

# Basic Doctrinal Studies

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## Introduction

This Basics series will encompass 10 primary and foundational areas of Bible study. Every believer needs to learn these areas of Doctrine.

- Babies in Christ need to be grounded in them as soon as possible following salvation.
- Adolescent believers need to review these categories and maintain humility in their growth.
- Mature believers need to review these categories and be prepared to teach them to others.

### *Areas of Study*

Bibliology:	The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.
Theology:	The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.
Anthropology:	The Doctrine of Man. A study of his essence, lost estate, and eternal purpose.
Soteriology:	The Doctrine of Salvation. A study of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man, and the work of God to remove that barrier. Includes Evangelism and Ambassadorship.
Peripatology:	The Doctrine of the Christian Walk. A study of the cross and three circles for the believer's daily life. Includes Positional Truth, Filling of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood function of Prayer.
Thelematology:	The Doctrine of the Will of God. A study on how believers may know and obey the will of God for their life.
Agonology:	The Doctrine of Struggle. A study of the believer's daily struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.
Boulology:	The Doctrine of the Plan of God. A study on God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. Includes the nature and description of Dispensations.
Ecclesiology:	The Doctrine of the Church. A study on the Universal Church and the purpose and function for the local church.
Charismatology:	The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts. A study on the grace provision for the spiritual gifts of believers in the Dispensation of the Church.

## *Bibliology*

The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.

Prior to salvation, the unbeliever had any number of influences molding and fashioning them to the image of the world (Eph. 2:1-3). After salvation, though, the new believer is in need of being grounded in the Word of God, beginning the edification process of being transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom. 12:2). The newborn babe must take in the pure milk of the Word (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:2).

The believer is a new creation, “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2:10). That believer now needs to be equipped for these works. That equipping comes through the Scriptures (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16-17), as they are communicated in a local church (Eph. 4:11-13).

The new believer must come to understand that God’s Word is 100% trustworthy and accurate (Ps. 12:6; Prov. 30:5). It is His Word, not the works of men (Lk. 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18,21; 4:25; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21 cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16). God Himself has magnified it according to His own name (Ps. 138:2). It is therefore worthy of our devotion, and the means by which we can worship Him. Believers should strive to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15), embracing the Whole Purpose of God (Acts 20:27), and build their understanding of Him order on order, line on line, a little here and a little there (Isa. 28:13).

## *Theology*

The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.

If God had wanted to remain unknown, then mankind would certainly never have come to know Him. He easily could have included Himself among the things which “eye has not seen and hear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9). However, God is both nearby and knowable (Acts 17:23,27). God has provided an undeniable witness to Himself in natural revelation (Rom. 1:18-20). Creation testifies to His glory (Ps. 19:1-6), and the element of creation made in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26,27) is left without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

The new believer already knows that there is a God, and that His Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for his salvation. What the new believer does not know is how much more about God there is to know. God wants us to grow into adult sons and daughters with capacity for mature fellowship (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3). Beyond the witness of natural revelation comes the particular testimony of special revelation. In God’s Word we are provided with the depths of God Himself (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9-16).

It is through Biblical revelation that we can come to find out the glories of God’s Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Veracity. It is through His revelation of Himself that we come to know Him, and yet we realize that our finite beings will always struggle to comprehend the infinite (Job 11:7; Rom. 11:33).

***Anthropology***

The Doctrine of Man. A study of his essence, lost estate, and eternal purpose.

Has there ever been a more misunderstood creature? False religions promote false gods to be sure, but they also promote a false view of man. It is this aspect of their lies that can be just as deceptive and evil. The Word of God portrays an accurate view of mankind that must be understood by the new believer.

The new believer has a frame of reference to understand that he once was lost, but is found, twas blind, but now he sees. He does not totally understand how lost he truly was or how blind. A Biblical study on anthropology will help him to understand his body, soul, and spirit.

Basic Doctrinal Studies will outline the tripart nature of redeemed man, as body, soul, and (human) spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:23). Basics will also teach the bipart nature of undredeemed man, being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5). Basics will also cover the current condition of our mortal bodies as dead and dying, even while the human spirit has been made alive (Rom. 8:10-11).

***Soteriology***

The Doctrine of Salvation. A study of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man, and the work of God to remove that barrier. Includes Evangelism and Ambassadorship.

