

COVER LETTER

To whom it may concern:

By the grace of God with me, I have diligently labored over the past four years to accurately handle, practice, and proclaim the Word of God at the Master's Seminary. With one semester remaining, it is with a solemn yet joyful expectation that I write this letter, knowing (1) that God has certainly called and equipped me for the work of the ministry – based upon the strong affirmation of God's people, and my firm and unyielding desire to see God's people built securely upon the God-breathed Scripture – and, at the same time, knowing (2) that no one in himself is adequate for these things, but that my adequacy is from God.

God's wise, kind, and fatherly hand has, I humbly believe, uniquely crafted me to be fit for ministry in many respects. He has lead me through several doctrinal heresies – including Roman Catholicism and the Charismatic movement; and, having gone through them, I have been given a resolute conviction to be *clear* in all things concerning the Scriptures and, in particular, the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is truth that sanctifies a man, and half-truths that condemn a man. Though God has crafted me for clarity, He has graciously kept me from that knowledge which puffs up. Far from diminishing my love for Christ and my joy in Christ, my time in seminary has only served to augment my desire to humbly serve Christ, to the end that I might one day hear those words from the King, “Well done, good and faithful servant” and “Enter into the joy of your Master.” May God use me however He wills.

For His glory,

Alexander Benfanti



ALEXANDER BENFANTI

(253) 273-8236 | alexbenfanti@gmail.com
325 E Santa Anita Ave, Apt 220 Burbank, CA 91502

Family

My wife Bianca (age 28) and I (age 29) have been married for 2 years and welcomed our daughter Aurelia in February 2022.

Ministry Experience

2020–present	Eagle Rock Bible Study Shepherd – <i>Grace Community Church</i> Includes teaching, preaching, and biblical counseling	Sun Valley, CA
2021–present	Neighborhood Outreach Leader – <i>Grace Community Church</i> Includes teaching on evangelism and leading groups to various locations around Los Angeles each Sunday to proclaim the gospel as well as door-to-door evangelism	Sun Valley, CA
2022–present	Only Hope Prison Ministry – <i>Grace Community Church</i> Includes preaching, Q&A, and counseling men after the service	Sun Valley, CA
2022–present	Deacon - <i>Grace Community Church</i> Includes serving communion	Sun Valley, CA
2020	Rehabilitation Ministry – <i>Grace Community Church</i> Includes counseling	Acton, CA
2018–2019	Bible Study Leader – <i>CrossFit St. Pete</i> Includes teaching and counseling	St. Petersburg, FL
2016–2017	Pastoral Internship - <i>Discovery Community Church</i> Includes coordinating and leading a summer College Internship Program; leading a young adult Bible study; various administrative responsibilities; teaching Sunday School (grades 1–5)	Tacoma, WA
2015	Prayer Group Leader – <i>InterVarsity Christian Fellowship</i> Includes leading triweekly prayer meetings with college students	Tacoma, WA
2013–2015	Bible Study and Men’s Group Leader – <i>InterVarsity Christian Fellowship</i>	Tacoma, WA

Employment

2020–present	EMT Supervisor – <i>Allied Universal</i>	Los Angeles, CA
2021–present	CrossFit L1 Coach – <i>CrossFit High Voltage</i>	Burbank, CA
2019–2020	Emergency Medical Technician – <i>American Professional Ambulance</i>	Van Nuys, CA
2019–2020	CrossFit L1 Coach – <i>CrossFit Outer Limits</i>	Chino, CA
2017–2018	Server – <i>Carrabba’s Italian Grill</i>	St. Petersburg, FL
2016–2018	CrossFit L1 Coach – <i>CrossFit St. Pete</i>	St. Petersburg, FL
2016–2017	Pastoral Intern – <i>Discovery Community Church</i>	Tacoma, WA

Education

Expected Grad. May 2023

Masters of Divinity

The Master's Seminary, Sun Valley, CA

Honors: *Irvin A. Busenitz Dean's Scholarship* (2020–2023)

GPA: 4.0

Grad. 2015

Bachelors of Science in Biochemistry

University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, WA

Honors: Recognized by *Phi Sigma Theta Honors Society* for high GPA.

