruit of good works. Our new nature cannot be killed, and will keep believing and obeying (I John 3). So, we are not saved by faith and works, but saved by grace through faith so that we may show our gratitude by good works (Eph. 2:8-10).

## Justification

### Basic Christian Doctrines 34

#### 1. Justification is a Legal Act of God.

One of the most precious ways the Bible describes salvation is by the word "justification." It is God that justifies (Rom. 8:33). Self-righteous sinners justify themselves, but remain condemned by God (Luke 10:29). God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5), but not by excusing their sin or denying they are sinners. Justification is a legal act by God, a metaphor taken from the law court. The best and most popular definition is in the Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."

#### 2. Justification is by Grace Alone.

Salvation is by grace alone, and justification is by grace alone. Rom. 3:24, "justified freely by His grace." It is not purchased by us in whole or in part by our good works. We cannot earn it, nor would if we could. To try to buy it is to offer the Judge a bribe, but God takes no bribes. It is a legal act, but also one of pure grace.

#### 3. Justification is by Faith Alone.

The Catholic Church, like the early Judaizers, says that justification is by faith and works, not by faith alone. They are not merely saying that works must follow faith; they are saying that both must precede justification. We utterly deny it. Again, they say: faith - works - justification. The Bible says: faith - justification - works. Rom. 3:28 and Gal. 2:16 are very explicit that we are justified by faith alone. Faith is the condition. It is not the ground of justification. It is the condition in the sense that God will not justify without it, and it is by faith that we are connected with Christ. He is the true merit.

#### 4. God Justifies a Person Because of the Work of Christ.

We are "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9). God set forth Christ as the propitiatory sacrifice that appeased His wrath. God thereby looks at the cross, is satisfied, and is then able to justify us (Rom. 3:25). God did not sweep sin under the carpet, nor wink at it. He punished it in Christ. The work of Christ, then, is the ground upon which God can legally justify us. We are also justified in His resurrection (Rom. 4:25).

#### 5. Justification is the Second Part of the Great Exchange.

2 Cor. 5:21 is one of the Bible's golden verses of salvation. It speaks of a great exchange. The first stage took place 2000 years ago. God placed our sins upon Christ. He "made Him to be sin". This was not literal. It was by substitution. Christ was treated "as if" He were the sinner. He was then made a curse (Gal. 3:13). He suffered the wrath of God and died. The second stage is when a sinner believes in Christ. Christ places His righteousness on the sinner, who is then accounted righteous by God. He is treated "as if" he had never sinned. It is the perfect counterpart of the cross. He suffered; we can rejoice. He died; we live. We are not literally made righteous, just as He was not literally made sin. Our sins were "imputed" to Him; His righteousness is "imputed" to us. This is why faith is the proper instrument that connects us with the cross, for we believe that Christ died for us.

#### 6. God Imputes the Righteousness of Christ to Us.

"Justify" is the legal metaphor, "impute" is the financial metaphor. God put our sins on

the account of Christ. Now God puts the righteousness of Christ on our account. He marks the bill "paid in full". He transfers the value of Christ's person and work to our account. Incidentally, God imputes both the active (life) and passive (death) work of Christ to us. See Romans 5. God then treats us "as if" we had never sinned. Indeed, He can look at us as clothed in the very righteousness of Christ.

#### 7. God Pardons All Our Sins.

There are two aspects of justification. In the one, God takes away sin. He forgives it. He pardons us. Second, He puts the righteousness of Christ in its place. This completes the great exchange. God pardons all our sins - past, present and future (Psa. 103:3). God takes away the penalty of guilt. Though we are guilty, He does not hold our sins against us. We are blessed because God no longer imputes sin or its guilt to us (Rom. 4:6-8). God pardons us. He does not grant clemency, which would somehow mitigate our sins. Nor does He place us on probation or parole. He totally pardons every sin we have ever committed. Moreover, He pardons the very sin nature in which we were born.

#### 8. Justification is Instantaneous.

God the Judge bangs the heavenly gavel down in a moment. He does not say, "Not guilty" per se, but rather "Justified!" We are freed in the twinkling of an eye. God predestined in eternity that we would be justified, but we were not actually justified until the moment of faith. Justification is instantaneous and complete. It is not progressive. No one is more justified than another. In fact, those in Heaven are not more justified than the saints on Earth, for justification is a perfect legal declaration by God Himself. An auctioneer bangs the hammer "Sold" in an auction to signal the moment the sale is enacted. So too, God bangs the gavel in the court of Heaven and in our conscience. If it did not occur in a moment, what would be the fate of those who died halfway through the process? It must be in a moment. One second before, the sinner is condemned and doomed; one second after, justified forever.

#### 9. Justification is Not Regeneration.

These two are essential to salvation and are related, but must be distinguished. In regeneration, our nature is changed; in justification, our status is changed. In the one, righteousness is infused; in the other, it is imputed. The order is: regeneration - faith - justification. But we are not justified on the basis of what God does in us by the new birth. No, the basis is the work of Christ. The new birth is drastic, but in some respects is only partial - we still have indwelling sin. We are not justified by an internal righteousness, but by an alien righteousness. What Christ has done in us is partial and progressive (Phil. 1:6), and so would not provide a complete basis anyway. Also, there is no interval between the two. Some err in suggesting that an infant might be regenerated but not justified till later in life. If so, what if he died at age 16: if regenerate, then fit for Heaven; but if unjustified and unbelieving, fit for Hell. It wouldn't make sense.

#### 10. Justification Is Permanent and Irrevocable.

There is no double jeopardy, no double indemnity. Satan cannot appeal the verdict or raise an objection or sue for a mistrial. It is over and done with. All that follows is the joy of knowing one is justified and free forever, never to be condemned. We have peace with God at last! (Rom.5:1).

## **The Benefits of Salvation**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 35

#### 1. We Are Saved.

Salvation is the general term that the Bible uses to describe the miracle of grace God performs for us. It is the greatest event in our life. It has three main aspects or stages: past, present and future (cf. 2 Cor. 1:10). We were saved at a point in the past. This is when we were born again, believed, repented of sin, and were justified. It happens only once (born again, not born again and again and again). It is perfect and complete. We were rescued from danger, delivered from harm. Now we are saved and safe. Second, we are being saved in the present. Christ's blood keeps us safe from the wrath of God and He daily rescues us from Satan. Third, we will be saved in the future, at death and at the Judgement Day. These three stages are inseparable.

#### 2. The Holy Spirit Indwells Us.

The Spirit enters the believer at the moment of regeneration and never leaves. He enters our whole being, even our body. It is the heavenly counterpart to being demon-possessed. He fills us. Romans 8 is the great chapter on the indwelling of the Spirit. Also, this is the miracle of the baptism of the Spirit, misunderstood by Pentecostals. The Spirit comes into us, with the result that He is in us. At the same moment, he puts us into Himself, with the result that we are in the Spirit. He in us, we in Him. It is not a second experience, but part of salvation. From there, we are to walk in the Spirit, go on being filled with the Spirit, etc.

#### 3. The Christian Knows God.

Every person knows that God exists (Rom. 1), but only the Christian knows God personally. This is true knowledge. It is a heart-to-heart personal relationship. It is part of having eternal life (John 17:3). God granted us this privilege (Matt. 11:27). We know Him because He first knew us (I Cor. 8:3, Gal. 4:9). It is a personal, deep and intimate knowledge. We are friends. We are also lovers. And we grow in this knowledge deeper and deeper (Phil. 3:8, 10).

#### 4. We are United to Christ.

This is similar to the union of the Holy Spirit. We are put into Christ's Body (I Cor. 12), with the result that we are "in Christ". At the same moment, Christ is put into us and is in us. In one sense, we were united with Him in the eternal Covenant, but we were united with Him in our experience when we were saved. We are united to Him and draw life from Him, and cannot do anything without Him (John 15). We are also united with Him in spiritual espousal. We are engaged to be His bride. One day, this will be consummated at the great heavenly marriage.

#### 5. We are Adopted into God's Family.

Once we were children of the Devil. God took us out of that family and made us His own children. Now God is our Father, other believers are our brothers and sisters, and Christ is our elder brother. Being His children, we are also His heirs. We can now call God "our Father in Heaven". Adoption is not the same as regeneration. Regeneration affects our nature; adoption affects our relationship. Regeneration precedes faith, which precedes adoption. But it happens in a moment, with no interval or exception. So, we are doubly God's children.

#### 6. We Are Reconciled to God.

This is a great benefit of salvation that we often overlook. 2 Cor. 5 is the great chapter on it. We were once God's enemies; now we are His friends. We are reconciled. It is more than a truce; it is the end of hostilities. The war is over. We have peace with God. We were once against God and God against us. Now He is for us and with us, and we with Him. Properly speaking, it is we that are reconciled to God, not God to us. We apologize, not He. Yet, on His part, the righteous enmity was removed when His wrath was appeased when Christ died for us.

#### 7. We Are No Longer Under Wrath.

We were once sinners under the wrath of God - condemned, doomed, facing judgement. All that has changed. We will never be judged. God is not angry with us, but smiles on us in Fatherly love. God saved us from several things: sin, Satan, death, Hell. But most importantly, He saved us from His own wrath. God saved us from God. Lost sinners are still under His wrath (John 3:36). But not us. As fierce as His wrath was against us then, so intense is His love for us now.

#### 8. We Are Cleansed From Sin.

Our sins were filthy and disgusting. Even our religious acts were filthy rags. But God changed all that. He cleansed us (I Cor. 6:11). He washed away the black guilt by the blood of Christ. We were baptized in the blood of the Lamb. Our sins were drowned in the Red Sea of His blood. Only Christ's blood, not the waters of baptism, can cleanse us in this way, for water cannot touch the soul. In one sense, we are already totally cleansed. In another, we need daily cleansing for the regular sins we commit (see John 13). This does not mean we get saved all over again. It only means that we need fresh applications of the blood of Christ (I John 1:7).

#### 9. We Are Transferred From Satan's Kingdom.

Col. 1:13 says that God transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. Christ, not Satan, is now our King. We defected from Satan's evil empire, became traitors to his wicked regime, and now are God's spies engaged in espionage and commandos involved in sabotage. We have been rescued from Satan's claws; he cannot ever have us again. We are on another team, part of another body, have different allegiances. We were once for Satan and against God; now we are against Satan and for God (Matt. 6:24). If God is for us, who can be against us?

#### 10. We Cannot Lose Our Salvation.

One of the great glories of salvation is that it is permanent. It has a ratchet-effect. Once saved, always saved. It is not because of our own selves, or even our own faith. It is ultimately dependent on God, for it was He that saved us in the first place. If it depended on us, none of us would get saved or stay saved. God elected us to salvation (Rom. 8:29-30) and completes what He started (Phil. 1:6). He has sworn to preserve, keep and guard us forever (Psa. 37:28, 66:9, 97:10, 145:14, 20, I Tim. 1:12). He keeps us by His omnipotent hand (1 Pet. 1:5), keeps us safe from Satan (I John 5:18, John 17:11, 12, 15), and seals us with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13, 4:30). The saints in Heaven are happier, but not more secure, than we are. Simply put, God loves His people too much to let them go. He holds us firmly and lovingly in His arms of love, from which no one can snatch us out (John 10:28).

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## **Spiritual Growth**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 36

#### 1. The New Birth Is the Start of the Christian Life.

Regeneration is the end of the old life, but the beginning of the new life. It is the door out of one and the door into another. I Pet. 2:2 says we are like "newborn babes" who need to be fed and grow. A baby needs feeding, teaching, cleaning, exercise, love, etc. No one can live the Christian life until he first gets born again. Then he begins the wonderful lifelong adventure of following and serving Jesus Christ.

