

# **Grace Bible Church**

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If you have any questions about the GBC Statement of Faith, please contact one of our elders.

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## GRACE BIBLE CHURCH OF BRANDON DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

### THE WORD OF GOD

We believe and teach that the Holy Scriptures, as found in the sixty-six books of the Bible (i.e. the Protestant Canon) constitutes the infallible and authoritative Word of God.

God has revealed Himself to man generally (i.e. in nature and conscience), but these avenues are insufficient for salvation because of man's persistent resistance (Romans 1:18-2:16). However, in the course of human history, our gracious God has also revealed Himself particularly through a variety of modes (e.g. Hebrews 1:1-4), all of which are made known to us through the Scriptures.

These Scriptures constitute God's special revelation to mankind. They are God-breathed (II Timothy 3:16), and thereby, are absolutely inerrant and infallible in the original documents (i.e. the autographic originals) Like the Living Word of God, i.e. Christ, the written Word of God is fully divine and yet, genuinely human. The Holy Spirit guided the writings of the human authors including their personalities, backgrounds, and styles (e.g. Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15-17) resulting in the production of God's book, the Bible (II Peter 1:20-21).

Although we do not have in our possession the original documents, God in His providence has preserved thousands of subsequent copies which perpetuate the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek portions of the Bible; therefore, through the methodology of textual criticism it is possible to reconstruct texts which very accurately reflect the original documents.

We believe and teach that although no one text-type or any particular version derived from it necessarily represents the autographs identically at every place, many of the various traditional and contemporary English translations should be looked upon as being reliable conveyers of God's Word to mankind.

In light of all these truths, the Bible is fully authoritative, i.e. it alone is our infallible rule for faith and all practice (e.g. Deuteronomy 32:44-47; Isaiah 1:10; 8:16, 20; 30:8; 34:16; 40:6-8; 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-19; John 10:35; II Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

This full authority of the Scriptures also demands that the Bible be handled with the utmost Spirit-enlightened precision (II Timothy 2:15). Consequently, it is the total Word itself that must be taught and proclaimed unashamedly (Acts 20:18-32; II Timothy 4:2). This is absolutely essential since the Spirit uses the words from His Word to accomplish genuine results which endure for time and eternity (e.g. Joshua 1:7-8; Nehemiah 8:2-9:3; Psalms 19:7-8; 119; Jeremiah 5:14; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:7; 3:4-11; Romans 1:16; I Corinthians 1:18, 24; I Thessalonians 1:2-10; 2:13; I Peter 1:22-25; 4:11).

Believing unreservedly in the total truth and trustworthiness of Scripture, we employ the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation. Such a literal or normal method as it is sometimes called, does recognize the Bible's varieties of expression and literary forms and allows for figurative language; however, these vehicles of revelation find themselves in service to, not in contradiction with, the Word's incontestable clarity, consistency and irreproachable historicity.

In application to theology, these great truths about the Bible demand that we neither fall behind nor charge out ahead of the Scriptural data upon which doctrine is founded and expressed.

### THE GOD OF THE WORD

We believe and teach that there is but one true eternally existing God. This unique God is Triune, being one in essence (e.g. Deuteronomy 6:4), and yet existing ever and always in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (e.g. Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19). Functional subordinations within the Trinity never stand opposed to the full Deity that each of the Persons possesses.

## *GOD THE FATHER*

We believe and teach that God the Father is the Archetype (i.e. the perfect pattern) of all fatherhoods (Ephesians 3:15). This relational metaphor of Father applies not only to His unique Person within the fellowship of the Trinity but also in a derived sense in reference to all of creation (e.g. Romans 11:36; I Corinthians 8:6a; Ephesians 4:6). As Father, He is the sovereign Architect of both creation (including personal beings, time, space, and history) and re-creation, i.e. salvation (Ephesians 1:3-14).

The attributes of God as revealed in His Word give us various perspectives on the Father. His essential spirituality or personality (e.g. John 4:24) is well attested through affirmations and indications of His being self-conscious (e.g. Exodus 3:14), alive and active (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:26; John 5:17, 26), intelligent (e.g. I Samuel 2:3), emotional (e.g. Deuteronomy 5:9; Hosea 11:8; Romans 1:18), purposive (e.g. Isaiah 14:26-27; Ephesians 3:11), and free (e.g. Psalm 135:6; Daniel 4:35; Romans 9:18).

