

Bibliology

God has revealed himself generally to all men in all places at all times through creation (Psalm 19, Romans 1:19-21) and providence (Acts 14:17). He has also written His law on the heart of man through conscience (Romans 2:14-16). While this general revelation is enough to condemn man (Romans 1:19-21) and to cause man to seek God (Acts 17:26-27), it does not reveal the full nature of God nor how to be saved.

God has also revealed himself in special ways throughout history. The primary means of this special revelation is through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). God has also given special revelation through appearing to men (Genesis 12:7), through the prophets (Hebrews 1:1), and through Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2, John 1).

The Bible is the inspired word of God (2 Timothy 3:16). It was written by the work of the Holy Spirit through men (2 Peter 1:20-21). I believe that the canon of the Bible is comprised of 66 books. The Bible in the original autographs is inerrant and infallible (John 17:17, Psalm 119:160). I believe the Bible has been preserved throughout time such that we have the complete word of God today (Psalm 119:89, 1 Peter 1:23-25, Matthew 5:18). God's Word, the Bible, is authoritative and sufficient for today (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Theology Proper

The Bible never argues for the existence of God, it is assumed. God reveals his existence through creation (Romans 1:19-20). God is not dependent on any one or any thing for His existence; He is self-existent (Exodus 3:14, John 5:26). God is the creator (Genesis 1-2) and king (Psalm 5:2, 10:16, 24:8) of the universe.

I believe in the eternal plan (or decree) of God, which is God's eternal decision rendering certain all things that will come to pass. God's plan is from eternity (Ephesians 1:4, 3:11). His plan and decisions are free on His part (Isaiah 40:13-14). The purpose of God's plan is His glory (Ephesians 1:5-6, 12). While God's plan is effectual (Isaiah 14:24, 27, 46:10), it does not annul human responsibility (Luke 22:22).

The attributes of God are essential and inherent aspects of His nature. God's attributes are not added, removed, or changed over time. Each attribute is equally a part of God's nature. They describe who/what God is; they are not separate pieces that, when put together, make up God.

God's attributes can be categorized into His greatness (attributes of His nature as a being that set Him apart from created beings) and goodness (attributes pertaining to His character). God's attributes of greatness include that He is spirit (John 4:24), living and the source of life (Jeremiah 10:10, Genesis 2:7, John 5:26), eternal (Psalm 90:2), all-knowing (Hebrews 4:13), all-powerful (Genesis 1, Matthew 19:26), omnipresent (Jeremiah 23:24), unchanging (Malachi 3:6), transcendent (Psalm 113:5-6), and immanent (Acts 17:27, Matthew 5:45).

God's attributes of goodness include holiness (Isaiah 6:1-3), righteousness (Psalm 11:7), justice (Exodus 34:6-7), faithfulness (1 Thessalonians 5:24), love (1 John 4:8), graciousness (Exodus 34:6-7, Ephesians 2:4-9), mercy (Exodus 34:6-7, Ephesians 2:4-9).

God is triune, meaning that He consists of three distinct persons in one. Scripture clearly teaches that God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). It also teaches that the Father is God (Ephesians 1:3), the Son is God (John 1:1), and the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4).

Christology

Jesus Christ is the second person of the trinity (Matthew 28:18-20). In His nature He is both divine and human. He has been God from eternity past (John 1:1-3) and remains God for eternity future (Revelation 22:13). Jesus was also the agent of creation (John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:16-17).

At His incarnation, Jesus took on human flesh (John 1:14, Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus was born of a virgin, Mary (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:18). He took on the full nature of humanity (Hebrews 2:17, 1 Corinthians 15:21). Beginning at His incarnation, Jesus is both fully human and fully divine (1 Timothy 2:5, Galatians 4:4, Colossians 2:9). The incarnation of Jesus was done willfully by Jesus, not forced upon Him by the Father (Philippians 2:5-8). As a man, Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life (Hebrews 4:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

The primary work of Christ was to provide a substitutionary atonement for mankind. Through Jesus' death, the wrath of God was satisfied (Romans 3:25). In His death, He was a substitute, dying not for His own sins, but for the sins of mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24). Through His substitutionary atonement, Jesus provided reconciliation for man to God (Romans 5:10, Colossians 1:20-22). A connected work to Jesus' substitutionary atonement is that of His resurrection. After His death, Jesus was laid in a tomb and rose to life on the third day (Matthew 28:1-20). Through His resurrection Jesus conquered death and guaranteed life for believers (1 Corinthians 15:21-23). Jesus currently does the work of intercession between believers and the Father (Romans 8:34, 1 John 2:1). Jesus also continually sustains creation (Colossians 1:17).

