

EFCA Central District

Ordination Thesis Paper

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Parkview Evangelical Free Church

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**Biographical:** My parents led a collegiate Navigator ministry at Western Illinois University when I was growing up. Through hearing the gospel of Christ presented at various events, I understood what I could do to become a Christian. So, when I was four, I put my faith in Jesus Christ for my salvation. By grace He drew me to Himself and I put my trust in Him to forgive my sins.

Ever since I started doing ministry activities, I have sensed a call to ministry as a profession. My calling to ministry has been confirmed in three major ways: by a specific calling experience, by a fulfillment in practice of ministry, and by dissatisfaction with lay jobs. It has been confirmed over and over again that this type of work is right for me and the sense that this calling is right has only grown stronger as I have done Christian work. My calling has been confirmed many times by my family, friends, peers, and leaders. I have had many comments on how what I am doing in ministry fits my personality and gifts. I see my main gifts for ministry are the gifts of pastor and teacher. I enjoy shepherding people and helping them in their Christian growth. I enjoy teaching the Bible. I love small group ministry and leading teams. I am passionate about equipping believers to use their gifts to serve the body of Christ and to reach out to a world in desperate need of the gospel!

In using my gifts and passions, I have led trips, organized worship times, facilitated small groups, spoken to large groups, mentored individuals, trained leaders, and led workshops. As far as clarifying my call, I will continue to pursue church opportunities. I served at Northwestern College and with The Navigators for two years as the Discipleship Coordinator of the campus and I served at Parkview Church for five years as college ministry staff. Currently I am serving as the Pastor of Young Adults at Parkview. In the future at Parkview, and at any other church with which I am involved, I hope to continue to experience different opportunities of doing small

group ministry, mentoring, teaching, and equipping leaders to serve according to their gifts. I have a Bible and Christian Ministries Bachelor of Arts from Northwestern College in Minneapolis, Minnesota and I have a Masters of Divinity in Christian Education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

***1: We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.***

The story of Scripture begins with God. God is the creator of all things (Is. 44:24). By His word God created the heavens; He spoke and it came to be (Ps. 33:6, 9). He created this universe out of nothing because He is a God who calls into being things that do not exist (Rom. 4:17). He created the earth and made it good (Gn. 1:10). It is important that God is the creator because the earth and its people were created by God and for God (Rom. 11:36). Because God is creator, we are to glorify and give Him honor in all things, for He is our Maker (Ps. 19:1; Rev. 4:11). Genesis 1 describes how God created everything; including matter, space, and time; from nothing (*ex nihilo*) and caused it to come into existence.

As far as Genesis 1 and the timing of the creation, it is clear in Scripture that God did more than simply create the evolutionary process and then let the world run its course. God made all living things according to their kind, intentionally creating each type of being (Gn. 1:24). He created in segments, each new creative work being wholly unique. As God breathed life into man, humans were also created special, not as a result of a macro-evolutionary process (Gn. 2:21). There are a number of theories held by evangelical scholars regarding the age of the earth such as theistic evolution, the gap theory, the day-age theory, and young earth creationism. The young earth theory is the most persuasive. The most straight forward reading of the text suggests that the days were twenty-four hour periods in which there was a morning and evening.

The Hebrew word *yom* seems to denote a normal day as the references to creation in Exodus 20:11 and 31:17 about the Sabbath only make sense if understood in terms of a normal day. Certainly God could create the earth with the appearance of age as He also created Adam and Eve with age. Finally, valid scientific research suggests that the earth could be much younger than it appears when factors such as the flood changing the rock strata are considered.

God's characteristics can be broken up into two main categories: attributes of His greatness (incommunicable) and attributes of His goodness (communicable). In His greatness He is apart from us, yet in His goodness He is near to us. The greatness attributes are those that are not shared in any sense with humans and the goodness attributes are those that are shared in some sense with humans. The main characteristics of God's greatness are as follows. God is spirit and He is infinite (Jn. 4:24; Acts 17:24-25). God possesses life in Himself, He is not dependent on anything or anyone (Jn. 5:26). God is constant, unchanging in His nature and promises (Mal. 3:6). God has all power, all knowledge, and He is present everywhere (Jer. 32:17; Rom. 11:33; Ps. 139:7-10). The main characteristics of God's goodness fall into three categories; moral purity, integrity, and love (Hab. 1:13; 1 Jn. 4:8,16). God's moral purity includes His justice and His righteousness (Rom. 6:23; Jer. 9:24). To say that God has complete integrity is to say that He is genuine in all He does, what He says is accurate, and that He is faithful in actions and words (Jn. 17:3; 1 Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19). Finally, the characteristics under God's love are His benevolence, grace, and mercy (Deut. 7:7-8; Eph. 2:7-9; Ps. 103:13). God is both immanent and transcendent. He is near to all people and He is also greatly exalted above creation (Jer. 23:24; Isa. 55:8-9; Isa. 57:15). God created the entire earth and made it good (Gn. 1:10). The earth and its people were created to glorify God and give Him honor (Ps. 19:1; Rev. 4:11). God being holy means that He is set apart, the only being that is perfect (1 Pet. 1:16).

1:15-16). One implication of this is that He is the standard of all morality. He is also the only judge of right and wrong as all creation looks to Him for redemption, righteousness, and vindication (Rom. 8:18-23).

God is also triune, three in one. There are three assertions to this doctrine: God is three persons, each person is fully God, and there is one God. The Trinity is one God who eternally exists as three distinct persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All are fully and equally God and in eternal relation to one another. Scripture teaches that the Lord God of Israel is one (Deut. 6:4). God is also composed of three co-equal and co-eternal persons; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus is divine. He is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being (Heb. 1:3). He also claimed to be God and His miracles, blameless lifestyle, and resurrection from the dead all show that He is God (Jn. 19:7). The Holy Spirit is also divine. Scripture uses the Spirit interchangeably with God (Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 3:16-17). The Holy Spirit also performs the works of God (Jn. 16:8-11).

The idea of the Trinity is confirmed in Scripture as all three persons are linked together in the work of salvation, the baptism of Jesus, and in the great commission (1 Pet. 1; Mk. 1; Mt. 28:18-20). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit also exist in a perfectly loving unity. Though they have different roles and responsibilities, each person of the Trinity honors the other. The implication of this doctrine for our relationships is that we should live in love for others and point people, not to ourselves, but to the greatness and glory of God. The three major denials of the Trinity today are Modalism (the persons of the Trinity express themselves three separate ways), Arianism (Jesus is a creature and not divine, Jehovah's Witnesses), and Tritheism (there are three distinct gods, as in Mormonism or Hinduism).

God is providential and sovereign over His creation. God works with all created things by directing them and causing them to act so that they are guided toward His purposes. This means that He governs His world and He preserves all things. God preserves all things by His word and in Him all things hold together (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17). People live, move and have their being in God (Acts 17:28). God also guides and governs His creation. God governs the affairs of nature (Ps. 135:5-7), the nations (Dan. 4:24-25), the animals (Ps. 104:21-29), and the individual lives of people (Ps. 75:6-7). God's providence reaches into the life of each believer as He plans and influences desires and decisions (Ps. 139:16; 33:15; Php. 2:13). This does not mean that individual decisions do not have effects. He does this in a way that choices are upheld as real choices. These choices are validated as true and God holds each person accountable for the choices he or she makes (2 Cor. 5:10).

