



BASIC CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Basic Christian Doctrines (Grow Resources)
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SESSION 1

BIBLIOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE)

INTRODUCTION

Bibliology is the doctrine, or set of beliefs about the Bible. Bibliology is important because it is from the Bible that we derive beliefs about our Christian faith, and not from experience or tradition. Although there are other important topics under this broad category, this session will cover the three most essential areas about the inspiration and canonicity of the Scriptures, as well as the confidence we have of it as the Word of God.

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

The Bible is a collection of 66 books, 39 of which are in the Old Testament and 27 of which are in the New Testament. The Bible contains different kinds of writings, and yet in spite of all the diversity, all the books of the Bible have a unified message. The Bible is very important because it contains God's divine revelation.

What is inspiration?

Inspiration is defined as the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation, or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the word of God.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 2:10-11

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Revelation is the communication of truth from God to human (vertical), while inspiration relates to the relaying of the truth from the first recipients of it to other persons, whether then or later generations (horizontal). The Bible authors used their own unique personalities, styles and knowledge to write, and were fully conscious of what they were writing.

Features of inspiration

Some important features of inspiration include:

- Inspiration is limited to the authors of Scriptures.
- Inspiration is essentially guidance by the Holy Spirit.
- Inspiration extends to the words, and not merely the thoughts and concepts.

Plenary verbal inspiration

The church believes that God's inspiration of the Scriptures is both plenary and verbal:

- Plenary – Inspiration is plenary because it is entire and without restriction; it includes all Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16).
- Verbal – Inspiration is verbal because it includes every word (1 Corinthians 2:13)

CANONICITY OF SCRIPTURE

The word “canon” means “measuring rod”, hence a standard of measurement. When we apply this definition to the Bible, it means books that have been measured, found satisfactory and approved as inspired of God.

Canonicity of the Old Testament books

Jewish scholars held that the final collection of the Old Testament canon was completed by Ezra in the 5th century BC. Hence, by the time of Christ, the Hebrew Scriptures were already closed.

Canonicity of the New Testament books

During the first century A.D., there were several books circulating around Christian communities in the world. Some were genuinely inspired writings by the apostles, while some were non-inspired writings. Some people also wrote documents promoting false teachings and they signed themselves off as one of the apostles. The early church therefore had the task of identifying which writings were inspired Scripture and which were not.

The churches came up with several criteria for recognising whether or not a writing was inspired scripture and therefore to be included into the canon of Scripture. However, it is important to take note that the churches did not decide for themselves which books were to be included in the canon and which were to be excluded. The criteria for canonisation are:

- Apostolicity – The book had to be written by an apostle or by someone in close relation to an apostle, since they were the ones entrusted with the teachings of Jesus.
- Universality – The book had to be received, collected, read and used universally by the Christian community. The criteria showed that the people of God universally accepted the book.
- Orthodoxy – The teachings of the book had to be consistent and in overall unity with the theme and message of other books in the Bible.
- Spiritual contents – The contents of the book had to reflect the transforming power of God, and they had to be of spiritual character in order to warrant it a place in Scripture.
- Inspiration – The book had to have internal evidence of inspiration. The central subject of the book had to be Christ, and the ethical and spiritual effect of the books on the lives of people had to be different from that of other writings.

During the Second Council of Carthage in 397 A.D., the New Testament Canon was closed, with the current twenty-seven New Testament books.

OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE BIBLE AS THE WORD OF GOD

The important first principle for all Christians is that the Bible is the Word of God. Because of this fact, we use the Bible as the final authority in our lives and the basis of all that we do. Since we stake our lives on this fact, it is important that we have adequate confidence in what we believe and not just have blind faith.

Claims of Scriptures

The Bible makes bold claims about itself being the infallible record of God's revelation. There are more than 3,800 records of God speaking to people in the Old Testament.

Genesis 15:1

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.

1 Kings 6:11

The word of the LORD came to Solomon:

Isaiah 1:10

Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; listen to the law of our God, you people of Gomorrah!

Haggai 1:1

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest

New Testament writers also claim to declare the message of God.

1 Corinthians 14:37

If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

1 John 5:10

Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about his Son.

2 Peter 3:2

I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.

Unity

The Bible was written by at least 40 authors of different backgrounds over a period of 1,600 years and in 3 different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek. It was also written in 3 different continents – Europe, Asia and Africa. Yet there is a unity in the writing of the Bible and its message is consistent, as compared to other religious writings. All these show that there is probably only one true Author (the Holy Spirit) behind it.

Indestructibility

The Bible has survived the test of time (almost 2,000 years). It has also survived severe opposition and persecution, particularly during its infancy stage. The Bible has supernatural authority because it is indestructible; we cannot get rid of its message.

Influence

Some religious writings have influence, but they are different from the Bible in that they have led to either a low view of God or of sin. The Bible has high standards and has strong influences on art, architecture, literature and music. The Bible has influenced laws of nations and brought about great social reforms. It also transforms individual lives.

Fulfilled prophecy

Only God can reveal the future, and prophecy as it related to foretelling. It is a miracle of knowledge. Fulfilled prophecy indicates that the writers of prophecy possessed in some manner supernatural intelligence. Many Old Testament prophecies have been accurately fulfilled, especially the messianic prophecies about the coming of Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:21

For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Historical and archaeological confirmation

Some facts of Scripture have been confirmed by historical and archaeological discoveries. In fact, nothing in history and archaeology has disproved biblical facts.

SESSION 2

THEOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF GOD)

INTRODUCTION

Theology is the doctrine, or set of beliefs about God. Theology is a key doctrine that gives us a clearer idea of who God is. We have to believe in the existence of God and understand His attributes before we can learn about other doctrines, since all the other doctrines presuppose the existence of God and His divine and moral attributes. Theology should lead us to know God better and worship Him correctly.

SOURCES OF THE STUDY OF GOD

There are several sources from which all theological truth is derived, but they are broadly categorised into nature and the Bible.

The material universe

We can see the power, wisdom and greatness of God in the design of the material universe and also in the laws which govern it.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)

...since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)

Through observing the universe, people can conclude that someone must have been responsible for creating the stars and constellations, the abundant vegetation, and the supply of minerals and natural resources which man and animals require for sustenance. However, we cannot get information from nature regarding the depravity of the human heart and its cure, and of the love God for fallen man. Nature also does not tell us anything about eternity, and of the conditions necessary for a blessed future. These deeper revelations can only be found in other sources.

