

Doctrinal Statement
Brian L. Olson

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

REVELATION -

Revelation is the act of God making himself, truths and information otherwise unavailable known. God's very nature can not be contained and, as a result of his desire for a relationship with human kind, it must be made known. (John 3:16, II Peter 1:4) This revelation can be subdivided into two categories.

General Revelation -

The first category is General (or Natural) revelation. General revelation is the act of God revealing himself by means of His creation. He can be seen both in nature itself (Psalm 19:1-6, Romans 1:19-23) and in people's own consciousness (Romans 2:14-15).

Special Revelation -

The second category is Special revelation. Special revelation is the act of God revealing himself through means that are not "natural" or are "special." Special revelation is a divine action in history. Special revelation includes, but is not limited to, Miracles (Exodus 4:3-5, I Kings 18:30-39), Spoken Word (I Samuel 3, Acts 9:4), Visions (Isaiah 6), Angelic Visits (Luke 1:11-20), Dreams (Matthew 1:20), Incarnation of Christ (John 1:1, 14, 18) and Scripture (II Timothy 3:16).

Holy Scriptures -

All scripture is the inspired word of God. Inspired, literally meaning God-breathed (II Timothy 3:16), refers to the way in which God has communicated his message through those who wrote the scriptures. Inspiration is not dictation, meaning God did not say the words and the authors wrote it down word for word. At the same time God did not simply give the authors a nebulous concept and say "Explain it." Rather, God spoke the very words (Galatians 3:16) through the writers in their unique personalities and styles of writing (II Peter 1:21). This means the scriptures are the very words of God, and at the same time they are the very words of the authors. As a result, scripture may be understood through study and the illuminating guidance of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 2:12 - 13).

The scriptures are inerrant (John 10:34-35) in their original writings. The very fact that they were inspired

by God makes it impossible for them to contain errors. Having said this, it must be understood that this claim can only be made of the original writings as penned by the authors, that is to say the very words put on paper by the authors' hand. The scriptures are the proven authority for life (Isaiah 55:11). This is testified to by the scriptures themselves and by Christ. (II Samuel 22:31, John 17:7-8)

GOD -

How does one describe God? Infinite, yet personal. Powerful, yet gentle. God is God. He summed it up best Himself when he stated, "I am that I am." God is eternal, nonmaterial and personal. Having said this, I do acknowledge that the Son does possess a specific physical form but God is nonmaterial. The question then is, "What does nonmaterial mean?" The term nonmaterial does not mean that God is without substance. Rather, it points to the fact that God is Spirit (John 4:24). He is nonmaterial in the sense that we understand physicality. But God is more than this, he is also personal. To say that God is personal is to say that God possesses two basic characteristics. He possesses consciousness and distinctiveness. He is aware of himself and his relationship with his creation. Further, he has specific characteristics that no one else shares making him distinctive. I refer to God as a being. He is a being in that he has consciousness and a unique identity, but God is more than "a" being. God is the essence of being. He is the source of all life (Acts 17:25, Colossians 1:16).

God possesses many attributes, many of which are unique to Him alone while others He chooses to share with his creation. There are three basic attributes of God, which are unique to him. These attributes are:

1) Immutability - God in His essence and nature is never changing (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17). This is not to say that God is static, for He is capable of change and does so in His relationships (Genesis 6:6, Exodus 32:10, 14), but His very nature is unchanging.

2) Infinity - God is limitless in His existence. He is beyond measure and therefore not capable of being confined. Included in his infinity are unconfined (I Kings 8:27, Acts 17:24), all-powerful (Job 42:2), always present (Psalms 139:7-12, Jeremiah 23:24), and all-knowing (Psalms 147:4-5).

3) Eternity - God is not confined to the essence of time. He is beyond time. His existence is outside time and is therefore in existence before, during, and after time. He has no beginning or end (Genesis 21:33,

Psalm 90:2, I Timothy 1:17).

