

What I Believe

The Personal Doctrinal Statement of M. Chase Hinson

Bibliology (Doctrine of the Revelation and the Bible)

I believe that God Almighty, of His own prerogative and out of love for people, has revealed Himself to mankind. This revelation is manifested in two forms. The first and most basic method of God's revelation of Himself is through *general revelation*. General revelation is available to all people at all times. The existence of creation and the inner conscience of men witness that God exists (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 2:14-15). This God is powerful, creative, and wise and has established basic moral standards according to which people are to live. The purpose of general revelation is to leave men without excuse before God, though it is not enough to lead people unto salvation in Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:19-20). Because general revelation is insufficient for the salvation of men and women, God saw fit to reveal Himself to the fathers, prophets, and apostles in order that fallen men might know God and His salvific purposes. This special revelation was faithfully recorded and preserved through the ages so that men might know the one true God (John 16:12-15; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:1).

I believe that the Bible which is the combination of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments is the Word of God—God's special revelation of Himself to all mankind (1 Thess. 2:13). No book may be added or deleted from this canon which has been rigorously put together under tests that *recognized* (not determined) their inspired nature and contribution to the whole revelation of God (cf. Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6; Rev. 22:18-19).

I believe that this Holy Scripture, the Word of God, was written under the combined authorship of God and men. It was physically written by men in a style and manner consistent with their individual experiences, personalities, and giftedness under the supernatural inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21; 3:15-16). Due to its Divine authorship by a holy and perfect God who cannot lie, the Scripture is infallible and inerrant in the original manuscripts (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). This inspiration is known as verbal-plenary inspiration, meaning that it is equally inspired in all of its parts even down to the very words (2 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 5:18). Because of its Divine authorship, inerrancy, and infallibility, Scripture is the absolute truth which does not change or pass away and is therefore binding upon the attitudes and actions of all men in all situations and realms of life (Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Luke 16:17; John 10:35; 17:17; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12).

I believe that the Holy Scriptures have many applications but only one true interpretation which is to be found by the literal, grammatical, historical, and systematic hermeneutical method under the guidance, leading, and illumination of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20, 2 Tim. 2:7) always comparing Scripture with Scripture. The Scriptures are basically clear, and their meaning is available to the believer who diligently studies under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It is therefore the responsibility of every believer to diligently study the Scripture in order that he may know the meaning and intentions of Scripture, accurately applying the principles and practices therein to his life (Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16). The Scriptures do acknowledge that some passages are harder to understand than others (2 Pet. 3:15), and God has

given to his church teachers who work to further the understanding of God's Word in order that His people might be edified, corrected, encouraged, and trained for every good work (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 4:2).

Theology Proper (Doctrine of the Trinity and God the Father)

I believe that there is only one true and living God (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5-7; John 6:57; 1 Cor. 8:4) who is an infinite Spirit (John 2:24) and who is eternal and self-sufficient needing nothing outside of Himself (Ex. 3:14; 1 Tim. 1:17) but who according to His love seeks to share Himself with man in eternal life (John 17:3).

I believe that God is infinite in power able to do all things without contradicting His nature (Job 37:5; 42:2). He is infinite in wisdom knowing all things past, present, future, and possible (Ps. 147:4-5; 139:1-6). He is infinite in His presence in all places at all times such that nothing occurs without His awareness (Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:24; Heb. 4:13). God does not change (Mal. 3:6; Num. 23:19; James 1:17) and is perfect in holiness (Lev. 20:26; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:16; Rev. 4:8), righteousness (Gen. 18:25; 2 Tim. 4:8), justice (Deut. 32:4; Acts 17:31), goodness (Matt. 5:45; Rom. 2:4), love (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8-12), grace (Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 2:11), and mercy (Eph. 2:4; James 5:11). He is *the* source of truth (2 Sam. 7:28; Prov. 30:5; John 14:6, 17:17) and therefore cannot lie (Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18).

I believe that God eternally exists in three distinct persons known as the Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). These three persons are one God sharing the same essence, nature, and being but are different in person and function. Therefore the Son is subordinate in relational and functional position to the Father (John 5:37-38; 14:28; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:24-28; Eph. 1:3), and the Holy Spirit is subordinate in relation and functional position to both the Father and the Son (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:13-14). Yet, all three are *completely equal* in deity and divine attributes. No member of the Trinity is ontologically superior to any member. The biblical witness is that the Father is the source of the Trinity. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father. The Holy Spirit eternal proceeds from the Father through the Son (John 1: 14, 18; 14:16; 15:26; 16:7; Eph. 2:18).

I believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, causes all things to work together for His purposes for the ultimate end His glory (Isa. 48:11; Ps. 145:8-9; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 1:11). He is the Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1-31; Job 38:7; Acts 17:29; 1 Cor. 8:6) which He accomplished through His Son by the power of His Spirit (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Not only is He the Creator of all things, but He is also the Sustainer of the same through Christ (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). As the Sovereign of all creation, He has power over all things (1 Chron. 29:11) including nature (Acts 14:17), animals (Matt. 10:29), the nations (Rom. 13:1), all people (1 Sam. 2:6-9), and believers (Rom. 8:28). God the Father manifests His fatherhood in three ways. First, He is the Father by His participation and function in the Godhead. Second, He demonstrates His fatherhood in the fact that He is the Father to all those whom He has created (Acts 17:29; Eph. 4:6). Third, He is clearly the Father in truth to all those who having come to Him by His Son Jesus Christ having been cleansed from sin and adopted by Him into His own family (John 1:12; Rom. 8:14-16; 2 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 12:5-9).

Christology (Doctrine of the Son of God)

I believe that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is the incarnate Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). He Himself is the eternal Word become flesh so that He might dwell among men in order that He might redeem them from sin and death (John 1:1-2, 4, 12, 29; 1 Tim. 1:15).

I believe that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man with two distinct, unmixed, yet inseparable natures (John 1:1-14; Rom. 1:2-4; Phil. 2:5-11; 1 John 1:1-3). As such, Jesus possesses all of the divine attributes of deity and is coequal with God the Father (John 10:30; 14:9). Through this incarnation, Jesus surrendered the privileges of deity but did not surrender any of His divine essence or attributes enabling Him to be both God *and* man in the fullest sense (Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 2:9). This incarnation then was not a giving up divine attributes but rather a gaining of human attributes. The goal of the incarnation was to fulfill Old Testament prophecies (Luke 24:44-47), supply a perfect and final sacrifice for sin (Mark 10:45; John 1:29; Heb. 10:1-10), reveal the Father (John 1:18), provide an example for godly living (1 Pet. 2:21), make possible the abundant and eternal life (John 3:16-17; 10:10), destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), give a perfect High Priest who could sympathize with mankind (Heb. 4:15; 5:1-2), and furnish a King for God's Kingdom (Ps. 2; Luke 1:31-33).

I believe that Jesus Christ was conceived by a miracle of the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38); and thereafter lived a sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15) at the culmination of which He died a completely voluntary, vicarious, all-sufficient atoning, propitiatory, and redemptive death upon the cross (Mark 10:45; John 1:29; 10:17-18; Acts 2:22-24; Rom. 3:24-25; 8:34; Heb. 10:5-10; 1 John 2:2). He was then buried and three days later bodily rose from the dead indicating God's acceptance of His atoning death (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24: 38-39; Acts 2:22-24; 10:39-40; Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3-8). After being seen by many witnesses, He physically ascended in His glorious and resurrected body to sit at the right hand of God where He now serves as our Advocate and High Priest before God (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; Heb. 1:3; 4:14-16; 7:24-25; 1 John 2:1). According to the will of the Father, He will one day return in the air to rapture His Bride the Church (1 Thess. 4:13-18). Upon the event of the rapture, the Great Tribulation will ensue and last for seven years ending at His Second Coming which will be marked by a personal, visible, and bodily return of Himself and His raptured saints at which time he will cast Satan into the Abyss. This will mark the beginning of His Millennial reign (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 16; 19:11-20:6). At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be set free to gather an army for the final battle only to be ultimately defeated by Christ and cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:7-10). These events will be followed by the eternal state of the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21-22). Through Jesus, God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23) whether they be believers (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10), living people at the Second Coming (Matt. 25:31-46), or the unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit)

I believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is truly God and is coequal with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4, 9; 2 Cor. 3:17-18). He is truly a person who has the

attributes of intellect (1 Cor. 2:10-13), will (Acts 13:2; 1 Cor. 12:11), and emotions (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 4:30). He possesses the qualities and nature of God such as eternality (Heb. 9:14), omniscience (Isa. 40:13-14), omnipotence (Rom. 15:13), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7-12), truthfulness (John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13), and holiness (Rom. 1:4).