Human History

God has revealed Himself throughout history in His dealings with humans. From the time of Adam down through the ages, God has been at work in providing and intervening on behalf of people. In historical events, He is achieving His purpose.

Conscience of Man

All humans have an inbred recognition of God's existence and of their responsibilities towards Him. This can be seen by the wide-spread belief in the existence of God (or gods) across most primitive cultures.

Romans 2:14-15

Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

Scripture

Nature, history and man only partially reveal the existence of God. But in Scripture, we find a record and description of God's attributes and activities. Scripture alone unfolds God's dealings with man, including creation, fall, redemption, and future.

The Lord Jesus Christ

God revealed to man the full and final revelation of His character and the will through His Son.

John 14:7-9

If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

The complete revelation of God came to man through the Incarnation of the Son, through His manifested Person, Word and Work.

John 1:18

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

Hebrews 1:1-2

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Attributes are the characteristics or qualities of a person. The attributes of God refer to the characteristics or qualities that belong to God, and that makes God who and what He is. The attributes of God fall into two main groupings: essential and moral.

Essential attributes

Essential attributes are attributes which make God who He is. They can never become attributes of man. These attributes are also known as the non-moral or incommunicable attributes of God.

- God is eternal – This means that God has no beginning or end. God is timeless; not limited to or by time, whether past, present or future. This implies that God was at the beginning, and He will be at the end.

Isaiah 43:10

“You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

- God is self-existent – God does not owe His existence to any other, and He is independent of everything outside of Himself. This implies that God does not need anything from us.

John 5:26

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

In contrast, man is dependent on God for his origin, life and continued existence.

- God is immutable – This means that God’s character and being have not changed and will never change. God’s laws are also eternal and unchanging. This implies that He did not change between the Old and New Testaments, and that He will deal with us in similar manners to the ways He dealt with His people in the past.

James 1:17

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

In contrast, man can and must change to be what God intends him to be.

- God is omnipotent – Omnipotence means that God is all-powerful; nothing that would be consistent with His holy nature, character, and being is impossible with God. This implies that God can do whatever He wills to do.

Jeremiah 32:17

“Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you.

- God is omniscient – Omniscience means that God is all-knowing. Omniscience involves perfect knowledge, perfect understanding, and perfect wisdom. This implies that He knows what He is doing, and is totally qualified to be the Judge of all matters.

Romans 11:33-34

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”

- God is omnipresent – Omnipresence means that God is all-present; He is unlimited by space or time. He is present everywhere all at the same time.

Psalm 139:7-12

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

Moral attributes

Moral attributes are those characteristics or qualities which belong to God especially in relation to His creation. God also intends man to possess these attributes, and thus they are called communicable attributes.

- Holiness – This means absolute purity. God is perfect and He cannot sin or tolerate sin.

Leviticus 19:2

“Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: ‘Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

- Righteousness – Righteousness is holiness in action against sin; it is about a holy God taking action in a just and upright manner towards His creation.

Romans 2:8-9

But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;

- Faithfulness – The faithfulness of God means that God is absolutely trustworthy, loyal, reliable, and true to His Word. God is absolutely reliable and He cannot lie.

Hebrews 10:23

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

- Love – Love is the heart of God’s nature. God not only has love, but He is love.

1 John 4:7-8

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

THE TRINITY

The word "Trinity" means "three in one". According to the doctrine of the Trinity, there is one God, but He exists as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The word "Trinity" is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, but the words "three" and "one" are used in the Bible and they tell us that God is revealed in the Bible as triune in nature and being. All three persons of the Trinity were mentioned in certain passages of Scripture:

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit co-exist together and are co-equal in nature, power and attributes.

SESSION 3

ANTHROPOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF MAN)

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, people have been asking questions like what we are, where we came from, where we are going, and ultimately what the future holds for us. Beneath all these, the essential quest is for the meaning of life, and the final significance in the age-long human struggle. In spite of the great advances in technology and knowledge in our time, no one has ever come any nearer to a definitive answer. Man can only understand himself in the light of God and His purpose for humankind as revealed through His word.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MAN

Man is a created being

Every man and woman exists because God created them. God created humans with a special dignity, and appointed them rulers of the world under Him.

Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Man is a dependent being

Since man is a created being, he is therefore not self-existent or independent. Man in fact owes his every moment to God his creator.

Psalms 104:27-30

These all look to you to give them their food at the proper time. When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things. When you hide your face, they are terrified; when you take away their breath, they die and return to the dust. When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.

Man is an intelligent being

Man is an intelligent being, with mind, intellect, and reason that is far superior to any other creation.

Genesis 2:19-20

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

Man is a moral being

God gave man the free will to make choices, and not do things mechanically. This makes him a moral and responsible being. God placed within man a conscience which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, godly and evil. However, man's conscience is not perfect because it has been defiled by sin due to the Fall.

Colossians 3:9-10

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Man is a love being

God is love (1 John 4:16-19) and because man is made in that same image, he is also capable of receiving and giving love. God created man with the capability to fellowship with Him, with God communicating His love to man, and man reciprocating that love.

1 John 4:16-19

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

Man has a material and an immaterial dimension

Man consists of a single unit but with a material dimension (the body) and an immaterial dimension (soul and spirit).

Genesis 2:7

...the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

The soul is the seat and source of varying emotions and appetites. The faculties of the soul are the mind (1 Corinthians 2:11), heart (Hebrews 10:16) and will (1 Peter 4:2-4) The spirit is the part of man that is capable of knowing God. God is spirit and only a spirit is capable of having communion with God.

John 4:24

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MAN

Fellowship

God created man to have fellowship and communion with Him. Before the Fall, it was normal for God to come and have daily fellowship with Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:8

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Ever since the Fall, sin has been hindering fellowship between God and man. But God has been working to restore fellowship. Those who place their faith in Jesus are reconciled to God (covered in greater detail in the lesson on the Doctrine of Salvation).

Character

It was God's purpose for man to reflect His character and likeness. The Greek word for character means "image and likeness" and Jesus is referred to as the "exact image" of His Father.