Open theism teaches that God does not know the future exhaustively, namely, He does not know the future free acts of people. This view has a number of assertions. One, the future free acts of humans cannot be known by God because people have independent, free will. Two, God is not responsible in any part for evil because He has given freedom to humans to act against his will. Three, since He does not know what they will do, He cannot coerce them towards evil. In this view, God is not responsible in any way for evil because He cannot prevent it and He does not know evil will happen until it does. Four, because God does not know the future acts of people, He is absolved of evil in order to relate authentically and lovingly by giving full free will to His creatures. I do not hold to this view. God has exhaustive meticulous knowledge of the past, present, and future. Open theism is inconsistent with the full message of the gospel. The prophecy that the Messiah would not suffer decay was pronounced hundreds of years before Christ (Ps. 16:10). There were countless human factors that went into the suffering,

crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ. In the open theism model, it would be impossible for God to guarantee all the specifics of the events of Christ's life, even the general prophecy of the resurrection. Pilate, the Jews, Judas, Peter's denials, the soldiers, and many more people were all making "free" choices apart from God's control. Yet, even with all these human factors, what was prophesied hundreds of years became true? It is simply too difficult to conceive of all these things happening simultaneously under the open theist system of thinking. Furthermore, the fact that God changes direction in response to human activity in the Bible does not mean that God made a mistake or that He had no knowledge of human actions. God changes His mind in the sense that He responds to human activity so that he may stay consistent in His character (Mal. 3:6; 1 Sam. 15:11.29; Jonah 3:10; Gen. 6:5-6; Isa. 38:1-5). He does not change His mind in the sense that new knowledge has come up that He did not know about previously, since God knows the future exhaustively (Ps. 139:1-16; Isa. 46:10). Also, there are many typological references to the work of Christ on the cross that indicate God's precise foreknowledge. One case is Moses, who was the mediator between God and the people of Israel. Moses' role pointed to the ultimate mediator, Christ, who stood on our behalf before a holy God to pay the penalty for our sins (Heb. 8:5-6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

God has also purposed from eternity past to redeem a people for Himself (Eph. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20). The significance of this is that God is the source of salvation and redemption is primarily an act of grace to be received by faith and to be greatly appreciated. Our salvation is to be to the praise of God's glory in mercifully saving sinners (Eph. 1:3-8, 2:1-10). God's saving purposes also includes the restoration of all things in the new heavens and new earth (Rom. 8; Rev. 21:5).

**2: We believe that God has spoken in the Scriptures, both Old and New Testaments, through the words of human authors. As the verbally inspired Word of God, the Bible is without error**

*in the original writings, the complete revelation of His will for salvation, and the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged. Therefore, it is to be believed in all that it teaches, obeyed in all that it requires, and trusted in all that it promises.*

The Old and New Testaments are inspired, inerrant, truthful, and sufficient. Scripture being inspired means that the Holy Spirit influenced the writers of the Bible so that they, using their individual styles, wrote the very words of God. God breathed out on these writers His supernatural work so that they wrote what He wanted to be said (2 Tim. 3:16). Scripture is not simply man's own interpretation, but it finds its origin in the will of God because men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21-22). The New Testament is as equally inspired as the Old Testament. Peter puts the Apostle Paul on the same level of authority as Old Testament Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16) and Paul puts the Gospel of Luke on the same level of authority as the Old Testament. (1 Tim. 5:18).

There are various tests of Old Testament canonicity. First, does the New Testament attest to the book's authority? (Luke 24:44). Second, is the book consistent with other revelation? Third, was the book written by a prophet or someone with divine authority? And Fourth, did Christ attest to the authority of the book? The reliability of the Old Testament Scriptures is rarely questioned. Old Testament canonization and compilation was an extremely reliable process.

God used the early church to recognize the right books. God's people immediately recognized most of the New Testament books as authoritative Scripture. The tests for New Testament canonicity are as follows. One, was the book written by an apostle or by a recognized authority that was influenced by an apostle? Two, did the book agree with the teachings of undisputed Scripture? Three, did the book have a self-authenticating nature? And four, did the church accept the book? Ultimately these tests were used by God to help the early church

recognize the books He desired to be in His Word. The process of canonization is reliable because it is validated by three things: the promises of Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the providence of God. Christ promised that His followers would be reminded of all He had said to them (Jn. 14:26). The Holy Spirit was given to live inside them and to attest to the truth (1 Jn. 2:27). And finally, God providentially worked in the canonization process so that the books He wanted to be in the Bible were affirmed by the early church (Eph. 1:11). One implication of inspiration is that, because the Scriptures are completely reliable, we can be confident that what we have is the very word of God. As a result, we should regard Scripture highly and seek to apply the Bible to our lives with great diligence.

Scripture is comprehensively inerrant in the original autographs. Scripture is not simply error free for faith in practice, but God has breathed authority into all of Scripture. Inspiration is verbal—the very words of the Bible are from God. This inspiration is also plenary—every part of the Bible is God-breathed revelation. The English translations that use the modern day Greek and Hebrew texts in their translation methodology, such as the ESV and the NASB, are extremely reliable. No major doctrine is in jeopardy when the manuscripts show differences. The alleged errors in the Bible can be explained when the cultural setting is expressed, when the purposes of the writers are understood, and when it is realized that the Biblical writers reported on what was seen with the eye and not on what is scientifically exact. Jesus said that Scripture cannot be broken and that not a single letter or stroke of a pen would disappear from the law until everything is accomplished (Jn. 10:35; Mt. 5:17-19). God's word is truth and is completely pure, right, and perfect (Tit. 1:2; Ps. 19:7-9). If Scripture reflects the truthfulness of its author, then all of Scripture is unable to err (Jn. 17:17; Ps. 119:172). Furthermore, God is omnipotent and fully capable of ensuring that His word is error free. Finally, God's word is sufficiently

authoritative for life, containing all that is needed for knowledge of salvation and for living a life of trust and obedience (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Ps. 119:9-11).

God can be known through general revelation and special revelation. He is known through general revelation by nature and by conscience. God's eternal power and divine nature can clearly be seen by what He has made (Rom. 1:20). The skies and heavens tell of God's glory (Ps. 19:1), for God has made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them (Acts 14:15). Though general revelation reveals God's nature, this knowledge is not enough for salvation. God has also revealed His wishes and desires by giving every person a conscience, an inner moral code. This inner sense of right and wrong is the manifestation of God's law written on people's hearts (Rom. 2:11-16). Every person has a choice whether or not to acknowledge the God who is seen in nature and give Him glory, or turn to the worship of the created rather than the creator (Rom. 1:21,25). God also reveals the characteristics of who He is by working through history, showing Himself as He guides the rise and fall of nations, particularly the nation of Israel (Job 12:23, Dan. 2:21, Acts 17:26).

Finally, God reveals Himself through special revelation, which is Scripture. This Word is clear and it is sufficient. To say that Scripture is clear is to affirm that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who read Scripture—as people seek God's help to know its meaning (Ps. 19:7; 119:130). The sufficiency of the Bible ensures that Scripture contains all the words of God of complete revelation that He intended His people to have at each stage of redemptive history. Scripture contains everything needed for salvation, for trusting in God perfectly, and for obeying Him fully (Ps. 119:9; 2 Tim. 3:17). Scripture is the ultimate authority by which every realm of human knowledge and endeavor should be judged (Ps. 12:6; 119:60). This is important because Scripture speaks of the will of God in every

important area of life and it is the final authority for all of the Christian faith and life (Matt. 24:35; John 17:17). Finally, in response to these truths, Christians should believe all the Bible teaches (2 Tim. 3:16), obey all the Bible requires (Heb. 4:12), and trust all that the Bible promises (2 Pet. 1:4). This means that as a minister I should know, study, love, and apply the Bible to my life and encourage those I lead to do the same!

***3. We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.***

All humans, both male and female, are created in the image of God (Gn. 1:27). To be made in the image of God means that human beings are like God and represent God. Some unique capacities in humans as being like God include: intellect, moral purity, spiritual nature, dominion, creativity, ability to make choices, and immortality. Being made in the image of God means that humans have the unique ability to relate with God personally. Because of this doctrine we must treat each person with dignity and each human life with awe and sacredness.

Humans have sinned against God and have lived contrary to His will. Satan, a fallen angel, enticed Adam and Eve to sin. To sin is to turn away from God and His truth (Acts 1:25; 1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is any failure to adhere to the moral law of God in attitude, act, or nature. The essential nature of sin is pride, not appropriately honoring God by displacing Him from the throne of one's life (Rom. 1:18-32). Some results of sin are restlessness, evil, and guilt. Sin also results in God's disfavor with people (Hos. 9:15). God, in His justice, must punish sin and He does so by pronouncing death to people who do not repent. This death is physical and spiritual (Heb. 9:27), and ultimately it is eternal separation from God in hell (Mt. 25:14-46a).

