

## **Doctrinal Statement for MFBC**

**By Jeremy Cagle**

### I. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

#### A. BIBLIOLOGY

##### *Revelation*

I believe that the Lord has generally revealed Himself to mankind through nature and creation (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1-6; Romans 1:18-21) and I also believe that He has specifically revealed Himself to mankind through the Bible (Psalm 19:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

##### *Inspiration*

I believe that the Holy Spirit moved or “inspired” men to write the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

##### *Inerrancy*

I believe that, as the Spirit did so, their writings were given without any error in the original manuscripts (John 17:17).

##### *Illumination*

I also believe that today God, the Holy Spirit, chooses to “illumine” His people to understand the Bible. As He does so, He does not change the meaning of the Bible, but rather opens our minds to understand the author’s intended meaning (Psalm 119:18; 1 Corinthians 2:6-15).

##### *Canonicity*

I believe that the canon of Scripture in its current list of 66 books is closed and complete (Revelation 22:18-19).

##### *Sufficiency*

I believe that the Bible is sufficient and all we need to deal with the issues of life because every problem of the soul has been addressed within its pages (Psalm 119:97-105; 2 Peter 1:2-3).

##### *Transmission*

I believe that the original writings of the Bible were “transmitted” or copied remarkably well and preserved down throughout the ages so that the Greek and Hebrew texts we have today maintain the integrity of the original manuscripts.

##### *Translations*

As a result of that, I believe that the modern translations we have today in English, Spanish, Portuguese, etc. also have the potential to maintain the integrity of the original manuscripts so long as they stick as closely as possible to the Greek and Hebrew texts and do not seek to deviate from them.

#### B. THEOLOGY PROPER

### *Existence*

I believe that the Bible begins with a definitive statement of the existence of God. In other words, the Bible does not begin by defending the existence of God or arguing for it. It just proclaims it as being self-evident when it says “In the beginning God” (Genesis 1:1).

### *Attributes*

However, as the Bible goes on, I believe that it says more about the person of God by giving us various divine attributes that could be divided up into two categories: incommunicable and communicable. The incommunicable attributes of God are those that He does not share with human beings such as eternity, foreknowledge, immutability, independence, omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence. The communicable attributes of God are those that He does share with human beings such as His wisdom, truth, compassion, grace, love, mercy, patience, goodness, holiness, and righteousness.

### *Sovereignty*

I believe that one attribute that stands out as particularly important in this list is the attribute of God’s sovereignty which says that God controls all things. Since He created all things, the Lord has the authority to rule all things and govern them according to His will (Proverbs 21:1; Isaiah 45:7; Daniel 4:35; Acts 17:28).

### *Providence*

I also believe that, as He does that, He carries out His sovereignty upon the earth through the use of His providence in the affairs of men. The Lord is not just a passive spectator looking down upon the earth but rather is personally involved in it (Genesis 50:20; Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:28-31; Romans 8:28).

### *Decrees*

As He involves Himself in this world’s affairs, the Bible also says that God decrees everything that comes to pass according to His eternal plan. This includes:

- The good actions of people along with the bad (Acts 2:23; Ephesians 2:10)
- The means and ends of our actions (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- The length of someone’s life (Job 14:5)
- The times and boundaries of “our habitation” (Acts 17:26)

### *Trinity*

I believe that God is a triune being which means that He is one God in three persons. Each person is truly God and yet distinct. The Bible says that God the Father is God (1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6). God the Son is God (John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:13-18) and God the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:1-4; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

## C. CHRISTOLOGY

### *Pre-existence*

Since I believe that Jesus is the second person of the Trinity, I also believe that He is eternal, having existed before time began. There was never a time when He did not live with the Father and Spirit in heaven because He is the creator of the universe (John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2). Yet when the fullness of time came, the Father sent Him to save us (John 3:16; Galatians 4:4-5).

### *Theophanies*

I also believe that, before Jesus came to save us, He revealed Himself in His pre-incarnate form through the means of the “angel of the Lord” who ministered to Hagar (Genesis 16:7-14), Abraham (Genesis 22:1-19), and Moses among others (Exodus 3:2-4:17). These pre-incarnate appearances are known as “theophanies” or “Christophanies.”

### *Incarnation*

Furthermore, when the fullness of time came, the second person of the Trinity was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:26-38), took on human flesh (John 1:14), and, as a result was truly God and yet, without compromise of his divinity, was concurrently truly man (Colossians 1:15-22). From this point onwards, Jesus’ two natures, human and divine, would be inseparable. Colossians 2:9 sums it up well when it says “For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form.”