GPA: 3.35

Media

2021-2022

Podcast Guest Speaker on “Ordinary People with Extraordinary Lives”

Bianca's and My Testimony:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQqradXLZNw>

Justification:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7smlMS7OYg>

Transubstantiation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGm77Tgfnew>

The Sacrifice of the Mass:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ioK1C8f19U>

References

Dr. Mike Riccardi

GraceLife Pastor and Shepherd

Grace Community Church

Sun Valley, CA

Contact information available upon request.

Carlos Ordoñez

Eagle Rock Bible Study Shepherd

GraceLife, Grace Community Church

Sun Valley, CA

Sheldon Ko

Local Outreach Leader

Grace Community Church

Sun Valley, CA

(405) 933-2851

Michael Dionne

Associate Pastor

GraceLife London

+44 7510 080019 (London)

Pete Beaudoin

Eagle Rock Bible Study Shepherd

GraceLife, Grace Community Church

Sun Valley, CA

(323) 286-6521

Doctrinal Beliefs

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

I believe that the Bible is God's *very* Word to man (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 1:1–2). The Bible does not originate with man, but with God, who, by His Spirit, superintended the human authors in such a way that He did not override their individual personalities or styles of writing (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20–21). Scripture is God's *perfect* Word to man (cf. Ps. 19:7–9); it does not need supplementation, nor should any man or institution add to it (cf. Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18–19). It contains all things that are necessary for man to come to a saving knowledge of God in Christ Jesus (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15) and it provides everything necessary to adequately equip the believer for every good work (cf. vv. 16–17). The original autographs of the 66 books comprise an inerrant, infallible, inspired, authoritative, sufficient, and clear revelation of God.

I operate consistently under a literal, grammatico-historical hermeneutic. In any given text there is but one single meaning/interpretation (i.e. the authorial intent) with many applications or significances. It is the solemn responsibility of the biblical expositor, in conjunction with illumination of the Holy Spirit, to work diligently in order to understand the author's original intent (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

GOD

I believe that there is one, living, and true God (cf. Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:5–7; 1 Cor. 8:4). God is eternal (cf. Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2), uncaused (cf. Rom. 11:36), spirit (cf. John 4:24), infinite (Pss. 145:3; 147:5), timeless (cf. Ps. 90:4), immutable (cf. Mal. 3:6), omniscient (cf. Ps. 139:1–6), omnipresent (cf. Ps. 139:7–10), omnipotent (cf. Ps. 139:13–16), holy (cf. Isa. 6:3), perfect in all of His attributes (cf. Ps. 18:30), and the one from whom all things exist (cf. Acts 17:24–25). God is one in essence (substance) and exists eternally in three Persons (cf. Matt. 28:19) – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – each fully deserving of the worship and obedience which belongs to God alone (cf. Matt. 28:9; John 5:23; Phil. 2:9–10).

God the Father

I believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, sovereignly decreed (from eternity) and providentially orders (in time) all things according to His will (cf. Pss. 103:19; 115:3; 135:6; 139:16; Isa. 14:24, 27; 46:9–10; Dan. 4:35; Acts 4:27–28; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:11).

God the Father is sovereign over all things – including the spirit/heart/will of man (cf. Exod. 10:1; Deut. 2:30; Josh. 11:20; 1 Chron. 19:22; Ezra 1:1; Ps. 33:15; Prov. 21:1; Jer. 32:40; Rom. 9:17–18; Acts 16:14; Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 2:11; Rev. 17:17), chance events (cf. Prov. 16:33), evil/calamity (cf. Gen. 50:20; Exod. 4:11; Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6–7; Isa. 45:6–7; Lam. 3:37–38; Amos 3:6; Acts 2:22–23), and salvation (cf. Jer. 24:7; Luke 10:20–22; John 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 11:18; 13:48; 16:14; 22:14; 2 Cor. 4:4, 6). Though the Father is the ultimate cause of all things, He is not the proximate or chargeable cause of sin (cf. Deut. 32:4; Pss. 33:4; 111:7; 145:17; 1 John 1:5).

From eternity, the Father predestined (elected) a particular people whom the Son redeemed on Calvary and to whom the Spirit applies the redemption of the Son in relative time (cf. Eph. 1:3–14).