Hebrews 1:3

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Rulership

God created man to rule the heavens and the earth together with Him. God created the universe and all its glory, and wants to share that creation with man. For this reason, God commanded Adam to subdue the earth.

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

Reproduction

God created man to share in the miracle of nature. Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful, to multiply and to replenish the earth.

Genesis 1:28

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

SESSION 4

HARMATOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF SIN)

INTRODUCTION

Human history and man's conscience bear testimony to sin's reality. The Scriptures show that sin entered the universe through Satan and then into the human race with the fall of man. The Bible reveals the essence of sin to be self-centeredness and its tragic result to be death, but sin cannot and does not overthrow the sovereignty of God. The Bible also reveals God's redemptive plan in Christ to make an end to sin for eternity.

THE MEANING AND ORIGIN OF SIN

What is sin?

- Rebellion – God has a standard for people and has also set up a law of purity. To sin is to transgress God's law, which means to break God's given regulations and to stubbornly go our own way, turning from His will to self-will.
- Missing the mark – God's desire is for everyone to be pure. The consequence of failing to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature is to "miss the mark" or the aim of our existence.
- Evil attitudes and desires – People commonly think of sin as wrong deeds or actions. But it also concerns the heart attitude of a person.

Where does sin come from?

It is important to note that God did not create sin because He is totally holy and righteous. He also cannot and does not sin, and neither can He be tempted to sin.

Essentially, sin started among humans as Adam and Eve disobeyed God out of their own wilful, voluntary choice.

Genesis 3:1-6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

THE SPREAD OF SIN TO MANKIND

Through the Old Testament and through basic human experience, it is clear that the sin of one man has damaging effects beyond himself. In the same way, the sin of Adam and Eve continued to spread through all their descendents (Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-23).

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-

We are not told about the exact relationship between Adam's act of disobedience and subsequent human sin, but the result is clear that eventually all sinned and fall short of God's standard (Romans 5:14-19; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

It is also clear that all have to take personal responsibility for the sins they commit as individuals. The Bible teaches that God will render every man according to his works (Romans 2:6), and that wrongdoers will be paid back in full for the wrong they have done (Colossians 3:25).

THE EFFECT OF SIN ON MANKIND

The human nature is sinful, and sin is destructive because it negatively affects the lives of people. The destructive effects of sin on mankind can be seen in the following areas:

Man is totally depraved

The Fall resulted in the total depravity of man. This means that although man is not altogether bad, every part of his nature was tainted by sin. The extent of man's corruption is seen in that:

- His spirit is darkened (1 Corinthians 2:14)
- His soul is debased (Jeremiah 17:9; Ephesians 4:19)
- His heart is corrupted (Genesis 6:5; Romans 1:17-24)
- He mind is hostile towards God (Romans 8:7-8)
- His will is weakened (Romans 7:14-20)
- His conscience is seared (1 Timothy 4:2)
- His body is diseased and death-ridden (Romans 7:24)

Man is utterly lost

Sin causes a barrier to be erected between man and God, and this hinders fellowship between them. Sinful man has been estranged from his source (God) and is therefore lost.

Luke 19:10

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Man is under the control of Satan

Since man decided to rebel against God and to go his own independent way, he is by default under the control of Satan.

Ephesians 2:2

in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Man is under God's wrath and judgement

God is a holy and just God, and He cannot tolerate sin. All sins have to be punished.

John 5:28-29

"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-9

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

Man is subject to death

The Fall caused many kinds of sin and evil to enter the world. But above all, death entered creation and all man is subjected to it.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

GOD'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Man inherited his sinful nature from Adam, and all men have sinned (Romans 3:9-10; 1 John 18-10). No one except Jesus can say that he is without sin.

1 John 1:8-10

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Sinful man may do good works, but good works do not justify anyone in God's sight.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Only God can deal with sin and repair the damaged image of Himself in man. God created man, and He can renew man through His Holy Spirit (John 3:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

God redeemed man through Jesus Christ

The only way for man to be saved from sin is through accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Christ took upon Himself man's sinful nature and liabilities, and redeemed man from the consequences of the Fall.

1 Peter 2:24-25

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Him (Romans 8:1).

Man is made alive in Christ

In Adam, man is dead. But in Christ, man is made alive (1 Corinthians 15:22) and has eternal life (1 John 5:11-12). The position of those who have put off the old man and have put on the new is one of sonship. They are children of God, adopted in to His family (Galatians 4:7; 1 John 3:2). Believers are also partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), and are sealed by the Spirit for the day of final redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14).

SESSION 5

CHRISTOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST)

INTRODUCTION

From Scripture, we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who has always existed with the Father and the Holy Spirit. In the one person of Christ, there are two natures, human and divine, each in its completeness and integrity. It is this sinless union of the divine and human natures which qualifies Him to be the only sacrificial mediator between God and man.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ came to earth and ministered as a human being, and the Bible portrays Him clearly as a human being. This can be seen from the simple fact that He shared similar characteristics with humans. Jesus Christ lived as a real man who endured not only what humans commonly endure but far more. Through His life on earth, He modelled dependence on the Holy Spirit in everything he says and does.

Christ had human ancestors

In the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, He was portrayed as a human being with human ancestors like Adam and David.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

2 Samuel 7:12-13

When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Christ went through the process of growing up

Growing up is a process that humans go through, and the Bible also mentions about Christ growing up.

Luke 2:40

And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him.

Luke 2:52

And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Christ had human limitations

Like all other humans, Christ was subject to human physical limitations like hunger, thirst and tiredness.

John 4:6

Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

Matthew 4:2

After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

John 19:28

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

Christ had emotions

Humans are capable of emotions, and Scripture portrays the humanity of Christ through the emotions that He showed.

Matthew 9:36

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

Luke 22:44

And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Christ experienced temptation

Humans experience temptation to sin. Christ was no different because He also experienced temptation, but He did not give in and sin.

Hebrews 2:18

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 4:15

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin.

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Christ is not only human; He is also God. From the Bible, we can find evidence of Christ's deity.

Christ possesses the attributes of deity

Christ has eternity (John 8:58), omnipresence (Matthew 18:20), omniscience (John 16:30), omnipotence (Matthew 28:18), and immutability (Hebrews 1:12).

John 8:58

"I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

Matthew 18:20

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

John 16:30

Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

Matthew 28:18

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Hebrews 1:12

You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."