The Barrier Removed		
The Problem	The Solution	Comments
The Penalty of Sin	Expiation (Col. 2:14)	Reconciliation (Will of God plus Act of God-Man)
Sin	Redemption (1 Cor. 1:29,30) Unlimited Atonement (1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:1)	
The Character of God	Propitiation (1 Jn. 2:2; Rom. 3:25)	
The Character of Man	Justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:1) Imputation (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:2)	Salvation (Act of God plus Will of Man)
Spiritual Death	Regeneration (Jn. 1:11,12; 3:3; Gal. 3:26)	
Physical Death	Positional Truth (1 Jn. 5:11,12) Eternal Life (Jn. 3:15)	

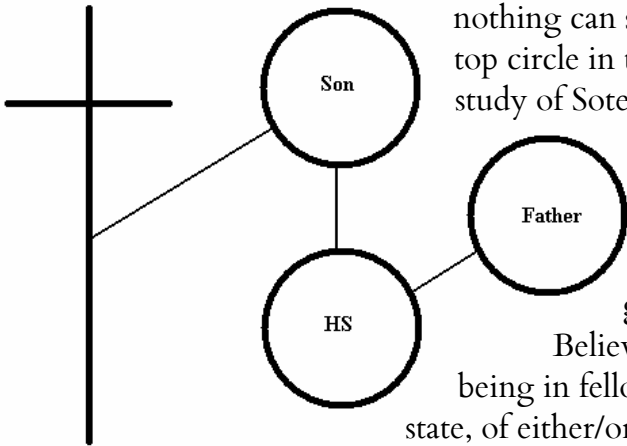
The brand new believer knows that he is saved, but does not have any doctrinal framework to understand all that God did on his behalf in order to save him. He has an experience of salvation, which was easy enough for him to receive, but he now needs doctrinal information to understand the glories of what he has experienced.

The new believer needs to know fully what is meant by “it is finished.” The new believer needs to know fully the duration of eternal life. The new believer needs to know fully the security of his salvation, and that there is nothing he can do, or indeed even that God could do to reverse the Justification he has been given.

***Peripatology***

The Doctrine of the Christian Walk. A study of the cross and three circles for the believer’s daily life. Includes Positional Truth, Filling of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood function of Prayer.

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The born-again believer is placed “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3), and nothing can separate him from this (Rom. 8:38,39). This is the top circle in the cross and three circles diagram. In the Basic study of Soteriology this has been made clear, but now the

believer needs to be grounded in the principles of the Christian Walk. Salvation is not the end of God’s plan for us, but rather the beginning of our walk for His good pleasure and the eternal glory of Jesus Christ.

Believers have the operational volitional choice of being in fellowship or out of fellowship. This is an absolute state, of either/or and not both. The Apostle Paul referred to this

as the operational volitional choice of walking by and being led by the Holy Spirit or carrying out the desire of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The Apostle John referred to this as the operational volitional choice of walking in the light versus walking in darkness (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:6,7). This is the bottom circle in the cross and three circles diagram.

A believer in Christ, functioning in the power of the Holy Spirit, can then engage in his Priesthood function before God the Father in the Holy of Holies. This is the third (right) circle in the cross and three circles diagram. When a Church Age Believer steps into his priesthood and actively functions before the Father, the Father’s fulness becomes his own (Jn. 16:23-28; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-25).

### *Thelematology*

The Doctrine of the Will of God. A study on how believers may know and obey the will of God for their life.

Just as God in His Being is nearby and knowable, so too is His will for the believer. The new believer needs to understand the Will of God for his life. Not understanding the will of the Lord is foolish (Eph. 5:17).

The third circle priesthood function of Prayer must be offered according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:14). Our walk of sanctification (bottom circle) must be according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 4:3). Our rejoicing, prayer and thanksgiving (in Christ, top circle) must be according to His will (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:16-18).

### *Agonology*

The Doctrine of Struggle. A study of the believer’s daily struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

Basic Doctrinal Studies must include teaching on spiritual conflict. The very sound of ἀγωνίζομαι agonizomai <sup>Strong’s #75</sup> says “agonize, oh my!” Believers in Christ will encounter tribulation, and various multiplied trials, but ours is a struggle with a guaranteed victory (Jn. 16:33).

It is a good fight that we must fight (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:7). This is the race (ἀγών <sup>Strong’s #73</sup>) set before us at the moment of our salvation (Heb. 12:1).

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The struggle will be manifest on three simultaneous fronts: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are in the world, but no longer of the world (Jn. 17:6,11,14,16). We are not to submit to the flesh (Rom. 6:19). We must resist the devil (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:9), put on our armor and stand firm (Eph. 6:12-17).

### ***Boulology***

The Doctrine of the Plan of God. A study on God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. Includes the nature and description of Dispensations.