People are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, spiritually lost and alienated from God. After Adam sinned in the garden, sin spread to all men. Adam was acting as

the head of humanity, the representative of the human race. Therefore, all men sinned because they are in Adam as human beings (Rom. 5:12-21). When anyone is born, he or she inherits a sinful nature (Ps. 51:5). Sin is universal (1 Kgs. 8:46). There is no one righteous and all people have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:9,12,23). Not only have all sinned, but sin has effected each person totally. It has infected the whole being so that the person is unable to please God in any way and consequently he or she is alienated from Him (Rom. 8:8). Those who have not trusted in Christ are under the control of sin's dominion (Rom. 6:6) and are objects of God's wrath (Eph. 2:3). This type of person is an enemy of God (Rom. 5:10), hostile to Him (Rom. 8:7), and unable to discern spiritual matters (1 Cor. 2:14). No one is able to avoid God's condemnation by doing good works. Rather, it is only through the saving work of Jesus Christ by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit that one is saved, inheriting spiritual life (Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). This is the way that humans are renewed to right relationship with God after the fall and are therefore reconciled back to their Creator (Rom 5:1-2). The implication of this great salvation is that humans who put their faith in Christ are rescued from the dominion of sin and renewed back to a right relationship with their Creator, resulting in peace with God (Rom. 5:1, 8:29). This renewal is by Christ Jesus only; salvation is found in no other person or religious figure or system (Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6).

**4. We believe that Jesus Christ is God incarnate, fully God and fully man, one Person in two natures. Jesus—Israel's promised Messiah—was conceived through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate.**

Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Luke 1:35), lived a sinless life (Heb. 4:15), died for sins and rose on the third day (1 Cor. 15:2-3), and is now ruling at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). The Bible teaches that Christ is fully divine. He is the fullness of deity in bodily form and

the exact representation of God's being (Col. 1:19; Heb. 1:3). There is testimony of this fact from the power of His miracles, from the disciples, and from Jesus Himself. Jesus said that He and the Father were identical and that before Abraham was born, He existed (Jn. 10:30; 8:58). The historical evidence that Jesus raised from the dead shows that He had divine power.

The Bible also affirms that Jesus was fully human. Jesus experienced all the emotions of humanity as He grew and He was touched and seen by hundreds of people (Luke 2:52; 1 Jn. 1:1). Jesus was the Word of God that took on flesh and experienced all the kinds of temptations that a fully human person faces (Jn. 1:14; Heb. 4:15). It is also clear that though Jesus was fully tempted, He never fell into sin. No legitimate charge of sin was brought against Jesus (1 Jn. 3:5; Mt. 27:4). Admittedly there are mysteries here beyond what the Bible explains. There were limitations to Jesus' capacities during his time on earth; however this does not mean He gave up any of His attributes as God. Philippians 2:6-7 explains that the divine Jesus humbled Himself (*kenosis*) by becoming a man in order to serve humanity through His death on the cross. There were certain aspects of divinity that Jesus did not utilize fully while on earth, such as being omnipresent or being completely omnipotent. Yet He did not give up being God in any way while He walked the earth. Rather, Jesus did not exploit or use to His own advantage His divine nature while He was on earth so that He could fulfill His purposes as a humble servant (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus' full human incarnation was necessary in order for Him to be a perfect sacrifice for sins. The main Christological heresies that were present in the early church arose in two categories: denial of the full divinity of Jesus or a denial of the full humanity of Jesus. Some of the denials of the full divinity of Jesus came from the Ebionites, Arians, Nestorians, and Sabellianists. Some prevalent groups in this camp today are Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons.

Some of the denials during the early church of the full humanity of Jesus came from the Marcionites, Docetists, and Gnostics. A prevalent group in this camp today is the New Agers.

Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah. This truth puts His life and ministry in the proper Old Testament context according to the story of the Bible. The name of Messiah in the Old Testament is equal to the Christ in the New Testament (Mt. 16:16; Mk. 15:32; Jn. 1:49). The importance for this belief is that it reminds us that we have a unified Bible, a story of redemption in Christ throughout its pages. It also reveals that Christ is the key to understanding Old Testament Prophecy. And it puts weight behind our belief in Christ because He was a historical figure and consequently, He is the only Savior of the world (1 Jn 2:1-2).

Jesus was born of a virgin (Mt. 1:18-20). This is essential in our beliefs because it showed that He was fully human—born of a woman, yet was deity because the Holy Spirit conceived Him. An implication of this for soteriology is that He was God and therefore able to be our perfect sacrifice. He was also fully man, born of a virgin, and therefore was like humans in every way (Heb. 2:18, 4:15). This makes Him a substitute sacrifice and the representative of the human race in His obedience (Rom. 5:18-19; Heb. 2:16-17). Jesus was without sin (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 1:19). Jesus have sinned? It was not possible for Jesus to have been able to sin because He is God, however He still suffered when He was tempted and His temptations were very real. Because Jesus never sinned does not make Him any less human. After all, the original good creation of humanity was without sin before the fall. This was God's original intention for humanity. The Bible affirms that Jesus temptations were real (Luke 4:2). Furthermore, the one who resists temptation to the end understands the full weight of the temptation, as Jesus did, and He overcame it!

Jesus died so that He could be our perfect sacrifice to a holy God who was showing grace to humans by providing an opportunity to be at peace with Him (Rom. 3:21-26; 5:1). Jesus died so that those who have faith in Him can experience reconciliation with a holy God and spend an eternity with Him in heaven (2 Cor. 5:11-21). Jesus died so that God could be just in His forgiveness of sinners (Rom. 3:26). Jesus' resurrection is important because it showed that He has power over death. Jesus' resurrected body was perfect in that it was no longer subject to weakness, aging, decay, or death. His body was imperishable (1 Cor. 15:53), yet physical (Mt. 28:9; Jn. 20:27). Jesus ascended to the right hand of God and is interceding for the saints in accordance with God's will (Acts 1:6-11). This doctrine is important because it emphasizes the fact that His saving work is finished and it foreshadows the resurrection that believers will one day experience (Heb. 1:3, 8:1; 1 Thes. 4:17). Jesus as our High Priest means that He intercedes to the Father for us as our mediator and fulfills all that the priest function foreshadowed (Heb. 3:1, 4:14, 8:1). Jesus as our Advocate means that He prays for us. It also means that He is our strength and propitiation when Satan tries to bring charges against us (Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Jn. 2:1).

***5. We believe that Jesus Christ, as our representative and substitute, shed His blood on the cross as the perfect, all-sufficient sacrifice for our sins. His atoning death and victorious resurrection constitute the only ground for salvation.***

Jesus as our representative means that He acted on our behalf as the second Adam, representing believers to God as righteous through His sacrifice on the cross (Rom. 5:12-17). Christ as our substitute means that He took our place, substituted His life, on the cross and bore the penalty of God's wrath that we deserved. Christ's atonement was sacrificial. He gave His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the people who believe and trust in Him. The shedding of blood on the cross was necessary because without it, there is no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22). This sacrifice was foreshadowed during the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament (Lv. 16; Heb. 9:6-5).

Christ's sacrifice does not need to be repeated every year, but it rather served as God's final sacrifice for sin (1 Pet. 3:18). The atonement was both a propitiation and expiation. Propitiation is a satisfaction of God's wrath against sinners. Instead of being poured out on humans, God's wrath was poured out on Jesus as a propitiation, a sacrifice of atonement (Rom. 3:25). Expiation means that the sins of the people who believe in Jesus are carried away by Christ, just as the scapegoat in the Old Testament symbolically carried the sins of the people far away, outside of the camp of the people of God (Lv. 16). Jesus' atonement is also particular, limited to only those who are elected by God and receive His salvation. This is true because though Christ's salvation is sufficient for all people, there are only a certain number who actually become Christians. This group is saved by grace, not on the basis of foreseen faith, and this grace is particular to those whom He chooses to save. The Bible points to this group as it explains that Christ died for the church, laid down His life for the sheep, purchased the church by His blood, died for the scattered children of God, and purchased men for God from every nation (Eph. 5:25; John 10:11; Acts 20:28; John 11:52; Rev 5:9).