#### 2. The Bible Feeds and Strengthens Us.

A baby needs food - milk. The Bible is that milk. It is the food and nourishment and refreshment that we need to grow as Christians. The more we eat, the more we grow (and the less we eat, the less we grow). It is the means of grace - the way in which God continues to supply us with grace. It is compared to milk, bread, meat, honey. It is sometimes hard to digest, other times very sweet. Feeding on the Word takes the same stages as physical eating. We bite into it by reading it. We chew it by studying it. We swallow it by believing it. We digest it by understanding it. We incorporate it by obeying it.

#### 3. We Follow Christ by Faith.

We were saved by faith; we continue to follow by faith (Col.2:6-7). We continue in the way we started. We walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). We believe the promises of God, not trust our own feelings. It is as simple as, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way, to be happy in Jesus, than to trust and obey." We follow as His disciples, which means students, learners, pupils. We ought to sit at His feet and learn from Him. That takes faith. It does not happen overnight. It is a school of discipleship from which no one ever graduates until death. Faith is the primary means by which we follow, so we need to exercise our faith, strengthen it, pray for more.

#### 4. We Are Saved to Serve.

We were once slaves of sin and Satan; now we are slaves of righteousness. We are slaves of Christ. Not slaves who wish to be free, but willing slaves. We serve Christ as our Master. He purchased us, and we belong to Him and not to ourselves. Therefore, we ought to serve Him and not ourselves. He wants us to serve Him by serving other people, too. All this involves sacrifice - putting Christ first, others second, ourselves last. It is also a duty. A slave has the duty to serve his Master. We have the duty of serving our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not always easy, but it is always right.

#### 5. We Serve Christ Out of Gratitude.

God wants us to obey Him. The Christian is like the Israelites after God delivered them from Egypt. They were grateful and wanted to express it. It was as if God said, "If you want to show how grateful you are, then here's how you can show it. Don't have any other gods, don't take my name in vain, etc." We ought to be grateful for all the great blessings, which God has given to us for free. With this in mind, the Christian life should be one of joyful gratitude, not dour drudgery. This gives vitality to duty. It is a privilege to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. We sometimes forget and thus become ungrateful. That's why God told us to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly, to remember His great love at the cross, lest we forget and be ungrateful. When we remember, our faith is renewed and our gratitude



increased.

6. God Equips Each of Us with a Spiritual Gift.

The members of the Body build each other up (I Cor. 12). This is done by the spiritual gifts which God gives to all Christians (I Cor. 12, Rom. 12). These are not natural talents, which all have, though God uses those also. Spiritual gifts are the special abilities God gives us to serve Him and other Christians. They are tools, not toys. We need to discover what our own gift is by checking the lists and examples in the Bible, discerning if we have one of them, then study how to use it properly - and then use it!

7. We Fight Against Satan.

The warfare with God is over when we are reconciled to Him, but this begins the warfare with Satan. Better to have God with us against Satan than Satan with us against God. The Christian life is not one of ease and fun, but of struggle against temptation and fighting with Satan. Eph. 6 is the classic chapter on spiritual warfare. God supplies the armor to defend against Satan's attacks. We are not alone in this fight; every Christian is in the war. And God fights for us, too.

8. Christians Face Trials.

Christians struggle against temptation, and also against trials and tribulations. We suffer persecution from friends and family. We suffer afflictions of all sorts. This comes with being a Christian, and only makes us stronger. It is a sure sign that we are on the right side. It purifies us and tests our faith. There is also a great blessing in the midst of persecution, if we stand for Christ against all odds. Though we sometimes fail the tests and trials, God does not forsake us. We are down, but not out. God picks us up and keeps us going. The Christian's life is not a bed of roses, but of thorns and tears. But it is worth it all. There is an exquisite joy of being in the fire.

9. The Christian Life is a Lifelong Walk.

The Bible frequently compares the Christian life with a walk. It is not a stroll, but a march. It is a hike, the long walk of a pilgrim (we are pilgrims with a destination, not hobos without a home). It is a step-by-step walk, a daily life of obedience. We may stumble in this walk, but we get right back up and keep going. We are to run this race set before us. It is a long distance marathon, not a short sprint. One of the great Christian books on this theme is "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan. It begins in the City of Despair and ends in Heaven.

10. We Look Back at the Cross and Forward to the Crown.

It is good to look back and remember our former life, but not yearn for it. It is also important to look back in faith to the cross. This reminds us of why we are on this road to begin with, for sometimes we forget. And it is also important to look forward to the end of the trail. Backwards in faith, forward in hope. Our walk is not in vain. It has a goal, a destination. That is Heaven, where we will receive the crown. There are rewards for obedience, which serves as added incentive to obey and serve all the more. When we arrive at the end of the road, we will be met by our blessed Savior. In the meantime, Jesus walks with us every step of the way, strengthening and encouraging us and keeping us on the straight and narrow path.

## **Spiritual Experience**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 37

#### 1. God Desires Us to Have True Spiritual Experience.

God has done many things for us, and granted the privilege of being a Christian. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heaven. We are positionally right with God. But He also desires us to be what we are. He wants us to be and live in practice what we are in Heaven. We are to be daily transformed into the image of Christ. In fact, not just in theory. He has already changed our nature. Now we are to go on being changed gradually. This involves our experience: what we are and what we do. The order is as follows: we believe in our minds, trust in our hearts, speak it with our mouths, and do it with our hands.

#### 2. God Develops the Fruit of the Spirit in Us.

God has changed the root, now He grows fruit on the branches. This is done by the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit that dwells in us. He produces these new attitudes within us. They are listed in Gal. 5:22. They begin internally, then manifest themselves externally. We cannot produce them ourselves. We are connected to Christ, the Vine, who produces them in and through us. God actually changes the way we think, feel, and look at things. This in turn produces spiritual virtues, such as those listed in Matt. 5 and 2 Peter 1.

#### 3. Love is the Most Important Spiritual Fruit.

Love is the first fruit listed in Gal. 5:22. It is the greatest of all God's commandments: love God, love other people. We are to love others as Christ loved us, even be willing to die for them. We are told to walk in love. How important is this attitude of love? Without it, all else is worthless (I Cor. 13). Faith is the primary virtue, but love is the culminating and crowning virtue. Love seeks the well-being of another, seeks to do good to him. God wants us to love in reality. He wants us to really love, not just say it. And show it in our deeds. But it begins in the heart, and that means true Christian experience.

#### 4. We Sin and Backslide.

Though we have been born again, sin still dwells in us. We still sin. We do what we should not do, and fail to do what we should do. We develop bad habits of frequent sins. When we sin for a period of time we call this backsliding. It is like riding a bicycle up a hill: if we stop going forward, we go backward. This sometimes happens with besetting sins, which are like weights that pull us down. We need to be aware and beware. Backsliding affects our hearts, and we ought not to get accustomed to sin. We should immediately forsake it.

#### 5. God Chastens His Children.

Because we are His children, God chastens us. He does this out of love, not wrath. It is for our good, not for our punishment. He does it as a Father, not as a judge. God does not chasten us to "get even", but to teach us not to sin. How does God chasten? God does it in a variety of ways: affliction, circumstances, illness, financial loss, etc. He even uses our enemies. Chastening teaches us that sin is not worth it. It always hurts - it's supposed to. But it is for our good, and is evidence that we are God's children. Not all the afflictions we suffer are due to sin, but some are. When we are afflicted in some way, we need to pray and search our hearts and Bibles to see if it is because of any specific sin. Chances

are, our own consciences will convict us.

6. We Must Deny Ourselves.

Self-denial is another important virtue affecting our experience. It is not easy, and is never fully mastered in this life. Sin wants us to put ourselves first, and this has been the history of our lives. That attitude produces pride. God tells us to deny our selves, not put them first. He does not want us to engage in self-love, self-esteem or self-worth, all of which are simply other words for pride. God wants us to be humble. We need to deny our selfishness, our sinful lusts, our desire to be Number One. Our self must be crucified.

7. We Must Mortify Indwelling Sin.

Our basic nature was changed in regeneration, but Original Sin still dwells in us as an unwelcome stranger. We cannot expel it once and for all. There is no instant Perfection, as some teach. We daily struggle against it and sometimes give in. We are told to mortify it (see Rom. 6). How? Several ways. For one, we are to make no provision for the flesh. Starve it by not giving in to it or providing opportunity for it. Also, we are to reckon sin as a foreign intruder. Then we are to reckon ourselves as alive to Christ and dead to sin. This means, among other things, to believe that we really have changed and that we do not have to sin. We may still struggle and give in, but we also can fight and win those struggles and gain victories and progress. This is an important part of true spiritual experience, but often overlooked.

8. We Ought to Be Separate from the World.

We are in the world, but are not to be of the world. We are to go in and evangelize it, not let it in us and bring us down. The world ought to be able to see a noticeable difference in us. We need different attitudes, words, lifestyles, deeds, even attire. We ought not to indulge in worldly fashions, entertainment or the like. There ought to be a noticeable difference between us and the world, otherwise we are but hypocrites. We need to be careful lest the world's sin seeps into us and affects the way we think and live. It takes vigilance.

9. We Need to Examine Ourselves.

2 Cor. 13:5 tells us to examine ourselves. The first thing to check is whether we are true Christians or only deceived. We examine our lives by submitting them to God to examine. We look in the mirror of God's Word (James 1), which will show up the imperfections of our character. Indwelling sin likes to deceive us, so it cannot be trusted. We can only trust the Bible to give us a true examination. We need to search and discover our faults, weaknesses, secret sins, bad habits. Then we inspect our overall character, then our words and deeds. One way is to compare ourselves with Christ - we will soon spot the imperfections in us. Also, we need to check and see how much we have progressed so far in the Christian life - how much we have done vs. how much we could have done.

10. We Have the Privilege of Enjoying God.

One more thing needs to be pointed out as we conclude this section on spiritual experience. God desires for us to find our joy in Him. We are to love Him and enjoy Him. Love and be loved by God. This actually produces spiritual delight and true pleasure. We taste and see that the Lord is good. We do this by prayer and Bible study, worship at church, fellowship with the brethren, Communion, and walking closely with the Lord Jesus day by day. With Christ in us and with us, it is then possible to enjoy God's presence even in the little things. This is one of the most delightful aspects of the

Christian's experience, a little bit of Heaven on Earth.

## Prayer

### Basic Christian Doctrines 38

#### 1. Prayer is a Great Privilege.

One of the most important parts of the Christian life is prayer. It is also one of the most neglected. Yet what a great privilege it is. Imagine, being granted the privilege of speaking with God Almighty Himself! Though God rules the whole universe and knows everything, He condescends to listen to us unworthy sinners. It is a privilege, not a right. God lets us approach Him in prayer (Ezek. 36:37). Done rightly, prayer is for our good and for the glory of God.

#### 2. Prayer is a Great Duty.

Not only is it a privilege, it is a duty. All men are duty-bound to ask their Creator for the things they need. In this sense, even unbelievers ought to pray and acknowledge God. Yet God will not hear their prayers until they are converted. As for believers, we are frequently commanded to pray and are given many examples in the Bible. Though God is sovereign, we have the responsibility to pray. In a deep mysterious way, God uses our prayers to carry out His eternal will.

#### 3. We Must Confess Our Sins Regularly.

There are several aspects of prayer. One of the most important is confession. We ought not to barge into God's presence with unclean hands. Like the Old Testament priests who were to wash their hands before entering the Temple, so we must confess our sins before proceeding further. To confess means to acknowledge and admit, without any excuses. It also means to repent and be willing to turn from sin. We cannot shift the blame onto others, no, not even Satan or Adam or other people, least of all God. We have nobody to blame but ourselves, and confession means taking the blame. It means submitting to the consequences of chastening. If we confess our sins, God will forgive them (I John 1:9). God will cleanse us and restore us to the fellowship with Him that was broken by our sin. Unless we confess our sins, God will not hear our prayers (Psa. 66:18, I Peter 3:7).