### *Kenosis*

As He did so, Jesus restrained the manifestation of some of His divine attributes and prerogatives. This was a voluntary act whereby the Son of God “emptied himself” (*kenosis*) and took on the form of a slave (Philippians 2:5-7).

### *Humanity*

Consequently, I believe that Jesus’ humanity was not an artificial one but a real one which is seen in the fact that He needed sleep (Luke 8:23), food (Matthew 4:2), and physical protection at times (Matthew 2:13-15). He also sweat (Luke 22:43-44), bled (John 19:34), thirsted (John 19:28), and expressed human emotions like any other person and yet did so without any intermixture or influence of sin (Matthew 26:37; Mark 3:5; John 15:11).

### *Miracles*

I believe that, in His humanity, Jesus performed miracles that only God could do. For example, He turned water into wine (John 2:1-11), healed an official’s son in Capernaum (John 4:46-54), cleansed a man with leprosy (Matthew 8:1-4), healed a paralytic who was let down through a roof (Mark 2:1-12), raised a widow’s son from the dead (Luke 7:11-17), calmed a storm on the sea (Luke 8:22-25), fed the 5,000 (Mark 6:33-44), and walked on water (John 6:16-21).

### *Resurrection*

I believe that, when His ministry was finished, Jesus was arrested, tried, crucified, and three days later He rose from the dead (Matthew 26-28) which validated His claim to be the Son of God (Romans 1:3-4). It also showed the power of God to remove the sting of death (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) and it reminded us that Jesus would be “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20-21). In other words, He would lead the way for us to be resurrected just like Him (Romans 6:4-5).

#### D. PNEUMATOLOGY

Since I believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, I also believe that He is eternal (Hebrews 9:14) possessing all the divine attributes of God the Father and Son. He was involved in creation (Genesis 1:1-2) and ministered to several saints by name in the Old Testament such as Moses (Isaiah 63:10-12), Joshua (Numbers 27:18), Othniel (Judges 3:10), Gideon (Judges 6:34), Jephthah (Judges 11:29), Samson (Judges 14:5-6), and Ezekiel among others (Ezekiel 8:3). During the New Testament era, He descended upon the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-11) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

##### *Baptism*

One of the ways He does that is through the means of Spirit-filled baptism where He immerses our souls into Christ at the moment of salvation (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26-27).

##### *Indwelling*

As the Spirit does that, He also indwells us or lives inside of us in order to show us that we belong to Christ (Romans 8:9).

##### *Sealing*

At the same time, the Spirit simultaneously guarantees our inheritance until the day of redemption. This is known as the work of being “sealed with the Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30).

##### *Spiritual Gifts*

The Spirit also gives us spiritual gifts to use for the “common good” of the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7). Every individual within the church has been given at least one spiritual gift (1 Peter 4:10) and the Holy Spirit is sovereign in their bestowal (1 Corinthians 12:11). For a further discussion of the spiritual gifts and the issue of cessationism, please see Letter H below.

##### *Filling*

Furthermore, the Holy Spirit fills us with His presence as we choose to fill our lives with the things of God (Ephesians 5:18-21). This work of the Spirit is different from the other ones mentioned above in that it is the only one that is commanded of us. Ephesians 5:18 indicates that we are responsible for working with the Spirit in order to apply this particular aspect of His ministry to our lives.

#### E. ANTHROPOLOGY

##### *Origin*

The first man was created from the dust of the earth on the sixth day of creation (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7) and I believe that the first woman was created from one of Adam's ribs that God removed (Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25).

### *Imago Dei*

They were also created in the *imago dei* or "image of God" which means that they were created in order to resemble God by having a spiritual side to their being (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-2; 9:6). In the context of the Book of Genesis, this image enabled them to rule over the earth (Genesis 1:28) cultivate the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15), and obey the revealed will of God (Genesis 2:16-17).

### *Fall*

Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15-17). However, they did so (Genesis 3:1-7) and the result was the "fall" or the transition of human beings from a state of innocence to a state of guilt and sin (Romans 5:12, 15-21).

### *Sin Nature*

This "fall" caused human beings to inherit a sin nature (Romans 5:12, 15-21), incur the penalty of death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23), and become inherently corrupt and incapable of doing that which is acceptable in the sight of God apart from the enablement of divine grace (Romans 7:18-25).