Christ's atonement was also a substitution; meaning God laid the sins of people on Jesus, who became a curse as their substitute (Is. 53:6; Gal. 3:13). Jesus said that His life was a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45). He is also our redemption, meaning that Christ bought us out of our slavery to sin and redeemed our hearts from the domain of darkness, transferring us into the kingdom of light (Col. 1:14-15). Christ also justified believers in God's sight as part of His salvation work. This means that those who trust Christ are justified, made righteous in God's eyes. Believers are counted by God as clean because they have become united with Christ who is pure and holy. God as judge has pronounced believers justified in His sight on the basis of Christ's sacrifice on their behalf (Rom. 3:21-25). Christ's atonement was a reconciliation,

which means that through His death He reconciled men to God (2 Cor. 5:18-21). Christ's righteousness was given to us, imputed to us by God through the death of His Son. Imputation means that God regards Christ's righteousness as ours, that He reckons us as righteous just as He thought of Abraham as righteous after his sincere belief (Rom. 4:3; Gn. 15:6). This idea is clearly taught in 2 Cor. 5:21 as it explains that God made Christ to be sin for believers so that in Him we might become righteous in God's sight. This righteousness that comes from God is by faith in Christ, not by good works (Php. 3:9). Finally, the atonement of Christ demonstrates God's justice and His love. It shows His justice by providing the opportunity for God to punish sin through Christ's sacrifice. And it shows His love by providing a way for salvation through Christ to undeserving people.

God chose believers for salvation before the foundation of the world, not on the basis of what anyone would do, but because He desires to demonstrate His grace and glory (Eph. 1:4-6; 2 Tim. 1:9). The vocabulary of predestination in the New Testament makes it clear that God chooses people for a special love relationship. Passages such as Eph. 1:4-6 and John 1:12-13 indicate that God initiates the action of predestination. Because humans are totally depraved in their human condition, God is the one who takes the initiating step in salvation. In His sovereignty God decides those whom He wants to grant His unconditional salvation (Jn. 15:16; Ex. 33:19). God then calls those whom He has predestined (Rom. 8:30). This is effectual because those whom God calls are also justified. Because humans live in hostility to God, He is the one who enables the elect to respond to His calling (Rom. 8:7; Mat. 22:14). Those whom God appoints to eternal life are the ones who will believe because only those whom God draws will come to Christ (Acts 13:48; Jn. 6:65).

Salvation involves conversion; an act of repentance and faith. Each person must make an individual decision to become a Christian. Those who trust and believe in Jesus are saved, but those who do not believe are lost (Jn. 3:17-18). When a person repents, he or she experiences a true sorrow for his or her sin and then turns to God (Acts 17:30). Faith is a person's trust in Christ. Faith in Christ involves both an intellectual assent to the historical facts about Christ and a trust to know Him personally. Salvation is deliverance from God's wrath on the day of judgment (1 Thess 1:10,5:9; Rom. 5:9-10). Salvation is an end-time gift and also the possession of the believers now. This means that believers taste glimpses of victory over sin through the Holy Spirit's work in their present lives while always casting an eye on the future, looking forward to complete salvation in the end (Rom. 8:24).

Jesus' resurrection is considered an element of our salvation because through raising Christ from the dead, God showed His power over sin and death. Because of our union with Christ, we also have power over eternal death, given to us upon belief and trust in Him. Jesus' resurrection was victorious. This means that Jesus overcame the devil and death by His raising to new life on the third day (1 Cor. 15:20; Heb. 2:14; Rev. 12:11). Jesus' work being the only ground for salvation means that peace with a holy God and the gift of eternal life comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is found in no one else and He is the only way to God (Acts 4:12; Jn. 14:6-7).

***6. We believe that the Holy Spirit, in all that He does, glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ. He convicts the world of its guilt. He regenerates sinners, and in Him they are baptized into union with Christ and adopted as heirs in the family of God. He also indwells, illuminates, guides, equips and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.***

The Holy Spirit is one of the three persons of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is, like the Father and Son, a person--one who grieves, speaks, and has a mind (Eph. 4:30; Mark 13:11; Rom. 8:27). The Holy Spirit is divine, having characteristics of God (1 Cor. 2:1-10). One of

these characteristics, for example, is that the Spirit is eternal (Heb. 9:14). The Spirit was involved in creation and directly influenced the writers of Scripture (Gn. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:21). In the Old Testament, the Spirit did not indwell every believer like He did in the New Testament after Pentecost. Nevertheless, the Spirit was active by giving special skills to people for various tasks that needed to be done such as for the making of the tabernacle and its elements (Ex. 31:3-5). The Spirit also empowered various leaders such as the judges and certain kings (1 Sam. 10:10). The Holy Spirit was extremely active in the life and ministry of Jesus. The Spirit was involved in Jesus' miraculous conception (Mt. 1:18) and during His life, Jesus was full of the Spirit and of power (Luke 4:14, 10:21).

After Pentecost, the Spirit has been given to each believer for his or her empowerment and to the church for its advancement. The Spirit is active at conversion, regenerating the believer for new life in God (Jn. 3:3-8; Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit regenerates those whom God calls. This is the supernatural work of God whereby the Spirit is given to bring new life (Tit. 3:5). The believer is adopted into God's family through the work of the Spirit in regeneration (Rom. 8:14-17). God transforms these people by creating them anew in the Spirit (Jn. 3:5-8). He changes them into a new life of growth and good works (Eph. 2:10). As the Holy Spirit indwells the believer, God also adopts the believer into His family and takes care of them as a father takes care of children (1 Jn. 3:1). Believers are also united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). Because of this union, believers experience strength to serve and power to overcome temptation (Gal. 2:20; 1 Jn. 15:4-5). In all that the Spirit does, He glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn. 16:12-15). This means that as He works in the world and in believers, He is always pointing to the work and person of God. One example of how He does this is through helping believers remember all that Jesus taught them (Jn. 14:26).

The Holy Spirit is active in the world as He convicts people in regards to sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn. 16:8). This means that people, by the Spirit, realize that they will be judged by God because they did not believe in Jesus and obey His commandments and desires (Jn. 16:9-11). The convicting work of the Spirit is the first element in regeneration. This is when the Spirit awakens a person to see his or her pride and apathy toward the things of God.

The indwelling of the Spirit means that He lives in each believer to give power to live the Christian life. Just as water baptism symbolizes the believer's union with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, baptism of the Spirit means that the Spirit is given to the believer upon belief in Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; Romans 6:2-4). The baptism of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is to unify all believers because the same Spirit is said to have been given to all believers as a gift of God. I do not believe in a second or special baptism of the Spirit given to certain believers later in their Christian lives in order to achieve perfection. Spirit baptism is an initial blessing given at conversion and poured out universally on every believer. The baptism of the Spirit means that at conversion all the fullness of the Spirit is given to the believer. Upon conversion, every believer is given all of the Spirit. There are also commands for believers to be continually filled by the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). This means that believers are to continue to live a life in which the flesh is being fought and the Spirit is being obeyed. This is similar to the idea of walking in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit means that the believer must live the life of the Spirit (not the life of the flesh), demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit, and be used by the Spirit to build up the body of Christ (Gal. 5:16-26). The Holy Spirit is active in the sanctification of the believer as well (Gal. 5:22). He helps believers pray (Rom. 8:26-27), gives them power for life and ministry (2 Tim. 1:7), and gives spiritual understanding of God's truth (Jn. 16:13-14). The Holy Spirit gives gifts to the church so that it may be built up and God's kingdom may be advanced (1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:11-16).

Each believer has been given one or more gifts from the Spirit as He has determined (1 Cor. 12:11). The Holy Spirit convicts person of his or her sin and then, upon conversion, He regenerates, indwells, instructs, and empowers the believer to live a life of Christlikeness and service. The gifts of the Spirit are special empowerments by God to be used to build up the church to maturity (Eph. 4:11-14; 1 Cor. 12:7). The fruit of the Spirit, such as love, joy, peace, and patience (Gal. 5:22), are demonstrations of Christ-like character. I believe my spiritual gifts are pastor and teacher. Therefore, I should seek ways to use these humbly and effectively as I serve God and equip and empower His people!