He exhibits an array of attributes (e.g. Exodus 34:5-7; Deuteronomy 7:9-10; 32:3-4; I Kings 8:22ff; Psalm 145:8ff; Nahum 1:2-8). Those which display His incomparable Deity, such as His self-existence or aseity, infinitude (including eternity, omnipresence [everything is totally exposed before Him], omniscience [everything is fully known by Him], and omnipotence [He is all-powerful over everything]), immutability (His unchanging purpose) and incomprehensibility (no creature can fully fathom His Person) (cf. respectively, Exodus 3:14; Psalms 90:2; 139:7-10; Hebrews 4:13; Revelation 11:17; Malachi 3:6; Isaiah 55:8-9) are appropriately labeled attributes of greatness. Characteristics such as these are God's unique possessions (e.g. Isaiah 45:5-6) and are, therefore, incommunicable (i.e. non-transferable). He also richly displays communicable (or moral) attributes, i.e. characteristics of His goodness, such as justice or righteousness, grace (including His love, beneficence, restraint), and faithfulness (cf. respectively, Genesis 18:25; Psalms 103:4, 13; 119:68; II Peter 3:9, 15; Lamentations 3:23). All of these particular attributes are circumscribed by His absolute holiness (e.g. Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:3; John 17:11) and utter perfection (e.g. Matthew 5:48).

In view of His attributes of greatness, He is transcendent (i.e. He is over, above, and beyond all creatures) in Being (e.g. Psalm 113:1-5; Isaiah 57:15a); however, from the perspective of His qualities of goodness, He is nevertheless genuinely immanent (i.e. He is actively concerned about all His creatures) (e.g. Psalm 113:6-9; Isaiah 57:15b).

## *GOD THE SON*

We believe and teach that the second Person of the Godhead is eternally of the same essence of Being as the Father (e.g. John 10:30; 14:9). This full Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ is attested in various ways. He is called "God" (e.g. John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5), "son of God" in the Semitic sense of sameness of nature (e.g. John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7), "the Lord" (e.g. I Corinthians 2:8), "the Holy One" (cf. Acts 3:14 with Isaiah 48:17), "the First and the Last" (cf. Revelation 1:17-18 with Isaiah 44:6), "the Alpha and Omega" (cf. Revelation 22:13, 16 with 1:8), and "the Amen" (Revelation 3:14). Also, He is especially recognized as Creator, Sustainer, and Savior (e.g. John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2; Titus 2:13). In His preincarnate appearances, He was known in the Old Testament both as "LORD" (e.g. Genesis 18:1-2, 22) and as "the Angel of the LORD" (e.g. Genesis 16:7). His attributes of greatness and goodness also correspond to the Father's.

Without surrendering His full Deity—the emptying of Himself in Philippians 2:5-8 was not of His divine essence but pertained to the independent exercise of His Divine prerogatives during the First Advent—through the incarnation (John 1:14) which was initiated by the Virgin Birth or Miraculous Conception He took upon Himself genuine humanity (e.g. Hebrews 2:9-18). He thereby became the unique God-man who consequently is the perfect Revealer, Savior, Mediator, and ultimately the Judge of all men (cf. respectively, John 1:18; Titus 2:13; I Timothy 2:5; John 5:27). Through this loving condescension, He fully accomplished His task of grace which culminated in His sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, and ascension, furnishing the grounds for the forgiveness of believing sinners (cf. respectively, Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Romans 6:1-11; Romans 1:4; 4:25; Acts 1:9).

Today He is building His church (Matthew 16:18) and continually ministers to her as the heavenly Advocate (e.g. Hebrews 7:25; I John 2:1). He will return for His bride at the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-18) then

will subsequently establish His millennial kingdom reigning on the throne of David (e.g. Luke 1:31-33; Revelation 20). Furthermore, He will judge all people and either reward or punish them (e.g. Acts 17:30-31; II Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15).