I believe that all things done by God are done by the entire Godhead. God the Father wills and accomplishes it *through* the Son *by the power* of the Holy Spirit. This dynamic is evidenced by the Holy Spirit's participation in such events as creation (Gen. 1:2), the incarnation (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35), inspiration of Scripture (2 Pet. 1:20-21), and salvation of man (John 3:5-7).

I believe that it was by the power and coming of the Holy Spirit that the Church began at Pentecost according to the promise of Jesus Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4). At this point, the Holy Spirit began His work of baptizing into the Body of Christ (the Church) all those who believe in Christ for salvation (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit also takes part in the justification, the sanctification (2 Cor. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), and the sealing of the believer until the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13; 4:30). He also indwells the believer (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19), instructs the believer (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:6-16), empowers the believer for service, comforts the believer (John 14:16-17; 15:26), and intercedes for the believer (Rom. 8:26). The work of the Spirit in the world includes the conviction of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8) and the restraining of evil (2 Thess. 2:7).

I believe that the believer is *permanently* indwelt by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation, but the believer must be continuously filled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This filling is a life in which the believer walks by the Spirit which produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22-24).

I believe that part of the Spirit's work is the administration of spiritual gifts to the members of the church for the purpose of edification of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-12).

Angelology (Doctrine of Angels)

I believe that angels are created beings (Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:1-6; Col. 1:16) who are spiritual beings (Heb. 1:14) of great power (Ps. 103:20; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 2:11) but who are distinct from human beings altogether (Heb. 2:6-7). Angels are persons in that they possess intellect (Ps. 148:2; Dan. 10:14, 21; Luke 2:13; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12), emotions (Job 38:7), and will (Isa. 14:12-15; 2 Tim. 2:26; 2 Pet. 2:4). Angels do not marry or reproduce, and therefore, their number is fixed (Matt. 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27). There are two classes of angels. The first class is comprised of holy (elect) angels who, when faced with the opportunity to sin against God and follow Satan, chose to remain faithful to God and are therefore still holy and fulfilling their purpose of serving and worshipping God (Luke 2:9-14; Heb. 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Rev. 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9). The second class of angels consists of fallen (evil) angels who, when faced with the opportunity to sin, were deceived by Satan and were cast from their place as holy servants of God (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-9). Fallen angels (also called demons) make a point to resist believers, resist the work of the elect angels, and support the work of Satan (Dan. 10:13; Eph. 6:12; Rev. 12:7-9).

I believe that Satan is a created angel who was once the model of perfection, full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, anointed guardian cherub, blameless in his ways (Ezek. 28:11-19). Satan is now a fallen angel who originally introduced sin into creation by rebelling in pride against God (Isa. 14:12-17; 1 Tim. 3:6). He deceived a large number of the angels and introduced sin into the life of mankind through his deception of Eve (Gen. 3:1-15; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7-9). Satan is the enemy of God that declared war with Him (though he is not as powerful as God) who has temporary power of the earth (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Eph. 2:2) but who has been defeated by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:20). At the end, Satan will be eternally tormented in the lake of fire (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Anthropology (Doctrine of Man)

I believe that man was created directly and divinely by God on the sixth day of creation and that man *has in no way evolved* from a common ancestor of any animal species somehow arising from non-living matter. Man was created by God in God's own image making man the image-bearer to shine forth the glory of God throughout all creation (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7; 5:1; James 3:9). Being such created, man was created perfect, without sin, capable of rational thought, intelligence, volitional choice, emotion, and moral responsibility (Gen. 2:7, 15-25). God created them male and female designed for one another and ordained for them complementary, gender-defined roles (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-23; 5:2). Men and women are created equal in regards to personhood, dignity, essence, and worth, but serve distinct role functions. The man's role is to be the loving and sacrificial leader, protector, and provider for the home and the church. The woman's role is to respect her husband, to submit graciously to his loving servant leadership, and to serve as his helper in life and ministry (Gen. 2:18-23; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:9-15; 5:8; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

I believe that God's original intention for man was so that man, in living a life according to the will of God, might glorify Him in all things and enjoy fellowship with God at all times (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