*7. We believe that the true church comprises all who have been justified by God's grace through faith alone in Christ alone. They are united by the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ, of which He is the Head. The true church is manifest in local churches, whose membership should be composed only of believers. The Lord Jesus mandated two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which visibly and tangibly express the gospel. Though they are not the means of salvation, when celebrated by the church in genuine faith, these ordinances confirm and nourish the believer.*

Justification is God counting the person righteous in His sight by faith in Christ (Rom. 3:21-26). Justification is not based on works, but it is a free gift of God as Christ's righteousness is given to the believer (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace is God's loving favor resulting in unearned salvation. Faith is trusting in God's gift of His Son. God's justification of a believer comes as he or she trusts in the free gift of Christ to pay the penalty of sin. As one trusts in Christ, God looks upon the believer as holy, through the lens of Christ's sacrifice as He appeased the judgment of a holy God (Rom. 6:23). It is faith alone in Christ alone. No good works can add to Jesus' work to accomplish salvation (Eph 2:8-9). No one else can provide the way to have peace with God (Acts 4:12).

The term *church* is used in Scripture to denote Christ's universal body, all believers in a city or region, or a specific congregation of believers usually centered in one meeting place. The

true church is everyone who are believers in Jesus Christ (Mt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 12:28). The church is Christ's means of reaching the world. Some prominent Biblical images for the church are the people of God (2 Cor. 6:16), the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), and the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12). Other ideas used to describe the church are Abraham's seed, a holy priesthood, the bride of Christ, a family, and a pillar and foundation of truth. The church is called to worship God by meeting together in song and preaching as an outward manifestation of an inward transformation of each believer (Heb. 10:24-25; Rom. 12:1). The church is also called to edify believers through discipleship (Eph. 4:11-16). Believers are edified through preaching, teaching, counseling, fellowship, and ministry. Those called to leadership in the church are to use their gifts especially for the edification of the congregation so that the laity is enabled to do works of service (Eph. 4:12). The goal of each believer is to use his or her gifts for the service of the church so that the world may be reached for Christ. Spiritual gifts are special abilities given to believers by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and are to be used to build up the church. The lists of the spiritual gifts are in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, 28-30; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11; and 1 Pet. 4:11. I hold to a soft continuationist view of the miraculous gifts (tongues, healing, prophecy). I do not find any Scriptural reason why any of the gifts have ceased. The major text in the debate is 1 Cor. 13. In this text, Paul is referring to the miraculous gifts passing away when we see Jesus face to face during his return (Rev. 22:4), therefore these miraculous gifts continue during the church age. That being said, I am open to the miraculous gifts, but cautious toward the use of them because they have been greatly abused and we need to remember that they should always be used for the edification of the church.

The local churches are groups of people who are unified together as Christians in any given area (Acts 9:31; Rom 16:5). Members of the true church should be the ones that hold

membership in the local church as they have professed faith in Christ (Acts 16:31; 1 Cor 1:2,16:19). Each local body has the right to govern its own affairs. Christ gave His church power by the Holy Spirit to make disciples of all nations and therefore gather God's elect from every people group on earth; every tribe, tongue, and nation (Rev. 5:9-10; Acts 1:8; Mt. 28:18-20).

A healthy church is a congregation of believers who progressively reflect God's character revealed in His Word. They do this as they display God's character and ways to the world, testifying in their speech and actions that He is a God of grace and glory. Membership is important because it represents those who are serious about the purity and growth of their local congregation. Church members should be believers in Jesus Christ and committed to meeting together consistently to worship, serve, pray, give, learn the Scriptures, accomplish the mission, and to spur one another on towards love and good deeds (Mt. 28:18-20; Heb. 10:24-25).

My preferred type of church government is the Congregational model. In this model the local congregation holds the authority to make major decisions. The different types of congregational approaches are as follows; single elder/pastor, plural elders, corporate board, entrepreneurial model, and pure democracy. A congregational structure often has some form of appointed elders and hired staff who make the leadership decisions, teach the Scriptures, and make sure the church is running (often with the help of Deacons and Deaconesses). I find four major arguments supporting congregationalism in the Scriptures. One, the New Testament churches were to find qualified elders to lead the local congregations (Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:17). Two, churches as a whole made major decisions such as selecting deacons and appointing Paul and Barnabas (Acts 6, 13:1, 15:2-3). Three, Jesus said that leaders are servants and as an inference, it seems wise that they should keep in mind that they have been chosen by their

congregation to serve them and be answerable to them (Luke 22:25-27). Four, Jesus and Paul assigned church discipline to the whole congregation (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5). Parkview's congregational structure is working for the size and makeup of the church. We are a plurality of elders with a representative and autonomous democracy. Our elders are appointed by the congregation to give spiritual direction to the church. We are autonomous, which means that we have support from the denomination, but we also call our own pastors, determine our budget, and purchase property. We also are a representative democracy. This means that our congregation has the final authority in major decisions while other decisions are made by representatives of the people; such as staff, elders, and deacons. Denominational affiliation is important because it makes our church more official, gives us resources and like-minded churches to work with, it gives us resources, and helps us with doctrinal leadership.

Baptism is an important ordinance of the church. The various ways this is practiced and viewed are: as a means of saving grace, as a sign and seal of the covenant, and as an outward symbol of an inward change. I believe in the third view. All believers who have made a profession of faith in Christ should be baptized. Baptism does not save a person (Luke 23:43), but it is a symbol of one's union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 6:3-4). It is a public proclamation that the believer is united with Christ. The various types of baptism are sprinkling, immersion, pouring, infant baptism, and believer baptism. The subjects of baptism should be only those who can make a profession of faith in Christ as it is an outward sign that an inward change has occurred. In the Bible, those who received the word were baptized, showing they had faith in Christ (Acts 2:14; Gal. 3:27). Baptism should be by immersion because this most fully demonstrates the transformation from death to life (Col. 2:12),

it was the way people were baptized in the Bible (Mk. 1:5,10), and it holds most strongly to the meaning of the Greek word for baptism; which means to immerse, dip, or plunge.

The Lord's Supper is also an ordinance of the church. It is to be continually practiced by God's people to remember His death on our behalf. It was established by Christ during the last supper (Mt. 26:26-28). There are three views regarding what happens with communion; transubstantiation (the wine and bread are changed to Christ's blood and flesh as Catholics believe), consubstantiation (the body and blood are present in the elements, as Lutherans believe), and the reformed view (communion is a time to remember Christ's sacrifice—no physical change in the elements, as reformed churches believe). I hold to the reformed view as communion is to be partaken as a remembrance of how Christ's body was broken and his blood was spilled for the forgiveness of sins. It is restricted to followers of Christ who understand its meaning and it should accompany self examination (1 Cor. 11:26-34). Communion is a way of proclaiming Christ's death until He comes again. The elements are not literally Jesus' flesh and blood, but they are used as a sign to enact remembrance of His sacrifice. Communion reminds people that Christ's spiritual presence is with believers always (Mt 28:20; Jn. 6:63). The Lord's Supper is a chance for believers to come together for introspection, proclamation of the gospel, Christian growth, and worship (1 Cor. 11:27-32).

**8. We believe that God's justifying grace must not be separated from His sanctifying power and purpose. God commands us to love Him supremely and others sacrificially, and to live out our faith with care for one another, compassion toward the poor and justice for the oppressed. With God's Word, the Spirit's power, and fervent prayer in Christ's name, we are to combat the spiritual forces of evil. In obedience to Christ's commission, we are to make disciples among all people, always bearing witness to the gospel in word and deed.**

Sanctification, the continuation of the salvation process, is a work of God through the Holy Spirit to keep the believer growing in maturity (1 Thes. 5:23; Phil. 2:13). Sanctification is also an active work of the individual as he or she strives to continue the good work started at

conversion (Phil. 1:6; 2:13). The believer does good things in Jesus' name as a response to His great grace in salvation. Such good works are appointed beforehand by Christ for believers to walk in (Eph. 2:10). They also show that our faith in Christ is genuine (James 2).

Sanctification is a progressive work of separation from the world (2 Cor. 6:17), mortification of the sinful nature (Col. 3:5-6), and transformation into Christlikeness (Rom. 12:2). The Bible teaches that all whom have been saved will persevere in the faith. Therefore, sanctification and assurance of salvation are linked, "those He justified He also glorified." (Rom. 8:30). God is the one who does this sanctifying work and will carry it to completion (1 Thess. 5:23-24; Phil. 1:6). The Bible is very clear about the fact that those who are saved will persevere, because salvation is based on God's power instead of man's decision (Jn. 1:13). Jesus said that no one can snatch his sheep out of his hand or the Father's hand (Jn. 10:27-29). Nothing can separate a believer from the love of God, those He justifies He also glorifies, and no one can bring a charge against the elect (Rom. 8:30-31, 39). God's people always persevere because the sheep follow the voice of the shepherd (John 10). God gives people warnings and promises so that His people will follow His ways, and because they are His people, they will ultimately obey and consequently persevere to the end (Mk. 13:13).

