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Five Key Bible Doctrines

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About the Author

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Introduction

This document provides a brief overview of five important or “key” Bible doctrines – Christology (the study of Jesus), ecclesiology (the study of the church), eschatology (the study of the end times), pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit), and soteriology (the study of salvation). Within each of these I provide vital Bible passages, some key issues, my personal statement and a warrant for position.

While this document is by no means exhaustive, it provides what I believe to be enough foundational content necessary for the believer to walk away with a sound level of understanding of each doctrine, while simultaneously encouraging the believer to seek out further study via more in-depth sources and of course through his or her Bible – the wonderful source from which all doctrine only flows.

Christology – The Study of Jesus

Bible Passages

John 1:1-18: This passage from the Gospel of John tells us who Jesus is. Jesus is the Word that was there in the beginning, he is preexistent and eternal. Jesus was with God before the world was created. John lets us know that Jesus is the creator of all things. Jesus is life and light.

Philippians 2:5-11: Paul tells us the Jesus exists “in the form of God” (v. 6) and Jesus comes in “the form of a servant.” (v. 7) He left his place in heaven and came down to earth. Jesus was willing to come here as a human. Jesus was even willing to go to the cross even though it was going to mean death for him. Jesus was raised to life and God gave him the name that is above every name and one day every knee will bow to him.

Colossians 1:15-20: Paul like John reminds us that Jesus was the creator of everything in heaven and earth. Jesus holds everything together. Jesus is also the head of his body which is the church. Jesus has the fullness of God dwelling in him, he is the reconciler of all things through his death on the cross, and was also raised to life so he is the firstborn from the dead. Jesus died and was raised to life never to die again.

Hebrews 1:1-4: The writer of Hebrews lets us know that Jesus is the word of God. God used prophets in the past to speak to his people but now Jesus speaks as the Word of God. Jesus is the glory of God. He holds the universe together - just like Paul and John say about Jesus. After Jesus's death made a way for us to have our sins purified he sat down back at the right hand of God in heaven. His name is above every name, and he is even greater than the angels.

Key Issues

Christology is the study of Christ, yet this has been misunderstood and it has resulted in heresies. As such, the early church fathers had to come up with a way to speak about who Jesus was and is.

The church fathers came together and came up with the **Nicene Creed** that helps us understand and know who Jesus is. The church fathers wrote this:

“We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, The only-begotten of God, Begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, Very God of Very God; Begotten, not made, Of one substance with the Father...Who for us, and for our salvation, Came down from heaven And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, And was made man.”

Later the church fathers wrote the **Chalcedonian definition** to help us know who Jesus is. The church fathers wrote this:

“This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably united: The distinction of natures is not annulled by such a union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature is preserved and united in one Person and subsistence, not separated or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The church fathers had to face many issues but as they faced these issues they have helped to give us the language we need to use when speaking of the nature of Christ. These statements made by the early church fathers still need to be the ones we hold today.

Personal Statement

All of the different views that the early church fathers had to face seem to cycle through as you talk to people about who Jesus is. When looking at how to answer the question of who Jesus is we can turn to different Bible passages to show us that He is truly God and truly man.

If Jesus is not both human and divine he can't save humans from their sins. I believe that Jesus was both God and a man in one person. Jesus is the Word that was preexisting and he is eternal.

There never was a time when Jesus did not exist because the word “was” is a tense that is a continual tense. This verse in John 1:1 could be read “In the beginning was continuing the Word and the Word was continuing with God and the Word was continually God.” Jesus is God but as John continues in the first chapter he became a human and came to earth.

Warrant for Position

Since sin entered from Adam (a man) people have needed to be redeemed from their sins. Jesus becomes that God-man to redeem us from our sins. Jesus needed to be both God and man. Jesus could not just be a man and he could not just be God without human flesh.