Christ does the work of deity

In the Bible, we see that Christ does these same works that only God can do. For example, He forgives sins (Mark 2:1-12), gives life (John 5:21), and executes judgement (John 5:22, 27).

Mark 2:5-11

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ... But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."

John 5:21

For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it.

John 5:22, 27

Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son... And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

Christ was given the names and titles of deity

In Scripture, we can find that Christ was addressed as "Immanuel" (Matthew 1:23), meaning "God with us", King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16), and Son of God (Matthew 14:33).

Matthew 1:23

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"-which means, "God with us."

Revelation 19:16

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Matthew 14:33

Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Christ Himself claimed to be God

In John 10:30-33, Christ claimed to be one with God the Father. The Jews who heard His claim wanted to stone Him because they thought of Him as only a mere man.

John 10:30-33

"I and the Father are one." Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, "I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?" "We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

The Bible explicitly states that Christ is God

The Bible contains some direct statements that indicate Christ's deity. These statements equate Christ with God, thus establishing a strong scriptural basis for His deity.

John 1:1

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Romans 9:5

Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Hebrews 1:8

But about the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever, and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom."

THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

After learning about the humanity and divinity of Christ, one question that would arise would be how He could be both human and divine at the same time. God's answer to this question is in the incarnation of Christ.

Why the incarnation was necessary

All men have sinned, and therefore face the penalty of death for their sins.

Romans 3:23

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The only way out of the death penalty for sin is for someone to take the place and also the punishment of the guilty party. Only man can qualify to take up this role of dying for the sins of man. But the descendants of Adam cannot qualify for this role because all of them have sinned; no one who is born of Adam's race is clean.

Romans 5:12

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned—

Only God can redeem man. But He cannot redeem man as God, only as man. So through the incarnation of Christ, God became a sinless man in order to redeem man back to Himself. Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God to man, to show man how to live (be a role model), and to rescue man from the guilt and power of sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The nature of the incarnation

Christ did not cease to be God and neither did He give up the possession of the divine attributes in becoming man. It should be noted that God was not changed into a man, but rather assumed the nature of man without ceasing to be God. In becoming a man, God emptied Himself, and became dependent upon the Father's will for any exercise, operation or manifestation of His divine attributes.

Philippians 2:6-8

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

THE DEATH OF CHRIST

The death of Christ had already been foretold in the Old Testament before it was fulfilled in the New Testament.

Luke 24:27

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

It was planned by God

God purposed from eternity that the human race should be restored through the death of Jesus Christ. The death of Christ did not simply happen as an unplanned event in history.

1 Peter 1:18-20

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

It was the chief purpose of the incarnation

Christ had a specific purpose for coming to earth, and it was to die for the sins of man. He was the only person who was born for the purpose of dying.

John 12:27

"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.

It was a demonstration of God's love and justice

God cannot simply overlook sin because His holiness demands that sin be punished. The wages of sin is death. However, God's grace and love restrained His wrath against sin, so He instead provided a means for man to escape death – atonement, where sin is dealt with through the death of a substitutionary sacrifice.

It was a voluntary act

Jesus Christ made a deliberate choice to die on the cross. He offered Himself as a "freewill" or "voluntary" offering as portrayed in the voluntary burnt meal and peace offerings in Leviticus 1-3. Christ was not helpless, and He had the means to escape death if He wanted to.

John 10:17-18

The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Matthew 26:53-54

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

It was the conquest of Satan's kingdom

When Christ died on the cross, He disarmed the powers of Satan and stripped him of the keys of death and hell. Christ turned what seemed to be the greatest defeat into the greatest victory.

Colossians 2:15

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The resurrection of Christ is a very important doctrine of the Christian faith. In fact, the whole of Christianity is built upon the historical fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It has solid biblical support

Christ's birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection had been foretold in the Old Testament. It was therefore necessary that He be raised from the dead in order to fulfil these Old Testament prophecies. In the New Testament, there are around 104 references to the resurrection of Christ.

Psalms 16:10

because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

It was foretold by Christ Himself

Christ Himself declared that He would arise from the dead.

Mark 8:31

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

It was necessary because of Christ's character and what He had done

Jesus Christ is the holy and sinless one, and death has no power over Him. It is therefore impossible that death should have a permanent grip on Him.

Acts 2:24

But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

It was a necessary part of God's plan for redemption

The death and resurrection of Christ should never be separated from each other as one is not complete without the other. A balanced Gospel message always includes Christ's saving death and His saving resurrection. Christ's death alone does not save men; it is His death and resurrection that together bring salvation to believers.

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

The resurrection of Christ was necessary in order to complete God's redemptive plan. If Christ did not rise from the dead, everybody would still be in their sins (1 Corinthians 15:16-20).

THE ASCENSION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST

After Christ rose from the dead, He appeared to His disciples on earth over a period of forty days and taught them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). After that, He ascended to heaven, where He sat at the right hand of God the Father, taking the place of honour (Acts 1:9, 2:33).

While in this exalted place, Christ will:

- Prepare a place for His people (John 14:3)
- Serve as the advocate for His people by interceding for them (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1)
- Function as Head of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18)

In the future, Christ will return to:

- Take His people to be with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18)
- Judge the world (Matthew 25:31-32)
- Rule over the world (Revelation 20:4)

SESSION 6

SOTERIOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION)

INTRODUCTION

Soteriology is the study of the doctrine of salvation. It teaches on the results of Christ's death, especially how it brings atonement for sin and salvation to all who believe. In soteriology, we also learn other important aspects of salvation, such as redemption, justification and sanctification.

CHRIST'S ATONING SACRIFICE

Christ did not die in vain. His death had far-reaching effects on man's salvation and relationship with God. Christ's death was essentially atonement for man's sins. In the Old Testament, after individuals made offerings for their sins, the priest would make atonement for them and the transgressor will be forgiven (Leviticus 6:6-7). There are several facets of atonement.

Substitution

The concept of substitution refers to the act of putting in the place or on behalf of another, which means to exchange or to interchange. In the case of the death of Christ, man was supposed to die for his own sin, but God sent His son Jesus Christ to die on man's behalf; Christ was punished in the place of man.