## F. SOTERIOLOGY

I believe that salvation is all of grace on the basis of the redemption through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7), the merit of His shed blood (1 Peter 1:18-19), and not on the basis of human merit or works (Ephesians 2:8-10). Since man is in such a helpless state, the only thing that can save him is the power of God alone.

### *Atonement*

One of the components of God's work of salvation is the term "atonement" which refers to the act of making amends. God hates sin and, therefore, He cannot ignore the behavior of sinful people. A sacrifice must be paid in order to cover the cost of sin and that is what Christ has done for us at the cross (Leviticus 17:11; Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 26:26-28).

### *Grace*

Another component of salvation is "grace" which refers to unmerited favor. Jesus did not die for us at the cross because we deserve it. Rather, He did it in spite of the fact that we do not deserve it at all (Romans 5:1-2, 6-8; Titus 3:5).

### *Imputation*

A third component of salvation is "imputation" which describes how Christ's righteousness is applied to us the moment we believe and our sin is applied to Him (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:18).

### *Justification*

The Bible also says that Jesus “justified” us. Justification is the act whereby God pronounces a sinner to be righteous on the basis of faith in Christ (Romans 3:21-26; Galatians 2:16; 3:11). Jesus Christ never sinned (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). He kept all of God’s law (John 8:45-46) and, because of that, He was righteous in the eyes of God. However, in His love for mankind, God sacrificed this perfectly just Man for the sins of every one who would be saved so that God “would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

### *Propitiation*

Propitiation deals with the issue of averting God’s wrath. Christ’s death was one not only one of atonement but also one of satisfying His righteous anger towards our sin (Romans 3:25).

### *Regeneration*

Regeneration is the radical change whereby God takes a person who is spiritually dead in sin and He makes them alive in Christ so that they become a new creature (John 3:3, 5-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

### *Substitution*

Vicarious substitution describes how Jesus traded places with us at the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24).

### *Election*

Election is God’s decision in choosing certain persons for salvation prior to creation in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 2:9). This does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and believe (Luke 13:3; John 3:16-18; Acts 16:31; 1 John 1:9).

### *Predestination*

Predestination corresponds to election and it refers to the fact that God has determined mankind’s destiny prior to creation in eternity past making our redemption inescapable and inexorable. He works all things after the counsel of His will including the fate of our souls (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-5, 11).

### *Foreknowledge*

Foreknowledge is God’s experience of personally knowing all those who were selected for redemption from eternity. This personal knowledge is not based on man’s works or anything that God has foreseen in us but simply on His mercy and grace (Romans 8:28-30; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

### *Depravity*

This is important because the fall of man is so extensive that he has become what theologians call “totally depraved” which means that every part of him—both internally and externally —has been tarnished by the fall. Sin penetrates to the very core of our being to such an extent that, if the Lord had not selected some to salvation this way, none of us would be saved (Genesis 6:5; Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10-11; 8:7).

### *Eternal Security*

This doctrine of election is also important because it demonstrates that our salvation is eternally secure. Since it is a unilateral work of God, therefore, it cannot be undone by us. Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice ... I give eternal life to them ... and no one will snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:27-29; Romans 8:38-39; Philippians 1:6).

### *Limited / Unlimited Atonement*

Furthermore, this doctrine shows us that Christ’s death is efficacious. He did not die in order to provide a potential salvation but an actual one that results in the inescapable redemption of the elect. Some refer to this as the concept of “limited atonement” (Matthew 1:21; John 10:15; Revelation 5:9).

### *Lordship of Christ*

These things serve another purpose as well and that is to bring us under the lordship of Christ so that we surrender our lives to Him in total and unreserved obedience. We have been saved so that we would make Jesus our master, ruler, and king (Romans 10:9-13; 14:8 – 9; Philippians 2:9-11).

### *Sanctification*

We have also been saved so that we might be sanctified (i.e., made holy). This is a process that begins with our regeneration (Hebrews 10:10) but it continues with our progressive growth in Christ (Philippians 2:12-13) until we are finally presented to the Lord without any spot or blemish (Ephesians 5:25–27).

### *Repentance*

God’s electing grace also results in repentance whereby the elect, at the predetermined time, turn away from sin and express Godly sorrow over it (Acts 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10). Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of such repentance (Ephesians 2:10) and will be experienced to the extent that the believer obeys the Word of God (Philippians 2:12; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4–10).

### *Free Will*

At this point, some people ask the question if we have a free will. In addressing that, it might be helpful to quote Acts 2:21 which says, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Peter does not explain how that statement coincides with all of the verses that I just mentioned above about election because he did not feel the need to. In his mind, both of these statements are equally true:

- 1). God elects some to salvation.
- 2). God commands all people everywhere to believe and “call on the name of the Lord.”