Jesus also holds the offices of prophet (Matthew 13:57, Hebrews 1:1-2), priest (Hebrews 4:14), and King (1 Timothy 6:13-15, Revelation 19:16). He is also the head of the church (Colossians 1:18).

Jesus will one day rapture the church (John 14, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and then return after the tribulation to establish His millennial kingdom (Revelation 19:11-20:6).

Pneumatology

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the trinity. He is identified as God in Scripture (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 5:3-4). The Holy Spirit is a person, not a mere force. He has intelligence (Romans 8:26-27, 1 Corinthians 2:11), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), and emotions (Ephesians 4:30). Jesus also spoke of the Holy Spirit as a person (John 14:16-17).

While the Holy Spirit did not indwell every Old Testament believer, He was still active during that period. He was present at creation (Genesis 1:2). He equipped people for specific service such as governing (Numbers 11:16-17), physical strength (Judges 14:5-6), and revelation/inspiration (2 Samuel 23:1-2, Ezekiel 11:5, 2 Peter 1:21). It was also possible for people to lose the Holy Spirit during the Old Testament period (1 Samuel 16:14).

During the church age, the Holy Spirit's work is more prominent. He was active in the ministry of Christ (Luke 4:1, Acts 10:38, Hebrews 9:14), as well as His resurrection (Romans 8:11). He also specially works with believers. The Holy Spirit illuminates (1 Corinthians 2:9-16), directs (Romans 8:14), convicts (John 16:7-11), regenerates (Titus 3:5), seals (Ephesians 1:13-14), indwells (Romans 8:9), enables holy living (Romans 8:4, Galatians 5:16), intercedes (Romans 8:26-27), and gives gifts for service (1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are given for the building up of the church (1 Corinthians 12:7, 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 4:11-13). Each of these gifts are important, and no one person possesses all the gifts (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). I believe that some of the gifts have passed away, as they are no longer needed. I believe Scripture provides at least three strong reasons for believing this. First, we are told that these gifts will pass away (1 Corinthians 13:8). Second, the apostles and prophets were the foundation for the church (Ephesians 2:20), and once the foundation has been laid, that work is done. Finally, Hebrews 2:3-4 states that God validated the gospel message with special signs and gifts.

The Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Romans 8:9). This means that the Spirit takes up residence within the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 1:22). Since every believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, I believe the Spirit begins to indwell the believer at the moment of salvation (Galatians 3:3, 4:6, 1 Corinthians 12:13). I believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit refers to this initial indwelling. I believe to be filled with the Spirit means to be controlled or led by the Spirit. When one is filled with the Spirit, they are yielded to the Spirit's leading (Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:16).

Anthropology

Mankind was created on the sixth day of creation and is not the result of any evolutionary process (Genesis 1:1-31). God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him (Genesis 2:7). Man was created perfect and without sin (Genesis 1:31, 2:25). Man was given the responsibility to fill, subdue, and exercise dominion over the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28-30).

Mankind was uniquely created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Being in the image of God relates to man's nature, not something man has or does. The image of God is seen in the qualities of man that make him like God, thus able to represent or "image" Him.

Mankind was created as male and female (Genesis 1:27). In this context, God instituted marriage between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24-25), and any other form of sexual activity is condemned by God (Leviticus 18:22-23, Romans 1:26-27).

Man is a dichotomy, made up of material and immaterial (Genesis 2:7, Matthew 10:28). The body and soul are united here on Earth (Job 32:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:23), but will be separated at death (2 Corinthians 5:8, James 2:26). However, the body and soul will be reunited at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:35-49, John 5:28-29).

Hamartiology

Sin is any failure to meet the holy standard of God, whether by act, thought, or being (Romans 3:23). At some point after creation, Satan rebelled against God. Sin entered the world when Satan deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden and Adam followed Eve and willfully sinned (Genesis 3:1-6, 1 Timothy 2:14).

As the representative head of humanity, Adam's sin is passed on to all people as soon as they begin to exist (Romans 5:12-19, Psalm 51:5). No one is exempt from this, as all inherit a sin nature (Romans 3:23, 5:12). Mankind is totally depraved and dead in their sins (Romans 3:10-18, Ephesian 2:1, Romans 8:7-8).

