

Charles Joseph Specht III

Doctrinal Statement of Faith

(Adopted July 31, 2009)

The Holy Scriptures

I believe that the written Bible—the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments—is God’s objective and sufficient revelation to humanity, that men were chosen by God to write them under the guidance and enabling of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16), and that they alone constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (Hebrews 1:1-2; 1 Corinthians 2:7-14). I believe the Scriptures to be God breathed, without error in the original manuscripts, and that they are the only infallible rule for faith and life (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

I believe in the literal, grammatical historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17). I believe that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be determined as one diligently applies the literal grammatical historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

The Godhead

I believe that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, omniscient and self-existent Spirit (John 4:24), being both omnipotent and omnipresent, perfect in all His attributes, unchangeable in His nature, one in essence, eternally existing in three inseparable Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (John 1:1; 10:30; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience (Luke 2:14; Hebrews 1:6). I believe the eternal Godhead to be the absolute and sole creator of the universe and that its creation was by divine fiat, not through evolutionary process (Genesis 1:1; Psalms 33:6; Colossians 1:15-17).

God the Father

I believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Triune Godhead, is the Creator and sovereign Ruler of all things (Genesis 11:31; Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 3:9), and that He orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36).

I believe His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with humanity. As Creator He is Father of all humanity (Ephesians 4:6), but is the spiritual Father only to repentant believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through repentant faith in Jesus Christ; He adopts as his own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

I believe that the second person of the Triune Godhead is the Son, whose name is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:1; 14:9; Hebrews 1:3-4), and that He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit (John 10:30; 14:9). I believe in His pre-existence, incarnation, virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, burial, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, and personal and visible premillennial return (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1-3, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Romans 3:24-25, 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Hebrews 9:24; Revelation 20).

I believe that God the Father created the universe according to His own will, through His Son Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2). I believe that in the incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God Man while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 1:34-35; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9). I believe that Jesus Christ represents

humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9), and as the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), He lived a sinless life (Hebrews 7:26; 2 Corinthians 5:21) and died a propitiatory, substitutionary death bearing the full penalty of God's wrath to save His people from their sins (1 Peter 3:18; Romans 3:25; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

I believe that Christ's death demonstrated love for all humanity, is to be proclaimed and offered to all, and is sufficient to save all (Acts 17:30; Romans 10:10-13; Luke 24:46-47), but that Christ's death was designed to be efficacious for the elect alone (John 10:15; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 5:9). I believe He was buried, arose bodily, ascended into heaven, and is presently fulfilling His intercessory and mediatorial ministry as our Advocate and High Priest at the right hand of the Majesty on High (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their repentant faith in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31). I believe that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing and repentant sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross, through the endurance and bearing of the Father's wrath for sin upon Himself, and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23), specifically:

- Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)
- Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

God the Holy Spirit

I believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Triune Godhead, is coequal, consubstantial, coeternal with God the Father and God the Son (Matthew 28:19; John 14:16; Acts 5:3-4, 28:25-26; 2 Corinthians 13:14), and is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all repentant believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

I believe that although the Holy Spirit was actively present in the world in the Old Testament, He became resident in the world on the day of Pentecost having been sent by God the Father as promised by God the Son (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26), to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13).

I believe that as a divine Person of the Triune Godhead, the Holy Spirit possesses all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit convicts the unsaved of their need of Christ. He regenerates, baptizes, indwells, and seals all those whom He brings to repentant faith. He teaches the believer, whom He leads into spiritual maturity through the knowledge of Christ and empowers through His filling ministry (John 16:7-11; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 3:16; 4:30; 5:18; 1 John 2:27). He effectually calls and regenerates the elect, enabling them to exercise the gift of repentant faith and to receive Christ in all His offices as both Savior and Lord (Philippians 1:29; Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 4:5; John 1:12; 3:3-5; Titus 3:5; 1 John 5:1).

I believe that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

I believe that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18). In this respect, God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

I believe that the moment the repentant believer places his faith in Christ he is baptized with the Holy Spirit and becomes a functioning member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13,18; Acts 11:16; Romans 12:4-6). As a result of this baptism, the Holy Spirit imparts a spiritual gift; the Lord Jesus Christ assigns a ministry for which that gift is to be utilized; and God the Father guarantees supernatural effects as the believer fulfills that ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:15-16). I believe some of the spiritual gifts given in the church during the ministry of the Apostles were directly related to the founding of the church and the completion of the New Testament and are thus no longer given, such as the gifts of prophecy, tongues, knowledge, and healing (Ephesians 2:20-3:4; Hebrews 2:3-4; 1 Corinthians 14:37-38; 2 Corinthians 12:12). I believe, however, that God continues to work supernaturally among His people. For example, those who have a debilitating sickness are to call for the elders who are to pray and expect supernatural healing as a part of their present-day ministry (James 5:16).