The interworking of how each of those truths coincide is a mystery that is not unfolded in the pages of Scripture so it is one that I have personally placed in the hands of God (Romans 9:14-24). I am comfortable teaching both things concurrently and leaving the intricacies of the divine will up to Him.

## G. ANGELOLOGY

I believe in the existence of angels or a divine company of spirit beings who operate in both heaven and earth in order to carry out the will of God (Genesis 28:12; Acts 12:5-11; 27:21-26; Revelation 7:1-3).

### *Classification*

The angels fall into two categories: fallen and unfallen. Created before mankind, the fallen angels represent a significant number of spirit beings who fell from their original state by rebelling against God along with Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-17). The unfallen angels represent those who did not fall but chose to remain faithful to God instead. Scripture mentions the names of several unfallen angels such as Michael the archangel (Jude 9) and Gabriel (Luke 1:19-28). It also mentions a cherubim who guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24) and several seraphim who worshipped before the throne of God in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-7).

### *Ministry*

The unfallen angels or "holy angels" have several ministries such as bringing judgment (Revelation 16:1-12), bringing about answers to prayer (Acts 12:1-11), carrying believers to heaven (Luke 16:22), and providing physical protection for those on the earth (Revelation 7:1-3).

### *Character*

Since the unfallen angels are spiritual, the Bible says that they cannot marry (Mark 12:25) nor be subject to death (Luke 20:36). It also says that they are of a higher order than man (Hebrews 2:7), possessing a greater wisdom (2 Samuel 14:20) and power (Matthew 28:2; Acts 5:19; 2 Peter 2:11). They are also sinless which allows them to serve in the presence of God (Isaiah 6:1-7).

### *Fallen Angels*

As indicated above, Satan is a created cherubim who incurred the judgment of God by revolting against Him. As he did so, he took numerous angels with him (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19) that are known as demons or "fallen angels." They perform several tasks such as tempting human beings (Ephesians 6:12), practicing the art of deception (1 Timothy 4:1), and possessing people (Mark 5:1-20).

### *Satan & His Methods*

Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and ruler of the demons (Matthew 12:24). He goes by several names in Scripture such as the "tempter" (Matthew 4:3), "the god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), "the evil one" (1 John 5:18), "the father of lies" (John 8:44), and "a roaring lion" (1 Peter 5:8). His goal has always been to lure people away from God (Genesis 3:1-19). In order to accomplish this goal, the devil employs several methods such as temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), deception (Revelation 12:9), possession (Luke 22:3), and accusation (Revelation 12:10).

### *Demon Possession*



Demonic possession is a confusing subject and it needs further clarification because it refers to a time when an individual comes under the direct influence of these fallen angels (Mark 1:21-28; 7:24-30). However, the Bible records no single instance of a believer being possessed this way. Since believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13), we can never be indwelt by the forces of darkness because we have already been indwelt by God Himself. Second Thessalonians 3:3 says, “The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.”

## H. ECCLESIOLOGY

All those who believe in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body which is called the church (Matthew 16:17-19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:22-32), of which Christ is the head (Colossians 1:18). The formation of the church began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ and made up of all born-again believers in this present time (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). It is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32) and was a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6).

### *Church Government*

The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) who has called men to lead it through the office of elder and deacon. The elder’s role is to preach, teach, and give spiritual guidance (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:1-3; 1 Peter 5:1-2) while the deacon’s primary role is to serve (Acts 6:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:8-9). The local church is to be autonomous and free from any external authority or control (Titus 1:5). However, it is good for local churches to cooperate with each other for mutual encouragement and the propagation of the faith.

### *Plurality of Elders*

The biblical pattern of eldership is a plurality with multiple men serving together in order to provide balance and mutual accountability (Acts 15:22; 20:17; 21:18; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

### *Deacons / Deaconesses*

In regards to the discussion of whether a church should have deaconesses or not, 1 Timothy 3:8-13 lists the qualifications of deacons and, in the midst of doing so, verse 11 refers to “women” or to “the wives of the deacons” because the word *gunai* could be translated “woman” or “wife.” If one translates it “woman,” then it refers to the qualifications for the office of deaconess. If one translates it “wife,” then it refers to the qualifications for a deacon’s wife.