### *GOD THE SPIRIT*

We believe and teach that the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, is equal in nature with God the Father and God the Son (e.g. Acts 5:3-4; I Corinthians 12:4-11, 18; II Corinthians 13:14). His divine Personhood is attested by many references to His attributes of greatness and goodness. In His role of functional subordination within the economy of the Trinity, He bears divine witness to the Person and work of Christ in this age (e.g. John 15:26). In His relationship to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is their divine Author and Applier (e.g. II Samuel 23:2; John 14:25-26; 16:13; I Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 6:17; II Peter 1:21).

He is the predominate divine Agent in the Father's plan of salvation through the work of the Son (e.g. John 3:1-10; 16:8-11). The Holy Spirit has always been active in regeneration and renewal, i.e. in personal salvation and sanctification. He is vitally associated with our adoption, sealing and service (e.g. Romans 8:12-17; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18; Colossians 3:16).

Historically, the Spirit was intimately involved in the Church's birth at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). In this present age, all genuine disciples are baptized into Him (by Christ) thus uniting them into one Body, the Universal Church (I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

We believe and teach that in His gifting ministry (e.g. I Corinthians 12:4-11) the extraordinary gifts (e.g. miracles and tongues) were for attestations during the Apostolic era (Ephesians 2:20). They have served their purpose (e.g. II Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:3-4) and are, therefore, inappropriate for today. For example, instantaneous healings for the purpose of attestation are replaced by prescribed means of prayer in the established Church (e.g. James 5:13-16). Furthermore, historically conveyed illustrations in the Old and early New Testament eras of special fillings or empowerments for particular tasks have been superseded by evidences of His abiding presence, e.g. the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22-23).

### CREATION, PRESERVATION, AND PROVIDENCE

We believe and teach that God created out of nothing the physical universe and all that it contains, including metaphysical beings, in six literal days (e.g. Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3). He also sustains for His own purposes the whole of that which He has created (e.g. Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3).

We also believe and teach the sovereign providence of God (e.g. Psalms 103:19; 135:6; Isaiah 44:26-27; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11). His absolute sway is all inclusive, including, for example history (e.g. Daniel 2:20-21), circumstances of life (e.g. James 4:13-15), duration of life (e.g. Job 14:5), manner of death (e.g. John 21:18-19), helpful acts of men (e.g. Isaiah 44:28-45:7), harmful acts of men (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20; Acts 4:27-28), salvation of sinners (e.g. II Thessalonians 2:13-14), eternal punishment of ungodly men (e.g. Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:22; I Peter 2:8; Jude 4), the greatest world events (e.g. Revelation 13:8), seemingly trivial circumstances (e.g. Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:29-30), etc. These truths, however, never nullify the responsibilities of created, moral beings (e.g. Acts 2:22-23).

### ANGELS

We believe and teach the existence of angels which were apparently the first issue of God's creation (cf. Job 38:6-7 with Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11; Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16). In relation to men, these created spirit beings currently have greater powers (e.g. II Peter 2:11), and yet, elect angels minister on behalf of elect people (Hebrews 1:14). Furthermore, someday redeemed people will judge angels (I Corinthians 6:3).

Morally, angels may be classified under two headings; holy or elect angels (e.g. Mark 8:38; I Timothy 5:21) and fallen angels (e.g. Matthew 25:41). There also seems to be various hierarchies of angels; for example, archangels (cf. Michael, Jude 9), special attendants (e.g. Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2, 6), and designations in

series (e.g. Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:10; I Peter 3:22).

At the head of all fallen angels stands Satan (e.g. Job 1:6-9, 12; Matthew 4:10). He is also called the devil (e.g. Matthew 4:1, 5, 8, 11; 25:41; Revelation 12:9), the serpent (cf. Genesis 3:1-4, 14-15 with Romans 16:20; II Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9), the dragon (e.g. Revelation 12:9; 20:2), Beelzebub (e.g. Matthew 3:22), Abaddon or Apollyon (Revelation 9:11), Belial (II Corinthians 6:15), the evil one (e.g. Matthew 13:19, 39; I John 5:19), the tempter (e.g. Matthew 4:3), the ruler/prince (e.g. Matthew 12:24; John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2), the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4), the accuser (e.g. Zechariah 3), the adversary (I Peter 5:8), the deceiver (Revelation 12:9), the enemy (e.g. Matthew 13:25, 28, 39), murderer (John 8:44), the father of lies (John 8:44), a roaring lion (I Peter 5:8-9), etc.