2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Christ's death was a complete work and the perfect sacrifice was made once and for all for all the sins of man. After offering the acceptable and perfect sacrifice, Christ sat down at the right hand of God the Father.

Hebrews 10:12

But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

Redemption

Redemption means buying back something or somebody for a price. It is only after the thing or person has been redeemed that it becomes the property of the buyer. All mankind became slaves to sin because of the Fall, but Christ redeemed them by paying the ransom price of His life.

Titus 2:14

who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Mark 10:45

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Propitiation

Propitiation means to appease, or to render favourable. It is also defined as the offering of a gift/sacrifice of sufficient value in order that the wrath of another might be appeased. In the Bible, it is to appease the righteous wrath of a holy God by offering an atoning sacrifice.

1 John 2:2

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

It is only after punishment for sin is meted out that God's wrath is propitiated or appeased. As Christ became the substitutionary sacrifice, all of mankind's sins were placed on Him, and He took the punishment and God's wrath on man's behalf. God's wrath was thus propitiated by the death of Christ. Once the death penalty was executed, the Law is satisfied and justice is upheld.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation refers to the process of making friends and bringing together those who are at enmity with each other. As a result of Christ's death, God's wrath has been appeased and He no longer has any reason to hold anything against people who have received His free gift of forgiveness. God and man are thus reconciled.

2 Corinthians 5:18

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation

THE PROCESS OF SALVATION

The process of spiritual birth

At the point when a person receives Christ, he or she is "born again". In this process, many things take place simultaneously and instantaneously to put the salvation into effect.

- Election – With regards to salvation, election is God's responsibility where out of His grace, He chooses people to come to Him (Ephesians 1:11). Election must be balanced with personal responsibility in response to God's call. God elects people based on their response to the Gospel.
- Calling – Calling is God's responsibility where He calls people to receive His mercy in Christ. When the Gospel is being presented, the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sins and need for a Saviour, and brings them to faith in Christ (John 16:8).
- Regeneration – Regeneration means rebirth, and it marks the moment when people come into union with Christ. This is a once-for-all event that marks the beginning of the Christian life, just like physical birth (John 1:12-13).
- Conversion – Conversion accompanies regeneration, and it is the role of man in turning away from sin and towards righteousness in response to God's grace. Conversion involves hearing the Gospel and responding to it with genuine repentance and saving faith. Repentance involves a change of heart and mind concerning sin. Faith is trust in the truth of the objective reality that Jesus Christ was crucified and raised from the dead.

- Justification – This is God’s once-for-all legal declaration that sinners are counted as righteous before Him because of their faith in Christ, and there is no longer any legal recourse or accusation against them. In justification, all the believers’ sins (past, present and future) are forgiven, and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to them through their faith in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Adoption – In adoption, God receives believers into His family as His children (John 1:12). It has to do with a new relationship with God as father, Christ as elder brother and other believers as brothers and sisters.

The process of spiritual growth

- Hope – This is the distinctive mark of believers (Colossians 1:27; Titus 2:13), and it is the anticipation of the victory of God’s purposes and the coming of Christ. Hope helps believers to look forward to the future and to endure hardships because they know that they will experience eternal glory with God in heaven.
- Assurance – Assurance is confidence of salvation experienced at the personal level (2 Corinthians 1:22). Believers have this confidence because the Holy Spirit assures them that they are God’s children (Romans 8:16).

Romans 8:16, The Message

God’s Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children.

- Sanctification – This is the work of the Holy Spirit by which He transforms believers into the image of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). In sanctification, believers become more holy in their character as they set apart more and more areas of their lives to the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:3-7), and their lives display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit will transform believers as long as they willingly submit to His leading and prompting.

2 Corinthians 3:18

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

- Perseverance – Perseverance of the saints refers to the idea of God helping believers to go through the lifelong process of salvation; they are secure in Him (Romans 8:38-39) and He will bring to completion the good work He began in Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Philippians 1:6, The Message

There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

- Glorification – Finally, this is the moment when believers receive their resurrected bodies and are perfectly fitted for existence with God in heaven.

SESSION 7

PNEUMATOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT)

INTRODUCTION

Christians are very different from pre-believers because they have the Holy Spirit living in them. The Holy Spirit plays a very important role in the life of Christians. He helps them grow towards spiritual maturity and empowers them to serve God. Living life in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and in His power is an exciting adventure for Christians. It is therefore very important for Christians to have a proper understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

THE PERSONHOOD OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God; He is the third person of the triune godhead. As God, the Holy Spirit is a person as well as divine. Even though the Holy Spirit has no physical body, He is very much a person, and there is plenty of evidence of this found in the Bible.

Personal pronouns are used of the Holy Spirit

In John 14:26, Jesus addressed the Holy Spirit as the “Helper”. The NIV translates this word Jesus used as “Counselor”, which means a person who helps or encourages.

John 14:26 NASB

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Personal characteristics are ascribed to the Holy Spirit

There are three essential elements of personality, and the Holy Spirit has all three of them.

- Intellect – The Holy Spirit knows the minds of people and He understands them, knows the way they think and respond etc.

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 2:11)

- Emotions – If the Holy Spirit is merely a force, He will have no feelings. But the Bible here clearly states that the Holy Spirit expresses love, which is clearly a feeling.

I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. (Romans 15:30)

- Will – It is the Holy Spirit who wills or determines who gets which spiritual gift.

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

The Holy Spirit performs personal acts

In the Bible, we find recorded in several instances that the Holy Spirit performs acts that can only be performed by persons, and not by influences or forces.

- Regeneration (John 3:5)
- Teaching (John 14:26)
- Bearing witness (John 15:26)
- Convicting (John 16:8-11)
- Guiding (John 16:13)
- Glorifying Christ (John 16:14)
- Calling people into service (Acts 13:2)
- Directing (Acts 16:6-7)
- Interceding (Romans 8:26)
- Searching (1 Corinthians 2:10)
- Working (1 Corinthians 12:11)

The Holy Spirit can be subjected to personal treatment

The Bible also describes the Holy Spirit as capable of being subjected to personal treatment.