Sin has several serious and literal effects. Initially God judged the serpent (Genesis 3:14), Satan (Genesis 3:15), the woman (Genesis 3:16), man (Genesis 3:17-19) and the earth (Genesis 3:17-19, Romans 8:20-22). Sin also causes a broken relationship with God (Genesis 3:8, Ephesians 2:12). Because of sin, sinners are under God's wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 1:18). Sin brings both physical and spiritual death (Romans 5:12, Hebrews 9:27, Ephesians 2:1). One who dies in his sin will face eternal death in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:12-15).

Soteriology

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 4:11-12). It is a gift from God (Romans 3:24, 6:23) and not based on any work of man (Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:9). Salvation is provided based on the substitutionary atonement of Christ (1 Peter 3:18).

There are two calls to salvation. There is a general call for all people to come to repentance (Acts 17:30), and there is an internal, effectual call. The effectual call is the working of the Holy Spirit that brings a person to salvation (Romans 8:28-30, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 1 Peter 2:9).

There are four aspects to conversion: repentance, faith, regeneration, and justification. Repentance involves a knowledge of sin, a genuine sorrow over sin, and a choice to forsake sin (Psalm 51, Acts 26:20). It involves both a free act and a divine gift (Acts 11:18, 17:30). Faith involves a knowledge of the truth (Luke 7:18-23), assent to the truth (James 2:18-19), and trust in and commitment to Christ (Romans 10:9, Hebrews 11:1). Regeneration is the new life produced in the believer at the moment of salvation by the work of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, Ephesians 2:1-5, Titus 3:5). Justification refers to one's standing before God where one is declared righteous (Romans 3:21-26).

I believe that God has elected from eternity past those who would believe. God has chosen those who would believe and receive eternal life (Acts 13:48). God's pattern of election is seen throughout history (Romans 9:6-12). Election is not based on any merit or worthiness of the one elected (Romans 9:16, Ephesians 2:8-9). Believers were chosen before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). God is not unjust to elect some but not others (Romans 9:13-18, Matthew 20:1-16). God offers salvation to all, and all reject it apart from God's grace of election (1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, Matthew 22:14, Romans 9:19-23).

Salvation also involves two ongoing aspects, sanctification and perseverance. Sanctification is the process of believers being transformed into the image of Christ, putting off the old man and putting on the new man (2 Corinthians 3:18, Colossians 3:5-10). Perseverance is the work of God that guarantees the believer's salvation (1 Peter 1:5, Ephesians 1:13-14).

The final aspect of salvation is glorification, which is the completion of sanctification and the realization of salvation (Romans 8:30, 1 Peter 1:5). It involves both moral perfection (1 Thessalonians 3:13) and physical perfection (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

Angelology

Angels are created beings (Psalm 148:2-5, Nehemiah 9:6). They are spiritual beings (Hebrews 1:14) who are above man in position and ability (Psalm 8:5, 2 Peter 2:11), but subject to God (Psalm 103:20). As spiritual beings who do not marry or die, it is reasonable to conclude that the number of the angels is fixed (Luke 20:34-36, Matthew 22:30). Angels have personality as they have intelligence (1 Peter 1:12), will (Jude 6), and emotion (Luke 15:10). They are also described as powerful beings (Psalm 103:20, 1 Thessalonians 1:7).

The unfallen angels are holy and elect (Mark 8:38, 1 Timothy 5:21). The primary dwelling place of the unfallen angels is in heaven (Matthew 28:2, Mark 13:32), but they do spend time on earth as demonstrated by their various appearances. The holy angels perform various activities in relation to God, man, and Christ. In relation to God, angels worship and praise Him (Psalm 103:20, Isaiah 6:3), they serve Him and do His will (Psalm 91:11, 103:20), they deliver messages (Genesis 19, Daniel 8-9, Luke 1), and they act as agents of judgment (2 Samuel 24:15-17, Acts 12:23, Revelation 9:15). In relation to man they are ministers to God's people (Hebrew 1:14), and they protect and deliver God's people (Daniel 3, 6, Acts 5, 12). In relation to Christ, they ministered to both physical and emotional needs (Matthew 4:11, Luke 22:43).

There are three classes of angels. The first class is the archangels, about which we know very little (1 Thessalonians 4:16, Jude 9). The second class is the cherubim, who seem to be tasked with protecting the holiness of God (Genesis 3:24, Exodus 25:17-22, Ezekiel 1:5-14, 10:1-20). The third class of angels is the seraphim, who are only depicted as worshipping God (Isaiah 6:2-6).