God the Son

I believe that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all of the divine excellencies of God the Father, and thus He is coequal, coeternal, and consubstantial with the Father (cf. Isa. 9:6; Micah 5:2; John 1:1, 18; 10:30; 14:9; 17:5; Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 1:8; Rev. 1:17–18; 22:13).

The Father created all things *through* the Son (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:15–17), who continually upholds all things by the word of His power (cf. Heb. 1:2).

In His humiliation, the Son, without divesting any of His divine attributes, took on a full human nature (cf. Phil. 2:5–8), yet without sin (cf. Heb. 4:15; 7:26). He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (cf. Luke 1:35) so that He might be born of a woman – that is, to add the human nature to His Person (cf. Phil 2:7) becoming like unto those whom He will redeem (cf. Heb 2:17) – and born under the Law of God (cf. Gal. 4:4–5), so that He might redeem those under the Law by becoming their vicarious Substitute (cf. 2 Cor 5:14–15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). In this way Jesus Christ is now and forever both fully divine and human, without any confusion, change, or separation of His divine and human nature. He is the only mediator between God and man (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5).

Jesus Christ, being fully God and able to carry out all of His intentions (cf. Isa. 14:4, 27), accomplished a *perfect* redemption for God's elect (cf. John 10:10, 26; Rom. 3:21–26), for that is why He came (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Luke 19:10; John 3:16–17; 12:47; Gal. 1:4; 4:4–5; Eph. 5:25–27; Col. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:15; Heb. 2:14–15; 9:15; 1 John 3:5). Also included in this divine redemption is His (accomplished) intention to satisfy God's wrath (Heb. 2:17), to take away sin (cf. John 1:29; 1 John 3:5), to impart eternal life (cf. John 6:51; 10:10; 1 John 4:9), to pay the ransom price for captive sinners (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; Heb. 2:14–15; 1 Tim. 2:6), to impute His own righteousness to the believer's account (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9), to sanctify His people (cf. John 17:19; 2 Cor. 5:15; Eph. 5:25–27; Titus 2:14; Heb. 13:12; 1 Pet. 2:24), and to bring the elect into the presence of God in glory (cf. Heb. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:18).

On the basis of the efficacy of Christ's death, the believer (upon spiritual regeneration) is freed from the penalty of sin (cf. Rom. 8:1) as well as the power of sin (cf. Rom. 6:5–23), and will one day be freed from the presence of sin (cf. 1 John 3:2).

The believer's justification and resurrection is assured by virtue of the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 6:5–10; 1 Cor. 15:12–28). The resurrection also furnished proof that God the Father has fully accepted the work of Christ both in His life (satisfying God's holiness; cf. Matt. 5:13, 48) and in His death (satisfying God's justice; cf. Rom. 1:4; 4:25) on behalf of the elect (cf. Isa. 53:4–6; 2 Cor. 5:21).

The church is awaiting the immanency of Christ's return (cf. Matt. 24:43–44; 1 Cor. 15:51–52), during which He will meet the church in the air and translate them to heaven (rapture; cf. 1 Thess. 4:17) for the duration of the 7-year tribulation period (cf. Dan. 7:25; Rev. 11:2–3; 12:14; 13:5), at the end of which He will return to the earth (second coming) with His church (cf. Rev. 19:11–19) to judge the ungodly (cf. John 5:22–23; Rev. 20:11–15) and bring about His millennial reign on the earth (cf. Rev. 20:1–6). At the end of His millennial reign, Christ will hand over the kingdom to God the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24), and a new heavens and a new earth will come, commencing the eternal state (cf. Rev. 21:1–2).

The excellencies of Christ are supremely glorious and inexhaustible: He is the ultimate Prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15; John 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22; Col. 1:15, 19; 2:9; Heb. 1:3), Priest (cf. Heb. 7:23–28; 8:1–6; 9:11–14, 24–26; 10:11–14), and King (cf. Ps. 2:6–8; Matt. 25:34; Luke 19:38; Rev. 15:3; 17:4; 19:16), the promised King of the Davidic covenant, the true King of

Israel (cf. Matt. 27:11, 37; John 1:49; 12:13). He is the Head of the Church, which is His body (cf. Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18). He is Lord over all (cf. Phil. 2:9–11), and the only Savior that has been given among men (cf. John 6:14; Acts 4:21).