God also possesses certain qualities that are shared with his creation on a limited basis. These qualities include: Knowledge (John 2:25), Power (Genesis 1:3, Matthew 19:26, Revelation 19:6), Goodness (Mark 10:18), Justice (Micah 6:8) and love (I John 4:7-10) to name but a few.

God himself exists eternally as a tri-une being, most commonly referred to as the Trinity. There is one God (Ephesians 4:6) who exist eternally in three persons (John 10:30, 14:15-26, Acts 1:3-5): God the Father (John 6:40, Ephesians 4:6), God the Son (John 1:1, 6:40), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). Each equal ontologically [fully God] (John 10:30, Romans 8:9-14) yet subordinate economically, the Son prays to the Father, the Father sends the spirit (John 14:16).

God created the heavens and the earth from nothing. (Romans 4:17, Genesis 1:1) In the beginning there was only God. (John 1:1) God created all things from nothing and brought life to it all. God is the origin (Colossians 1:16) and sustainer (Hebrews 1:3, Nehemiah 9:6) of all things. All things were created for his glory (Isaiah 43:6-7).

CHRIST -

Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He is the eternal God, Yahweh [I am](Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:2), who existed from the very beginning in co-existence with God [the Father] (John 1:1, 17:5). Simultaneously He is fully man (Luke 19:10, Galatians 4:4). It was necessary for Him to be fully man to be an adequate sacrifice. He was the true God who took on the form of a man and faced all temptations that men face, to an infinite degree (Hebrews 4:15, Philippians 2:6-8).

Jesus Christ, in human form, was conceived of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came upon the virgin Mary and brought forth a son, the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 1:35, Matthew 1:18-25).

Though Jesus Christ was fully God, He willingly emptied himself. When he came to earth, He voluntarily surrendered the rights that came with His being God. He did not give up His being God, but willingly set aside His position as God to take the form of a man and face all temptations that man faced. He was willing to lower Himself to the point of being not only a man, but serving man and dying in his place. (Philippians 2:5-11).

Jesus Christ suffered and died a true physical death on the cross (Matthew 27:45-54, Mark 15:33-41, Luke 23:44-49, John 19:28-30). His death was a sacrifice which paid the penalty for the sins of man (Matthew 20:28, I Timothy 2:6). The sins of Man needed a perfect offering to satisfy a just God. Jesus, being a perfect man, was the only adequate sacrifice to pay the price. His death on the cross fulfilled the prophecies of the messiah to come. His death on the cross was a complete physical death. His death was a sufficient sacrifice for the entire world, but it was only efficient for those who would believe.

After his death on the cross, Jesus was laid in a grave for three days and on the third day He rose from the dead. On the third day the Father raised Him from the dead in the perfection of the resurrected body (John 20:11-17, 26-29, I Corinthians 15:3-8). He was the first to be resurrected and through his resurrection, the door was opened to eternal life for those who believe.

Jesus now sits at the "right hand" of the Father, where He sits in authority over the church (Colossians 1:18) and serves as an advocate for believers (Hebrews 4:14-16). He will sit in the judgment seat at the end as all humanity stands before Him and He will separate those who have received the atoning blood of Christ from those who are the unregenerate of the world (Matthew 25:31-46).

HOLY SPIRIT -

The Holy Spirit is the third and final (and often over looked) part of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is fully God and at work in the life of the church today. The Holy Spirit is the helper that Christ said was to come (John 14:15-26). The work of the Holy Spirit is to develop God's church and His people on earth. The Holy Spirit is at work in the development of Christian lives (John 14:26). He guides us day by day in our lives (Acts 8:29, Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit intercedes for us in our prayers to the Father and communicates what we are unable to communicate (Romans 8:26). The Holy Spirit convicts the believers of sin in their lives. The Holy Spirit draws unbelievers to God and regenerates the heart of those who believe and call upon the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness.

The Holy Spirit is sent of God to fill His people (Titus 3:5). When a person comes to accept the Lord as his personal Savior, he is baptized with the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13), washing away all his sins. Now, the sin

having been washed away, the new believer in Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19). The Spirit then works to guide this new child of God (Romans 8:14) helping them to grow and develop in their relationship with Christ.