He needs to be both God and man. Jesus is God that comes down to us with human flesh on - to live the life that would be perfect following God without sin and then paying the penalty for our sins so that we can be reconciled to God and be able to be with him forever when we die.

Jesus is truly God and truly man. We need to hold fast to this truth that has been passed down through the centuries.

Ecclesiology – The Study of the Church

Bible Passages

Matthew 16:16-19: This is the most famous passage on the church. Here Jesus said that he would build his church on a rock and that the gates of hell would not prevail against it. It is also here that Jesus gives to Peter and the other disciples “the keys to the kingdom of heaven” and where the church's authority is established.

Today, the church still has the power to forbid and permit what ordinances and rites should or should not be allowed according to how close such suggestions align with God's Word.

Matthew 18:15-20: This passage shows us the role the church plays in the handling of disputes between members who sin against one another.

Specifically, it teaches us how to deal with this as brothers and sisters in Christ. If we go to the person that has sinned against us and they listen we have gained them. If they do not listen we are to bring two or three witnesses and if they still do not listen then we are to bring them before the church.

If their impertinence finds no end, they can be considered as heathen men. Jesus also speaks again of the binding and loosing role of the church which means its authority under God to permit and forbid things according to God's will and word.

Acts 2:37-47: This passage takes place on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit came upon the disciples. Accordingly, Peter stood up and gave a sermon to explain what was happening. At the end 3000 people believed in Jesus and they were baptized into the church.

They would then devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, the breaking of bread (this could mean the Lord's Supper or the sharing of a meal together) and prayer. (Acts 2:42) The early church gathered and ate together and shared resources. This continues to be the call of the church today.

Moreover, we are to gather together, praise God, listen to teaching from both the Old and New Testaments, have fellowship with each other, break bread as part of the Lord's Supper and meet the needs of our fellow believers. The early church met at the temple together and in their houses.

I Corinthians 12:14-31 and I Corinthians 14:1-26: Here we learn that the Holy Spirit does the work when it comes to salvation and bringing people that make up the church together. And, when we come together we make up the body of Christ. Therefore Christians are known as the body of Christ.

As such, when the body of Christ suffers we all enter into that suffering and likewise we also rejoice together. Also, Christians have Spiritual gifts given to them by the Holy Spirit for the common good of the church, and when we gather we are there to build up and encourage each other. Lastly, when we come together to worship God we are to meet in an orderly manner.

Ephesians 2:11-22: In this passage, Paul takes the time to remind the Gentiles of what it was like for them before they came to know Christ. Then he lets them know who they are for knowing Christ. They are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints (the people that have been part of the church for all time) and members of the household of God. These same claims that Paul made to the Gentiles in Ephesus have the same meanings for us as well.

Key Issues

Some of the issues regarding the doctrine of the church center around how we are to meet. The early church met together in homes every day, and its not uncommon today to hear people asking if we need to return to this model.

In fact, the house church movement has been gaining traction once again. People in this movement believe that if the church meets in this way then the spiritual gifts of all of its members can be equally utilized. Regardless, to me there seems to be a place for both large gatherings and a place for small gatherings in regards to the church.

Personal Statement

I believe that the Bible is clear that the church is the gathering of the body of Christ. Likewise, when the church comes together there are things that we need to do. First, we must worship God with songs and praise. Second, we are to honor him through the public reading of Scripture. Third, we must teach and preach from the Bible, and fourth we ought to follow the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Warrant for Position

The Bible is clear that God wants his people to come together to worship him, to learn from the Scriptures, to pray together, care for each other, and to partake in the ordinances.

Eschatology – The Study of the End Times*Bible Passages*

Daniel 12:1-3: In this passage, Daniel speaks about a “time of trouble.” (Dan. 12:1-2) Jesus also spoke about the same time of trouble and that this will lead to his second coming.

Daniel also speaks about some of those who are resurrected from death. He states that some will have everlasting life while others will partake of everlasting contempt. In these instances Daniel is speaking about things that are going to happen at the second coming of Christ.