God the Holy Spirit

I believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, possess all the divine attributes of the Father and the Son, and is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (cf. Isa. 40:13–14; John 16:13; 1 Cor. 12:10–13; 2:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14).

It is the role of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will in relation to mankind. His activity is revealed to us most clearly in creation (cf. Gen. 1:2), in the incarnation (cf. Matt. 1:18), in written revelation (i.e. inspiration of Scripture; cf. 2 Pet. 1:20–21), in salvation (cf. John 3:3–5), and, relatedly, in the supernatural regenerating work of the New Covenant (cf. Ezek. 36:25–27; Jer. 31:31–33), whereby He *applies* the blessings of Christ's accomplishments to the elect in relative time (cf. John 3:8; 1 Cor. 12:13). The indwelling Spirit serves as the seal (i.e. the guarantee) of the believer's redemption (cf. Eph. 1:13), as well as their empowerment for service (cf. Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 5:22). The principal role of the Spirit is to exalt Christ (cf. John 16:14a).

The work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4), as foretold by Christ (cf. John 14:16–17; 15:26). His sovereign activity in the church age (i.e. the last days) includes initiating and building up the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4–13; Eph. 4:4–6, 11–14) by spiritually baptizing the elect into Christ (cf. Rom. 6:3–7; 1 Cor. 6:17; 12:13; Gal. 3:27) and by granting spiritual gifts to the members of the body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11).

The Spirit is the active agent in sanctification, and works synergistically (with the believer) to conform the believer more into the image of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18). The Spirit also illuminates the truths of the inspired Scripture to the mind of the regenerate believer (cf. Ps. 119:18; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 2:10–13; Eph. 1:17–18).

MAN

I believe that man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:27). After the Fall, the image of God remains in man (cf. Gen. 9:6) though it is marred by the Fall (cf. Jer. 13:23). Upon regeneration, the image of God is restored and increased as the believer grows in likeness to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4), until that day when, in glory, the image of God is perfected in man (cf. 1 John 3:2).

Because of the disobedience of Adam, the whole of the human race is spiritually dead in transgression and sin (cf. Rom. 5:12; 8:7–8; Eph. 2:1–3). Unregenerate mankind is both unable and unwilling to do anything pleasing in God's sight (cf. Jer. 13:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Heb. 11:6; John 5:40), let alone merit salvation for himself by good works (Rom. 3:19–20; Gal. 3:10–11). The biblical testimony is clear: "There is none righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3:10; cf. Ps. 143:2b); "There is no one who does good" (Rom. 3:12); "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23; cf. 1 Kings 8:46); "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5); and "All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment" (Isa. 64:6). There is no part of man that is not stained with the curse of sin (cf. Isa. 1:5b–6a).

Taken together, unregenerate mankind is not spiritually "wounded" but dead and wholly unable and unwilling on his own to respond to God's commands from the heart. He needs a *new heart* which can only be given to him by the Spirit of God in the promise of new covenant (cf. Ezek. 36:25–27; Jer. 24:7; 31:31–33; 32:39–40; John 3:3–8). The Spirit works in conjunction

with the faithful proclamation of the *gospel* of Jesus Christ in order to open the blind eyes of the elect to the Person and work of Christ (cf. Rom. 1:16; 10:14; 2 Cor. 4:4–6). Without the effectual grace of God in Christ, mankind remains wholly dead in sin (cf. Eph. 2:1–8).

Jesus Christ is the only one who never sinned and lived a perfectly righteous life as a man (cf. Heb. 4:15; Phil. 3:9). Either a man is in Christ, or he is in Adam – as they both act as the representative heads of mankind (cf. Rom. 5:12–21). Either God credits the obedience of Christ to the man’s account, or he is left with the imputation of the disobedience of Adam (cf. Rom. 3:21–22; 4:1–16; 5:12–21; 10:1–10; 1 Cor. 1:30). By nature all are *in Adam* (cf. Rom. 5:12, 15, 17, 18, 21), but by God’s effectual grace, through faith, one will be *in Christ* (cf. John 15:4–5; Rom. 5:1–2; Eph. 2:4–8; Gal. 2:20).