Man (Creation and Fall)

I believe that God's intention in the creation of man (humanity) was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

I believe that the first man (Adam) was directly and immediately created by God, on the literal 6th day of creation, in God's image and likeness, apart from any process of evolution (Genesis 1:26; 2:7), and created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7; 15-25; James 3:9). I believe that as a direct and immediate result of Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence and thereby incurred the penalty of both physical and spiritual death, which is utter separation from God and, therefore, subject to the eternal wrath of God.

I believe that as our representative head, the guilt of Adam's act was imputed to the entire human race (Romans 5:12-14, 18-19), Jesus Christ Himself being the sole exception, and that all men have inherited a totally depraved sin nature and are sinners by nature, choice, practice, and divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12). Man became inherently corrupt and guilty before God, totally incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God, and possesses within himself no means of recovery apart from divine grace (Genesis 1:27, 3:1-19; Romans 3:9-18; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-3).

I believe that man's depravity extends even to his will. While man is a free moral agent, choosing as he pleases, his will is in bondage to his sinful nature and subject to Satan's power by personal disobedience to the will of God (Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 5:12-19; John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2-3). Therefore, in his total depravity, he always chooses darkness and is both incapable and unwilling to choose Christ (John 3:19-20; 5:40; 6:44, 65; Romans 8:6-8; Ephesians 2:1, 4). Having no recuperative powers to restore or save himself, man is hopelessly lost apart from divine grace. Therefore, I believe that man's salvation is wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

Election

I believe that God, in His own sovereignty and under no obligation whatsoever to provide salvation for anyone, unconditionally chose and elected certain individuals for whom He would regenerate, save, and sanctify, and that this election took place before the foundation of the world (Romans 8:28-30; John 15:16; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 1:26-30; Acts 13:48; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). God's election to save certain individuals is not based on any foreseen act or response on the part of those chosen, but is based solely on His own good pleasure and sovereign will (Romans 3:11; 9:11-18). I believe that God's sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of every man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. I believe that all whom the Father calls to Himself will

come in repentant faith and all who come in such faith the Father will graciously receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

I believe that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9). I do not believe that God elected some to hell, but rather passed them by, leaving them to their own sinful preference, which is self-glorification and a Christ-less life (Matthew 23:37 Romans 9:15-15; 10:21; John 3:19-20).

Salvation

I believe that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, through His sacrificial death, and is neither merited nor secured, in part or in whole, by any virtue, work, or achievement of man (John 1:12; Romans 9:16; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The sole ground of salvation is the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:24-25; Hebrews 9:26; 10:10-14). I believe in justification by grace alone, through repentant faith alone (a faith that trusts in Jesus Christ alone and is authenticated by a life of turning away from sin toward God) (Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 20:21), in Christ alone, and for the glory of God alone. I believe that genuine believers will reveal and exhibit the spiritual fruit of a changed life, in both word, thought, and deed (Matt 13:8, 23; John 15:8; Gal 5:22-23).

Regeneration

I believe that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are graciously given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). Regeneration is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation.

I believe that genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance, as demonstrated in righteous words, thoughts, and deeds. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Justification

I believe that justification before God is the judicial act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). It is an instantaneous and final act, so that the believer is forever and completely justified from the moment of saving faith (Romans 5:1, 9). Therefore, the believer awaits no final last day declarative justification.

I believe that this righteous justification is apart from any virtue, merit, or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Justification is not based upon the believer's own righteousness, not even the imputation of faith itself as the believer's righteousness, but on a righteousness alien to him: the forensically imputed righteousness of Christ alone (Romans 4:3-6, 9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

I believe that every genuine believer is sanctified—that is, set apart unto God, declared to be holy, and identified as a saint (1 Corinthians 1:2). However, sanctification is both positional and progressive (Hebrews 10:14).

I believe that positional sanctification has to do with the believer's judicial standing before God, not his present walk or experience (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

I believe that progressive sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer is brought into an ever increasing submission to the will of God, becomes more and more conformed to the image and likeness of our

Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23), and is thereby drawn closer to the standing the believer enjoys positionally.