#### 4. We May Ask God for the Things We Need.

God has granted us the privilege of asking for the things we need. This is called supplication. We request these things from God, we cannot demand them by right. See Phil. 4:6. There are many things we do not have because we have not asked for them, or because we have asked in the wrong way (James 4:2-3). No request is too small or large to bring to God. This does not mean that we sit back and do nothing. No, we are to do what we can and open the channels by which God may answer our prayers. For example, we are to ask for our daily bread, but that does not mean we quit our jobs. It is important to keep priorities in their right place when we pray. Spiritual needs are more important than material needs. We ought to pray for food, clothing, work, health and so on. But we ought to pray even more for growth in grace, humility, more faith, an increase in love, opportunities to witness, and so on.

#### 5. We May Ask God for the Needs of Others.

This is called intercession. As with supplication, we may ask for the needs of others, especially their spiritual needs. Take a look at what Paul prayed for in his epistles. I Tim. 2:1-2 is a good summary. We can pray for anyone, especially those in authority, for God's will to be done, for their salvation, etc. It is best to pray mostly for those known to us,

then to others less known to us. Information about needs helps

6. We Must Have Faith When We Pray.

James 1 tells us that we must have faith when we pray, otherwise we will not receive what we ask for. This does not mean that we must have giant-like faith - Jesus said that faith as small as a mustard-seed can move mountains by prayer (Matt. 17:20). This does not mean that we can "Name it and claim it", as some teach. That would be ludicrous. On the other hand, God does not honor lazy prayer. We are to persevere in prayer over and over again (Luke 18:1-3, Eph. 6:18, I Thess. 5:17).

7. We Must Pray to God Alone.

God forbids us from praying to anyone else. This is because prayer is a form of worship, and we are to worship God alone. We must never pray to any other god, such as Allah. Nor may we pray to angels or Christians in Heaven, as Romanism teaches. It is one thing to ask another living person to pray for you; it is quite another to ask a dead person to pray for you or answer your prayers. God strictly forbids us from trying to contact the dead. Prayer means speaking with God alone. It includes meditation on His Word. This is not Transcendental Meditation or talking to yourself. God speaks to us in the Bible. We reply in prayer.

8. We Can Pray Anytime Anywhere.

We need not be in a church meeting to pray. We may and should pray at anytime, such as in an emergency in the middle of the night. We can pray anywhere, too, such as in our cars or in the hospital. For example it is a good practice to pray before meals, as they did in the Bible. We may pray when we are alone or with others. In fact, the Bible gives us examples of prayer meetings with others. This is very important to the health of a church. No church is stronger than its prayer meeting. Also, parents should have daily family devotions with their children to lead them in prayer and Bible-reading.

9. Prayer Must Be in Christ's Name.

We must pray on the basis of the merits of Christ, not our own. We do not use these words as magic words, but with the meaning that we are relying solely on Christ's worth and authority. This is much the same as what the Bible means when it says we are to pray according to God's will (I John 5:14-15). We ought not to pray for things God has forbidden or which are outside the scope of prayer. For example, we ought not to pray for certain spiritual blessings for unbelievers which really belong only to believers (see John 17:9). We must pray for the conversion of unbelievers first, then the rest. Prayer must be regulated by God's Word. We must not borrow ideas of prayer from pagan religions, such as burning candles, spinning wheels, using beads, incantations, repetitious words, etc. We ought to follow the example of Christ.

10. Worship is the Highest Form of Prayer.

If confession is the low notes on the prayer scale, then worship is the high notes. This is the most important aspect of all, for it alone will continue into eternity. We ought to thank God in prayer. Unthankfulness is a great sin. We ought to praise God, both for what He has done and for what He is in Himself. We should meditate on His Word and let our hearts dwell on His person. Worship means to humble ourselves before God and exalt Him as God. It may be vocal, it may be silent. Adoration is the very zenith of this aspect of prayer. Adoration is that lovely combination of love and worship. It is loving worship and worshipful love. In this God is most glorified, and in it we fulfill the purpose for

which we were created. We can find no happier or holier place than the place of true worship.

## **Evangelism**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 39

#### 1. Christ Commanded Us to Preach the Gospel.

Right before He returned to Heaven, Jesus told the Apostles to preach the Gospel throughout the world. We call this the Great Commission. We find it in Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-16, Luke 24:47, and Acts 1:8. Jesus preached the Gospel while He was here. He is still with us spiritually, and through us continues to spread the Gospel. The first Christians started in Jerusalem, and throughout history Christians have preached the Gospel to almost every part of the world. But the work is not yet over. The Great Commission is still a great work.

#### 2. All Christians Should Spread the Gospel.

Obviously Jesus knew that the first 12 Apostles could never cover the whole world, let alone live until the Second Coming to tell the Gospel to people everywhere in all later generations. The work has been passed on down to each generation and to each Christian. It is not just for preachers and evangelists - it is for all Christians. Some early Christians were slow to do this, but God providentially stirred them up and sent them out everywhere (Acts 8:4). What an immense impact we would have on the world if every Christian today would do his share in spreading the Gospel. Most people who come to Christ do so through the personal evangelism of a friend or relative.

#### 3. Some Christians Have the Gift of Evangelism.

While all Christians are to evangelize, some have the gift to be able to do it better and more often than others. Evangelists are mentioned in Eph. 4:11 and 2 Tim. 4:5. Philip was an evangelist (Acts 21:8). There have been many great evangelists over the centuries, such as George Whitefield and John Wesley. But most with this gift aren't pastors; they are everyday Christians who have the burning desire to tell people the Gospel frequently and successfully. But though some do it better than others, all of us are to do our part in telling the Gospel.

#### 4. Evangelism is Preaching the Gospel.

Evangelism simply means telling people the Gospel. "Evangel" is the word for Gospel. We evangelize when we tell someone the Gospel. It is not sharing opinions, telling stories, sharing our testimony, singing songs, etc. We may tell the Gospel through various means, such as these, but the main thing is the message, not the method. We may say it or write it. We may tell it to a friend over coffee, or in a Christmas letter, or by knocking on doors. We may tell it to close relatives, friends, acquaintances or total strangers. Most people still have not heard the Gospel. They may know some things about the Gospel, but not the basic facts. The Gospel is the basic account of the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation (I Cor. 15:3-4).

#### 5. We Need to Answer Questions and Objections.

We are to proclaim the Gospel, but we are also to make sure that people understand us. Therefore, we are to explain, not just proclaim. It may mean answering people's questions. Some people haven't the slightest notion of how to get to Heaven. Others will try to argue with us. We need to give basic answers to everyone. Evangelism will then employ Biblical apologetics to explain and defend the Gospel. But we ought not to get



side-tracked by secondary issues or become entangled in minor arguments. The main thing is to communicate the clear Gospel to folks.

6. The Bible is Our Guide to Evangelism.

God saves the elect by means of the Gospel. It is a seed which is to be sown everywhere. God specifically uses His Word to save sinners. And the Gospel is that part of the Word which He uses to regenerate dead sinners (1 Pet. 1:25). Our opinions or ideas do not mean anything. The Word is what counts. In fact, it is the simplicity of the Word that does it best, unencumbered by Madison Avenue techniques or other things. One good way to evangelize is to get someone to start reading the Bible. Also, we do Biblical evangelism when we imitate those in the Bible as they told the Gospel to people who are similar to those we speak with.

7. We Ought to Refrain from Gimmicks.

Just as we ought not to add to the Gospel, so we ought not to do anything which would detract from the Gospel or imply anything contrary to it. Most of modern evangelism is counter-productive. There is no Biblical basis for things like altar calls, asking people to repeat "the sinner's prayer" after us, and other such gimmicks. One evangelist asked, "Why not? What harm could it do?" Such things do much harm, by giving people false assurance that they are saved. Easy believism is a dangerous factory of false Christians. It leads millions to Hell, and thus is one of the greatest enemies of true Biblical evangelism.

8. We Ought to Have the Right Attitudes.

As we spread the Gospel, we need to have attitudes that reflect the message we tell. We ought to have hearts of love for the lost. We should be serious. We ought to tremble at the awesome alternative for those who reject the Gospel. We need perseverance as we spread the Gospel. Most people will not believe us. But don't lose heart. Some people will believe the Gospel, and will thank God forever that we were loving and brave enough to take the time to tell it to them. Above all, the main reason we spread the Gospel is obedience to God. We tell the Gospel so that God may be glorified.

9. Prayer is Important to Evangelism.

In evangelism, we speak to sinners on behalf of God. In prayer, we speak to God on behalf of sinners. We ought to pray for the lost to be saved. First, pray for those to whom you have spoken. Then pray for those to whom you might be able to speak. And then those others have spoken to. And then those to whom nobody has ever told the Gospel. Pray also for fellow Christians who are spreading the Gospel, and that God would send out yet more laborers into His field. Pray that God stop the Devil's opposition to our efforts. Plant the seeds, then water them with prayer.

10. We Ought to Support Missionaries.

We ought to work in the corner of the vineyard in which God has placed us, but also support those in other corners. They go where we cannot go. One way to support them is by prayer. Another is financial gifts. Missionary work should be primarily evangelism, then church-planting. It may also include Bible-translation and then discipleship teaching, and then other things such as medical missions. Christians should be compassionate in supporting missionaries. And sacrificial. And wise. Missionaries are noble frontline soldiers who have sacrificed comfort back home to do what is often a thankless, hard and often dangerous job. We need to encourage them and pray for them. And maybe join them.

## **The Law**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 40

#### 1. God Gave Us His Law.

God gave His Law to Man to tell us our duty. Sin is defined as the breaking of this Law (I John 3:4). If there was no Law, there would be no such thing as sin (Rom. 4:15). It is the Royal Law (James 2:8). The Law is holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12). The Hebrew word for Law is TORAH. The Greek word is NOMOS. God's Law is given to all men through Natural Revelation (Rom. 2:14-15). It was given more specifically and verbally in the Bible.

#### 2. The Law is Summarized in the Ten Commandments.

The Bible contains over 600 laws in the Pentateuch alone, but God summarized them in the Ten Commandments, which are found in Ex. 20 and Deut. 5. The first 4 commands deal with our relation with God; the next six with our relation with other people. Some of them are negative, some are positive. When a certain thing is forbidden, its opposite is implicitly commanded. When something is commanded, its opposite is implicitly forbidden (see Eph. 4:28). Virtually every other law in the Bible is subsumed under these 10 laws. Some laws and sins involve several laws (e.g., to kill your father on the Sabbath).

#### 3. The Law Has Three Divisions.

When we study the many laws in the Bible, we find that they fall down into three main categories. The Moral Law is the main one. The Moral Laws pertain to all men everywhere. They are written on their hearts and consciences. They pre-date Moses and continue today. They allow no exceptions. One might call these direct laws of pure morality. Others fall into the category of the Ceremonial Law. These are primarily ceremonial in nature, and are only indirectly moral. They do not apply to all men, but only to those within the covenantal limits. For instance, Gentiles were never bound by the laws regarding circumcision, animal sacrifices or special festivals for the Jews. In the NT, non-Christians are not bound to keep baptism or the Lord's Supper. These laws are mainly types and symbols, and are temporary. The third group are the Civil Laws, such as in Ex. 21-23. Some of these are meant to apply to all civil societies, such as capital punishment. Others were tied into the Ceremonial Laws and were temporary and only for Israel.

#### 4. Part of the Law Has Been Changed.

Law as Law cannot be changed any more than the very holy nature of God can be changed, for the Law reflects that holiness. The Moral Law stands unalterable. See Matt. 5:17-19. Yet, God has changed the Ceremonial Law and also the Civil Law in part. The OT Ceremonial Laws were types of Christ, and so were fulfilled and abolished when Christ came (Col.2:17). God then substituted these laws with two new ceremonies, namely Baptism and Communion, which symbolize salvation with Christ as well. Those civil laws that had to do with Israel as a special theocracy have been abolished, while others of a purely moral nature still continue.