SALVATION

I believe that salvation is a gracious work of the triune God (cf. John 1:13; Rom. 9:16; Eph. 1:3–14). From eternity past, the Father chose a particular people for salvation (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28–30; 9:11, 22–23; Eph. 1:3–6, 11; 2:10; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8–9; Titus 1:1; Rev. 13:8). On Calvary (1st c. A.D.), Jesus redeemed the same people whom the Father chose to save (cf. Luke 12:32; John 10:14–15, 26; 17:2, 6, 9, 25–26; Rom. 8:31–33; Heb. 9:15; Rev. 13:8). In relative time, the Spirit applies the saving benefits of Christ to the same people that the Father chose and the Son redeemed (cf. John 3:3–5, 21; 10:26; 1 Pet. 2:9–10).

Regeneration

I believe that regeneration is the sovereign, supernatural, and monergistic work of the Holy Spirit, who, by the instrumentality of the Word of God, bestows new and eternal life to those for whom Christ died (cf. John 3:3–5) in order that they would be enabled to see and exalt in the glory of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4, 6; Phil. 3:8), and to be freed from the enslaving dominion of sin and enslaved to righteousness (cf. Rom. 6:18, 22). It is an instantaneous work of the Spirit that is always accompanied by the fruit of righteousness (cf. Ps. 1:1–6; Matt. 7:17–20; John 15:2–6, 8, 16; Rom. 7:4–6; 8:9; Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:11; 1 Thess. 1:5; 1 John 2:6).

Election

I believe that election is the sovereign and unconditional act of God the Father, who, before the foundation of world, chose a particular people to save for the praise of His glory (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 6:37, 44, 65; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28–30; 9:11, 22–23; Eph. 1:3–6, 11; 2:10; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8–9; Titus 1:1; Rev. 13:8). Sovereign grace does not nullify the responsibility of man to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Ezek. 33:11; John 3:18–19, 36; 2 Thess. 2:10–12). Nevertheless, those whom the Father has chosen from eternity past will certainly come to Christ (cf. Matt. 11:27; 13:11; Luke 10:0–21; John 6:37, 44, 65; 12:39–40; Acts 2:39; Rom. 8:28–30; 9:11, 16, 22–23; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3–6, 11; 1 Thess. 5:9; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:8–9). Those whom God does not graciously elect (to the praise of His glorious grace) will be left to God’s righteous judgement (to the praise of His glorious justice; cf. Rom. 2:4–5; 9:22–23), so that in all things, whether in the administration of His grace or justice, God will be glorified (cf. Isa. 48:9–11; Ezek. 36:21–23; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:28; Eph. 1:22–23; 4:6; Heb. 2:10).

Justification

I believe that justification is an act of God whereby He judicially declares a sinner to be righteous in His sight based upon the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner's account and that Christ's righteousness is credited to the sinner through the instrumentality (i.e. the means) of faith in Christ (cf. Luke 18:14; Rom. 3:21–26; 4:3–5, 11, 22–24; 5:1; 9:30–32; 10:3–4, 10; Phil. 3:9). Based upon the substitutionary, atoning work of Christ, the believer's sin was credited to Christ's account on the cross, and Christ's righteousness is credited to the believer through faith (cf. Isa. 61:11; 2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:13–14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). Whereas faith is the instrumental cause of justification, the atoning work of Christ is the grounds of the believer's justification.

Sanctification

I believe that sanctification can be understood biblically under three sub-categories: positional sanctification, progressive sanctification, and perfective sanctification (i.e. glorification).

Upon justification, a believer is *positionally* sanctified (that is, set apart from reign of sin and consecrated to God; cf. Rom. 6:10–11, 22; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13; Heb. 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2). Those who have been positionally sanctified are identified as “saints” (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; Phil 1:1). Positional sanctification, like justification, is a monergistic act of God, and it has to do his *standing* before God, not his practice, or walk.