I believe that Adam fell from his original state by sinning in complete disobedience to the clearly revealed will of God and thereby incurred the penalty of eventual physical death and immediate spiritual death, which is separation and alienation from his God. Man was therefore corrupted in his nature and is completely lost. Man became spiritually dead and had no power to save himself because he is incapable of doing anything which would merit God's favor and pleasure thereby rendering him only worthy of the wrath of God and an eternity in torment (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Rom. 3:9-19, 23; 6:23; Eph 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

I believe that all men were in Adam at the time of his fall and that Adam's sin has been passed on to all men everywhere due to corporate solidarity (Rom. 5:12-21). Thus, all men and women are sinners by nature *and* by choice as confirmed by the testimony of God in Scripture (Ps. 14:1-3; Rom. 3:9-19, 23; 5:10-12, Eph. 2:1-3).

Hamartiology (Doctrine of Sin)

I believe that sin entered into creation by the fall of Satan (Isa. 14:12-17; 1 Tim. 3:6) and then subsequently entered into mankind through the fall of Adam whereby he acted in disobedience to God's revealed will (Gen. 2:16-17; Gen. 1:1-19). The presence of sin in the world is shown by the universal experience of death which is the penalty for sin (Heb. 9:27), the universal presence of a corrupt nature in people (Ps. 51:5; Eph. 2:1-3), the universal personal involvement in sin (Rom. 3:23; Gal. 3:22, James 3:2), the universal status of condemnation (Rom. 5:16, 18), and the universal need for salvation (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2).

I believe that sin always includes three marks, which are a lack of conformity to God's revealed will, actual active rebellion against God's moral law, and our human desire to exalt ourselves above God (Gen. 3:1-7). In basic definition, sin is "cosmic treason" against God. The consequence of sin is death, which is eternal separation from God in complete torment and anguish in a literal hell (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:11-15). Sin is not limited to only actions, but sin can also be committed in attitude and thought (Matt. 5:21-22).

For the believer, sin is a serious matter. It results in a loss of the familial fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7), chastisement (Heb. 12:4-11), lack of spiritual fruit (John 15:1-11), disqualification as to service and reward (1 Cor. 9:24-27), and possibly even physical death in order to save one's soul and preserve the Christian testimony (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:27-34).

Soteriology (Doctrine of Salvation)

I believe that God, seeing man's condition and desperate need, took it upon Himself to redeem man so that man might enjoy eternal life and fellowship with God (Gen. 3:15; Rom. 6:23). This salvation then has no basis in man but only in the power and plan of God and is extended to man as a free gift of God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9). Man's salvation is based upon the merit and work of Christ in the shedding of His blood on the Cross (Eph. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). This gift of salvation from God has three main stages in the life of the believer—justification, sanctification, and glorification.

1. *Justification* is that act of God (Rom. 8:33) whereby He declares the sinner righteous before Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). Justification is enacted on those who through faith in Jesus Christ repent from their sins (Isa. 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10) and confess Jesus as Lord calling upon His Name (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5). The act of justification is the product of our sins being imputed to Christ and Christ's righteousness being imputed to us (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24). Justification delivers man from the *eternal penalty* of sin.
2. *Sanctification* must be defined by two *distinct* works in the life of the believer by God.
 - a. First, there is what is called *positional* sanctification which is simultaneous with justification. In this sense, the believer is set apart from

sin and set apart to God such that the believer is viewed in the eyes of God as a saint and therefore holy. Positional sanctification does not directly determine the manner a believer's personal walk before the Lord but only his position before the Lord (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2).

- b. Second, there is what is called *progressive* sanctification which is the daily, continuous work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer whereby the believer, in obedience to God's Word and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is able to progressively come into conformity with the will of God, living a life that is increasingly closer in keeping with God's standard of holiness, being made more and more into the likeness of the Son (John 17:17, 19; Rom. 6:1-22; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 5:23). Though progressive sanctification is designed to deliver the believer from the *temporal power* of sin, complete annihilation on sin in one's life is impossible until death or the rapture (1 John 1:8).
3. *Glorification* is the final stage of salvation in which the believer is remade anew, glorified from what he once was (Rom. 8:17, 29-30; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3). His old body is resurrected according to the pattern of the glorified body of Christ (1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:20-21). In this state the believer is given a body and existence that is imperishable (not subject to decay or death), glorious (not subject to sin), powerful (not subject to weakness or physical laws), spiritual (completely subject and in conformity with the will and transforming power of the Spirit), heavenly (adapted to live in the sphere of heavenly existence) (1 Cor. 15:42-49).
Glorification delivers the believer from the *abiding presence* of sin.