I believe that sanctification is universal, mandatory evidence of a justification that is already final and complete, and not in any sense a means of attaining justification (Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-15). I believe that every saved person is involved in a daily, lifelong conflict against the flesh (Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-17; 1 Peter 2:11) but that adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, the struggle stays with the believer all through his earthly life and is never completely ended. While eradication of sin in this life is not possible, the Holy Spirit empowers both for victory over sin and impact and fruitfulness in ministry (Acts 1:8; 4:31; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:16; 4:22-24; 5:18; Colossians 3:9-10; Philippians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Perseverance (Security)

I believe in the biblical doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. It has two parts: 1) No true child of God, born of the Holy Spirit, will ever be lost because he is kept by the power of God (Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5-6; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24); 2) It is equally true, however, that no person is saved without persevering to the end. Such perseverance may be marked by temporary periods of discouragement, doubt, and even disobedience, but those genuinely saved will persevere to the end in faith and obedience (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 8:10-11; 1 John 3:9-10; Hebrews 3:6, 14). Those who make a beginning in the Christian faith but do not continue in obedience to the will of God give evidence that they never really had saving faith (1 John 2:19; Ephesians 5:5-6).

I believe that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Separation

I believe that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

I believe that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. I also believe that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

I believe that genuine believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

The Church

I believe that all who trust in Jesus Christ with a repentant faith are immediately and forever sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13) and, therefore, placed into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Cor 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (II Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Eph 1:22; 4:15; Col 1:18). The church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ and made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11, 3:6). I believe the church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

I believe that in this age, commencing at Pentecost, Christ is building His church in partial fulfillment of the Old Testament Messianic promise, originally stated in the Abrahamic Covenant, to bless all the nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3; Galatians 3:7-9; Isaiah 49:6; Acts 13:47). Christ builds His church by calling out His elect from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue (Romans 1:5; Revelation 5:9). The Holy Spirit forms and constitutes the church by baptizing true believers into the one universal, spiritual body, which is manifested in autonomous local churches (1 Corinthians 12:13). I believe that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

I believe that the foundational purpose of the local church is to glorify the Triune Godhead (Ephesians 3:21) with every word, thought, and deed. This can and is to be accomplished through prayer, the preaching and teaching of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:2; 4:2) and our obedience to its correct interpretation and application, obedience to the Great Commission of making disciples of all the nations (Matthew 28:19-20), fellowship (Acts 2:38-42), service (Ephesians 4:12), and preserving the purity of the church through discipline when needed (Matthew 18:15-18; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

I believe two ordinances have been committed to the local church: 1) Believer's baptism by immersion (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-42; 8:36-38; 10:46-48), which is a testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11) which is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42) and; 2) The Lord's Supper (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26), which is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). I believe that whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16)..

I believe the officers of the local church are elders (also referred to as bishop, overseer, and pastor)—godly men to whom is committed the oversight and care of the church—and deacons (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17; Titus 1:5), both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). I believe that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the local church. The elders should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Spiritual Gifts

I believe in the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, God gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities (speaking and serving abilities) to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

I believe that the moment a believer trusts in Christ with repentant faith, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit and becomes a functioning member of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13,18; Acts 11:16; Romans 12:4-6). As a result of this baptism, the Holy Spirit imparts a spiritual gift; the Lord Jesus Christ assigns a ministry for which that gift is to be utilized; and God the Father guarantees supernatural effects as the believer fulfills that ministry (1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:15-16).

I believe that there were two kinds of gifts given the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the foundation of the early church having been laid and the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature (such as the gifts of prophecy, tongues, knowledge, and healing) are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those nonrevelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8). I believe that no one possesses the gift of healing today but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

Angels (Holy and Fallen)

I believe that God created a great host of varied spirit beings, called angels, and that because they are creatures they are not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God, to worship Him, and to minister to those who will inherit salvation (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

I believe that Satan (Lucifer) is a created angel and that he is the author of sin and the instigator in the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:1-7). He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Ezekiel 28:11-18; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race (Genesis 3:1-15).

I believe that Satan is the open and declared enemy of both God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; Revelation 12:9-10); the prince of this world, who was defeated at the cross through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; John 12:31; Revelation 20:10).

I also believe that the genuine believer is removed from Satan's authority and dominion and that while a true believer may be an object of severe oppression and attack, he cannot be indwelt bodily by a demon (John 17:15; Colossians 1:13; 1John 4:4; 5:18).

Death

I believe that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8), that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

I believe that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

The Rapture of the Church

I believe in the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

I believe that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2-3; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

I believe that, after the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

I believe that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

I believe that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38), and will be brought to an end with the temporary release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

I believe that following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone forever (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10) whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

I believe that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (John 5:28,29), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

Eternity

I believe that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).