Progressive sanctification is the only *synergistic* work within the realm of soteriology; meaning, that both God and man cooperate to effect continual growth in Christlikeness (cf. Phil. 2:12–13; 3:12–14, 16). That man must work to be progressively conformed to the image of Christ does not mean that he is saved by his works (cf. Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5). His pursuit of Christlikeness is based upon the mercies of God (cf. Rom. 12:1–2), his new nature, and new love for holiness, though he is still in the flesh (cf. Rom. 7:14–24). In light of the mercies of God, the Christian is commanded, obligated, and encouraged to pursue holiness and to walk in a manner worthy of such a glorious salvation (cf. Rom. 6:19; 12:1; 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:1–4; Heb. 6:10–11; 12:1–2; 2 Pet. 1:5–11). The believer is required to utilize the various means of grace, in conjunction with the work of the Spirit, to grow in Christ (cf. John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18). No believer will ever be perfectly holy in this life; it is only when God has put off the remaining sinful flesh from him in death that he will be raised in holiness (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–58), namely, in *perfective* sanctification (cf. 1 Thess. 5:23). It is only in glory that the believer will finally be set free from indwelling sin and will be able to stand in the presence of God in complete righteousness and holiness (cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

Until then, the believer is engaged in continual internal *warfare* against indwelling sin (cf. Rom. 7:23; Gal. 5:17; Jas. 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11). He is, however, given adequate grace from God for any situation so that he is able to have victory over sin and to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:16–25; Eph. 4:22–24; Phil. 3:12; Col. 3:9–10; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 2 Pet. 2:9; 1 John 3:5–9).

Security

I believe that all the redeemed will certainly *persevere* in the faith because they will be *preserved* to the end by the grace of God (cf. Ps. 37:28; Jer. 32:40; John 6:37; 10:28–30; 17:12; Rom. 8:29–30; 31–39; 11:29; 14:4; Eph. 4:30; Phil 1:16; 2 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 7:25;

12:2; 1 Pet. 1:3–5). Those to whom God has given His indwelling Spirit have received the *seal* (the sure promise) of their salvation (cf. 2 Cor. 1:21–22; Eph. 1:13–14; Eph. 4:30).

THE CHURCH

I believe that the church is the body of Christ (cf. Eph. 1:22–23) which is made up of all elect believers from the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:4) to the rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13–18; 5:9). Biblically, the church can be understood in terms of the *universal* church (cf. Matt. 6:18; Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 12:8; Eph. 1:22; 5:23–25) or the *local* church (cf. Matt. 18:17; Acts 8:1; 13:1; 14:23; Rom. 16:1, 5; 1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). Though the universal church is the invisible church made up of only elect believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13), the local church is a combination of true believers and nominal (“name only”; false) believers (cf. Matt. 13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50). The church is thus a unique spiritual organism made up of all regenerate believers in this present age – such was a mystery that was previously hidden in the Old Testament but has now been revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11–3:13).

I believe the church cannot be equated with “the people of God in all ages,” since the church did not exist prior to Pentecost. Jesus said, “I *will* build by church” (Matt. 16:18; note the future tense). The church is thus distinct from Israel. The Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant promises to national Israel still await their future fulfillment in the millennial kingdom (cf. Rom. 9:4–5). But the promises of God to them has not failed (cf. Rom. 9:6); the nation of Israel has only been partially and temporarily set aside “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom. 9:25; cf. vv. 26–36), after which “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26) during the tribulation (Rev. 7:4–8).

Jesus Christ is the only head of the church (cf. Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 1 Pet. 5:1–4). The two offices of the church are elders/overseers/bishops (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1) and deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8). Those who aspire to the office of elder or deacon must meet the biblical qualifications (cf. Titus 1:5–18; 1 Tim. 3:1–13). The biblical model for eldership is a plurality of elders (cf. Acts 11:30; 14:23; 20:17; 21:1, 18; 1 Tim. 4:14; Titus 1:5; Jas. 5:14). The elders are to lead the congregation as servants of Christ (cf. 1 Tim. 5:17–22), and the congregation is to submit to their leadership (cf. Heb. 13:17). Each local church is free from any external authority, and they possess the right of self-government (cf. Titus 1:5). Through its biblically qualified elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, each local church is to determine for itself all matters of discipline, policy, and membership (cf. Acts 15:19–31; 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1–4).