I believe in the eternal security of the believer in that, once one is redeemed by God, he is kept by the power of God and the sealing of the Holy Spirit in such a way that he is always and without fail secure in Christ (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Rom. 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; Eph. 4:30, 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Heb. 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet. 1:5; Jude 24). This security is a cause for joy and even a motivation to live as one ought. Eternal security should *never* be viewed as a "license to sin." A belief that eternal security is a "license to sin" is a misunderstanding of grace because a true understanding of grace motivates righteous living (Rom. 6:15-22).

Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church)

I believe that all those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ are baptized by the Holy Spirit into one Body bound together in the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 4:1-3). This Body of Christ is known as the Church whose Head is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18). The Church had as the beginning of its formation the day of Pentecost when Holy Spirit came upon the disciples of Christ (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will have as the end of its *formation* (not existence) the coming of Christ in the air for the rapture of His Church (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Christ's church is not merely an organization but rather is primarily an organism made up individual members who are alive and indwelt individually and corporately

by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:19-22). In the program of God's Kingdom, the church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor. 10:32) therefore a mystery that was not fully revealed until the present age (Eph. 3:1-6; 5:32).

I believe that the New Testament makes clear provision for the establishment and formation of local churches (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2) where members of Christ's Body are called together to fellowship with one another in local congregations (1 Cor. 11:18-20; Heb. 10:25). These local churches are completely autonomous having the right to self-government and are only under the headship and leadership of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18) therefore having no obligation to subject themselves to any type of hierarchy whether to individuals or institutions (Titus 1:5). It is, however, wise and scriptural for local churches who hold to the fundamentals of the faith leading to true relationships to Christ to work together for the furtherance of the gospel of Christ. It is the burden and responsibility of the leadership of the church to determine to what extent this cooperation is to occur based upon sound interpretation of scripture and comparison of those interpretations with the cooperating assembly.

I believe that there are two offices of the church which have been ordained *under* Christ and for the congregation. The first office is that of the elder (also known as bishops, pastors, or pastor-teachers) and its fulfillment is limited to men (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-5). These men are tasked with teaching the church and leading the church in matters of church government, policy, discipline, and benevolence (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11). The second office is that of the deacon who is to assist the elders in matters of service to the church, of care to its members, and of being examples in godly conduct (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:7-13). Elders are to lead the congregation entrusted to them as servants following the example of Christ not lording their authority over those in the assembly (1 Pet. 5:1-5). The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Heb. 13:7, 17), and they are to be accountable to the members of the church since all members are part of the priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2:9). Since churches are self-governed under the headship of Christ, the biblical model for church polity is *elder guided congregational rule* (Acts 6:1-7; 20:28, 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17).

I believe that the mission of the local church is found in the Great Commission given first to the disciples and extrapolated to the church to make disciples of all nations. This involves the evangelizing of the lost, identifying those who place their faith in Jesus Christ with a local church through baptism, and teaching (discipleship) them sound doctrine and principles of godly living which God has laid out in His written Word (Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; 2 Tim. 2:2).

I believe that the Church is God's current channel in His Kingdom program whereby He is glorifying Himself and revealing Himself to the world (Eph. 3:10). Hence, it is the church's responsibility to conform to and to promote the purposes of God by glorifying Him (Eph. 3:21), by maturing itself unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13-16), by faithful teaching from the Word (2 Tim. 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by observing the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42), and by furthering the gospel through evangelism, missions, and discipleship so that the entire world might hear the good news of Jesus Christ in order that all people everywhere might have the opportunity to believe (Matt. 28:19-20, Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

I believe that Christ has given His Church spiritual gifts for the ministering of members to one another. Each believer has received at least one spiritual gift which are unique talents and abilities which when empowered by the Holy Spirit allow that individual to meet a need in the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). In addition, Christ has equipped some with leadership abilities and roles that are to be used for the maturing and equipping of the saints (Eph. 4:7-16).

I believe that the Church has been given the authority to exercise two ordinances—believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42).