While God may still use any of the gifts of the Spirit in the church today, they are not always active. Most gifts of the Spirit are still manifested in the church today. I do, however, believe that the miraculous gifts were for a special situation, such as the founding of the church, and therefore not normative for today. This is not to say they do not exist but that the miraculous gifts, when expressed, must be in a context consistent with the Bible. They must be edifying and non-disruptive to the body (I Corinthians 12:12-31, 14:26-40, Ephesians 4:11-12). The miraculous gifts include tongues, prophecy and healing. The "charismatic" [or spirit] movement has brought this debate to the forefront. When speaking of the most noted of the miraculous gifts, speaking in tongues, Paul declares it is the least of the gifts. He states that not all believers possess the gift of tongues (I Corinthians 14:5). It therefore cannot be used as a litmus test in the life of a believer as some are prone to do. I believe that the gifts of prophecy and healing should be classified with the gift of tongues as not being normative in the church today. However, while they may not be normative in the church today, they should not automatically be dismissed, but should be examined on a case by case basis as to their legitimacy.

To further build up the body, the Holy Spirit bestows (I Corinthians 12:11) His gifts upon the people of God for the working of the church (Ephesians 2:22, 4:11-12, Hebrews 2:3-4).

Setting aside the discussion of the "miraculous" gifts, we know that many gifts are given by the Spirit that are important to the working of the church. Each has their own special gifts that complement each other (I Peter 4:10). One gift is not greater than another, rather they all work together to build up the body of Christ. Through all, however, we must always make the word of God paramount in the application of the gifts.

MAN -

Man (I use this term in reference to all human kind, male and female) is a special and unique creation of God. God formed man from the dust of the land with his very "hands." He then breathed the breath of life, His very power of being, into His creation and bestowed on him a life and existence beyond that of the rest of creation

(Genesis 1:26-30, 2:4-25).

Man was created in the image of God. This does not mean that man looks like God, for as I have said, God does not have a physical form. "In the image of God" refers to those qualities that God bestowed on man that He did not bestow on the rest of creation. Man was created in three parts sharing in many of the qualities of God. Man has 1) Mind (intelligent, knowledgeable and creative) 2) Body (authority, strength and passion) and 3) Soul (immortality, eternal understanding and a need for fellowship) (I Corinthians 11:7, Ecclesiastes 3:11, Deuteronomy 6:5).

Man was created perfect in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-31) and then placed in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8) where God allowed him free moral choice. When tempted by the Devil, Adam and Eve willfully chose to go on their own, in opposition to God's will and instruction (Genesis 3:1-6). At this point man's soul became damaged and "died" (was separated from fellowship with his creator) and a division was created between himself and God which he was incapable of traversing. This is referred to as the fall (Genesis 3:7-24).

Due to the sin of Adam and Eve, who were the prototypes for humankind, the entire human race was separated from fellowship with God. Mankind is incapable of reaching God on its own. This sin of rebellion is passed on from generation to generation. This is referred to as original sin. All are guilty for this reason and all are lost (Genesis 3, Romans 5:12).

While man was created to have fellowship with God, as a result of the fall the very nature of man is fallen (Genesis 3). He is, therefore, sinful by nature from the very beginning and unable to attain to the glorious standard demanded by God's holy nature. For this reason, each person is judged not only for original sin, but also for his own actions (Revelation 20:11-13). Sin is more than just doing the wrong thing, it consists of those things in act, attitude or thought that are contrary to the very will of God (Romans 3:23, I John 5:17).

SALVATION -

Salvation is the process of reconciliation between man and God. God being eternal chose those whom he would call to himself before the very foundation of the world. (Ephesians 1:4). This was solely determined by God's supreme purpose (Ephesians 1:5, 11) and loving intent (Acts 2:23, Romans 8:28-30). This was not because of

anything man would do (Acts 13:48, Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 3:27-28), yet man remains responsible to respond to the calling of the Holy Spirit. God's choice and man's response are not in contradiction, rather they are the result of two different perspectives of the same thing, that of God's and man's.