We are to love God in mind, body, heart, and soul (Mk. 12:29-31). This is the greatest commandment. The calling to love others sacrificially comes from God's love working in us as we seek to love in actions and truth (1 Jn. 4:7-12, 3:18). We are to care for other believers and love, serve, and encourage one another in the faith (Gal. 6:10; Rom. 12:10; Heb 10:24-25). It is important to keep our churches in order and healthy so that we can remain effective in our calling to reach out. Compassion for the poor and seeking justice for the oppressed are to be taken seriously, as Scripture calls the church to act out these commandments extensively (Prov.

14:31; Micah 6:8; Luke 16:19-31). These attitudes are important to a world that is in need; acting on them shows this world that we care for the physical needs of our fellow humans. We also reflect our Savior when we show compassion and we reflect our Father when we show justice (Mt 9:36; Gn. 18:25; Psalm 51:4).

Satan and his agents are angels that have fallen because of their pride. They are now on earth to wreak havoc and oppose the works of God (1 Pet 5:8). Because of this, spiritual warfare is real and active. Our battle is against the powers and authorities of the spiritual realm (Eph. 6:12; 1 Cor 10:4-5). Because of this, Scripture encourages us to be clothed with spiritual armor in order to take a stand against the schemes of the Devil (Eph 6:10-18). We are especially to combat spiritual forces with fervent prayer and the Word of God, along with the sword of the Spirit, as Jesus modeled in His temptation in the desert (Mt. 4:1-11).

Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations in Matthew 28:17-20 was His final charge to His followers before He left earth, making it tremendously important. In this statement, Jesus also appealed to His authority over heaven on earth (Eph. 1:20-23). Making disciples means that we should preach the gospel and build up those who trust in Christ, helping them strive for maturity in knowing and doing His commands, and modeling this life to others (2 Tim. 2:2). There are three activities that making disciples involves; going, baptizing, and teaching to obey. This means that we are to go to the ends of the earth with this commission, we are to preach the gospel and help new believers identify with Christ symbolized in baptism, and we are to instruct people to understand and do all that Jesus taught. We are to bear witness in word, preaching the message of the gospel. We are also to bear witness in deed, living as those who have been changed by Christ, pursuing a moral lifestyle filled with affections full of the love of God (Mt. 5:16; Ps. 63:1-3).

***9. We believe in the personal, bodily and premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ. The coming of Christ, at a time known only to God, demands constant expectancy and, as our blessed hope, motivates the believer to godly living, sacrificial service and energetic mission.***

The return of Christ will be personal, visible, and bodily (1 Thess. 4:16; Rev 1:7). Christ could come back very quickly, therefore believers are exhorted to be ready (Mt. 24:44; Mk. 13:32-35). There are four major views on the end times: postmillennialism, amillennialism, pretribulational premillennialism, and historical premillennialism. Postmillennialism is the view that Christ will come after the millennium, which is characterized by a gradual portion of the earth becoming Christians. Amillennialism is the view there is no future millennium to come, rather the events of Revelation 20 are happening in our current church age. Pretribulational premillennialism is the view that believers will be raptured before the tribulation and then return with Christ to reign on earth a thousand years. Historical premillennialism is the view that believers will go through the tribulation and then be caught up and immediately returned to live one thousand years on earth with Christ.

There are a number of good arguments for historical premillennialism. The timing of Christ's return is linked to the rapture as one event. This rapture is an extremely visible event. 1 Thess. 4:16 clearly teaches that the rapture is a visible and public event with the trumpet call of God and a loud command. The trumpet call of God (1 Thess. 4:16), the trumpet to gather the elect (Mt. 24:31), and the trumpet for the bodies to be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52) all point to the same event: the rapture coupled with the second coming. Also, it is clear in Scripture that the rapture is not a secret event, but very visible and widespread (1 Thess 4:15-17; 2 Thess 2:8; Mt 24:27). Indeed there are passages that exhort believers to be ready and wait eagerly because Christ's return is at hand (Mt. 24:35). But this is not inconsistent with the fact that there may be a delay for certain events to take place. There are parables that suggest a period of delay that

believers may prove their character (Mt. 24:45-51; 25:5,19). Furthermore, there are events that will need to happen before Christ returns: the gospel preached to all nations (Mt. 24:14), the great tribulation (Mk. 13:19-20), false prophets and signs in the heavens (Mt 24:23-30), and the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:1-10). The tribulation will be God's wrath on the unbelieving world, but it will also be a result of an increase of wickedness. Passages such as Mt. 7:13-14 and 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 12-13 indicate that humanity will become increasingly wicked and the world will fall into disrepair. Therefore, the tribulation will be a time of refining and testing the church. The church will not be taken out of the tribulation, but will escape out of the midst of the full wrath on the unbelieving world (Mat. 24:29-31; Rev. 3:10). To summarize the arguments of this view I would say that firstly, the New Testament nowhere clearly states that the church will be taken out of the world before the tribulation in a secret rapture. Secondly, the end of the tribulation is linked with the Lord's returning for his people as demonstrated by the trumpet call of God (Mt. 24:31, 1 Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor 15:51-52, Mt. 24:1-4). Finally, the New Testament does not seem to clearly support the idea of two separate returns of Christ. Therefore, the church will go through the time of tribulation and believers are exhorted to stand strong in suffering (Mark 13:13; Rev 2:20).

So the events of the end times are as follows. The church will go through the time of great tribulation. After the tribulation, believers will be raptured, meet the Lord in the air, and immediately return with Him to the earth as the glorious second coming. This will institute the millennium of Christ's reign on earth. At the end of the millennium, Satan will be loosed and quickly destroyed which will be followed by the resurrection of unbelievers, the final judgment, the final states, and the new heavens and new earth.

As far as the nature of the millennium, the premillennial view is the most persuasive. The millennium will be one thousand years of an earthly reign of Christ after His return to earth in power and glory. First, Revelation 20:1-6 is best interpreted in the context of a literal time in the future. One thousand years is mentioned six times in this passage. This is the most straightforward reading of the text and I do not find any good reasons why not to take it literal. Second, the Greek adverbs in 1 Cor. 15:22-24 indicate temporal sequence between the two resurrections, which is best interpreted to be the millennium. Third, the prophecy in Isaiah 11:6-9, indicates a time on earth of this type of peace and prosperity. Fourth, the premillennial view is the stance of virtually all the early Church Fathers. Fifth, the literal millinnum fits best with the flow of Revelation; there will be a time of future persecution (Rev. 13), of future return of Christ (Rev. 19), followed by a future millennial kingdom (Rev. 20).

The kingdom in the Bible is the reign of God. When Jesus spoke of the kingdom, He had in mind God's ruling and saving power fulfilling His promises. The kingdom can be found wherever God reigns in human hearts (Luke 17:21) and wherever the will of the king, Jesus, is being done. The promises of the kingdom will come to pass when Jesus judges His enemies and works on behalf of His people. In this sense, the kingdom is already, but not yet (inaugurated eschatology). It has arrived through Jesus' first coming and it is expanding through the mission of the church, but it will not reach its fullness until Christ comes again.

Some people see the relationship of the church and Israel as two eternally separate entities where, during the millennium, many of the Old Testament promises of land and blessing will be granted to the Jews. Others believe that the church has become the spiritual Israel, and the separation is no more. I believe that the New Testament teaches that the church is the new Israel and therefore the sharp distinction is unnecessary (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 3:29,6:16). The

church occupies the place in the new covenant that Israel occupied in the old (Jer. 31). Furthermore, some of the promises of the Old Testament for the nation of Israel have been fulfilled in the church (Hosea 2:23 fulfilled in Rom. 9:34-25 and Joel 2:28 fulfilled in Acts 2:17). That being said, there still is a great future for Israel as God has not forgotten the Jews as a special people (Rom 9-11). Romans 11:25-27 speaks of a time when there will be large-scale conversions of ethnic Jews—as God melts their hard hearts and many receive His offer of salvation through faith (Rom. 9:25). The phrase, “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26) means that the majority of ethnic Jews at that time will believe in Christ for salvation.