- Lied to (Acts 5:3)
- Tested (Acts 5:9)
- Resisted (Acts 7:51)
- Grieved (Ephesians 4:30)
- Insulted (Hebrews 10:29)
- Blasphemed against (Matthew 12:31-32)

THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The following is biblical evidence for the deity of the Holy Spirit:

Attributes of deity are affirmed in the Holy Spirit

There are certain attributes that only God has and they set Him apart as God. The Bible clearly states that the Holy Spirit also has these divine attributes.

- He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
- He is omniscient (John 14:26)
- He is omnipotent (Luke 1:35)
- He is omnipresent (Psalm 139:7-10)

Works of deity are ascribed to the Holy Spirit

The Bible records the Holy Spirit as being involved in works that only God can be involved in.

- He was involved in creation (Genesis 1:2)
- He was involved in the inspiration of Scripture (2 Peter 1:21)
- He is involved in the regeneration of people (John 3:5)
- He is involved in raising the dead (Romans 8:11)

The Holy Spirit is associated with the other members of the triune Godhead

The triune Godhead consists of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. In several Bible passages, we find that the Spirit is mentioned along with the Father and the Son.

Matthew 28:19

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

The words and works of God are attributed to the Holy Spirit

In the Old Testament, certain passages are attributed to God speaking. When Luke wrote the book of Acts, he used the same words that Isaiah used, but attributed them to the Holy Spirit instead. Hence, the Bible writers used "God" and "the Holy Spirit" interchangeably.

Acts 28:25-27

They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your forefathers when he said through Isaiah the prophet: 'Go to this people and say...'

The Holy Spirit is expressly called God

There are also passages of Scripture where the Holy Spirit is expressly called God.

Acts 5:3-4

Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ... What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Each person of the triune Godhead has His distinctive role. The main work of the Holy Spirit is in the lives of people, and in particular, in the lives of believers.

Convicting pre-believers

The Holy Spirit touches the hearts of pre-believers, and convicts them of the need to respond to the Gospel message.

John 16:8-11

When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Spiritual birth

When pre-believers respond to the Gospel message, repent of their sins and put their faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit will bring them through a process of spiritual birth. They are born again spiritually and into the family of God; the Holy Spirit does the work of renewal in them.

John 3:5-6

Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Titus 3:5

he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Their spirits are made alive and they have a personal relationship with God. They can have fellowship with Him.

Indwelling

Believers are privileged people because they have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

Romans 8:9

You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence in the lives of believers is to help them live the righteous life that God desires them to live.

Romans 8:14

because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

There are several things that the Holy Spirit does in His indwelling ministry:

- Assurance – Believers have the inner confidence and assurance of their salvation.

Romans 8:16

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

- Teaching and guiding in the truth – The Holy Spirit plays an important role in the lives of believers by helping them to recall the spiritual lessons that they have learned from various sources.

John 14:26

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

John 16:13

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

The Holy Spirit also affirms the truth of God in believers.

1 Corinthians 12:3

Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

- Sanctification – The Holy Spirit helps believers to live holy lives.

Romans 8:13

For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

- Enabling believers to worship – Worship is a very important part of the Christian life because it is when the human spirit connects to God at the deepest and most intimate level.

John 4:23-24

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

1 Corinthians 14:15

So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind.

Empowering

All believers can have the power of the Holy Spirit to enable them to serve God more effectively. All believers already have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them at the point of spiritual birth. However, in order to have the power of the Holy Spirit, they need to be baptised in the Holy Spirit.

There are several aspects of empowerment for ministry when people are baptised in the Spirit:

- Strengthening the inner man – During times when believers feel weary or discouraged in their walk with God or in serving Him, the Holy Spirit strengthens their inner being.

Ephesians 3:16

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Romans 8:26

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

- Empowerment to be witnesses – Jesus promised His disciples that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit so that they could be witnesses for Him.

Acts 1:4-5

On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

- Imparting spiritual gifts – The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts to each believer; each believer has at least one spiritual gift. These spiritual gifts are used for building up the church, and different members of the Body of Christ have different gifts in order to complement each other's giftings.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

SESSION 8

ANGELOLOGY & DEMONOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS AND DEMONS)

INTRODUCTION

Angels and demons are supernatural beings that are mentioned in the Bible. They are very real beings; angels work on the side of God while demons are fallen angels who oppose God and bring trouble upon His people.

ANGELS

Angels are mentioned frequently in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. They may be viewed as God's heavenly servants, carrying out His purposes and ministering to His people.

The nature of angels

- Angels are created beings – Unlike God, angels did not exist before creation; they are God's created beings. When God created the universe, angels were one category of beings that He created, along with man.

Colossians 1:16

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

- Angels are spirits – Spirit can relate to God. The human spirit is the intangible part of humans that can relate to God. Since angels are spirits, they can also relate to God.

Hebrews 1:14

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?

- Angels are persons – The definition of "person" means having mind, will and emotion; it is not necessary to have a body in order to be a person. Angels do not have bodies; they are invisible, but are not impersonal forces or influences.

Hebrews 13:1

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Angels have a will, and they can exercise their free will.

Jude 6

And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.

2 Peter 2:4

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.

Angels also have wisdom and knowledge.

- Angels are numerous – There are many angels, as we can see in certain Bible references.

2 Kings 6:17

And Elisha prayed, “O LORD, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

Matthew 26:53

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?

The works of angels

- Angels are worshippers – Angels are fully occupied in the work of worshipping God.

Hebrews 1:6

And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.”

- Angels are messengers of God – One of the specific roles of angels is to bring messages from God to people.

Psalms 104:4

He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.

The Angel of the LORD

This phrase appears mainly in the Old Testament, and it refers to the pre-incarnate Second Person of the Trinity (Jesus) before He came to earth as a human. In these Old Testament passages, the Angel of the LORD appeared to people in the form of an angel (Genesis 16:9; Exodus 3:2; Numbers 22:22-27). The physical manifestation of God is known as “theophany”.

SATAN AND DEMONS

Like angels, Satan and the demons are also spirit beings. But they are evil angels who fell because they rebelled against God. Unlike humans, they cannot be redeemed. They continue to oppose God and His purposes, and will try to thwart His plans.

The nature of Satan and demons

- They are created beings – Satan and demons were originally angels, and God created them as perfect beings. However, they became evil and fell as a result of their rebellion against God. Since they are created beings, they are not as powerful as God the creator.
- They are spirit beings – Satan and demons are spirits. Particularly in the New Testament, demons are also known as evil spirits (“unclean spirits” in certain translations).