Subsequent to his creation, Satan fell morally and along with him, there followed a host of fallen angels some of which today are bound while others are demons (e.g. Matthew 12:24; 25:41; Revelation 9:1-11). He then became the subtle instigator of mankind's fall (e.g. Genesis 3; Romans 16:20). Currently, he roams the earth, but his ultimate end is guaranteed by the finished work of Christ. He will be cast to earth during the Tribulation (Revelation 12:7-12), and then incarcerated during the Millennium (Revelation 20:1-3). After a temporary release and a final expression of rebellion (Revelation 20:7-8), he and his henchmen will be eternally consigned to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Although believers are in union with Christ, we are not to be presumptuous so as to seek to engage the Archenemy and his host. Our call is to be aware of his methods (II Corinthians 2:11), stand defensively in the provisions of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), and resist, not charge him (James 4:7).

### MAN AND SIN

We believe and teach that man is a direct product of the creative handiwork of God (Genesis 2:7). God created mankind in and according to His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), and even after the fall, no matter how thoroughly distorted that image has become, it was not eradicated (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

The reality of the image and likeness of God indicates that Man, via his original creation, resembles God in certain characteristics and capacities which are prerequisite for horizontal and vertical relationships and also for mankind's exercise of dominion over the rest of the earth. The grace of God in salvation, sanctification, and glorification focuses on the renewing of this image until it is finally perfect and eternally established (e.g. Romans 8:29; II Corinthians 3:18).

Both male and female equally bear the image of God. Although they share the same essence of being, there are nevertheless functional distinctions and subordinations (cf. a similar phenomenon within the Trinity). These differences, Biblically based upon creation, not cultural biases, are significant for both our families and our flock (e.g. I Corinthians 11:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; I Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5; I Peter 3:1-6).

God's original intention for male and female image bearers is that they be united as a couple into a bond, graphically designated "one flesh" (i.e. marriage), for the purpose of companionship and so that they might be fruitful and multiply. God was pleased to ordain marriage as the first institution for mankind. Each of the relational partners in the design of God is to complement the other in all areas of being (e.g. Genesis 2:18-25). This is why the sin of homosexuality, being "against nature" (Romans 1:26), violates the original order, therefore, all who practice it stand under the condemnation of God. The only remedy, as in the case of all sin and sins, is God's gracious salvation appropriated by Biblical repentance documented by the fruit of obedience (I Corinthians 6:9-11).

Through Adam's one act of disobedience, he not only fell from his estate of innocence into one of separation and alienation from God, but as our representative, he also plunged the whole race into sin and death (e.g. Genesis 2:17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-21). Consequently, all persons from their conception and birth, are innately unholy and stand condemned by condition (e.g. Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1, 3), and commission (e.g. Romans 1:18-3:20) before their Creator and Judge.

Man's depravity is total in breadth (e.g. I Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 1:2-6; 53:6; Romans 3:9-20) and depth (e.g. Ecclesiastes 9:3b; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:14-23). Furthermore, all the functions of man's heart, i.e. rational, volitional, emotional, etc. are morally tainted by sin and perversity (e.g. Genesis 6:5;

Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:17-19) leaving mankind utterly hopeless and helpless in reference to any kind of human reformation or rescue (e.g. Isaiah 64:5; Jeremiah 13:23; I Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 1:21-22).

The realities are not only crucial for an accurate theology, but also for a Biblically acceptable methodology for ministry (e.g. I Corinthians 2:1-5).

## SALVATION

We believe and teach that the salvation of sinful men ultimately depends upon the sovereign grace of God (e.g. Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). This great truth, however, never nullifies or diminishes the sinner's responsibility of appropriation nor the servant's responsibility of communication (e.g. Romans 10:8-15). As a matter of fact, the Bible always makes clear its prerequisite for true faith and repentance as substantiated by a genuine commitment and as confirmed by evidences of obedience. Biblical Christianity is discipleship (cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 9:23-26, 62; 14:25-35; Acts 11:26; etc.)

God's sovereign plan of salvation was divinely drafted in eternity past (e.g. Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8), including all of its provisions (e.g. the work of Christ and the Spirit) and processes (e.g. Titus 3:3-7). Furthermore, on an individual, historical basis, His gracious intervention stands behind all the stages of salvation, i.e. past, present (sanctification), and future (glorification) (Romans 8:29-30).