1. Believer's baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is an outward display of an inward change. That inward change results from one putting his faith in Christ who was crucified, buried, and rose again on the third day. Only those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ are to be baptized (Matt. 28:18-20). The baptism represents the believer's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection where he raises up to walk in the new life that he has been given by Christ (Rom. 6:1-11). Baptism is the means by which a believer identifies himself with the Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).
2. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic reminder and proclamation of the death of Christ until He returns for His church. This ordinance must always be preceded by a time of sober self-evaluation to ensure that one does not take the Lord's Supper amiss (1 Cor. 11:28-32). Though the elements—fruit of the vine and bread—are only *representations* of Christ's body and blood (and therefore undergo no change in substance), the service is an actual communion with the risen Lord who indwells His church corporately and individually by the power of His Spirit thus experiencing true fellowship with them (Matt. 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26). I believe that only those who are believers are to participate in the Lord's Supper and that the church may courteously allow other believers who are visiting the opportunity to participate so long as they are of like faith and practice. It is the responsibility of the local church to guard the integrity of the ordinance.

Eschatology (Doctrine of the End Times)

I believe that there is no loss of the immaterial aspect of man after physical death thereby denying both soul sleep and annihilationism (Rev. 6:9-11). The souls of the redeemed pass straight into the presence of God (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8), and the souls of the lost pass immediately into the place of Hell (Luke 16:19-26; Rev.20:13-15). During this time, there is a separation of soul and body during which the believer is in wonderful fellowship with Christ (2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:21-24). For the believer who died before the rapture, this separation ends at the rapture where the first resurrection takes place at which time the soul and glorified body of the believer will be united to spend eternity with the Lord (1 Cor. 15:35-44, 50-44; Phil 3:12; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:4-6).

I believe that the souls of the unsaved move at death into punishment until the second resurrection takes place when the soul and resurrected body are reunited so that each lost person can appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Luke 16:19-26; John 5:28-29; Rev.20:11-15). This judgment will result in them being cast into the lake of fire for eternity forever cut off from God, hope, and life (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:41-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

I believe that the rapture of the Church will occur before the seven year tribulation period [pre-trib] (1 Thess. 4:16; Titus 2:13). Christ will return personally in the air to meet His Church (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:15-5:11). Between the time of the rapture and Christ's Second Coming, He will judge and reward the saints according to their works (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10).

I believe that, immediately following Christ's rapture of His church, the Tribulation period will begin where God will righteously pour out His wrath on the world for their unbelief (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev. 16). Christ's glorious Second Coming to the earth will accompany the end of these judgments (Matt. 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 2:7-12). At Christ Second Coming, Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be given their glorified bodies and all still living upon the earth will be judged (Dan. 12:2-3; Rev. 20:4-6). Christ will also overthrow Satan casting him into the Abyss and defeat the Antichrist and the False Prophet throwing them into the lake of fire (Dan. 7:17-22; Rev. 20:1-7). These events will mark Christ's earthly assumption of David's throne and the establishment of the 1,000 year kingdom on earth [pre-mil] (Matt. 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30). The saints will reign over the entire earth with Christ during this time (Ezek. 37:21-28; Dan. 7:17-22; Rev. 19:11-16). This kingdom will be the fulfillment of the promise made to Israel and will restore to her the land (Isa. 65:17-25; Ezek. 37:21-28; Zech. 8:1-17) which she had forfeited through disobedience to God (Deut. 28:15-68). The Millennium will be a time characterized by peace, justice, righteousness, and long life (Isa. 11; 65:17-25; Ezek. 36:33-38).

I believe that the end of the Millennium will be marked by the release of Satan giving him the opportunity to deceive the nations and gather together a multitude of unbelievers for the last battle (Rev. 20:7). Satan and his army will be utterly defeated by fire from heaven, and Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire for all eternity in torment (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:9-10). This battle and defeat of Satan will usher in the bodily resurrection of the dead who are unsaved so that they may be judged at the Great White Throne Judgment. The fate of those who are unredeemed is an unglorified, bodily resurrection and eternal punishment in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; John 5:22, 28-29; Rev. 20:11-15).

I believe that after the transpiring of the aforementioned events, those redeemed of God will enter the state of eternal glory with God. The heavens will pass away (2 Pet 3:10) and the earth will be burned up to be replaced by a new heaven and a new earth. Then the New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven where the saints will live in constant and eternal fellowship with God and one another (Rev. 21-22). Having fulfilled His entire redemptive work, the Lord Jesus Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father so that in all ways and realms God may reign forever and ever (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Amen.