Matthew 25:31-46: In this passage, Jesus speaks about what is going to happen to two groups of people at the final judgement. He refers to these two groups of people as “sheep” and “goats.” (Matt. 25:32)

To the sheep Jesus will say “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matt. 25:34) Jesus saw the deeds done by this group of people as acts of kindness for him. However, Jesus will say to the goats, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41) Jesus goes on to say that these people did not do acts of kindness for him. Again, and just like with Daniel, Matthew's passages details what is going to happen when Jesus returns to earth at his second coming.

Philippians 3:20-21: In these verses Paul reminds us that Christians have their citizenship in heaven and that we are waiting for our savior Jesus to return to earth. Moreover, Jesus will transform our lowly bodies into glorious bodies like his. This is what we are hoping and longing for - that Jesus will return and renew our bodies!

Revelation 21:1-8: This passage speaks about what is going to happen at the end of time. At that point in history Jesus is going to renew the earth, and we are going to live within a new heaven and new earth. (Rev. 21:1)

Additionally, Jesus is going to dwell with his people, and we are going to live in the city that he has been preparing for us. There will be no more death, sickness, crying, and pain. This is what we are longing for - that Jesus will return and set up his kingdom forever where he is going to be King.

Key Issues

One of the issues of eschatology centers around the exact details of the millennial reign of Jesus Christ that is found in Revelation 20:1-6. It's an important matter because an understanding of the millennial reign helps us better understand the end times and in particular the second coming of Christ.

There are three primary views of the millennium. The first is called **amillennialism**, which does not understand the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth to be a literal thousand-year reign. The second major view

is **postmillennialism** which sees the millennium as a time when “the world will come to Christ as they believe the gospel.” Lastly, **premillennialism** understands that the passage in Revelation is a literal thousand-year reign of Christ. Something else that is important to note is that some believers hold to each one of these views of the millennium.

Personal Statement

When it comes to the view of the millennium and the second coming of Christ I hold to the postmillennial view. I'm encouraged by the evidence around me that the gospel has moved throughout the world and that many people around the world have come to faith. Moreover, the gospel's reach and influence continues to expand across the globe. I am a positive and hopeful person and the postmillennial view seems to have a lot of hope that things will get better before the return of Christ. With that said, I long for the return of Christ.

Warrant for Position

I believe the Bible is clear that Christ is coming back, that we are all longing for his return, and that when he comes back we will experience resurrection from death and will live with Jesus forever.

Pneumatology – The Study of the Holy Spirit

Bible Passages

John 14:15-17: Jesus promises the disciples that he will send the Holy Spirit to them. According to Jesus, the Spirit will be “another Comforter” (or advocate, counselor, and helper) that he will give to believers that “he may abide” with us for ever. (Jn. 14:16) The Spirit will lead the disciples to the truth and the Spirit will continue to teach the disciples the things that Jesus taught.

Acts 1:8: Jesus appeared to his disciples after his death and resurrection. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and that in a few days the Spirit would come to give them power. They will need this power to proclaim who Jesus was and is to the people in “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth.”

In the book of Acts the Spirit is seen as a divine person. He had attributes that only personal beings possess. For example, he speaks (Acts 10:19), forbids (Acts 16:6), compels (Acts 20:22), and can be lied to (Acts 5:3), tested (Acts 5:9) and resisted. (Acts 7:51)²

1 Corinthians 12:1-13: The Holy Spirit is the one who gives gifts to people. These gifts are given for the building up of the body of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 1:5-6: The Spirit is the one who takes the gospel when spoken and works in the lives of the people hearing it and helps them come to believe.

Key Issues

In Church history many heresies have come up around the topic of pneumatology. Even now the Holy Spirit gets confused with a force. The Holy Spirit has been active from the creation of the world, and he is still active in our world today.