#### 5. The Law Has Three Uses.

First, there is the Political Use. The Law is meant to punish certain kinds of sinners (I Tim.1:9-10) and to act as a restraint on sin. Second, there is the Pedagogical Use. The Law convicts of sin, tells us what sin is, and thus prepares us for conversion (Gal.3:24,

Rom.3:19-20, 7:7- 13). It silences all excuses and kills self-righteousness. Thirdly, there is the Didactic Use. It teaches Christians how they may express gratitude to God for saving them (John 14:15, 21-24, I John 5:3).

#### 6. Legalism is Wrong.

There are two major misuses of the Law. The first is legalism. It involves several things. First, we cannot be saved by the Law. Legalism is the religion of the Pharisees and Galatian Judaizers, saying we can be saved in whole or in part by Law-keeping. Another form of legalism retains those OT ceremonies which have passed away. Another form emphasizes the letter over the Spirit of the Law. Another places human tradition on the same level. Another form puts more emphasis on Law than on grace. But the Bible is clear: Christians are not under the curse of the Law, nor under it as a means of salvation (Rom.6:14-15). Christ has freed us from the dangers of legalism and warns us of it.

#### 7. Antinomianism is Wrong.

The opposite error from legalism is Antinomianism. The word comes from the words ANTI (against) and NOMOS (Law). It is an outlaw view of religion. It is similar to libertinism and licentiousness, which say that we have the liberty and licence to sin all we want because we are not under the Law but under grace. Doctrinal Antinomianism says, "The Law is one, therefore it has all been abolished"(the opposite of legalism, which says it has all been retained). It pretends to be super-spiritual by saying that the Spirit replaces the Law. This is a false mysticism. It often advocates Situation Ethics. It sometimes says that works are totally unnecessary to the Christian, even as evidence of conversion. Most forms of Dispensationalism teach a form of Doctrinal Antinomianism, claiming that the Law was only for Israel and not the Church.

#### 8. The Holy Spirit Enables Us to Keep the Law.

The Spirit does not replace the Law, but leads the child of God to obey it. The Spirit of the Law does not annul the letter of the Law. One of the great benefits of the New Covenant is that the Spirit writes this Law on our hearts and causes us to follow it (Jer.31:33). In our state of sin, we could not keep the Law. But being regenerate, we are freed from sin by the Spirit so that we can keep it, though never perfectly.

#### 9. Christians Should Love God's Law.

We ought to echo David's words, "O how I love your Law" (Psa. 119:97). Read through all of Psalm 119, the longest chapter in the Bible, and you'll see how David loved the Law, did not forget it, learned from it, etc. Paul said, "I delight in the Law" (Rom. 7:22). We show our love to God by loving His Law. If we love Jesus, we ought to obey His Law. We should obey it willingly and joyfully, not grudgingly. The Law tells us how we may express our gratitude to God for saving us. Too many Christians have a low view of the Law. To them, the Law is bad, whereas God says the Law is good and holy and perfect. It is sin, not the Law, that is bad. The Law stirs up the sin that is resident in us, but that doesn't make the Law bad. The Law by itself cannot save or move us to obedience. But it tells us the will of our Heavenly Father.

#### 10. The Two Love Commands Epitomize the Law.

According to Matt. 22:37-39, Rom. 13:9, Gal. 5:14 and James 2:8, the whole Law is summed up in two simple Laws: Love God and love other people. This is the heart of the Law. It is a summary. A Table of Contents does not annul the rest of the book, but indexes it. So too here. Love is the inner attitude that shows true obedience to the

meaning of the Law. God desires us to love Him with all our being. God also tells us to love other people as Jesus loved us, even to love our enemies. With this in mind, the Law truly is a Law of Love.

## **The Progress of Redemption**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 41

#### 1. God Worked Progressively in History.

God's eternal plan was worked out over many years in history. The Bible begins "In the beginning" and ends in eternity future. In-between, God is at work. He has worked progressively by stages, each building on the previous stages, like building a house on a foundation. It had to be like this. Christ did not come before Adam, nor immediately after Adam and Eve sinned. He came as Savior, which meant that sin had to happen first. And the way had to be made ready for the coming of Christ. He came "in the fullness of time", in the center of history. This progression is sometimes called Holy History. It is like the growth of a child to maturity or the rising of a sun to full strength.

#### 2. God Sent Prophets to Prepare for Christ.

Heb. 1:1-2 says that God spoke through many ways, and finally in Christ. History is the stage for a progression of revelation of God. One way in which God spoke progressively was through a series of prophets. Like John the Baptist, the last of the OT prophets, they prepared the way for the coming of Christ. They all spoke to people in their own day, but also pointed to the future when God's goal would be reached. Some spoke of the first coming, others of the second, still others of both. But they all spoke about Christ (Acts 10:43, Luke 24:25-27, 44). Some spoke of His person, some of His work, some of both. History is Christocentric.

#### 3. People Were Saved by Believing in the Coming Messiah.

The Gospel was revealed in various ways in the periods of time before Christ. The many symbols of the Temple all pre-figured Christ, especially the sacrifices. But it was especially the prophecies that gave the Gospel, starting with the very first one in Gen. 3:15. Abraham, Moses and many others were saved by believing in the coming Messiah who would defeat Satan, provide the perfect sacrifice and reconcile them to God. The Gospel was not nearly as clear then as now. But they were not saved merely by believing that God would give them land, children, etc.

#### 4. Salvation Has Always Been By Grace Through Faith.

A common mistake is to think that people in the OT were saved by keeping the Law. Or that they were to obey as much as they could, and offer a sacrifice for sin to make up the rest. Romans 4 kills this heresy. Abraham was justified by faith, not works. So was David. It has always been by God's sheer grace. And the condition has always been the same: faith. It has never been by works. Nor has it been by nationality. Though the Jews had special privileges, there were saved by grace, not by race. The same is true today regarding Christians and their children. God has always had only one way of salvation: His way. And it centers in Christ.

#### 5. Grace and Law Are in Both Testaments.

Another common error is to suppose that the OT was all Law and no grace, and the NT is all grace and no Law. Actually, both are in both. There is simply more emphasis on one than the other in each. One cannot read the OT without finding the great Hebrew word HESED, covenantal love, free mercy, grace. Similarly, we find Law in the NT as well. Otherwise, one would have to conclude OT people were saved by Law and that there is

no Law in the NT - both very dangerous errors. John 1:17 says that Moses gave the Law and that Christ gave grace. But this does not mean that Christ did not give grace before He came. He gave it to those who believed He would come. And the Law has gone from Moses' hand to Christ's

#### 6. God Used Israel in a Special Way.

Just as God flooded the whole world and started over with Noah and his family, so God started something new with Abraham and his family. They were to be a special nation dedicated to God. Not superior to Gentiles, Israel was to be a light to the nations and bring God's blessings to them. God made Israel a special theocracy, something He has not done for any other nation. They were even given a specific land grant. But there were conditions to all this, which Israel did not keep. Some of the promises to the seed of Abraham were fulfilled in national Israel in the OT; others have been fulfilled in the Church; but they are mainly centered in Christ (Gal.3). God's program for Israel was good, but failed because of the deficiencies of human nature. Israel was at the heart of most of the OT. All that time, God let the Gentiles at large go their own way (Acts 14:1.6). Eventually Israel ended up as bad as them.

#### 7. Israel and the Church Are Related But Not Identical.

Israel and the Church are not two completely separate entities, as taught by Dispensationalism. Nor are they entirely the same, nor does the Church entirely take Israel's place, as taught by Covenant Theology. The truth is in the middle. Some OT promises to Israel are fulfilled in national Israel, some in the Church. The two groups overlap. In one sense, Israel was the Church in an embryonic form. Acts 7:38 even calls it the Church in the wilderness. On the other hand, the Church is the true or mature Israel, called "the Israel of God" in Gal. 6:16. Still, there was a sense in which the Church didn't begin properly until Acts 2. Similarly, there is a sense in which Israel as Israel continues. (How these two will merge will be discussed later). Romans 11 talks about God's one tree, not two separate trees. There is one Body, not two. The existence of Christian Jews show the error of separating Israel and the Church too much.

#### 8. God Made a Series of Covenants.

All of God's dealings with Man are covenantal. A covenant is a contract, an agreement between two or more parties, with promises and conditions. The first covenant was the Covenant of Works with Adam as representative for all men. Adam broke it, and sinners are still under its curse. God made another covenant with Noah and his family, which also failed. Then there was the covenant with Abraham, with a later subsection added through Moses. Israel failed to keep this covenant, too. There were also several individual covenants, such as with David. Each of these marked a new stage in God's dealings with Man. Each ended in failure. But each also laid the foundation for a fulfillment of them all through the last and greatest of all the covenants.

#### 9. Jesus Christ Made the New Covenant.

Just as all God's dealings with men are covenantal and are through Christ, the perfect revelation of God, so it was fitting that Christ would make the greatest covenant of all. It was predicted here and there in the OT, especially Jer. 31:31-34, and was sealed in Christ's blood. Unlike the others, this one is perfect and unbreakable. It is the Covenant of Covenants. God keeps His part and guarantees that we keep ours, for in one sense Christ has kept all the conditions on our side for us. This fulfills and supersedes all the previous

ones.

10. Christ Inaugurated the Kingdom of God.

Another key feature to God's progressive plan is the Kingdom of God. In one sense, God rules over all things. In another, Israel was meant to be the Kingdom. In another, believers have always been in it. Christ the King brought it in and is now expanding it through the Church. One day, the plan of history will be fulfilled when the Messiah King returns and consummates the Kingdom of God.

## **The Universal Church**

Basic Christian Doctrines 42

### 1. The Church is God's Special People.

All people belong to God because He is their Creator. But in a more important sense, there is a select group that is God's special people. They are called the Church. The word Church is ECCLESIA. It means gathering, assembly, congregation, group. It consists of those who have been "called out". We were initially called out by election, then in our conversion. Called out and called into Christ. It is called the Church of God (Acts 20:28). Christ called it "My Church" (Matt.16:18).

### 2. The Universal Church Includes All True Believers.

All believers and only believers are in this Church. We call it the Universal Church, not because it includes all men everywhere, but because it includes believers from every tribe, nation, and language (Rev. 5:9). It includes men and women, young and old, rich and poor, slave and free, intellectuals and uneducated. We also refer to it as the Invisible Church, because it is not limited to any one place. The theory of Landmarkism says there is only the local visible Church, not a universal invisible Church. But the NT speaks of this Church in the collective singular (as in Matt. 16:18) as well as in the individual plural (Churches of Ephesus, Colossae, etc). Unbelievers may belong to the local church, but are not part of the true Universal Church.

### 3. The Church is Not Any One Denomination.

The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the only true Church. Many cults make the same claim. The fact is that those groups are not part of the true Church at all because they teach essential heresy. Nor is the true Church limited to any denomination that is true in doctrine. Some Landmark Baptists think that theirs is the only true Church because it is in the chain-link going back to John the Baptist and Christ. This is the same error of "apostolic succession" of Catholicism, viz, that the true Church is one denomination and must be in an organized union going back to the NT. But the true Church is a spiritual organism, not a Man-made organization. The Universal Church has members in a variety of denominations, and no one group is the one and only Church.

### 4. True Church Unity is in Christ.

Christ prayed for His Church to be one (John 17). But how is this accomplished? Not through one denomination, nor through the ecumenical movement, which throws out the Gospel and brings in heresy. Rather, true unity is by Christ Himself. It is brought about by the Holy Spirit, fostered by love and protected by peaceful relations between Christians. This is one of the main themes of Ephesians. This unity is not to be seen in the thing called "Christendom", which includes all churches and people who give the broadest and vaguest professions of being Christian. By far most of them are not part of the true Church at all, for they are not united to Christ in a spiritual way.

### 5. The Church is Not a Cult.

Ecumenism is too inclusive - it includes far too many people in the Church. The cults are too exclusive - they exclude too many. Actually, neither are part of the true Church. Cults are united, not by Christ or the Spirit or the truth, but by a charismatic leader, anti-social tendencies among their members, weird practices or heresies, and other unbiblical things. The true Church is related to Christ and is not cultic.