God has ordained that the result of sin must be death [separation from God] (Romans 1:18, 6:23) and that only a perfect sacrifice could be an atonement for sin. Christ was the only perfect sacrifice. By dying on the cross He paid the price that man could not (Matthew 20:28). He took upon himself the sins of humanity and took them to the grave where he left them. He served as a vicarious substitution (Hebrews 9:14-15, Romans 3:25). Though Christ's death on the cross, which is shared through the agency of man (Romans 10:13-18), was a sufficient atonement for the sins of the whole world, it was efficient only for those who would believe. (Romans 8:30, Acts 13:48).

When man willfully decides to turn away from sin and to turn to God in repentance and faith (John 1:12, 3:5-18, Romans 3:21-22), which though it involves the will of man (John 3:16), remains fully the gift of God (Acts 11:18, Ephesians 2:8, Philippians 1:29, II Timothy 2:25), man is reconciled to a relationship with Christ. Man then supernaturally, instantaneously and unconsciously changes from a state of spiritual death (Ephesians 2:1, 5) to one of spiritual life (Ephesians 2:4-6), and is made a new creature (II Corinthians 5:17, Titus 3:5) by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit (John 1:12-13). The converted and regenerated sinner has become a saint [one set apart] by being declared righteous and is adopted into God's family (Romans 3:24-26, Galatians 3:26, 4:5, Ephesians 1:4-5).

Conversion is itself the very point of salvation. It is the act of accepting the free gift of salvation that God has offered to man (Acts 13:39, 48). It is the point when a person decides to accept the message of the gospel and turn his life over to Christ.

Grace is a free gift which God extends to man (Romans 1:5, James 4:6). It is God giving to a person that which he does not deserve and has done nothing to earn.

Faith is the gift of God that allows us to believe in the things that we cannot see or understand (Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:1). It is what allows us to trust in the power of God which we could not know apart from Him (Romans 5:1-2).

Though salvation comes when the sinner chooses to follow Christ, he is justified by faith alone and not by any actions he does (Romans 5:1-2, Ephesians 2:8). Faith that Christ is God and an acceptance of the fact that He died for us is the only means to salvation.

Sanctification is the process of man becoming more Christ-like in his walk. It is a process that takes place over the life of the believer. The first thing that occurs is that God sets the believer apart from the world (I Corinthians 6:11, Hebrews 10:10). This is followed by the process of developing and growing in relationship with Christ (I Peter 1:14-16). A Christian is to grow in Christ-likeness (Romans 8:29, Romans 12:1-2, Philippians 3:10) by pursuing righteousness through prayer, application of the Word, and the fellowship of believers. The end goal is perfection in Christ (Philippians 3:12). Though man works towards this his whole Christian life, it is a process that will not be completed until the day the believer sees the Lord face to face (Romans 7:13-24, I John 3:1-3).

Though man may seek many routes, Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation (John 11:25, 14:6). He, being God incarnate, is the only access to God for man. Other religions may claim that they have the way, or more accurately a way, but they each are paths that lead to destruction. The result of following these paths is eternal death. Jesus Christ is the only way to God.

Believers have a security of salvation onto which they can hold (John 10:28-30, Hebrews 7:25, I John 2:1, Ephesians 4:30, Romans 8:28-39). Christ's death saves the believer from the punishment of Hell and eternity in the Lake of Fire. Once a believer's name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life it is there for all eternity. This is not to say that the believer can then rest on his laurels but it is a re-affirmation that justification is by faith alone and not the works of man.

The question arises of what happens to the infant who dies. Though scripture does not specifically address this issue, it does give direction in understanding that an infant who dies will go to heaven (II Samuel 12:18-23). Seminally all have sinned in Adam, are guilty and justly deserve God's condemnation, but God by His great love elected some to salvation. This includes those who die before the age of accountability (I Peter 1:1-2, Acts 13:48). Having said this, scripture is not clear on an "age" of accountability and the believer can not leave all dependence for children on this. Rather, the believers are responsible to educate their children on the message of the gospel

from birth, so that when they are past this "age" and held accountable for what they are capable of understanding, they will be prepared to give an account for what they believe. The actual "age" of accountability is in the hands of God and different for each person.