When we think about the Holy Spirit it can be hard to explain to people. However, when we talk about him we should use the same words found in the Bible. The Holy Spirit is a person, and he has personal traits and since he is a person he can be blasphemed (Mk. 3:29), lied to (Acts 5:3), tested (Acts 5:9), resisted (Acts 7:51), grieved (Eph. 4:30), quenched (1 Thess. 5:19), and insulted (Heb. 10:29).³ The Holy Spirit is not some force out there in the universe we can't know. Rath-

er, he is someone believers can know. Jesus said, “ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” (Jn. 14:17)

Since we know the Holy Spirit we are told that we are given gifts by the Spirit to build up the body of Christ. The Spirit has given different gifts to different people.

Personal Statement

I believe that the Holy Spirit is still active and involved in our world and the church. Just as the way he was with the earlier followers of Jesus. He is still reminding us the truth when we open up the Scriptures and read the words that he helped the authors of both the Old Testament and the New Testament write. He is still giving gifts to the church to help in the building up of the body of Christ.

Warrant for Position

The bible seems to be very clear about the role of the Spirit in bringing comfort and peace to believers. It seems to be clear that the Holy Spirit is still giving gifts to the church for the building up of the body of Christ. I do not understand it all, but I am open to see the Spirit move.

Soteriology – The Study of Salvation

Bible Passages

Romans 8: This chapter teaches the way that salvation works in the life of the believer. God the Father foreknows and predestines a group of people for himself. God does this by his own loving will, there is nothing we have done to make him call us.

We see justification (Rom. 8:1-3, Rom. 8:33-34), adoption (Rom. 8:14-17), sanctification (Rom. 8:4-10), perseverance (Rom. 8:28-29), resurrection (Rom. 8:11, Rom. 8:23-25), and the new heavens and the new earth (Rom. 8:18-22).⁴

Ephesians 1:3-14: This chapter teaches us that the Trinity is involved in bringing about our salvation. We see that the Father chooses us in Christ, resulting in our holiness and adoption (Eph. 1:4-5)⁵ and the Son redeems us through his work on the cross and brings us forgiveness. (Eph. 1:7)⁶ Also, the Spirit seals and he comes to guarantee our final salvation. (Eph. 1:13-14)⁷

Key Issues

For years there has been this debate on the understanding of salvation. However, it seems clear from the Biblical text that God calls us to himself, through what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and through the Spirit working in ourselves to open up our minds and hearts to what God is doing.

God was the one that initiated the relationship with us to save us from our sins and he is the one that continues to do the work of saving us until the end. No amount of good works was ever going to save me from my sins. I needed Jesus to come and bring about my salvation from my sins.

Moreover, God will preserve those he calls until the end. Paul makes it clear...

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

When we answer the gospel call in our lives we are made into the image of Christ. After this we are justified, and we look with anticipation to the day when we will be glorified. That is the full story of our salvation.

Personal Statement

I believe that the Scriptures are clear on matters regarding our salvation. We can understand the way that God calls us, how he justifies us, how he adopts us into his family, and as we continue to live this life we see how he sanctifies us and makes us more into the person who he wants us to be.

We also see how he preserves us when we are in times of trials and testing; as we look forward to the resurrection when we are going to experience the new heavens and the new earth where we will live with God forever.

Warrant for Position

The Bible is clear that God is the one that does the initiating to bring about our salvation. If it was not for the work of the Holy Spirit opening up my mind and heart to the good news of the gospel I would not have looked for God. As such, God continues to be the one initiating the relationship that will bring about my final salvation. I am thankful to be a part of God's family.

¹ Nicene Creed, c. 381

² Morgan, Christopher W. & Peterson, Robert A., *Christian Theology: The Biblical Story and Our Faith*, pg. 399

³ Ibid, pg. 405

⁴ Ibid. 330

⁵ Ibid. 332

⁶ Ibid. 332

⁷ Ibid. 332



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