6. The Church is the House of God.

God uses a variety of metaphors to describe the Church. One is that the Church is a house. Ephesians describes it like this: Christ is the chief cornerstone, the apostles and prophets are the foundation, believers are individual bricks which are connected to each other by the Spirit and love. We are to edify (build up) each other, and thereby build up the Church. A local Church may meet in a building, but the Church consists of people, not wood or metal or bricks. We are the House of God.

7. The Church is the Family of God.

God also likens His people to a family. God is the Father, Christ is our older brother, we are brothers and sisters of each other. There are no cousins or grandchildren in this family. One enters this family by the new birth, not physical birth. One does not enter it because his physical parents are in it. One day, the entire family will be together in Heaven. This special family is more important than our physical families, for natural relations are for this life only. It is the blood of Christ, not parental or racial blood, that runs through this Family.

8. The Church is the Body of Christ.

Another popular way to describe the Church is to liken it to a human body. This is discussed in Ephesians, Colossians, I Cor. 12-14, Rom. 12, and elsewhere. Christ is the head of the body. Note two things. First, Christ is the only head. The Pope claims to be the head, but that would make the Church a monster with two heads. Nor is any king the head. In some countries (e.g., England), the reigning monarch claims to be the head of the Church. No one but Christ is the head of the universal or even the local Church. Second, Christ has only one body. He is not the head of false bodies like Islam or Buddhism. Each Christian is a member of this Body and needs all other members and should minister to others.

9. The Church is the Bride of Christ.

A very dear metaphor for the Church is the figure of it being the very Bride of Jesus Christ. Christ never married any one woman (let alone many, as taught by Mormonism!). Rather, He is married to each and every true believer. Romanism teaches that nuns are special brides of Christ, but that too is wrong. Each of us are brides, and especially all of us together. The order is this: we were betrothed to Christ in eternity, engaged to Him in conversion, and will be finally united to Him in the consummation of heavenly marriage after the Second Coming. In the OT, Israel was meant to be the bride of God, but proved to be adulterous. The true remnant of Israel was part of the bride of Christ, for this bride is a spiritual and not a national or physical bride. God has one bride, not two. Therefore, true Israel and the Church form the one bride.

10. The Church is the Temple of God.

There are many other wonderful metaphors for this great people of God called the Church, but none is so wonderful as that of it being the Temple of God. In one sense, the entire universe is a temple of God's glory. In another sense, Israel was meant to be it. Then there was the Tabernacle and then the Temple. These were all preparatory to Christ, who Himself is the final Temple. We are united to Christ and thereby become part of this Temple. A Temple is where God shows His special glory and presence. God is everywhere, but especially in and among His people who are united to Christ. Each of us is a Temple of the Spirit, and together form this great Temple. Our main purpose is to be

the place where God shows His glory and where we reflect it back to Him in worship.  
This is true in each locality and perfectly one day in Heaven.

## **The Local Church**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 43

#### 1. The Local Church is Part of the Universal Church.

The local Church is that visible part of the invisible church in a given locality. It does not include every believer in the world, only a few. It is part of the larger group, just as each believer is part of the Church at large. In one way, the two should match each other. All members of the Universal Church should be members of a Local Church (sadly, some are not). Conversely, all who are members of the Local Church should be members of the Universal Church (sadly, many are not). Just as there was an Israel within Israel (Rom. 9:6, 27), so there is a Church within the Church, as it were. The NT speaks of local churches in Ephesus, Colossae, etc, localized by cities, not nations, class, race, etc.

#### 2. The Main Purpose of the Local Church is Worship.

Worship is the prime directive, the *raison d'être*, our reason for existence. This is true of both the Universal and the Local Church. A local body does not exist for good things which are not essential, such as pot luck suppers. Some NT churches engaged in a meal called the agape (I Cor.10-11). It could be useful, but was to be cancelled if detrimental to essential purposes of the church. Nor is charity our main purpose for being. We exist here for the same reason we will in Heaven: worship. Nothing should hinder this purpose or detract from it. Worship is not "having a good time". It is not fun, entertainment, or emotionalism. It is the reception and reflection of God's glory. It is meant to please God (entertain Him, if you will), not us. Any local church that does not worship God is failing in its purpose. If it doesn't get back on track, it should close its doors. Each Christian can and should worship God alone everywhere, but especially together in the Church.

#### 3. Worship is to Be Regulated by the Word of God.

God tells us how He will be worshipped, and He tells us how in the Bible alone. He does not leave it to our imaginations, for we are prone to idolatry, which is the very opposite of worship. Nor does He leave it to majority vote, fads or fashions, what is popular at the moment, etc. Nor does He allow us to borrow from pagan forms of worship. We call this the Regulative Principle of Worship. God is not pleased with our little inventions, gimmicks, etc. On the other hand, true Biblical worship is pleasing to God. God will reveal His glory to His people only through Biblical means, and in turn will receive only Biblical worship. Done properly, it is spiritually uplifting, not boring. It is the very vestibule of Heaven on Earth. We should therefore strive to follow it.

#### 4. The Church is to Build Up Its Members.

This is the second main priority of the Local Church. We are to edify one another, individually and collectively. We can do this through fellowship, use of our spiritual gifts, encouragement, charity, and other means. When the Church comes together, the main means by which it is edified individually and collectively is through the faithful preaching of the Word of God. All members are to be involved in the work of mutual edification. The strong have a special responsibility to help the weak. By ministering to each other, we minister to Christ.

#### 5. The Church is to Preach the Gospel.

This is the third major purpose of the local Church. All Christians are to spread the Gospel. But there is a sense in which we are to do it together (prayer, encouragement,

etc). Without it, we get lazy and fat and self-centered. With evangelism, we retain spiritual vitality.

6. All Christians Should Belong to a Local Church.

Membership in a local church is not an optional extra. It is commanded by God. Failure to do so is rebuked in Heb. 10:25. We all need to be members of a local Body, under the guidance of God-ordained elders, accountable to them and the Body. God permits no "lone ranger" believers. We are sheep that need to be in a flock with shepherds. We are to be members of a team. We may shop around for a while to find a good one within a reasonable distance, but there is a difference between church-shopping and church-hopping. We are to be members, too, not merely guests. And one can belong to only one local church at a time.

7. Only Christians May Belong to a Local Church.

Just as there are only true saints in the Universal Church, there ought to be only true believers in each Local Church. The Bible teaches a "regenerate-only membership". A candidate needs to give a valid profession of faith, including evidence of being born-again and an acceptance of the basics of the Gospel. A membership that is part Christian, part non-Christian is a recipe for eventual disaster. Israel in the wilderness was a mixed multitude, and their problems often began with the Egyptians who tagged along. Unbelievers are to be removed from the membership roll, but are to be encouraged to attend.

8. A Church Should Have One Main Weekly Meeting.

I Cor. 10 and 11 and elsewhere describes this under the phrase "when you come together". God has always had an appointed time and place of worship for His people. Today, it is the local church meeting on the Lord's Day. Sunday is not the Sabbath in the sense that the main duty is to refrain from work. It is the Lord's Day, in which the main duty is worship with God's people. Much of the pattern of the meeting of the NT local church was patterned after the meetings of the Jewish synagogue. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory, not optional. All Christians should attend and participate, unless providentially hindered by legitimate excuses (illness, being out of town, in jail, works of mercy, etc). Sadly, too many saints allow sports, family visitors, rest from Saturday activities, TV shows, and other such trivia to keep them from what God commands for their good.

9. The Weekly Meeting includes Several Activities.

The Bible mentions several things that are essential to this weekly meeting. One is the reading of the Scriptures. Another is the public preaching and teaching of the Bible by a gifted man (not woman). Then there is prayer, the singing of hymns, evangelism, fellowship, weekly Communion, the use of spiritual gifts, baptism, the collection, and perhaps one or two others. Optional are things like pot luck suppers and foot-washing. Forbidden are things which are not in Scripture. There is liberty within Biblical lines as to how the legitimate functions may take place (who, how long, what order, etc).

10. The Church Should Strive to Conform to God's Ideal.

No local church is perfect. All need improvement. Occasionally God may send revival. We can pray for it and repent of anything that hinders it, but only God can send it. On the other hand, we can and must work hard for true reformation. We need to be "reformed and always reforming" so as better to conform to God's ideal as laid down in the Bible.

No church has the luxury of coasting, nor of being defeated by lethargy. It is Christ's Church and it is our privilege and duty to be in it and work for it to His glory.

## **Church Government**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 44

#### 1. The Local Church Should Be Independent.

God has ordained each local church as an entity in itself. There is no warrant in the Bible for denominations. Indeed, passages such as I Cor.1 would forbid denominations. A local church can and should be friendly with other local churches. They can co-operate in a variety of things. But there is to be no outside meddling or authority. The only exception to this was in the days of the Apostles. But there are no more Apostles. The council in Acts 15 was supervised by Apostles. Any council today may be useful for consultation, but can carry no authority. Thus, there are no denominations, headquarters, official canons, or the like.

#### 2. Church and State are Separate.

God has ordained three basic institutions: the family, the State and the Church. None may encroach upon the sphere of the others. The Kingdom of the State may not exert authority in the Church. The theory of Erastianism says that the reigning monarch is the head of the Church, as in England. But the Bible does not permit State churches. Nor does it permit Church states, such as a theocracy (except for OT Israel). State citizenship cannot equal church membership. Taxes and tithes are different. The State must not persecute the Church. It has the power of the sword over criminals, but not the power of the Word over Christians. Nor is the Pope over either State or Church. Christians may and should be involved in State functions as good citizens, but Church and State must be distinct kingdoms. Neither rules the other.

#### 3. The Bible is the Final Authority in the Church.

Creeds, confessions of faith, catechisms and constitutions are useful. But they are not final. Only the Bible is final. Tradition ("the way we have always done things around here") is also subject to the Bible. Catholicism reverses all this by placing the authority of the Church over that of Scripture, whereas the only authority any church or officer has is through the Word of God. No pastor is the "king of the congregation". Only Christ is King and rules by His Word.

#### 4. Church Constitutions Are Useful.

Though not the final authority, church constitutions can indeed serve a useful purpose. They state exactly where a local church officially stands on certain doctrines and practices. Otherwise, church government easily degenerates into mob rule. Many groups, especially some cults, say they have no constitution. Some "Brethren" churches also disdain constitutions. But upon further investigation, almost all have some sort of written agreement. Secret documents are dangerous, so a church constitution should be open for all to read.

#### 5. Church Government is Neither Democratic Nor Dictatorial.

The local church is not a pure democracy, in which every person has the same vote as everybody else. That idea is from pagan Greece, not the Bible. It is even questionable whether members are allowed to vote at all, except on the approval of deacons. What if a majority of new believers outnumbered the mature believers, and took over and went off onto strange fads? Children don't rule their parents. Members are to follow their leaders (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). The leaders are not to be dictators, but to imitate the loving serving

leadership of Christ (I Pet.5:2-3).

6. Elders Are Ordained by God to Rule the Church.

God has chosen to raise up those who are called elders. The word for elder is PRESBUTEROS, from which we get the word presbyter. Originally the word meant older man, who exerted authority by reason of the wisdom of his years. Later it came to be a word in Greek that referred to a local magistrate (cf. alderman). In the NT, it refers to those who are God-ordained to exert authority in the local church. They rule by the Word. They need not be older, but neither should they be new converts or children. In addition to spiritual maturity, I Tim.3 and Titus I lists many other requisite qualifications. They are to be men only, not women (I Tim.2:11).