THE CHURCH -

The church is the body of believers (Colossians 1:18, I Corinthians 12:13). It serves for fellowship, edification of believers and preparation of believers to reach out into the world. Jesus Christ now sits as the head of the church (Matthew 16:13-20, Ephesians 5:23). The church was founded at Pentecost (Acts 2). The church did not replace Israel as God's chosen people, but serves as an expansion of God's chosen people.

The church regularly observes two ordinances prescribed in scripture. The first of these ordinances is that of the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper is done as a symbolic remembrance of the last supper [Passover meal] that Christ shared with his disciples. It commemorates the debt that Christ paid through his death and the new life He has given through his resurrection (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:15-20). The nature of this command is that only believers who truly understand the meaning and have properly prepared themselves may be allowed to partake of it (I Corinthians 11:23-34). It is a time of self-examination and confession (I Corinthians 11:27-28) looking back at the sacrifice Christ made and looking forward to the Lord's return (I Corinthians 11:26).

The other ordinance practiced by the church is that of baptism (Acts 2:37-41). Water baptism is an outward symbol of the washing away of the believers' sins through the spiritual baptism that Christ accomplished with the shedding of His blood on the cross (Acts 2:41, 8:37-39). Baptism was a common symbol in inter-testamental and New Testament times to symbolize identity with a particular Rabbi. John, as well as others, used it as a sign of repentance or change from the old. So it is for the church, where it is an opportunity for a believer to be identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6:1-4) leaving behind the old man and becoming a new creature. I believe that the best method for symbolizing this act is immersion, however, it is not necessary that it be performed in this method. A person should only undertake baptism after having accepted the Lord as personal savior and coming to understand the symbolic meaning of the action. At this point the person can share a personal testimony and be baptized before others as a witness of the work Christ has accomplished.

The mission of the church is three-fold. First, it is to build up the body (Ephesians 4:11 - 12), second, to engage the culture as a beacon of light to the people in the surrounding world (Philippians 2:15, Matthew 5:14-16) and finally, to reach the lost (Matthew 28:19 - 20). The church, as a whole, is to give support to the individual members (I Timothy 5:8) and prepare them to reach out first to their community then to the entire world (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20).

Local Church

The local Church is an organized group of proclaiming believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who gather on a regular basis to worship the Lord (Acts 2:46-47) and to employ their spiritual gifts through the power of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12) edifying the Body (Ephesians 4:15-16) in accordance with Scripture, for the purpose of strengthening the Body to reach the world (Matthew 28:19-20). Each local body is characterized by unity and diversity (Romans 12:4-8, I Corinthians 12:12-31).

The local church was given two offices: Overseers [or Pastors-Elders-Bishops] (Ephesians 4:11, Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:1-7) and Deacons (Acts 6:1-7, Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:8-13). They are to be called out of the Body according to their spiritual qualifications (Titus 1:5-9, I Timothy 3:1-13). The primary responsibility of an Overseer is to care for the spiritual concerns of the Body by teaching (I Timothy 3:2), shepherding (I Peter 5:2) and equipping (Ephesians 4:11-12). The primary responsibility of a Deacon is to assist the Overseers with the physical needs of the Body (Acts 6:1-7). All believers are to use their spiritual gifts for the growth of the Body (Ephesians 4:13-16, I Corinthians 12).

The local church and its members are to be separate from worldliness within (I Corinthians 5:9-11, I John 3:1-10), disciplining its own members to maintain purity (Matthew 18:15-17, I Corinthians 5:2-5, 12-13) and reaching out to the needs of a hurting world. While the local church is most equipped to know and meet the needs of its own community, it should also associate with other like-minded churches in mission projects, care for the poor and in any other way which serves to further the kingdom of God (II Corinthians 9:1-15, Philippians 4:10-20) on the larger scale than the single local church can accomplish.