Believers need to be living in constant expectancy that Christ will return at anytime because no one knows the hour He will come back. Because of this, Jesus expects us to be ready when He does return (Mt. 24:36; Luke 18:8). This demands a constant expectancy because we must be ready when the Master returns (Luke 12:35-40). Knowing that Christ will return to defeat evil and establish peace is a great hope to the believer who is struggling with sin, pain, disease, and death. The imminence of Christ’s return should motivate believers to live godly lives, serve wholeheartedly, and pursue witnessing with vigor. Believers should do these things because the hour is soon when Christ will return and there will no longer be a need to reach out. When he comes, we want Christ find us working hard at His work of making disciples of all nations (Rom. 13:11-14; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; Mt. 24:44-51).

***10. We believe that God commands everyone everywhere to believe the gospel by turning to Him in repentance and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe that God will raise the dead bodily and judge the world, assigning the unbeliever to condemnation and eternal conscious punishment and the believer to eternal blessedness and joy with the Lord in the new heaven and the new earth, to the praise of His glorious grace. Amen.***

Jesus came saying, “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk. 1:35). This is the message God commands to everyone everywhere. The message of repentance and belief in Christ is for

all people in all places (Rom. 3:9,23; Rev. 7:9). The core of the gospel message is that Christ died for sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-4). To believe in this is to receive the message as truth, trusting in Christ for salvation. Repentance is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ (Acts 26:20). Repentance coupled with faith in Jesus is conversion (Acts 20:21). To receive Jesus Christ means to trust in His death on the cross for salvation to pay the penalty for sin. To those who receive Christ and believe in Him, he grants eternal life (Jn. 1:12). If one does not trust Christ, he or she will spend eternity in hell (Jn. 3:16-18). Therefore, the personal response to Jesus has eternal consequences.

The fruition of the salvation process for the believer is glorification. This is a great source of hope for believers and it will happen when Christ returns. This is guaranteed to every believer by the Spirit that has been deposited in them (Eph. 1:13-14). The bodies of believers will be transformed into moral and spiritual perfection (Col. 1:22). The characteristics of this body will be similar to Christ after His resurrection (1 Jn. 3:2). It will be healthy, strong, imperishable, powerful, and beautiful (1 Cor. 15:12-58). Glorification is also God's final declaration of the righteous status of believers (Mt. 25:41-46).

For the individual, death is inevitable (Heb. 9:27). However, death was not always intended to be a natural part of life. It is unnatural and will be conquered and swallowed up in Christ's victory at the second coming (1 Cor. 15:26, 54-55). The Bible teaches that the believer goes immediately into conscious fellowship with God in heaven. Jesus told the thief on the cross that they would be together in heaven that very same day (Luke 23:43). And Paul said that to be away from the body is to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6-8).

After the millennium comes the final judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). This is where Jesus will judge all people and the angels (Jn. 5:22,27; Mt. 25:32; 2 Pet. 2:4). Unbelievers will be pronounced to hell, a place of conscious punishment for eternity (2 Thes. 1:9). Scripture describes hell as punishment, fire, torment, darkness, and weeping with gnashing of teeth. This judgment is final as a great chasm is fixed between heaven and hell (Luke 16:19-31). This punishment will endure forever as it is described as unending and eternal (Is. 66:24; Mk. 9:43-48; Mt. 25:46). This punishment of the wicked ultimately is designed to show God's justice, righteousness, and triumph over evil (Rom. 9:17, 22-24). Also during this final judgment, believers will be judged, not for condemnation, but for the dispersing of rewards (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:12-15). This judgment will also serve as a final proclamation of one's justification in Christ. Believers will go to heaven for eternity (Mt. 25:46).

Heaven is a place of God's glorious presence, a place with no evil, pain, or death (Rev. 20:10; 21:3,23). Life in heaven will be restful and happy with believers worshipping and serving God as He displays His glory more and more each day (Heb. 4:9-11; Rev. 19:1-4; 22:3; Mat. 25:14-30). This is a place where believers in resurrection bodies will experience a new heaven and earth in the renewed creation. It is a place of beauty, abundance, and joy of God's presence forever (Jn. 14:2; Rev. 21:3-4; Ps. 16:11). It is fitting for this statement of faith to end in doxology because all people will be pointed to the glory of God and bow before Him, as He deserves the highest praise (Phil 2:10-11; Rev. 5:9-10).

***Current Doctrinal Issues: 1) Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage:*** God designed marriage to be a life-long covenant where a man leaves his parents and becomes united to his wife and they become one flesh (Gn. 2:24). God's purposes for marriage are procreation (Gn. 1:28), companionship (Gn. 2:18), serving together in church and society, and sanctification (Eph

5:26). A strong marriage is to be a picture of the love of Christ for the church (Eph 5:23-33) and a reflection of the strength of God's covenant with His people (Ezk. 16:8; Hos 13:4; Mal 2:10-16). God says that He hates divorce (Mal. 2:16) and therefore Christians should make every effort to stay married. Though God's ideal is that all marriages be life-long, the Bible includes two circumstances where divorce and remarriage are permitted, though not required. These circumstances are sexual immorality and desertion of an unbelieving spouse (Matt 5:32 cf 19:9; and 1 Cor. 7:15).

God never commands anyone to divorce, but there are two reasons where it is permissible for a Christian to divorce. The first reason for divorce is given by Jesus in Matthew 5:32 and Matthew 19:9, in which he states that it is permissible for a Christian to divorce on the basis of marital unfaithfulness if one of the partners has been sexually immoral. The second reason for divorce is found in 1 Corinthians 7. Paul says that if an unbelieving spouse abandons the Christian spouse, divorce is acceptable (1 Cor. 7:15). The reasoning Paul gives is that God has called us to peace; therefore the believer is no longer under the bond of marriage in this case.

Where divorce is permitted in sexual immorality and desertion, remarriage is also permitted. There are four main reasons why this view on remarriage is to be preferred. First, Jesus' comments in Luke 16:18 and Mark 10:11-12 are to be taken as general statements with his comments in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 more specifically defining exceptions to the general rule. Second, Jesus' hearers assumed that when he mentioned the sexual immorality reason for divorce he was also including remarriage. Third, grammatically, the exception clause in Matthew 19:9, "except for marital unfaithfulness," applies not only to the phrase, "whoever divorces his wife," but also to the phrase "and marries another." Fourth, the exception language of 1 Corinthians 7:15 is best explained to include both divorce and remarriage when the flow of

Paul's thought and the grammatical connections are considered.

Local churches should draft a collaborative policy on divorce and remarriage to help guide them in decisions regarding this issue. Churches should also work on creating a climate of grace when the issue of divorce and remarriage is handled. Finally, churches should do all they can to commit to preserving strong marriages.

**2) Abortion, Infanticide, and Euthanasia:** Humans are made in God's image (Gn. 1:27). Because of this fact, we must do everything possible to uphold this value by not taking innocent life—this includes the areas of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia. In God's sight, personhood starts at conception (Ps. 139:13-16; Job 31:13-15). David praised God for his fearful and wonderful works for watching over his unformed body within the womb and all the days of his life were written down before one of them came to pass (Ps. 139:13-14). The three positions on abortion in our society today are: abortion on demand, abortion on indications, and consideration of the life of the mother. The abortion on demand position indicates that abortions can be performed as the mother demands. Abortion on indications says that in certain circumstances, such as rape, incest, poverty, and other reasons, an abortion can be performed. Abortion on indications uses caution before accepting an abortion, but ultimately it is still up to the subjective criteria of the mother and the doctor to decide what the indications are. The life of the mother position indicates that abortions should only be performed if the mother's life is in direct danger, which places a higher value on the life of the baby than on the mother's right to choose. I prefer the life of the mother position. In the Bible, the value of upholding the sanctity of a life is extremely strong because humans are made in God's image, whereas the value of personal preferences is not always supreme (1 Cor. 6:19). This position is best because it respects life from the beginning, it is very consistent in its definitions, it is consistent with the

value of western civilization to give rights to more people, and it values human life regardless of gender, ethnicity, or health. God relates to the unborn in personal ways, Biblical authors speak of themselves as persons in the womb, and personhood begins at conception (Ps. 51:5).