Since this passage allows for various interpretations, I am inclined to give a lot of freedom on this issue. The office of deacon is essentially a “service” office so there is nothing that would disqualify a woman from becoming a deaconess. However, if a church chooses not to create this office, I believe that they are at liberty to do so.

### *Church Discipline*

Church discipline is the process of lovingly calling someone in sin who professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to repentance. It is the act of compassionately restoring them to a right

relationship with the Lord and is to be followed according to the steps given in the following passages.

**Matthew 18:15-18.** In this passage, Jesus gives us a four-step process for calling someone to repentance. Each step should occur in consecutive order: 1). Go to someone privately (2). Go to them in a small group (3). Tell their sin to the church (4). Treat them as a Gentile or a tax collector (i.e., remove them from fellowship). Also, there should be enough time given between each of the steps in order to allow the person time to turn from their sin.

**1 Corinthians 5:1-5.** In this passage, Paul gives us a much shorter process for discipline because a man is committing a flagrant sin and sleeping with his father's wife so Paul tells the church to dismiss him right away. Apparently, some sins are so grievous that they require a swift course of action and open immorality is one of those.

**Romans 16:17; Titus 3:10-11.** In these passages, the process is also short since they both address the sin of divisiveness because when someone threatens to divide the church, it is to be dealt with quickly as well. Titus 3:10-11 says, "Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned."

It also needs to be stated that the church discipline process is not meant to go on indefinitely in each of the scenarios mentioned above. If the person repents and they seek to reconcile with those they have sinned against, they should be allowed back into the fellowship of the church since the goal of discipline is always restoration and honoring the name of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

### *Ordinances*

The two ordinances that have been committed to the local church are those of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is only to be done once whenever a person professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as it allows them to identify with His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:1-11). The Lord's Supper is to be done continually after someone professes faith in Christ (Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:14-20) and should always be preceded by a process of self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32).

### *Spiritual Gifts*

Just as there are two ordinances that have been committed to the local church, historically, there were two kinds of gifts provided for it as well: the sign gifts and ministering gifts. The sign gifts were given for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of an apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12) and they manifested themselves through things like prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, miracles, healings, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11). On the other hand, the ministering gifts were given for the purpose of "equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). These gifts included things like teaching, evangelism, exhortation, leading, administering, giving, service, and mercy (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The sign gifts have ceased because they completed their purpose in the First Century and are thus no longer necessary (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture now becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message. However, the Holy Spirit still freely and generously distributes ministering gifts for the edification of the church.

## I. ESCHATOLOGY

### *Heaven and Hell*

I believe that it is "appointed for men to die once" (Hebrews 9:27). However, that is not the end of us for death involves no cessation of existence (Revelation 6:9-11). Upon physical death the soul of the redeemed will immediately pass into the presence of Christ in Heaven (Luke 16:19-22; 23:43) where they will experience continual joy (Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:21) as they enter into the dwelling place of God, the holy angels, and saints (Revelation 4-5; 19:1-6). Upon physical death the soul of the lost will immediately pass into Hell where they will experience continual misery as they are tormented (Luke 16:19-31), rejected by God (Matthew 7:21-23), cast into outer darkness (Matthew 22:13), and placed in unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43-48).

From there, both groups will await several things to occur upon the earth such as:

### *The Rapture*

The rapture of the church is the event in which Jesus "catches away" all believers from the earth in order to give them glorified bodies along with all those who are dead in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). This event will take place prior to the tribulation in order to spare them from the judgment that is to be poured out upon the earth during that time (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; Revelation 3:10).

### *The Tribulation*

Immediately following the rapture, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon the earth during a period that is known as the tribulation. It will be marked by various celestial disturbances, natural disasters, terrible plagues (see Revelation 6—19) and it will last for seven years (Daniel 9:24-7; 12:11; Revelation 11:2-3; 13:5). Other passages in Scripture refer to it as "the day of the Lord" (Joel 2:31) "a time of distress" (Daniel 12:1) or "the time of Jacob's distress" (Jeremiah 30:7).

### *Appearance of the Antichrist*

During this time, a false Messiah known as the Antichrist will appear who will seek to dominate the world (Revelation 13:1-8). Eventually, he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire along with the false prophet where they will be tormented day and night forever (Revelation 19:20; 20:10).

### *Marriage of the Lamb*

Also, during this time, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb will occur (Revelation 19:1-10) which will consummate the saints' union with Christ so that, when He returns to the earth, He will take them with Him (Revelation 19:11-14).