God the Father is the author of the Plan. God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). Everything He has planned, and everything He does is perfect in His eternal wisdom. God's eternal purpose is the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:23; Phil. 2:10,11; Col. 1:18,19).

Pastor Bob's expanded title for the Plan of God: God the Father's grace eternal dispensational plan of the ages for the maximum glorification, pleasure, and blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Plan of God is presently underway and fulfilling the Father's purpose. Believers in the Church are God's fellow workers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9), and must therefore be adjusted to the Father's plan. God's purpose is for all things to work together for Good (Rom. 8:28).

God has unfolded His plan to and through a variety of vested stewards. This progressive unfolding began with the angels, then progressed to the creation of man in Adam, then the race and nation of Israel, and presently the unfolding of the Plan of God is revealed through the Church. Understanding the basic outline of this dispensational progression is an important part of Boulology.

### ***Ecclesiology***

The Doctrine of the Church. A study on the Universal Church and the purpose and function for the local church.

In the study of God's plan, several distinct stewardships were detailed. The present stewardship of the Church needs to be accurately taught in order for believers today to function appropriately. The Basic Doctrinal Study of Ecclesiology teaches the new believer the difference between a local church and The Church. The Church is the Body (Col. 1:18,24; Eph. 1:22-23) and Bride (Jn. 3:29; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8) of Jesus Christ. Every born-again believer from Pentecost to Rapture is a Member of that Body (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30).

A local church is a small portion of The Church. Specifically, a local church is a particular flock entrusted to a gifted shepherd. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, and He oversees the flock of the entire Church, but He has designated and delegated under shepherds (pastors) to shepherd the flock of God "among them" (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:1-4). A local church is a family/body in a given geographical location assembled together for the corporate functions of the body and bride (Rev. 2&3). A local church is not a building, but a living body of believers in Jesus Christ. Any assembly of believers under the shepherding oversight of a Pastor-Teacher is a local church.

A local church may be without a Pastor for brief periods of time, but they cannot stay that way for very long! Sheep without a shepherd become scattered and devoured. A true local

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church must have at least one man with the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher. That one man exercising that one gift cannot fully edify the body of Christ. All believers exercising every gift supplies the maximum edification for each Member and provides the maximum glory for the Head of the Body—Jesus Christ.

### *Charismatology*

The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts. A study on the grace provision for the spiritual gifts of believers in the Dispensation of the Church.

Technically, Charismatology is a subdivision of both Ecclesiology and Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, a primary division of Theology). Spiritual gifts (pneumatika) were given here and there prior to the Dispensation of the Church. Various prophets were gifted and sent to Israel and even an occasional gentile nation. Craftsmen were gifted for the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temple. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be a feature of the coming Millennium, and that coming aspect of pneumatika is rightly considered under Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things). Our present stewardship of the Church features grace/spiritual gifts (χάρισματα *charismata*<sup>Strong's #5486</sup> & πνευματικά *pneumatika*<sup>Strong's #4152</sup>) given on a universal basis. Every believer today has at least one spiritual gift (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

The new believer needs to understand that the impartation of Divine power is not given for the pursuit of miraculous events or the participation in ecstatic experience. Spiritual gifts are provided for grace service to Members of the Body of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

A believer who has grasped these 10 categories of Basics, culminating with teaching on Spiritual Gifts, is equipped to step into active service in and for the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Father's purpose for saving him in the first place (Eph. 2:10).



## Bibliology

The Doctrine of the Bible. A study on inspiration, revelation, inerrancy, canonicity, and basic hermeneutical principles.

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The new believer must come to understand that God’s Word is 100% trustworthy and accurate (Psa. 12:6; Prov. 30:5). It is His Word, not the works of men (Lk. 1:70; Acts 1:16; 3:18,21; 4:25; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 1:20-21 cf. 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16). God Himself has magnified it according to His own name (Ps. 138:2). It is therefore worthy of our devotion, and the means by which we can worship Him. Believers should strive to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15), embracing the Whole Purpose of God (Acts 20:27), and build their understanding of Him order on order, line on line, a little here and a little there (Isa. 28:13).

### *Inspiration and Revelation*

Keep things simple—don’t begin by having a theology book or a denomination tell believers what the Bible is. The Bible tells believers what the Bible is! It is God’s message to man, revealing Himself to mankind in a way that general revelation of creation could never do. A terrific description and definition of “revelation” comes in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:9 (citing Isaiah). “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” The role of the Holy Spirit is to search out all things, even the depths of God, and reveal such things to believers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10-13). God reveals what cannot be learned in any other non-revelatory manner.