Pastorally, clear teaching on this subject is imperative even though it will be difficult because it is a sensitive topic. Many people need to be challenged to think biblically on this issue and not just adopt the popular view of the culture. The loss of life must be affirmed and there must be encouragement to grieve. Also the message of forgiveness and healing in Christ should be taught in the case of abortion (Rom. 8:1).

**3) Role Distinctions for Men and Women in the Home and the Church:** As far as leadership in the church, the Bible gives guidelines for its leaders in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Tim. 3:1-7. These men are to be exemplary in personal character, experienced in the Christian life, and respected by those outside the church. Women should not be ordained for pastoral positions because they would then have authority to teach men in a church setting or have authority to govern the whole body. The overwhelming majority of OT and NT leaders were men. Women who were leaders are the exception to the norm. There are no examples of women priests, apostles, or elders in Scripture. It is true that in the NT there are examples of women prophesying (such as the daughters of Philip in Acts 21:9), but these passages do not address governing and teaching over the whole church. Furthermore, prophecy is not listed as a requirement for eldership. However, the passages that directly address the governing and teaching over the whole church teach that women should not teach or have authority over a man (1 Tim. 2:11-15; 1 Cor. 14:33-35). Paul's argument that women should not teach men stems from the creation order. The church as it preaches, teaches, and governs should model the headship of men over women and reflect their appropriate roles from creation. This view does

not mean that women are somehow inferior to men; it simply means they have been created with a different role. Women can contribute greatly to the life of the church as they serve, teach, and use their gifts in appropriate settings. Men and women are equal in Christ (Gal. 3:26-29). Jesus treated women with great dignity and many women followed Him. Women were prophetesses, deaconesses, and missionaries yet they did not hold the offices of pastors, overseers, or elders. Women and men are equal, yet men have the responsibility to lead, heading up the church and home.

Leadership in the home should reflect God's desire that the husband should be the head of the household; he should love his wife as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:22-33). This means that the husband should bear the responsibility of the direction of the home especially in spiritual matters. The wife is to submit to the husband's humble and sacrificial leadership as she seeks to serve the family with respect and love (Col. 3:18-21).

**4) Homosexual Belief and Conduct:** The Bible is very clear in teaching that homosexuality is wrong in God's sight (as well as other sexual perversions such as incest, rape, and bestiality). In 1 Corinthians 6:9 a homosexual person is mentioned in the list of unrighteous people who will not inherit the kingdom of God. In 1 Timothy 1:10 homosexuals are listed as those who act contrary to sound teaching. In Romans 1:24-27 homosexual acts are called, impure, dishonorable, degrading, unnatural, and indecent. This text is important because Paul frames his teaching about homosexuality around the creation order. By doing this, Paul is saying that homosexuality is not simply wrong for the church in Rome, but for all people in every society. Homosexuality goes against God's plan for a sexual relationship in Genesis: one man and one woman who leave their father and mother and cleave to one another in a sexual union (Gn. 2:24). As sexual union is for one man and one woman within the covenant of marriage,

Paul is saying that homosexuality is a sin because it is contrary to God's plan for a sexual relationship. Homosexuality is a consequence of a depraved mind, impure heart, and an idolatrous lifestyle. In the Old Testament, homosexuality is called an abomination (Lv. 18:22). Both the Old and the New Testament are unequivocal in their teaching that homosexuality is contrary to the moral law of God. As a pastor, I need to be very clear on explaining that the Bible is against homosexuality with conviction and sensitivity. I should strive for clarity in Biblical convictions and also compassion with those who are struggling.

**5) Theology of Worship:** Worship is to be a lifestyle (Rom. 12:1-2) and it is to be God-centered (Ps. 115:1; Rom. 11:36) and Christ-exalting (Col. 1:15-20; 1 Pet. 3:15). Worship is to be done every day as we seek to live our lives as living sacrifices and to do all things for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). Yet there are times when it is appropriate, at least once a week on Sundays, for the community to gather and worship God in a special way. This worship service should include elements such as praise music, Scripture readings, the proclamation of God's Word, administration of communion, and prayer. In worship music, both traditional and contemporary worship styles have their place in the church. I like the upbeat, contemporary sound and many others like it as well. I also like the depth of the traditional songs. Each church is unique in what is appropriate for worship style, but it is important that, regardless of taste, the music is centered on God and the gospel.

***Issues Related to Lifestyle:*** **1) Spiritual Disciplines:** Scripture calls us to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness (1 Tim. 4:6). Spiritual disciplines are regular practices of the Christian faith for the purpose of growing in godliness such as Bible study, meditation, prayer, fasting, worship, and solitude. The regular practice of spiritual disciplines is very important in order to grow in Christ. They can be done personally (alone) or corporately (with

other believers). Currently I am exercising many of the spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, memorization and meditation, worship, and prayer.

**2) Stewardship, Personal Finances, and Debt:** Good financial dealings are also important in the Christian life. We are to be good stewards in our personal finances. This means maintaining regular habits of budget-making, saving, and giving. Debt should be kept in check and paid off according to schedule as much as possible to keep things from getting out of control.

**3) Sexual Purity (Including Pornography):** A Christian must maintain sexual purity in order to be a good witness and glorify God (1 Thess. 4:3-4). As a single man, God calls me to abstain from sex until I get married (1 Cor. 6:13-20). When I am married, God calls me to be faithful to my wife (Prov. 5:19-21). Pornography is to be avoided at all costs as it is an avenue a man to commit adultery in his heart (Mt. 5:27-28).

How do I seek to remain pure as a minister? Pray, pray, pray! I also try to have good accountability, a strong community around me, and good times with God for refreshment. To do this, I schedule a morning with God each week and a day with God each quarter, and a personal retreat each year. I also memorize verses to help me stay on track with God in this area patterned after Psalm 119:9,11.

**4) Marriage & Family Priorities:** In marriage, men and women were created differently. They each have unique physical, mental, and social characteristics. Men and women were created to complement one another in marriage (Gn. 2:18). Men and women are equal in personhood, for they were both created in God's image, and equal in importance, for they are both equal in status in Christ (Gn. 1:27; Gal. 3:27-28). However, men and women are different in the roles God has created them to occupy. Just as the Father has authority over the Son, so in marriage the man has authority over the woman (1 Cor. 11:3). This authority is not to be

domineering; rather, a man is simply the one who has the ultimate responsibility. Wives are exhorted to submit to the husband's leadership and husbands are exhorted to love and serve their wives (Eph. 5:22-23; Col. 3:18-19). These roles are to be a reflection of how Christ submits to the will of the Father and how Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Eph. 5:25). Marriage and family should be a high priority in the life of the minister because marriage is the relationship that most closely reflects Christ's relationship with the church. Furthermore, managing one's household well is a very important qualification of an elder, so it should be a high priority of the minister (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

**5) Social Drinking of Alcohol:** I do not see drinking in and of itself as a sin. However, getting drunk as a sin (Eph. 5:18). Therefore, it is important to not put oneself in a circumstance where it would be tempting to sin. If a Christian is drinking and a younger believer is there who is tempted to betray his or her conscience, then the drinking should be stopped. The younger believer needs to be respected and not put into a situation where he or she will easily stumble (1 Cor. 10:23-31; Rom. 14:13-23). Also, for the minister, social drinking should be practiced with caution so as to not cause gossip or disrepute to the pastoral position or the Christian witness (1 Tim. 4:16; 2 Tim. 2:15). I personally do not practice social drinking because I am not that interested in alcohol and I want to remain above reproach.

**6) Accountability in Life and Ministry:** Accountability in the Christian life is extremely important. It helps the growth process along in positive ways. Well-kept accountability helps believers keep sin in check, stay disciplined, and remain close to Christ (Prov. 27:17). Currently, I am in accountability relationships where we ask each other how we are doing in issues such as purity and spiritual disciplines.

**Attitude towards the Evangelical Free Church of America:**

1. Yes
2. Yes
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. Yes
6. Yes
7. No