Some vital constituents of His salvation plan include unconditional election (e.g. Deuteronomy 7:6-8; Amos 3:2; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; Ephesians 1:5, 11; II Thessalonians 2:13; II Timothy 2:10; I Peter 1:1-2), effectual calling (e.g. John 6:44-45; Romans 9:11; I Thessalonians 2:12; II Thessalonians 2:14), regeneration (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 31: 31-34; John 3:1-10; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; I Peter 1:23), adoption (e.g. Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5), justification (e.g. Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 3:20, 24, 26, 30; 4:1-5), faith (Genesis 15:6; Jeremiah 17:7; Romans 10:9-10; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:1; James 2), repentance (e.g. II Kings 17:13; Lamentations 5:21; Luke 24:47; Acts 11:1; 20:21), conversion (e.g. Acts 15:19; 26:18), sanctification (e.g. Leviticus 20:22-26; John 17:17, 19; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 1:4; 5:26; I Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10; 12:14), eternal security complemented by perseverance (including all means, be they in the form of assurance or of warning; e.g. Romans 8; Philippians 1:6; II Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-27), etc.

We believe that as Christians, God has saved us to be holy and consequently to do good works. This holiness has both fixed and progressive aspects. Our sanctification - the process by which we become holy - has three sequential manifestations: our standing before God has been perfected for eternity (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2), a state that cannot be altered (called Positional Sanctification); second, now that God possesses us, He makes us alive so that we can grow spiritually and find victory over sin by means of God's grace resources: the Spirit of God, the Word of God and the people of God (called Progressive Sanctification. John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23); finally, we await a day in which God will glorify us (bring us to Glory and equip us to be there) at which time God will perfectly complete our maturity so that it corresponds to the position in Christ He already has given to us (called Glorification). The chart below illustrates the three types of sanctification as growth in godliness.

Positional Sanctification -> Progressive Sanctification -> Glorification

## THE CHURCH

We believe and teach that in the current era, commencing at Pentecost (Acts 2), Christ is building His Church (Matthew 16:18). The Church of which Christ is the Head (e.g. Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) is variously depicted as His Body (e.g. Romans 12:5; I Corinthians 12:13), His Bride (e.g. II Corinthians 11:2), a building, spiritual house, or sanctuary (e.g. I Corinthians 3:9, 16-17; 6:19; II Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:20-22; Colossians 2:7; I Peter 2:5), branches of which He is the life source (John 15:1-8), the flock of the Shepherd (e.g. John 10:11; I Peter 2:25), etc. This Church exists both universally (i.e. the total number of genuine disciples throughout Church history) and locally (i.e. historically in localized assemblies). Although salvation is bestowed and appropriated individually, the scriptural focus is always upon the Corporate Body within which the individual is to be a complementary, contributing member (e.g. Romans

12:3-8; I Corinthians 12:4-27). Christ establishes and oversees this unity and diversity in order that the local Church might become the primary context for worship and service, especially including edification and evangelism (e.g. Ephesians 4:1-16). The primary purpose of the Church, whether viewed from the local perspective or the universal, is to glorify God (e.g. Ephesians 1:2-14; 3:21).

The Scriptures establish two categories of office within the Church: elders (also designated overseers or bishops, and pastor-teachers) and deacons (e.g. Philippians 1:1) to lead and serve the flock under Christ. Those who serve in these capacities must be qualified Biblically (e.g. I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-5) by being men of noteworthy integrity (i.e. above reproach). They must be characterized by an unwavering love and commitment to their own wives, never having had any history of polygamy or divorce in their backgrounds. Deaconesses must be similarly qualified for service within the Body (e.g. I Timothy 3:11). The elders-overseers-pastors-teachers who have been given a divinely delegated authority are especially accountable for the spiritual welfare of their Master's flock. He will judge not only them and their guidance of His sheep, but also the flock's expected submission to their spiritual direction (e.g. Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Since the primary purpose of the Church is to glorify God, it is His ordained context for both discipleship and discipline. Everything in particular carried out by the Church must be done appropriately and in order (e.g. I Corinthians 14:40).