Not every angel remained in their holy position. Many angels fell in sin, giving up their position and holiness (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). The fallen angels oppose God's will (Ephesians 6:12), and do Satan's will (Matthew 12:22-30, Revelation 16:13-14). They can also enter and control humans and animals (Matthew 12:45, Mark 5:2-4).

Satan leads the fallen angels. He is deceitful and cunning (2 Corinthians 2:11, Ephesians 6:11, John 8:44). He is also described as evil and a murderer (1 John 5:19, John 8:44). Satan works against the gospel by blinding men to the truth (2 Corinthians 4:4) and promoting false beliefs (1 Timothy 4:1). Satan also works against believers seeking to destroy them (1 Peter 5:8), tempting them (Ephesians 6:11), and hindering their work (1 Thessalonians 2:18).

In the end, Satan and his demons will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:2, 10; Matthew 25:41).

Ecclesiology

The church is a body of believers who have been baptized by immersion and gather together to edify, worship, practice the ordinances, and fulfill the great commission. The church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18), and the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32). The church consists of the universal church, made up of all believers from Pentecost until the rapture (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 3:21, 5:25-27), and the local church, made up of believers who assemble together in a certain location (1 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1). Members of the local church must be believers (Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 1:2) who have been baptized (Acts 2:41, Matthew 28:19).

The church exists to fulfill the great commission (Matthew 28:18-20), provide fellowship (Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25), provide edification (Ephesians 4:16), provide Scriptural teaching (Ephesians 4:11-14, 2 Timothy 2:15, 4:1-2), give sacrificially to the work of Christ (2 Corinthians 8:1-9, 9:7), and care for the widows and needy (1 Timothy 5:9-10, Galatians 6:10).

I believe that local churches are autonomous and governed by the congregation, under the leadership of the pastor. I believe this is what Scripture teaches based on the importance of order within the church (1 Corinthians 14:40, Acts 6), the priesthood of the believer (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 4:14-16), the importance of each believer to the whole body (Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12), the pattern of group decisions in Acts (Acts 4:32, 6:1-6, 15:22), and the role of the pastor (1 Timothy 3:5, 1 Peter 5:1-3).

There are two ordinances which the church ought to observe, baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper. Both ordinances are done in obedience to Christ and in remembrance of Christ's work (Matthew 26:17-30, 28:18-20).

The two offices of the church are pastors and deacons. Pastors are to lead (1 Timothy 3:5, 1 Peter 5:1-3), care (Acts 20:28), and teach (1 Timothy 3:2). The qualifications for pastors are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The office of deacon was established in Acts 6:1-6, and the qualifications for deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3. The duties of deacons are to minister to widows and needy (Acts 6:1-6), and service (definition of "deacon").

I also believe that the church is distinguished from Israel. God currently works through the church, while a partial hardening has come upon Israel (Romans 11). Eventually, God will restore the nation of Israel as His people during the tribulation (Romans 11:25-26, Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1).

Eschatology

Jesus will one day have a literal, physical return that will be seen by all (Acts 1:11, Revelation 1:7, 19:11-13). Prior to Christ's return to judge the world and establish His millennial kingdom, He will return in the clouds to rapture the church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

After the rapture, the Tribulation will begin (2 Thessalonians 2:3). During this time, the antichrist will take power, helped by and the False Prophet (2 Thessalonians 2:3, Revelation 13:2-10). The antichrist will proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) and deceive the nations via the False Prophet (Revelation 13:11-18), ultimately leading them into battle against Christ (Revelation 16:12-16, 19:11-21). The tribulation is a literal 7-year period of unmatched trouble during which God pours out His wrath on the world (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:21, Daniel 12:1, Revelation 6-9, 16).

Following the Tribulation, Christ will return, conquer Satan and his armies, bind Satan for one thousand years, and set up His millennial kingdom (Revelation 19:11-20:6). During this time, Christ will literally reign for one thousand years, sitting on David's throne (Isaiah 9:7, Luke 1:32). After the thousand years have ended, Satan will be released to make one last rebellion against Christ, but he will be conquered and thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10).

Believers will be judged based on their works to determine the extent of their eternal rewards, not their eternal destiny (1 Corinthians 3:10-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10). Following the tribulation, those who live through the tribulation will be judged to determine their entrance into the millennial kingdom (Matthew 25:31-46). All unbelievers will ultimately be judged and thrown into the lake of fire for eternity (Revelation 20:11-15).

Following the Tribulation, millennium, and judgement, God will create a new heaven and new earth where believers will dwell with God for eternity, without the presence of sin (Revelation 21-22:5).