The church is required to exercise the process of church discipline in the case of an unrepentant member (cf. Matt. 18:15–22; see also Acts 5:1–11; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15; 1 Timothy 1:19–20; Titus 1:10–16) in the hopes that the sinning member may be “won” and reconciled to the body (cf. Matt. 18:15; 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:5–8; 2 Thess. 3:14–15; 1 Tim. 1:19; Titus 1:13).

At the completion of the canon, the Spirit is no longer bestowing *miraculous* gifts – such as prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and healing – to the church. With the church’s foundation laid (cf. Eph. 2:20), the miraculous gifts have ceased to be given. The miraculous gifts served their function in the pre-church era, namely, to authenticate the message and the messenger of divine revelation (cf. Exod. 4:1–9; 1 Kings 17:20–24; John 4:48; 10:38; 2 Cor 12:12; for more information, please request my paper on this topic). The only gifts in operation today are non-miraculous gifts which are to be used for the edification of the body of Christ (cf. Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor. 12:7, 18–26; 14:3–5, 12, 17, 19, 26; Eph. 4:11–16).

The church has been given two ordinances to observe: baptism (cf. Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (cf. Matt. 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–33). The ordinance of baptism is an outward symbol of an already accomplished spiritual reality, namely, that the one who has placed their faith in Christ has spiritually died with Christ, was buried with Christ, and is raised to new life with Christ (cf. Rom. 6:3–6, 8, 11; Eph. 2:5–6; Gal. 2:20). To be baptized by immersion is to publicly proclaim faith in Christ and spiritual union with Christ (cf. Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:35–38).

Whereas baptism is a one-time event in the life of a believer, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper ought to be observed regularly in the local church assembly (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24–26). The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ during the Passover meal on the night in which He was betrayed (cf. Matt. 26:17–30; Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–30; 1 Cor. 11:23–33). This meal serves as a memorial (“Do this in *remembrance* of Me”), pointing the church back to the cross of Christ, where her perfect redemption was accomplished (cf. John 19:30). But the meal also points forward to the return of Christ for His bride: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

LAST THINGS

Death

I believe that upon physical death the soul and the body are temporarily separated (cf. Phil. 1:21–24) with no loss of immaterial consciousness (cf. Luke 16:23; Rev. 6:9–11). The soul and body of the redeemed will be reunited (i.e. resurrected) at the *rapture* (for the church; cf. 1 Thess. 4:15–16) and at the *second coming* (for OT saints and tribulation saints; cf. Dan. 12:1–3; Rev. 20:4–6), and they will receive glorified bodies fitted for eternal life (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35–54). The soul and body of the unsaved will be reunited at the end of the Millennial Kingdom at the Great White Throne judgement (cf. Rev. 20:7–15), in which God will give them bodies fitted for eternal destruction (cf. Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Rom. 9:22).

Until those events, believers who die are currently enjoying unhindered peace, joy, and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23). The unsaved, however, are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (cf. Luke 16:23), during which they will be judged and cast into the eternal lake of fire reserved for Satan and his angels (cf. Rev. 20:13–15).

Rapture of the Church

I believe that at the end of this age, once the fulness of the Gentiles has come in (cf. Rom. 11:25), the Lord Jesus Christ will descend bodily into the air to gather the church to Himself (cf. John 14:1–3; 1 Cor. 15:51–53; 1 Thess. 4:13–17), and He will translate the church from this earth to be delivered from the Day of the Lord (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9–10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10).

The Tribulation Period

I believe that, following the rapture of the church, the Tribulation Period (or Daniel's “70th week”) will begin (cf. Dan. 9:24–27; 12:1; Matt. 24:15–21). This is a 7-year period during which: (1) the *wrath of God* will be poured out against an ungodly and unbelieving world (cf. Isa. 63:4; Jer. 30:7; Joel 1:15; 2:1–17; Nah. 1:6; Zeph. 1:14–18; Mal. 3:2; Rev. 6:14, 17); and (2) all Israel will be saved (cf. Deut. 4:30; Dan. 12:1; Ezek. 20:33–38; Zech. 13:8–9).