The Bible declares itself to be the God-breathed and profitable training manual for all believers (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 3:16-17). Θεόπνευστος <sup>Strong’s #2315</sup> tells us that human instruments were involved in the recording of the written word, but the source of that written record was the very breath (Spirit) of God. 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 1:10-21 corroborates this as do over 3800 Scripture passages declaring “thus says the Lord.” These passages are the simplest way to define “inspiration.” God the Holy Spirit inspired the men He chose to write Scripture.

Strictly speaking, revelation and inspiration no longer occur today. The business of writing Scripture ended in 96AD with the completion of the Book of Revelation by the Apostle John. Believers who study the Bible today will have things from the Scripture revealed to them by the Holy Spirit, but no special revelation will be given beyond what the written Scripture contains.

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The new believer needs to understand that the Bible is the work of God, and not man. Only God Himself can possibly be the Author of the Bible. Given that the 66 Books which comprise the Bible were composed over a span of 1600 years, no single human being could have lived long enough to produce it. Just as certain—no multiple human beings over such time could have coordinated such a singular message woven throughout the entire Bible. In the case of the Bible, over 40 human authors contributed to the Bible in three different languages. These authors in many ways couldn't have been more different. Shepherds, herdsmen, priests, kings, doctors, lawyers, fishermen, soldiers, carpenters, & musicians were among the human authors that God worked through to produce His written testimony.

Only God Himself with Omniscience & Foreknowledge could have written such a prophetic work. At least one-fifth of the Bible was, at the time it was written, an anticipation of the future (prophetic). Believers today may overlook this important matter, because to a 21<sup>st</sup> century believer, much of the prophetic content of the Bible has already been fulfilled. There is still a great deal left unfulfilled (yet future), but the total amount of the Bible that was prophetic when it was given is largely overlooked.

One example here, out of literally thousands, will suffice to illustrate the prophetic nature of the Bible. In 539BC the prophet Daniel delivered a prophecy pertaining to a decree that a coming king would make for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Daniel declared that after the completion of 483 years after that king's decree Messiah the Prince would be cut off and have nothing (Dan. 9:24-27). 95 years later, on March 5, 444BC Nehemiah recorded the Persian King Artaxerxes' decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1-8).

Now, don't get side-tracked by using a 365.24219879 day per year calendar (365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, 45.975 seconds per year). Daniel used a 360 day calendar in his prophecies (Dan. 7:24-25; 12:7), and when correlated with the Apostle John's Book of Revelation (Rev. 11:2,3; 12:6,14; 13:5) the 360 day year is sometimes referred to as a "prophetic year." The 483 prophetic years amount to a little over 476 solar (calendar) years, from 444BC to 33AD.

Now, 69 7-year periods of 360 days equals 173,880 days. Beginning on March 5, 444BC and counting 173,880 days brings us to March 30 (Nisan 10), 33AD. This was the day of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Four days later, on April 3, 33AD (Nisan 14, Passover) Jesus Christ was crucified. Messiah the Prince was indeed "cut off."

This is simply one out of thousands of places where Divine prophecy has been given in Scripture, and recorded by both later Scripture and secular history. Only God could compose such a prophetic work. "I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isa. 46:9-10).

Some have pointed to the Bible for its unique description of humanity. Of all the world's religions, only Christianity as taught in the Bible accurately depicts mankind's lost estate and total need for Divine substitutionary atonement and redemption. Only the Bible communicates a significant meaning of life, or purpose for human existence. Every other present or past religious text in the world has reflected Satanic kosmos wisdom in one way or another. Only the Bible accurately presents Divine viewpoint, even as it exposes Satanic kosmos wisdom for what it is!

Yet another testimony to the unique nature of the Bible is the track record that the Bible has over the millennia to transform the lives of those who study it. This evidence may be anecdotal, but it is so universal as to be undeniable.

### *Canonicity*

The new believer may come under angelic attack and be exposed to other so-called books of the Bible. Maybe they'll get ahold of a Catholic Bible and find some extra books in there. Do Tobit and Judith really belong in between Nehemiah and Esther? What about 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees? Why doesn't the Pastor's Bible have the Book of Wisdom or Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), or Baruch?

A full study on Canonicity, manuscript transmission, and textual criticism is rightly reserved for advanced Bible studies. Pastors, scholars, and other serious students of God's Word will at some point examine the complete spectrum of history, archaeology, and language research. A basic overview, though, is essential for the new believer in order for them to confidently take hold of their modern Bibles as the faithful provision of God's Word.