Within the context of its assembled fellowship (e.g. Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 14:19, 23, 28-35; Hebrews 10:24-25) the primary ordinances of believers' baptism by immersion (e.g. Matthew 28:16-20; Romans 6:1-14) and communion (e.g. I Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:17-34) are to be perpetuated. It is also the context for preserving purity (cf. Leviticus 11:44; 20:24-26; I Peter 1:4-16) including the Scriptural obligations of discipline and separation (e.g. Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17-18; Corinthians 5:1-8; II Corinthians 2:5-11; 6:14-7:1; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 5:11-13; I Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:6-15; Titus 3:9-11; II John 7-11).

Each local church is independent or autonomous in status although there may be occasions of interdependence among local assemblies of the same mindset and loyalty to the Lord and His Word (e.g. Acts 15:19-31; Romans 15:26-27).

### LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

We believe and teach that the study of eschatology is to have primarily an ethical effect on the people of God (e.g. I John 2:28-3:3; II Peter 3:10-14).

Individual eschatology involves Biblical considerations of death, the intermediate state, resurrection, judgment, and the final state. Personal conscious being is not interrupted by physical death (e.g. Luke 16:19-31). For the believer, his soul/spirit is ushered immediately into the presence of Christ at physical death (e.g. II Corinthians 5:1-8) until the time of the Rapture when he along with those disciples physically alive at the first phase of our Lord's return (e.g. I Thessalonians 4:13-17) will receive bodies suited for a new, ultimately eternal order (e.g. I Corinthians 15:12-58; Philippians 3:20-21). These redeemed ones all are part of the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6). The souls/spirits of the unregenerate at physical death also continue, but in conscious torment until the final (i.e. "second") resurrection which will be followed by the final judgment (e.g. Revelation 20: 13-15).

Although it is difficult to organize and interrelate the two kinds of resurrection and Biblical references to the various judgments, the overarching facts are transparently clear. All men will experience a bodily resurrection: the saved to eternal life and overwhelming joy; the unsaved to eternal separation and everlasting punishment (e.g. Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:19-29; II Thessalonians 1:6-11).

Cosmic eschatology comprehensively takes in both the consummation of history and the completion of God's eternal plan. The universal kingdom or reign of God (e.g. Psalm 145:13) will be completely and finally established to remain unchallenged (e.g. I Corinthians 15:24-28).

According to that dimension of His sovereign plan mediated through time, space, and history, the final stage of His Kingdom over the present cosmos draws nearer in an accelerating manner. His covenant and kingdom promises are being fulfilled in successive order. Although significant spiritual dimensions of the kingdom

began in conjunction with the first coming of Christ, the King will return again to fulfill God's many promises regarding the nation of Israel (e.g. Ezekiel 37; Romans 10-11). As it was prior to His first coming, in that it was not easy to discern a two-staged coming of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures, so it will be prior to His second coming. The two phases of His final coming, normally designated as Rapture and Revelation, are most often mentioned side-by-side without clear distinctions in the New Testament contexts (e.g. I Thessalonians 2:19; II Thessalonians 2:1; 2:8; II Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13). What is crystal clear, however, is the fact of both the Rapture (e.g. John 14:1-3; I Corinthians 15:51-53; I Thessalonians 4:17) and the Revelation which will launch and establish His Millennial Kingdom on earth (e.g. II Samuel 7:1-17; Psalm 89:4, 29, 34; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 19:1-20:4).

His two-phased coming is presented in the New Testament as being near or imminent, although its timing is unknown to men (e.g. Mark 13:33-37; I Thessalonians 5:1-11). Furthermore, as clear as the fact of the Rapture is, its timing in relationship to Daniel's Seventieth Week or the Tribulation remains open to at least four theological interpretations (i.e. pre-, mid-, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation), each exhibiting some strengths and some weaknesses. Once again, the primary responsibility of the true disciple is to wait expectantly and serve faithfully until He comes.

After Christ's 1000-year reign on the throne of David, Satan will be loosed briefly after his millennial confinement for one more insurrection (Revelation 20:7-9). Then, he will be defeated and eternally confined to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). After that the final judgment of all the unrighteous will take place (Revelation 20:11-15), and the new heaven and the new earth will be established launching eternity (Revelation 21-22).