7. Elders, Pastors and Bishops are the Same.

Two other important terms are used to describe this office. One is the word pastor, which means shepherd. Actually, he is an under-shepherd, under the Chief Shepherd (I Pet.5:4). Shepherds are to look after the sheep, that is, members of their local flock. They are to provide food and water (the Word of God), tend to their personal needs (like counselling, visitation, encouragement), warn them of danger (rebuke, church discipline, warning of wolves, etc), and so on. Then there is the word bishop, used in Titus I and elsewhere. This is not someone in authority over the pastors of many local churches, as taught by Rome, Episcopalianism, Methodism and others. A bishop is simply an overseer, a superintendent, a leader. It is the same office as pastor and elder.

8. There are No Priests, Cardinals or Popes in Scripture.

The Bible gives elders and deacons, but no other officers. Every believer is a priest. There is no separate office for priest or vicar in the NT comparable to the priests or Levites in the OT. Bishops are elders. There isn't even the slightest hint of anything like cardinals in the Bible. And the only parallel to the idea of Pope in Scripture is the one who sets himself above the Church of God claiming rights for himself which belong to Christ alone (2 Thess.2). There was a High Priest in the OT, but the NT fulfillment is Christ, not the Pope. Nor are there other offices, such as "The Prophet" (as in Mormonism). Some churches say they have Apostles, but the Biblical Apostles had a unique office. The only apostles that continue are simply missionaries.

9. Elders are Equal in Authority.

The Bible teaches that there should be a plurality of elders in each local church. This is a safeguard against any one pastor from having too much authority. A lone authority is easily corrupted. One elder may serve "full-time" and be financially paid by the church, but he has no more authority than the others. Elders are thus accountable to each other. Together they form a team of leadership and service.

10. Deacons are Servants of the Church.

Elders are to rule, deacons are to serve. Deacons do not have authority. Yet they are to be highly qualified and spiritually mature. They are not as essential to the church as elders. Still, they fill a very useful place in the ongoing work of the local church. Their major work is to tend to the physical needs of church members, such as the poor, ill and elderly. Maintenance of church property and finances are also their job. It would seem from passages like Luke 8:2-3 and I Tim.3:11 that women may serve as deaconesses, especially in areas of service to other women (especially widows) and where women are naturally more gifted than men. Elders are selected by elders, deacons by the whole

church under the approval of the elders.



## **The Sacraments**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 45

#### 1. God Has Always Given His People Religious Ceremonies.

God has always had a people. God has always commanded them to worship Him. God has always given them distinct ways in which to worship Him. God has always provided them with ceremonies which are fitting to their point in time. For instance, OT worship was very elaborate in the Temple. It included incense, animal sacrifices, priestly garments, etc. It was very detailed and prescribed. Yet God's approved ceremonies have always been mainly symbolic in nature. These are called sacraments because they are holy ceremonies. They are also called ordinances, for they are ordained by God.

#### 2. The New Testament Ceremonies Replace the Old Testament Ceremonies.

Most of the OT ceremonies revolved around animal sacrifices in the Temple. These prefigured Christ. When the sun rose, the shadows fled away. We do not need sacrifices, altars and priests any longer. Circumcision was another OT sacrament that was a badge that one was a member of Israel. It has been replaced by baptism, with several modifications (for those in Spiritual Israel, women and not just men). Most, if not all, NT ceremonies symbolize the same things that had been prefigured in the OT ceremonies. Circumcision is now needless, except possibly for medical purposes. The NT ceremonies are far fewer and far more simple than in the OT, for NT worship is more spiritual.

#### 3. There Are Only Two Sacraments.

The Catholic Church says there are 7 (baptism, Mass, confirmation, penance, holy orders, marriage, last rites), but the NT knows only 2. There is no sacrament of confirmation, nor penance. Ministerial ordination is Biblical, but is not quite a sacrament. Laying on of hands and prayer for the sick are Biblical, as is anointing with oil; but again, these are not quite sacraments. Some churches feel that foot-washing is a sacrament, but it seems rather to be an optional practice like the agape (love feast). Other groups, such as the Salvation Army and some Ultra-Dispensational groups think that baptism and Communion are no longer valid. But Christ ordained them for the Church until He returns.

#### 4. The Sacraments Are Not Magic.

Sacraments are primarily symbolic in nature. They do not automatically confer grace or spiritual benefits "ex opere operato", like if we say the magic words or wave our hands in the right way. That is what is called magic and is pagan in nature. The Bible teaches that we are to practice the sacraments, but we need to beware of the over-emphasis on them found in some churches. We must resist the lure of sacralism, sacramentalism, sacerdotalism, liturgicalism, ritualism and other forms of magic and priestcraft. The true spiritual power is in the Word by the Spirit. Nevertheless, we should not go to the opposite extreme in devaluing them.

#### 5. Water Baptism in the First Sacrament.

The first sacrament for which a Christian is eligible is baptism in water. Ideally it should be done by total immersion. It need not be by "trine" immersion (dipping 3 times). The use of the name of the Trinity is important, but is not a magic formula. Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin, union with Christ, identification with His death and resurrection, and the inner baptism with the Holy Spirit.

6. Baptism is for Believers Only.

All the commands for baptism lay down the condition of faith/repentance. Infants and unbelievers do not meet this condition any more than bells or horses, and so are not eligible. Nearly every example in the NT shows that the one being baptized made a profession of faith. The overwhelming pattern is clear: faith must precede baptism. There are no commands nor examples of infants being baptized. Infant baptism usually is associated with baptismal regeneration. Even in churches that deny baptismal regeneration, they tend to presume that the baby is/has been/will be regenerated somehow. This is leftover baggage from Roman Catholicism. Infant baptism manufactures millions of false Christians, and sends them to Hell with false assurance.

7. Baptism Follows Salvation.

One who comes to faith in Christ and is saved is commanded to be baptized. Ideally this should be done soon thereafter. But it is important to realize that water baptism in no shape or form produces salvation. The thief on the cross died unbaptized. Simon Magus was baptized but was never saved. Baptismal regeneration is a dangerous heresy taught by Rome, Episcopalianism, Lutheranism, most Methodists, many Presbyterians, the Church of Christ, the Christian Church, the Disciples of Christ, many cults, Greek Orthodoxy and others. Some say it doesn't produce salvation, it only completes it. Others say it infuses saving grace which needs to be cultivated or else will be lost. Whatever form it takes, it is heresy of the first order. Salvation is totally by grace through faith by the Word and Spirit, not by water.

8. The Lord's Supper is the Second Sacrament.

The second holy ordinance is variously called the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table, Communion or the Eucharist. It is mainly symbolic in nature, typifying the death and resurrection of Christ. The bread and wine do not change, as supposed in the Catholic heresy of the Mass. Nor do they automatically infuse grace. Ideally, the NT order is: conversion, baptism, Communion. But one wonders if we should refuse Communion to a born-again believer who has not yet been baptized. Scripture allows for some things that are acceptable, though not ideal. The Supper basically replaces all the OT sacrifices, especially Passover.

9. The Lord's Supper is for Believers Only.

There are conditions for the proper taking of Communion which exclude infants and unbelievers: self-examination, faith, repentance, remembering Christ, discerning the Body. The idea of infant Communion is unbiblical, superstitious and dangerous. Communion is for all believers, except those who have been excommunicated from a local church. Unbelievers and backslidden believers should be warned not to partake.

10. The Lord's Supper is a Special Time of Communion with Christ.

The Supper is symbolic, but not merely symbolic. It is a time to renew one's faith in the Lord Jesus, draw near to Him in prayer, and commune with Him heart-to-heart in deepest spiritual intimacy. I Cor. 10:16 is the classic verse here. The spiritual experience is not magically produced by the elements or a priest, but by the Holy Spirit through means of the Word of God. Appropriate Scripture ought to be read at each Communion. I Cor. 10 and 11 also make Communion an integral part of the weekly meeting of the Church. It ought to be practiced in a holy and worthy manner, seriously and joyfully, looking back to the Cross and forward to the Second Coming of our Lord.

## Death

### Basic Christian Doctrines 46

#### 1. All of Us Will Die.

Death is an important and serious subject. It ought not to be ignored or laughed at. Everyone will die sooner or later. Some die young, some old. Some by accidents, some by illness. Death is no respecter of persons. Only 2 people entered this world in an unusual way (Adam and Eve), and only 2 people left it without dying (Enoch and Elijah). Even Mary and the Apostles all died. Only Christians who are alive at the time of the Second Coming will escape death. The genealogies in Genesis frequently say, "So-and-so lived so many years and he died." People have devised all sorts of ways to avoid death; none have been successful.

#### 2. Death is the Result of Sin.

"The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). We earned death. We have a death penalty on us. "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezek. 18:4). God told Adam that he would die if he sinned. If Adam had never sinned, he never would have died. Through him, sin and death entered the world (Rom. 5:10). Even Christians die, for we still have Original Sin in us. Sin brings death like conception brings life (James 1:15).

#### 3. The Soul Leaves the Body at Death.

There are a variety of ways in which scientists and doctors have tried to define death. The most popular is that death is when all brain waves totally cease. That may be the best biological answer. But there is a more important definition. According to the Bible, death occurs when the soul leaves the body. "The body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). Jesus died by voluntarily yielding His spirit into the Father's hands (Luke 23:46). The body is either buried or cremated, but will turn to dust; while the spirit returns to face God (Eccl.12:7). The soul enters at conception and leaves at death.

#### 4. There is No Reincarnation or Second Chance.

There are many false ideas about what happens at death and after death. The Bible alone is our only sure guide. One of the most popular errors about death is that it opens the door to a new life via reincarnation. The idea comes from Hinduism and Buddhism, not the Bible. Heb. 9:27 says that it is appointed for us once to die, and then Judgement Day follows. Our doom is sealed at death. There is no second chance after death. Sinners do not get to hear the Gospel in the next world, nor are they sent back here for another shot at being a good person. God has occasionally raised a person from the dead, but even they later died.

#### 5. Death is Both an Enemy and a Friend.

Death comes as either an enemy or a friend, depending on whether that person is ready to meet God. I Cor. 15:26 calls death an "enemy". It is not friendly. It was not a part of the original Creation. Sinners may mock death, but when it arrives they will be terrified. The Death Angel will be sent by God to strike sinners dead at their appointed time. He will take no excuses or bribes; his errand is always accomplished. On the other hand, God sends angels to usher the souls of dying Christians to Heaven (Luke 16:22). All pain is past; only pleasure awaits us. In this sense, death is a friend to believers. Thomas Goodwin the Puritan said before he died, "He whom I feared as an enemy has come as a beloved friend." Psa. 116:15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His

saints."

#### 6. The Souls of the Dead Are Conscious.

There are many false ideas about what happens after death. One is that the souls of the dead cease to exist. That is the Devil's lie. Another false notion is that souls are alive, but are unconscious. This is the theory called Soul-Sleep. It, too, is wrong. The souls of both saints and sinners are wide awake. The metaphor of sleep is applied to their bodies, not their spirits. Their bodies "sleep" in the grave, in the sense that they will one day be awakened at their future resurrection. The story of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Luke 16 clearly tells us that both Christians and non-Christians are wide awake and fully conscious after death. This is the mysterious realm of the Intermediate State, which is that place and period between individual death and final destiny.

#### 7. Believers Go Immediately to Paradise.

The very moment a believer in Christ dies, his soul goes to be with Christ. The dying thief went to Paradise (Luke 23:43). Sometimes this place is called Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16:22) or the Third Heaven (2 Cor. 12:2,4). It is Heaven as it is now, not the New Heaven that is yet future. It is perfect bliss and peace, for we are with God. The Bible says that we go to be "with the Lord" when we die (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). Their bodies are still back on Earth, their souls in glory.

#### 8. There is No Purgatory.

The Catholic Church teaches that believers first go to a place of preparation called Purgatory. It is a place of fire and torment in which sins are burned out of us to purge us of all Original Sin and its taint. People supposedly stay there for varying lengths of time, some running into the thousands of years. But all make it to Heaven, and so Purgatory is said to be a blessing. But none of this is taught in the Bible. Christians go immediately to be with Christ - is Christ in Purgatory? We go to immediate happiness - is there joy in torment? All sin and its effects are left in our bodies. Our souls are immediately freed from the presence of sin and we are made perfect in a moment (Heb. 12:23). Only the blood of Christ cleanses from sin.