Mark 1:23

Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out

- They are persons – Satan and demons are persons because they have will and intellect, but not a body. At times, they will seek to inhabit a body to carry out their evil desires.

Matthew 12:45

Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first...

- They are numerous – Demons are numerous, and this can be seen from the biblical account of the man who was possessed by numerous demons who called themselves “Legion”, representing a large number.

Mark 5:9

Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.”

The works of Satan and demons

As the adversary of God and man, Satan’s works can be summarised as opposing God. The following sections give some specific examples of Satan’s evil works.

- Temptation – Temptation is a major weapon that Satan uses, and his objective is to entice people to sin against God and to thwart His plans.

James 1:13-15

When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

- Sin – Satan is the originator of sin, and sin separates people from God. Satan tries to keep people from drawing near to God through sin.

1 John 3:8

He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.

- Deception – Deception is another of Satan’s main weapons that he uses effectively against people.

John 8:44

You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- Accusation – Satan is called the accuser of the brothers and accuses people for their sins.

Revelation 12:10

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

- Affliction – Satan and his demons afflict people in order to entice them to be bitter towards God or to do something destructive.
- Possession and influence – Demons are spirits without bodies, and they seek to possess the bodies of people to use the body to carry out their evil desires. Christians cannot be demon-possessed because they belong to Jesus, and Satan or demons have no claim or ownership over them.

Mark 1:32-34

That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

- Death – Physical death is the consequence of sin and all humans have to experience it.

1 Corinthians 15:53-55

For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

THE BELIEVER'S VICTORY

Why believers can be assured of victory

It is true that Satan and his demonic servants are powerful and in opposition to God and His people. However, those who have a personal relationship with Jesus have reasons to be confident of victory over their enemies.

- God is more powerful than Satan and demons – God is clearly more powerful than Satan, and Satan can never defeat God.
- Satan and the demons will be judged – Jesus dealt Satan the fatal blow by His death on the cross.

Revelation 20:10

And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

What believers should do to live in victory

- Be alert and vigilant – Believers should not allow room for complacency in their lives and slacken in their walk with God as a result.

1 Peter 5:8-9

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

- Deny Satan any foothold – Believers should give Satan no foothold over their lives; he can easily force his way in to establish a stronghold.

Ephesians 4:26-27

“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

- Put on the whole armour of God – In Ephesians 6:13-18, Paul commanded believers to put on the full armour of God.

Ephesians 6:13-18

Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

SESSION 9

ECCLESIOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH)

INTRODUCTION

The church consists of all of God's people, and it is God's representative on earth. It carries out and continues the ministry of Jesus on earth. Ideally, by looking at the church, people should have an idea of who God is.

WHAT IS "CHURCH"?

In the biblical definition, the church is an institution that has been ordained by God, for the purpose of spreading the Good News of Jesus to the world so that people may be saved. The church is made up of people and not buildings. The following are how the church is portrayed in the Bible:

The people of God

This term originated from the Old Testament, where God took the initiative to choose the nation of Israel as His people.

Exodus 19:4-6

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

He took pride in them and had an exclusive claim on them. The Apostle Peter calls the church a people belonging to God (1 Peter 2:9). Christians are also God's people because God has made them His people (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). They are therefore people with a special identity.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

The Body of Christ

The church reflects Christ's fullness and it replaces Christ's physical presence and continues with His ministry on earth. In this body, Christ is pictured as the head and He rules the church (Colossians 1:18), while believers are pictured as various parts of the body, who are united with Christ and are nourished by Him (Colossians 2:19).

Colossians 1:18

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

No matter how different believers may be from each other, Christ should be the unifying factor.

Temple of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit indwells and imparts life to the church.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17)

He empowers the church to be witnesses of Christ (Acts 1:8) and helps maintain unity.

THE ROLES OF THE CHURCH

Evangelism and Missions

Evangelism is an act of obedience to Christ's command to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The central command in the passage is to make disciples of all nations. The commission to evangelise is accompanied by the authority of Christ. Christ also promised His disciples that He would be with them and that they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry on with His work on earth (Acts 1:8).

Edification and Discipleship

Edifying the church means building up the members of the church towards spiritual maturity, which is characterised by unity, stability, Christ-centeredness, speaking the truth in love. When members of the church are edified, they are prepared for works of service to God. There are various means of edifying the church:

- Spiritual gifts – Edifying the body requires the participation of all members of the church, whom Christ has given spiritual gifts.

Ephesians 4:11-13

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

All believers have at least one spiritual gift, and they are to exercise their gifts to edify the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:12).

- Fellowship – Fellowship refers to the relationship created by the Holy Spirit between God and believer on the vertical plane, and between different believers on the horizontal plane (Romans 12:10). Fellowship is important for believers because through the deep relationships built, believers are encouraged, and spurred towards faith and good works.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

- Instruction or teaching – Teaching is part of the broad task of making disciples. Believers are fulfilling the Great Commission as they teach people to obey the teachings of Christ.

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

- Prayer – Through prayer, believers acknowledge their own limitations and also express dependence on the unlimited God. Although prayer can be a very private matter between individual believers and God (Matthew 6:5-6), there are also times when the body of believers gather corporately to pray and to seek God.

Worship

Worship was the common Old Testament practice of recognising and declaring the greatness of God, and it was expressed by praising and exalting Him. We worship God corporately and also individually; God wants us to have a heart of worship always.

Social concern

Social concern is the performance of acts of Christian love to both believers and pre-believers. The Old Testament Law links a person's love for his neighbours to his love for God, and the Old Testament worship of God is linked to concern for the less-fortunate, such as the fatherless, the widow and the sojourner or stranger.

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt.

Christ also demonstrated in His ministry that love for neighbour is closely linked by the Law to love for God.

1 John 3:17-18

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

The practical aspect of faith includes looking after orphans and widows in their distress; this was James' definition of true religion.

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Social concern also includes the act of condemning unrighteousness, which was what John the Baptist did when he condemned King Herod's unrighteous act (Luke 3:19-20).