The Second Coming and Millennial Reign of Christ

I believe that at the end of the Tribulation period the Lord Jesus Christ will return with the church and He will reign for 1,000 years in this present heavens and earth (cf. Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:25–27; Rev. 20:4). It is during this time that the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant will be fulfilled for national Israel (cf. Deut. 9:5–6; Isa. 2:2–4; Jer. 31:35–37; Ezek. 20:33–38; Micah 7:18–20; Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:68–79; Rom. 9:4; 11:25–29). The rightful rule and reign of the Messiah will be established on the earth (cf. Ps. 2:7–9; Is. 2:2–4; 9:6–7; 11:1–5), fulfilling the Davidic Covenant (cf. Isa. 9:6–7; 11:1–2; Jer. 23:5–8; 33:20–26; Ezek. 34:23–35; 37:23–24; Luke 1:32–33).

Judgments

I believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One to whom God the Father has given all judgment (cf. John 5:22–23). After the rapture, NT believers will come before the judgment seat of Christ to receive their eternal rewards (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10). There is no condemnation for believers (cf. Rom. 8:1), only rewards or loss of rewards (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10–15). At the end of the Tribulation, the Lord will judge the living Gentiles (cf. Joel 3:1–2; Matt. 25:1–46), living Jews (cf. Ezek. 20:34–38), tribulation saints (cf. Rev. 20:4–6), and OT saints (cf. Dan. 12:2–3). At the end of His Millennial reign, Christ will judge Satan and his angels (cf. Rev. 20:10), the present heavens and earth (cf. Matt. 24:35; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 20:11), and the unsaved dead at the Great White Throne judgment (cf. John 5:28–29; Rev. 20:11–15).

The Eternal State

I believe that at the end of His millennial reign, “when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power,” Jesus Christ will “hand over the kingdom to the God and Father” (1 Cor. 15:24; cf. v. 28). The elements of this present heaven and earth will be burned up (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10), and God will bring about a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Rev. 21:1) in which righteousness dwells (cf. Eph. 5:5; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 20:17), and the redeemed will physically dwell in full and unhindered fellowship with God and one another for all of eternity (cf. John 17:2–3).

Philosophy of Ministry

The kingdom of God is arguably *the* overarching theme of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation (cf. Gen. 1:26–28; Rev. 22:3–5). The church, however, is *not* the kingdom (see Acts 1:6–8). The church has a unique role in this age that is *linked* with God’s overall kingdom program, and yet it is distinct from God’s kingdom. In other words, in God’s eternal kingdom all of the detrimental effects of sin – hunger, sickness, pain, poverty, etc. – will be done away with (cf. Rom. 8:18–23; Rev. 21:4–5; 22:3), but it is not the primary role of the church to do away with those things, for “the poor you will always have” (Matt. 26:11). Let me be quick to state that the church should be engaged in mercy ministries, especially toward believers (cf. Gal. 6:10), but mercy ministry is not the mission of the church. The church is nowhere said in Scripture to “bring” the kingdom or to “usher in” in the kingdom, for Christ’s kingdom is not of this world (cf. John 18:36); rather, the kingdom is something that is given (cf. Mark 4:11; Luke 12:32), received (cf. Mark 10:15; Heb. 12:28), entered (cf. Matt. 18:3), and inherited by those whom the Father predestined from before the foundation of the world (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 3:3, 5; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 2:12). The kingdom of God is not something the church “brings,” it is something for which she is eagerly waiting (cf. Mark 5:43; 6:10; Luke 19:11–27; 22:18; 23:51; Acts 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:1, 18; Rev. 12:10). The church, however, partially manifests the spiritual qualities of kingdom citizens (cf. Matt. 5:3–12; 11:11; 19:14; Luke 9:62; Rom. 14:17).

The mission of the church was given directly by the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who commanded her to: “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20a). *That* is the great (com)mission. The purpose of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit to make disciples by proclaiming the saving gospel of the King (cf. Luke 9:60; 16:16; Acts 20:25; 28:23, 31; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 1 Pet. 2:9), and to bring those disciples into a local church to be built up in the truth (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:11–12; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:11, 13, 15, 16; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 4:2–5; Titus 1:9; 1 Pet. 2:2, 9; 4:10), teaching them to worship the Lord and obey His commands so that they would be more conformed to the image of Christ, until He comes, to the glory of God the Father (cf. Rom. 9:23; 11:36; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:5, 6, 12; 3:10, 20–21; 2 Thess. 1:12; 1 Pet. 2:9; 4:11).