#### 9. Unbelievers Immediately Go to Hades.

Those who die in their sins go straight to Hades. This is the present state of Hell, not the future form called Gehenna. Sinners are there in their souls, not their bodies, which are still on Earth. Hades is a place of firey torment. But it is temporary, not permanent. It is the holding place for sinners until they go before God at the Last Judgement. This does not mean that their final doom is uncertain. No one in Hades will ever make it to Heaven, nor will anyone in Paradise make it to eternal Hell. The intermediate states match the final ends.

#### 10. We Should Be Prepared to Die.

Since death is inevitable and can come at any time, it is vitally important that we all be ready to die. But because death leads us to God and judgement, sinners have devised many alternative theories. One popular one today is the nonsense of "out of body experiences", in which a person supposedly dies, sees a bright light, has great peace, then re-enters his body, never to fear death again. It is a lie of the Devil. Death is a rude awakening to reality. Believers need to get their houses in order, too. And we need to warn unbelievers of their doom and tell them the only way to escape the penalty for sin. We need to invite them to go to Heaven with us.

## **Future Events**

### Basic Christian Doctrines 47

#### 1. Good and Evil Will Continue.

God foreordained the future and knows what will happen. He has revealed some of these events to us in advance. The Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13 tells us that weeds will grow in the field with the wheat until the harvest. That is, there will be unbelievers and believers in the world until the end. Some Christians optimistically think that Christianity will be so successful that there will be virtually no unbelievers left when Christ returns. Others think the opposite - there will be almost no Christians left. The truth is that both will continue.

#### 2. There Will Be a Great Revival of Jews Coming to Christ.

Romans 11 describes a significant aspect of how the world will continue until the Second Coming. God promised that many of Abraham's descendants would be blessed and through them the whole world would be blessed. The primary fulfillment of this is through Christ (Gal.3). Then there is the way in which the Church fulfills this as the spiritual children of Abraham. There is yet a third way this will be fulfilled. One day, God will stir up large numbers of Jews to a kind of jealousy as they reclaim Jesus as their Messiah. Many, perhaps most, Jews will become Christians. In turn, this will stir up the Gentiles at large to come to Christ in large numbers. This has not yet happened, but must happen before Christ returns. In this way, the Abrahamic Covenant is fulfilled through Christ and the New Covenant. Israel will not be specially blessed merely because of race, but by faith in Christ.

#### 3. There Will Be a Time of Great Persecution.

Various texts predict that persecution will continue to the end. We have seen periods of greater and lesser persecution. Many scholars interpret some of these texts as predicting a time of Great Tribulation, in which Christians are severely persecuted right before the end. Much of the question revolves around Matt.24. Some think this refers to the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD; others see it as all future; still others as both; and yet others as symbolic of church history in general. The best answer is that there was great tribulation for Israel in 70 AD. There has been recurring tribulation for the church throughout history. But there will yet come a time of one last major tribulation right before the end.

#### 4. Antichrist Will Be Revealed.

Christ said many false prophets and false messiahs would come. 2 Thess. 2 predicts a special one called the Man of Sin. I John 2:18 says there will be one main Antichrist and many lesser antichrists. Some would identify this person with the Beast of Rev. 13 and other figures. Others say he is not an individual but a system, like the Papacy. It would seem that he is the Satanic counterpart of Christ: a sort of incarnation of Satan. Much of the world will follow him in his assault on God's people, but he is doomed to be defeated by Christ at the Second Coming.

#### 5. Christ Will Remove Christians from the World.

Right before He returns to Earth, Jesus will take living Christians to Heaven without dying, like Enoch and Elijah. We call this the Rapture. See I Thess.4, I Cor. 15, John 14. It is an instantaneous transformation and glorification. Some think this will happen 7 years before Christ returns (i.e., before a future 7-year Tribulation), but that would mean

2 Second Comings. Christ does this immediately before He comes.

6. Dead Christians Will Be Raised from the Dead.

Moments before He takes living Christians from the Earth, Christ will raise up all dead believers, including OT believers. They receive new bodies that are perfect, immortal and without sin. Their resurrection and the Rapture of living saints both happen in a split-second. Just as angels assist in our deaths, so they will assist in this great event as they announce His coming and come with Him. No Christian will be left out, regardless of whether he was buried, cremated or eaten by lions. We will enter eternity with those new bodies. We will not marry or procreate, nor feel pain or death in them. They will be like the perfect body in which the Lord Jesus was raised. I Cor. 15 describes this.

7. Christ Will Rule on Earth for 1000 Years.

Rev. 20 is the classic place in the Bible on this. While some Christians think this period is symbolic of church history at large, or maybe the great revival of Jews and Gentiles toward the end, the plain meaning of the text is straightforward. Christ returns, defeats His enemies, reigns personally with His people for 1000 years, then defeats an enemy uprising, followed by the resurrection of the lost and the Last Judgement. The key is the two separate resurrections. The resurrection of Christians (the First Resurrection) is explicitly said to be separate from the resurrection of unbelievers by 1000 years. Since both are future events, the conclusion is that the interval is also future.

8. Unbelievers Will Be Raised from the Dead.

John 5:25, Dan. 12:2, Rev. 20 and other passages say that all people will be raised up one day, including unbelievers. Those who die in their sins will be taken out of Hades, reunited with their bodies, and stay in those bodies forever in Hell. Their bodies will be different than those of Christians. Their bodies will be corruptible, filled with pain and ugliness, always dying but never ceasing to exist. They used their bodies for sinful pleasure, therefore it is fitting that they pay for those sins by physical torment. None will be excluded.

9. All Will Appear Before the Last Judgement.

After the Millenium, all people will have been raised and will appear before God. Everyone who has ever lived will be there. All history has been recorded and will be replayed as evidence. Believers will be exonerated, not because they are innocent, but because their names are in the Book of Life: elected, redeemed, saved. They will receive extra rewards according to how they served Christ. Unbelievers, however, will be damned. Their names are not in the Book of Life. They have no excuse or escape, no second chance or higher appeal. Before they are executed, they will be forced to bow before the Lord Jesus and confess that He is Lord after all. Then they will be sent to Hell forever. The Last Judgement is predicted over and over in Scripture, such as in Matt. 25 and Rev. 20. Christ will be the Judge, Jury and Executioner.

10. God Will Refashion the Universe.

Immediately after the Last Judgement, God will cleanse the universe of the effects of sin. The curse on Creation will be lifted. It will be a sort of cosmic resurrection. 2 Peter 3 describes it like a great meltdown, after which it will be re-molded into something even greater. Rev. 21 and Isa. 66 describe it as "New Heavens and New Earth". Other texts call it the "reconciliation of all things". It is the last main event in time as such, and the beginning of the eternal state. The glory of God will shine through this Creation as never

before.

## **The Second Coming**

Basic Christian Doctrines 48

### 1. Jesus Christ Will Return to the Earth.

The Bible records hundreds of prophecies that Christ will return. Thus, God has promised it over and over. It is absolutely sure and inevitable. Jesus Himself said that He will return (John 14:3). All history awaits this great event, which will be as important to history as Christ's first coming was. We call it the Second Coming as per Heb. 9:28. Jews who reject Christ as Messiah still await the first coming. The Bible describes this great event as His coming, His revelation, His appearing. He will return, descend, invade and intervene. There will be nothing like it in the history of the world.

### 2. His Second Coming Will Be Different from His First Coming.

Both comings were predicted by prophets. Both had been foreordained by God. The same Jesus who came will come again (the Second Coming is not the coming of a second Messiah, like Sun Myung Moon). But there are also big differences. He will not come as a baby, but as an adult. He will not come as a servant, but as a king. He will not come in relative obscurity, but openly for all to behold. He will not come in humility, but in victory. He will not come to die, but to execute. Those who saw the first coming generally saw Him only as a man, but at the next coming we will see Him as the God-Man. He came veiled in secrecy, He will return in full glory. It won't be by birth at Bethlehem, but from the sky on a white horse. It will be far greater than we can imagine.

### 3. Christ Has Not Returned Yet.

All sorts of theories have been spun to say that Jesus has already returned. Some say He returned in 70 AD at the Destruction of Jerusalem. However, 2 Peter, Jude, I John and probably Revelation were written after 70 AD and looked forward to His return. Others say that Pentecost was the Second Coming. No, that was the special coming of the Spirit, not of Jesus. Still others say the Second Coming refers to our conversions or even our deaths. No. In the one, Christ comes into us spiritually, but that is radically different from the Second Coming. At death, we go to be with Him; He does not come to be with us. Then there are cults who say that Jesus returned invisibly in 1914, 1917, or other dates. But the Second Coming will be open for all to see, and He will judge unrepentant sinners.

### 4. No One Knows When Christ Will Return.

People have been guessing for centuries when Christ will return. They have all been wrong. God simply has not revealed the date, not even information from which we could deduce an approximate date. God alone knows (Mark 13:32). Beware those who think they can add up numbers in the Bible and name the date. It may be centuries away for all we know. Our job is to get the Gospel out, not pry into unrevealed secrets (Acts 1).

### 5. There Will Be Only One Second Coming.

There is a popular but erroneous theory that says there will be more than one Second Coming. It is called the Pre-Tribulation Rapture Theory. It says that Christ will come halfway to Earth in a cloud, take us out of Earth, then come again all the way to Earth 7 years later. This would be a second and third coming. But the terms coming, appearing, revelation and descent all are interchangeable and refer to the same event. There is no "secret coming" of Christ. The theory is sensational and popular, but is not found in the



Bible. Christ does several things together at the one Second Coming, not separately at a second and third comings.

6. Christ Will Return Visibly.

"Every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7). Christ compared it to the lightning that is seen from one end of the sky to the other (Matt.24:27). Believers will see Him and rejoice.

Unbelievers will see and recoil in terror. They will plead for the mountains to fall on them (Rev.6). He will return with the blast of a trumpet and shout of an angel. That will be loud enough to wake the dead. It will be seen and heard and felt by all. It is open and plain, not secret. He will appear in blazing fire and glorious splendor (2 Thess. 1).

7. Christ Will Come with Angels and Saints.

Christ will not be alone when He comes. He will come with millions of angels (2 Thess. 1:7). He will be accompanied by a heavenly entourage of archangels, seraphim, cherubim, guardian angels, principalities and powers, all with swords drawn and following His lead. Christ will also be accompanied by His people. He will bring with Him the souls of those saints who have already died, and will reunite their souls with their bodies as He comes. He will then take all living Christians to be with Him in the descent from the sky in a cloud. All together, there will be millions and millions, all aglow with the glory of God. But it is the Lord Jesus who is the center and focal point of it all.

8. Christ Will Defeat His Enemies.

One of the major reasons for the Second Coming is to defeat all ungodly enemies of God. He will slay all unbelievers with the sword of His mouth (Rev. 19). He will be ablaze in flaming fire that will go forth like a flame-thrower or laser. None will escape. He will come to begin the work of judgement on them for their sins. They will know for sure that He is Lord and King. But it will be too late for salvation. Christ will also execute judgement on Satan and the Antichrist at this time (Rev. 19:20). They will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. Satan will not be able to resist, but will crumble like a cobweb under a tank. Christ will come in overwhelming power and victory.

9. Christ Will Rescue and Vindicate His People.

Christ will rescue His people who have been persecuted. He will snatch them away from the clutches of the Antichrist. He will also vindicate them and show that they were right after all. See 2 Thess. 1. He will rescue us from death, pain, and especially sin. It will be the culmination of His wonderful work of redemption for us. That is why the Bible calls it the blessed hope (Tit. 2:13). Every Christian longs to be alive to witness this. But whether we are dead or alive, we will both witness and experience it. We will be on the winning side.