Regarding church discipline, the procedure outlined in Matthew 18:15-20, as well as in I Corinthians 5, is

the correct model of rebuke and restoration. In a spirit of love and humility, accompanied by prayer, the sinning person is to be confronted with the sin. If, after repeated tries, they still remain unrepentant, they should be publicly separated from the body for the good of the individual as well as the church (I Corinthians 5:11-13). What does this look like in a real application? The individual is removed from the organized activities of the local church [Sunday services, Potlucks, etc.] but on an individual level the members of the body should reach relationally to the individual to let them know that they are still loved and to attempt to restore them to fellowship.

The local church has the right to govern itself in the area of politics. I believe that it is inappropriate for a denomination to impose its own governance rules and decrees upon the local church as it is the local church who knows its specific needs and strengths. God has given each person different gifts to add to the building and working of the church. The gifts that are manifest in the local church should aid it in making decisions for an area they know personally (Romans 12:3-8).

Israel is God's once and future chosen people (Exodus 6:7). This is not to say that all Israelites were saved by virtue of the fact that they were Israelites or that Israel of today is the chosen people of God. Rather, in the Old Testament, salvation for individual members of Israel came through faith that God would send His Messiah and through the work He would do. All that they had, pointed to Christ and their faith was evident in their devotion to God. The nation of Israel was to stand as a beacon of light to the entire world to show that God was behind everything. I also believe that after Christ's death on the cross the spiritual role of Israel was expanded to include the Church (Romans 11:11-36). These chosen people of God would now stand as witnesses of Christ in the world (Matthew 5:14-16, Philippians 2:14-15).

The Israel we know today is much more a secular nation rather than a nation devoted to God. The question the believer must ask is if the promises made to Israel apply to a secular nation or to a nation devoted to God.

ESCHATOLOGY -

Scripture teaches us that Christ's return to the earth is imminent (Matthew 16:27), meaning it will be at a point in time which we will not know (Matthew 24:27,36). I believe that the return will take place before the Millennial Kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom is a 1,000 year period (Revelation 20:4) during which Christ will physically reign upon the earth (Revelation 11:15, 19:16). During this time Satan will be bound (Revelation 20:1-3). It will be a time of Paradise on earth.

That which Christians refer to as the rapture is when Christ shall call his people to him in the end times. I believe that this will occur at the time of Christ's return at the end of the tribulation and will serve to inaugurate the millennial kingdom (Matthew 24:10 -31, Revelations 16:11-16, I Thessalonians 4:15-17). Though scripture states that God has not destined believers to wrath (I Thessalonians 5:9) it is clear that it is referring to God's wrath for non-believers (Revelation 14:10). On the contrary, scripture clearly states, when speaking of the Tribulation, that the Beast will make war with the saints and will overcome them (Revelation 13:7). In fact, it further specifies that there are those who are destined to be made captive or to die (Revelation 13:10). Scripture clearly indicates that there will be believers present during the Tribulation (Matthew 24:22, Revelation 6:9). While some may argue that in order for Christ's return to be imminent, it must happen before the Tribulation, (for if it happens at the end we will be ready) this presupposes recognizing the signs and the start of the Tribulation. Scripture says that we do not know the time of Christ's return. (Matthew 24:36) Yet Christ did give the signs to look for (Matthew 24:3-39). Further, Paul reminds us that while the unbeliever will be taken by surprise (I Thessalonians 5:2-3) believers should be on the alert for these signs and not be overtaken by them (I Thessalonians 5:4-6). While believers will not know exactly when Christ will return, the signs should put them on the ready. These signs clearly indicate the beginning of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:4-8).

God has promised not to abandon His people Israel. In the end God will bring a majority of the people of Israel to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, re-establishing the nation of Israel as His chosen people. These people will come to realize that Jesus of Nazareth was in fact the promised Messiah of scripture. In this way God will maintain not only his material promises to nationalistic Israel, but also His spiritual promises to remember them (Romans 11:25-32).