SESSION 10

ESCHATOLOGY (THE DOCTRINE OF THE END TIMES)

INTRODUCTION

Eschatology has traditionally been used to describe the end times. It is the study of the last things, concerning the consummation of history and the completion of God's working in the world. God created things such that they have a beginning and an end, and people are interested in the future and particularly in the end times because it has an element of mystery about the unknown. There are several key elements in the study of the end times.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST AND RELATED EVENTS

The Return of Christ

The return of Christ to earth is the basis of hope for all believers, and it marks the beginning of the completion of God's plan. In the section below, we will examine some of the characteristics of Christ's Second Coming.

- It will be a definite event – The Second Coming of Jesus is a definite event, as seen from the fact that it is mentioned explicitly in many passages of the New Testament.
- It will be a physical return – His Second Coming is not something spiritual or figurative, but personal. This means He will come back physically. In Acts 1:11, the angels told the disciples that Jesus would return to earth in the same way He ascended to heaven.

Acts 1:11

“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

- It will be a visible return – Jesus' return will be visible to the whole world, like His departure. It would not be a low-profile event like His birth (Acts 1:9-11; Matthew 24:30).

Matthew 24:30

“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

- It will be an unexpected return – The Bible did not state when Jesus will return; it will be an unexpected return (Matthew 24:36-44; Acts 1:6-7). There will be signs that will precede Christ's Second Coming, but they do not indicate the exact time of His return. His return will happen so suddenly that there will be no time to react when it takes place.
- It will be a triumphant and glorious return – When Jesus returns, He will come in the clouds with great power and glory (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27), and He would be accompanied by angels (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

The Resurrections

The Bible supports the idea of life after death. This can be found in both the teachings of the Old Testament (Isaiah 26:19), and also in the teachings of the New Testament (Matthew 22:29-32; Mark 12:24-27; Luke 20:34-38; John 5:25).

Isaiah 26:19

But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead.

John 5:25

I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

Both the righteous as well as the wicked will be raised to life in order to stand before God in judgement (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:14-15). However, the Bible gives more explicit teaching regarding the resurrection of believers.

This resurrection of believers will be physical, which means that the physical body will be raised to life (Romans 8:11, 22-23; Philippians 3:20-21). This resurrection body will not be purely physical, but imperishable, glorious and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:42-44), since it is designed to inherit the imperishable Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:50

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The Judgements

All will have to stand before God in judgement (Matthew 25:32; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27). These judgements are future events (Matthew 16:27). There will be two judgements:

- The Judgement Seat of Christ – This judgement is only for believers, and it involves them giving an account of their lives to Christ (Romans 14:10-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The purpose of this judgment is not to determine the spiritual status of Christians, since this has already been determined by Christ's sacrifice and by the believer's faith in Him. Believers should look at this judgement as one in which God rewards them based on how faithfully they have served Christ while on earth.

- The Great White Throne Judgement – This will be for everyone, whether believers or non-believers, and they will be judged according to their deeds (John 5:28-29). This final judgment will take place after the millennium reign of Christ and after Satan, the beast and the false prophet have been thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-15).

Revelation 20:15

If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Great Tribulation & the Millennium

The Great Tribulation refers to a specific period of time (7 years) where there will be great suffering, distress and persecution. It is mentioned in Matthew 24:21. The millennium is the 1,000-year reign of Christ as found in Revelation 20:1-6. It is seen as a time of great abundance, fertility, renewal of the earth and rebuilding of a glorified Jerusalem.

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS DURING THE END TIMES

As a church, we have a position on what we believe Scripture says about the end times, bearing in mind the fact that issues regarding the end times is very complicated due to the highly symbolic nature of Scripture relating to this topic. It is reasonable to say that nobody can say with certainty how the end times will unfold.

The Great Tribulation

We believe that there will not be a rapture where believers are taken away to be in heaven to escape the Great Tribulation. Instead, all believers will still be present on earth during the Great Tribulation. The antichrist will try to persecute the church during this time. However, true believers will be supernaturally protected.

Revelation 3:10

Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

The Bible does not give any clear and definite criteria as to who would be qualified to be protected; only God knows who would be protected. It is therefore important for all believers to walk with God faithfully.

Revelation 13:15-18

He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666.

At the end of the Great Tribulation, Satan will be bound and thrown into the Abyss for one thousand years. (Revelation 20:1-3)

The Millennium

At the end of the Tribulation, Christ will come back in glory. When this happens, believers from all ages who have died will be resurrected. The believers who were protected during the Great Tribulation, together with the resurrected believers will be caught up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), and they will be transformed and will receive a new and glorified body (1 Corinthians 15:51-54). After that, they will all come back down to earth with Christ to establish and reign in the Millennium Kingdom for one thousand years.

Revelation 20:4

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

The Millennial Kingdom will be a kingdom of peace and righteousness (Psalm 72:6-8; Isaiah 11:5-10), with Satan bound and thrown into the abyss (Revelation 20:1-3).

The Judgement

At the end of the Millennium, unbelievers will be resurrected and Satan will be released from the Abyss. Satan will then deceive the nations to make war against God's people. However, God will protect His people, defeat the nations and throw Satan into the eternal lake of fire.

Revelation 20:7-10

When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Believers will stand in judgement before God to receive their rewards, and they have to give an account of their lives to Him. They will not be condemned.

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

Unbelievers will stand before the Great White Throne to be judged for eternal condemnation. God is just and would not simply condemn them arbitrarily, but will require them to give an account of their lives. After being judged, the unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:11-15

Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead

were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The New Heavens and New Earth

Believers will enter the New Heaven and New Earth and will be with God for eternity. The old earth (earth and skies) will disappear and there will instead be a New Heaven and New Earth.

Revelation 21:1-4

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Revelation 22:5

There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

HOW BELIEVERS SHOULD PREPARE FOR THE END TIMES

With respect to the Second Coming of Christ in particular, believers should not be spending their time and energy trying to predict and speculate when it will take place because the Bible clearly says that no one knows the exact time or the hour He will return (Matthew 24:36). Trying to speculate on the exact time of Jesus' return would not help believers to draw closer to God or be of benefit to their spiritual lives.

Instead, believers should focus on preparing themselves for His Second Coming, since it will be a definite event. Believers can prepare themselves by being watchful and consistent in their relationship with God.

1 Peter 5:8-11

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

No one can afford to live in sin and repent at the last minute when they think that Christ is returning. The Christian life is not meant to be lived in such a manner.