10. Christ Will Appear in Glory.

Christ is already filled with glory. But that is mainly hidden from us now. At the Second Coming, the curtains will be pulled back, the wrappers will be taken off, to show what is already there. It will be the greatest of all revelations, revealing the splendor of the glory of God as nothing else in history or Creation ever has. It will be the direct and full glory of God. Christ is the living conduit of the glory of God, like a prism or funnel. The glory will be let loose like the waters flowing from a broken dam. Sinners will shudder in terror, while saints will marvel in holy awe. The curtain between Heaven and Earth, between the natural and the supernatural, will be pulled back. He will shine in the radiance of His internal pure glory as on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is His by right.

## Hell

### Basic Christian Doctrines 49

#### 1. Hell is a Real Place.

The Bible repeatedly speaks about Hell. It is real. It is not the figment of our imaginations, the invention of capitalists to enslave their workers, or a make-believe place to scare little children. It was created by God Himself. It is no myth. We are not told exactly where it is located (inside the Earth, inside the Sun, a Black Hole, somewhere outside the universe, etc). It is called by several names in Scripture: Gehenna, Outer Darkness, the Lake of Fire, the Pit. It is a place of literal fire where people go in literal physical bodies to be punished. It has fire and brimstone (sulphur) in large supply, so it is a fire that will never go out. Hell is no joke.

#### 2. Satan and Demons Will Be Thrown into Hell.

Some fallen angels have been kept in chains in a part of Hades called Tartarus (2 Pet.2:4). One day, they will be transferred to the final Hell. Other demons have been roaming around Earth, in dread of the day when they too will be consigned to eternal Hell. And Satan himself will be bound and gagged and thrown into the Lake of Fire (Rev-19). Hell was originally created for these evil angelic beings(Matt.25:41).

#### 3. All Unrepentant Sinners Will Go to Hell.

At the Last Judgement, God will take lost sinners out of Hades, where they have been waiting in torments, and re-unite them with their bodies. They will then be judged, condemned and sent straight into Hell. There will be no exceptions. No unbeliever will somehow sneak into Heaven. Nor will any true Christian be sent to Hell. Of course, no one will want to go there when they see it for what it is. People joke about it now, but not then. They will be filled with total terror as they view it in all its horrors. They will be dragged kicking and screaming by angels to be thrown alive into this fiery furnace. It is worse than being thrown alive into a raging volcano. But all their resistance will be futile, and they will melt like butter before the fury of God's holy wrath.

#### 4. Sinners Will Be Punished in Hell.

Hell is the place where God punishes sin and unrepentant sinners. Everyone is a sinner and deserves to go there. Those who go there will have no excuses or appeals. They will know that they are getting exactly what they deserve. Hell is not a penitentiary or reformatory. It is not meant to do them good. It is made to punish them by inflicting intense and eternal pain. It is not Purgatory. It is a place of absolute justice. They will be legally punished for their crimes.

#### 5. Sinners Suffer in Hell.

Those in Hell are wide awake and conscious. They wish they could die or sleep, but there is no rest there. There is only pain and torment. They will suffer all the physical pains imaginable. Every nerve-ending in their bodies will be used as conduits of pain. They will thirst, but there is no water, only molten lava. They will suffer spiritually, mentally and emotionally. There is not even the comfort from other people in Hell, for all become enemies of everyone else. They will not be punished by Satan or demons or other people. They will be punished by God Almighty Himself. They will be tormented there (Rev.14:11). This is not sadistic torture or cruelty. It is just and right punishment. The least pains in Hell will far exceed the worst pains back on Earth.

#### 6. Sinners Do Not Cease to Exist in Hell.

There is an erroneous theory that says that Hell is temporary. As soon as someone is thrown in there, he ceases to exist. Eventually Hell itself will cease to exist. That's what they think and hope. But that is not what the Bible says. They are not annihilated into oblivion. They keep on living and suffering. They will wish they could cease to exist, but divine justice will not allow them to escape their punishment. The Antichrist survived 1000 years in Hell and did not cease to exist (Rev. 20:7). Hell is not a kind of Purgatory, in which people suffer only so long and then be annihilated (if they are cleansed or if their sins have been paid for, why not let them out?). They will live forever there.

#### 7. There Are Degrees of Punishment in Hell.

Just as there are degrees of rewards in Heaven, so there are degrees of punishments in Hell. Those who never heard the Gospel will be punished for their sins against Natural Revelation. Those who heard but disbelieved will be punished worse. Those who only pretended to believe will be punished still worse, then the false prophets and preachers, then Judas, and then Satan worst of all. Those with more sins will receive more punishment, and some sins deserve more punishment than others. But even the lightest punishment is extremely intense. As Jonathan Edwards said, those in Hell would give the whole world (if they could) if they could only reduce the number of their sins by only one. But they can't.

#### 8. There is No Mercy in Hell.

On Earth, God shows some mercy and some wrath. His wrath is held in check by His common grace. But this is not so in Hell. There is no mercy whatsoever in Hell. There is nothing to hold back the full fury of the wrath of God in Hell. It is where God lets loose His infinite holy anger against sinners who have offended Him by their willful rebellion. His wrath is poured out "unmixed", pure wrath, without even a drop of mercy (Rev. 14:10). Earth is the closest that these sinners will ever get to Heaven and mercy.

#### 9. Hell is Eternal.

Hell is as eternal and everlasting as Heaven (Matt. 25:46). It never ends. Its fire is unquenchable. God's wrath is infinite and therefore will never be shut off or satisfied. God will not change His mind. Each sin deserves eternal punishment, because it is committed against an infinitely holy God. People are punished infinitely in Hell - not in intensity (there are degrees of intensity) but in duration. The smoke of Hell goes up forever and ever (Rev. 14:11). Moreover, sinners continue to sin in Hell, not in sin's expression but in its evil state (totally depraved unregenerate sinners can only but sin permanently). Therefore, they will add still more fuel to the fires. There will be no escape, no respite, no "time out", no end. It goes on forever.

#### 10. God is Glorified in Hell.

God is glorified in the display of His attributes in Hell. He shows His truth (His warnings were true), His holiness (His will was disobeyed), even indirectly in His spurned common grace. His overwhelming power will be displayed. But it is especially His wrath that is shown there. Sinners will be separated from God's presence of love, but will be tormented in the presence of His holy wrath (Rev. 14:10). God will not receive pleasure from this, but He will receive glory. He will reveal the glory of His wrath, which will be echoed back to Him in the groans of those who are being rightly punished. Those who deny Hell's existence thus defy God and are going there. But no one in Hell has any doubts

about Hell - or the wrath of God.

## Heaven

### Basic Christian Doctrines 50

#### 1. Heaven is Our Eternal Home.

Heaven is real. It is not wishful thinking, a never-never land of childish dreams. In fact, Heaven is more real than Earth. Heaven is the eternal destiny and final resting place of all true Christians. It is sometimes described as a home (2 Cor. 5). It is home sweet home. There's no place like this home. We will be gathered together with the rest of our spiritual family, to live forever in our Father's home. We belong there because we are in the family. See John 14:2.

#### 2. There is No Pain in Heaven.

There will be no physical, mental or emotional pain in Heaven. There will be no sorrow or tears there. There will be no regrets. Nobody will miss Earth. There will be no sad memories. There will be no worries. There will be no fatigue or fear, or any other negative emotion. All pain is in Hell, where there is no pleasure. Also, there will be no death in Heaven - only eternal life.

#### 3. There is Full Pleasure in Heaven.

Heaven is the place of exquisite pleasures of all sorts. There will be perfect peace there. There will be overflowing joy. There will be rest from all tiring work. Even work in Heaven will be pleasurable. The internal spiritual pleasures will far outweigh the external physical pleasures of Heaven, great as they may be. "In thy presence is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psa. 16:11). Earth is mixed with pain and pleasure. Earth is the closest that we will ever get to Hell. Pain will be only a distant memory in Heaven, and even the memory will not cause pain. It is irreligious to ask if there will be pleasurable things like baseball in Heaven. God Himself will be the source of Heaven's pleasure. We will truly enjoy God to the fullest, even to overflowing. It is pure and perfect joy.

#### 4. Heaven is a Place of Holiness.

There is no sin in Heaven. That alone would make it a wonderful place. All sin is left outside. Christians are made sinless, not only legally but experientially. There will never be a "Fall Number 2". We will be made holy and pure and impeccable. The holiness of God will be revealed there and will transform everything and everyone there into living conduits of His holiness. Heaven is alive and pulsating with holiness.

#### 5. We Will Receive Rewards in Heaven.

Just as there are degrees of punishment in Hell, so there are degrees of rewards in Heaven. This does not include salvation, which is by grace alone. But Christ will give rewards to all of us according to how we obeyed on Earth. They will be gauged by factors such as how much we sacrificed, how much we suffered, how we followed the will of the Lord as we knew it, etc. Some will have more than others (Apostles, prophets, martyrs, missionaries, etc). Some will have few because they lived only a short time after their conversions, like the dying thief. Others will receive large rewards because they were converted young and lived a long life of faithful service. But those with fewest will not envy those with more, for all are perfectly happy.

#### 6. We Will Meet Other Christians.

We will meet the rest of the family, from Adam onwards. We will meet Old Testament

believers, New Testament saints, great Christians from church history. We will be reunited with dear relatives and friends. We will meet those who witnessed to us briefly and never saw us again. We will meet our converted spouses, though we will not be married to them any more. We will recognize each other, even in our perfected bodies. We will share happy memories and testimonies of God's grace. We will see all those in Heaven, including the holy angels. But we will also be able to view those in Hell. This will not frighten or worry us, however. Rather, it will cause us to thank God for saving us, and glorify God as He righteously punishes them. See Rev. 19:1-4.

7. Christ and His Bride Will Be United in Heavenly Marriage.

We were betrothed in election and engaged in conversion. One day the greatest of all marriages will happen. Each of us will be married to Christ and enjoy a full and perfect union with Him. But the Bride also consists of all true Christians, so this union will be between all them and us and with our beloved Jesus. It is spiritual, not physical. Sex will not be physical. The union will be far greater. It will produce a progeny of glory and bliss and eternal love. It will, of course, be permanent and indissoluble. We will know Christ deeper and deeper into all eternity.

8. We Will See God.

God is presently invisible and hidden. In Heaven, He will reveal Himself visibly to us. We will see Him with our very eyes. This is called the Beatific Vision. See Matt. 5:8, I Cor. 13:12, I John 3:2. "And they shall see His face" (Rev. 22:4). We will also see God spiritually and mentally. We will understand more of what He had not revealed, and will understand more and more into all eternity, but will never understand everything about God. We will gaze upon our precious Savior in all His beauty and grace and glory. We will look at God looking at us, eye to eye, heart to heart, with nothing to block the vision. Even one glimpse of that glory would be worth spending a million years in Hell. And we will see God forever and ever.

9. We Will Love and Be Loved by God Forever.

God elected us so as to show us the glory of His grace (Eph. 1). We will receive this love in Heaven. Heaven is a world of love, an ocean without shore or bottom, in which we will swim and bathe forever. Romans 9:23 says that God elected and saved us so that we would become vessels of mercy - containers of His love and goodness and grace. He will fill us to overflowing, and increase our capacity so we may receive more. In turn, we will love Him for first loving us. He will never stop loving us, and we will never stop loving Him.

10. God's Glory Will Be Revealed.

The ultimate purpose for which God created all things is to display His glory. He does this at last in Heaven (in Hell in another way). He will reveal the beauty of His glory in all its splendor and radiance, transforming everything and everyone there into living mirrors that reflect glory to everyone else and back to God. He will reveal the glory of all He is, in His many attributes, like bright light in all its wondrous colors. We will be overwhelmed in awe. We will respond in love, humility, and worship. We will adore God forever. His being and glory are infinite, so He will be increasingly revealed forever and ever. And thus will be fulfilled God's plan of the ages.