### *The Millennium*

After the tribulation period, Christ will return to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:31-33) and establish His messianic kingdom for 1,000 years upon the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). When He does, the resurrected saints will reign with Him over all the nations (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Revelation 20:4) and their reign will be characterized by the removal of Satan from the world (Revelation 20:1-3) along with a period of peace and justice (Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:6-7).

### *Great White Throne Judgment*

The Bible teaches that, at the end of the millennial kingdom, Satan will be released in order to deceive the nations and gather them to battle against the saints, at which time he and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:7-9). Following this, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10), whereupon Christ will resurrect and judge the unbelieving dead. This event is called the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) whereupon books will be opened (Revelation 20:12) that contain a record of everyone's deeds and the lost will be evaluated by them, found guilty, and then cast into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15).

### *The New Jerusalem*

After these events have transpired, the elements of this earth will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth whereupon only righteousness dwells (Revelation 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city or New Jerusalem will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and the Lord Himself "will dwell among them ... and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Revelation 21:3-4).

### *Bema Seat*

Another event that will take place in the future will be the Bema Seat or Judgement Seat of Christ where Christians will stand before Jesus in order to be judged for their service to Him (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). It will be a time of blessing rather than punishment because the Lord will inspect our works in order to reward us for them (see Matthew 10:40-42; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Timothy 4:8).

(I left this one at the end of this chronology of events because I am undecided as to when it will occur)

### *The Resurrection of the Dead*

Another issue that has to be considered when discussing the topic of eschatology is the order of resurrections in the Bible. I believe that the Bible speaks of two resurrections. The first one is the resurrection of believers (John 5:25-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Revelation 20:4) and the second one is the resurrection of unbelievers (Daniel 12:2; John 5:25-29; Revelation 20:11-14). The resurrection of unbelievers will be a one-time event which will take place at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-14).

However, the resurrection of believers will take place in stages. The first stage is the resurrection of the church at the time of the rapture prior to the tribulation (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). The second stage is the resurrection of Old Testament believers and the

redeemed tribulation martyrs at the beginning of the millennial kingdom (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:4).

### *Church and Israel*

Another issue that arises with regards to eschatology is the church's relationship to Israel and Romans 11 provides a good framework for this subject when it states that:

- Israel was not completely rejected by God (verses 1-10)
- Israel has temporarily stumbled over Christ (verses 11-24)
- Israel has temporarily been hardened in unbelief (verses 25)
- However, there will one day be an end to the Jews' hardening when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in (verse 25)
- At that point, all Israel will be saved according to God's irrevocable calling and mercy (verses 26-32)

It is because of this that I believe that the Bible teaches a distinct future for Israel as a race (Revelation 7:1-8) and it does not teach "replacement theology" or the idea that the church replaces Israel.

## J. COVENANTS

A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties and no doctrinal statement would be complete without a brief discussion of the covenants that God has made with people in the Bible. Here are six of them:

- **The Noahic Covenant.** The Noahic Covenant was given to the human race through Noah following the flood. It consisted of a promise not to flood the earth again among other things (Genesis 9:15).
- **The Abrahamic Covenant.** The Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham and, consequently, all his descendants after him. It promised to bless them (Genesis 12:1-3), make them into a great nation (Genesis 12:1-3), and give them land (Genesis 13:14-17).
- **The Mosaic Covenant.** The Mosaic Covenant was made with Moses and the people of Israel in order to give them God's Law. This covenant would serve to set them apart from other groups of people (Exodus 19:5), turn them into a nation (Exodus 19:6), establish the sacrificial system (Leviticus 1-19), and ultimately be used as a tutor to lead them to Christ (Galatians 3:23-24).
- **The Priestly Covenant.** The Priestly Covenant was made with Aaron and his descendants after him in order to set them aside to serve as priests unto the Lord (Numbers 18:19; 25:10-13).
- **The Davidic Covenant.** The Davidic Covenant was made with King David and it promised to establish his kingdom, make his name great, give him rest from his enemies, and assure him that the Lord would raise up one of his descendants in order to sit on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16).
- **The New Covenant.** The New Covenant was initially given to the people of Israel but it applies to the church as well because Hebrews 12:24 says that Jesus is the mediator of it. In this covenant, the Lord promises to write His law upon our hearts, put a new spirit within us, and

remove our heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:26–27). Jesus referred to this covenant at the Last Supper when He told the disciples that “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood” (Luke 22:20). The Apostle Paul also mentioned it in relation to the Christian ministry when he said “[God] made us servants of a new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3:6).