INDIVIDUAL ESCHATOLOGY -

I believe in the resurrection of the body. At the time of death the body is separated from the mind and the

soul. The body lies in the grave and the mind and the soul of the righteous is taken to heaven into the presence of the Lord (Luke 23:43) while the mind and the soul of the unrighteous is sent to Hell. At the time of the rapture when the Lord returns to call His church to Him the first to rise will be the righteous who have died (I Thessalonians 4:16). At this time the body will be transformed into a glorified form and reunited with the mind and the soul (I Corinthians 15:35-50).

I believe that after the Millennial Kingdom will come the time of final judgment. At this time the unrighteous will be resurrected for judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). At this point Christ will separate those who are believers and those who are not. Those who are not will be sent to face eternity in the Lake of Fire. Those who are His followers will be embraced to spend all eternity in the New Heaven and New Earth (Matthew 25:31-46).

I believe that which is called heaven is the abode of God (Isaiah 66:1). It is where God is eternally and fully present (Mark 16:19). That which most people think of as Heaven, the place where Christians will spend eternity, is in reality the New Heaven and New Earth. The heavenly city referred to and described in the book of Revelation is merely one place in the New Heaven and New Earth (John 14:2, II Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1-22). This will be a world where God's presence and holiness shines forth always (Revelation 21:22-27).

I believe that Hell is a temporary residence for the unrighteous dead. It is the Lake of Fire where the unrighteous will spend eternity. The Lake of Fire is a place prepared as punishment for the Devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41). I believe Hell and eventually the Lake of Fire to be totally and eternally separated from God. Once someone is there, no hope remains to be reconciled with God (Revelation 20:11-15).

ANGEOLGY -

I believe that angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14) created by God (Nehemiah 9:6, Colossians 1:16) before the creation of the world (Job 38:4-7). Though they are spirit beings they are capable of taking physical form for specific reasons (Hebrews 13:2, Genesis 19:1). Scripture presents us with information regarding specific purposes they serve, including protection of God's people (Psalm 34:7, 91:11, Hebrews 1:14), guardians (Genesis 3:24, Exodus 25:22), worshipping God (Isaiah 6:3), battling the forces of Satan (Daniel 10:13, Revelation 12:7) and delivering messages from God (Luke 1:13, 1:26, 2:9). As created beings angels are not to be worshipped

(Colossians 2:18). There also appear to be different orders of angels/heavenly beings, including Archangels (Jude 9), Cherubim (Exodus 25:22), Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2) and “living beings” (Ezekiel 1:5-14, Revelation 4:6-8).

I believe demons were angels who rebelled against God thereby sinning and abandoning their rightful position (2 Peter 2:4, Jude 6). They are fully aware of God and the truth of the Gospel (James 2:19). Demons use lies and deception (Revelation 12:9) to blind people to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4, Galatians 4:8). Demons, like angels, appear to have some sort of hierarchy (Daniel 10:13). Demons cannot act on people, however, without permission from God (Job 1:12, 2:6). It is possible for non-believers to be controlled by the will of demons (Acts 16:16-18). While believers can not be possessed by a demon, as the Holy Spirit lives within the believers, they can be oppressed through the activity of demons, but this can be resisted through the power of Christ (James 4:7, Mark 9:29).

I believe Satan to be a distinct living and active being in the world today. He is the leader of the demons and therefore a fallen angel (Zechariah 3:1, Job 1:6). While he was the greatest of the angels, at one point he became prideful and felt that he could be like God (Luke 10:18, Isaiah 14:12-15). One-third of the angels chose to follow him (Revelation 12:1-10). When they moved against God, He promptly threw them out of Heaven (Luke 10:18) to reside separated from Him. He was the first to ever sin (John 8:44, I John 3:8). Though fallen, Satan still disguises himself as an angel of light (II Corinthians 11:14). Satan currently stands as the accuser of the saints before God. (Job 1:6-11, Zechariah 3:1) Satan is a being who possesses intellect (II Corinthians 11:3, Job 1:6), emotion (Revelation 12:17) and a will (II Timothy 2:26).