Canonicity can be examined subjectively and objectively. Subjectively, Canonicity refers to the "rule" or "standard" utilized by man in recognizing God's legitimate Books of the Bible and rejecting illegitimate books claiming to be Scripture. κανών <sup>Strong's #2583</sup>: a means to determine the quality of something; *rule, standard*. (Latin *cānon*). Objectively, a Book's legitimacy is determined by God Himself. If He wrote it, it is God-breathed and therefore Scripture.

"A book is not the Word of God because it is accepted by the people of God. Rather, it was accepted by the people of God because it is the Word of God" (Norman Geisler). Jesus Christ's use of the phrase "It is written" declares the authoritative nature of the Canon of Scripture (Matt. 4:4,7,10). "It is written" denotes Divine Authority as Scripture certainly is.

The human Authors selected to record the God-breathed written Word of God were provided Divine offices and gifts in order to affirm their authenticity. Miracles were evidence of their Divine authority. Old Testament Prophets were held to a perfect 100% standard. One false prophecy marked a false prophet. From Moses to Malachi, the human authorship of Old Testament Books was entrusted to Prophets, or those scribes associated with Prophets in their ministry (Jos. *Contra Apion* 1.8). Inspired writings were considered sacred and kept by the Ark of the Covenant (Deut. 31:24-26), and eventually kept preserved in the Temple (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 22:8).

The Church had no such central "archive" or holy place to keep every Gospel and Epistle. The New Testament Books were written by Apostles, or those scribes associated with Apostles in their ministry (Mark, taught by Peter; Luke, taught by Paul). Like the Old Testament Prophets, the Apostles were granted signs and wonders and miracles to establish their Scripture writing credentials (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:12). Each Book was received by its respective audience, copied and distributed to other local churches, and spread throughout the world in that manner (Col. 4:16).

### *Inerrancy*

Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. Being the work of the perfect God, they are perfect in every way (Matt. 5:48; Jms. 1:17). The original documents penned by the human authors of Scripture are called Autographs. They were perfect in every way from the day in which they were written under Divine Inspiration. Copies of those manuscripts, being the product of human activity are subject to human error. Copies of copies of original manuscripts are vulnerable to repeating previous errors as well as making entirely new errors. Copies of copies of copies . . . well, you get the idea.

The art and science of Textual Criticism is the process by which manuscripts are assembled, collated, and compared. Differences between manuscripts are identified, recorded, analyzed, and classified. These differences are called text variants. Scribal errors crept in through the centuries, and yet the types of errors that were made are most often easy to observe. Haplography, dittography, metathesis, fusion, fission, homophony, & homoeoteleuton are among the classifications of unintentional scribal errors.

One remarkable advantage to having thousands of manuscripts with hundreds of thousands of text variants is that human error can be recognized, identified, and remedied. In other words, all of the variant readings provide all of the evidence necessary to overcome the shortcomings of human error and confidently refer to “the original text” of the Bible. Believers separated from Moses by nearly 3500 years can be assured that their copies of Genesis are accurate copies and translations of the very words that God breathed through His instrument Moses.

### *Hermeneutics*

The study of interpretation is known as Hermeneutics. This term comes from the Greek verb ἐρμηνεύω <sup>Strong's #2059</sup> meaning *to translate, to interpret*. This verb is found in John 1:42; 9:7; and Hebrews 7:2. The nouns ἐρμηνεία <sup>Strong's #2058</sup> *translation, interpretation* and ἐρμηνευτής *interpreter* also appear in the New Testament.

Intermediate and advanced principles of interpretation are properly taught in more intermediate and advanced Bible studies. Nevertheless, as with Canonicity, certain basic principles should be given to the brand new believer. These foundational principles will keep the new believer from making some very serious mistakes as the foundations of their understanding are being established.

The basic principles of interpretation are easy enough to learn, and also simple to observe. When a Pastor or other Bible teacher departs from sound hermeneutics, the student can identify that departure quite easily. Such training and practice will make even the baby believer “noble-minded” and able to search the Scriptures and see if these things are so (Acts 17:11). Examining the Scriptures is the absolute and objective standard for validating a spoken Bible message. There must therefore be an absolute and objective method for interpreting and understanding the written Bible message.

Dr. Clinton Lockhart presented fifteen hermeneutical axioms in his work *Principles of Interpretation*. One such axiom serves to summarize the entire concept of Biblical interpretation. “The true object of interpretation is to apprehend the exact thought of the author.” Simply put,

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any particular passage may potentially be taken any number of different ways, but it was actually given by One specific Author with His precise intent.

Perhaps the easiest way to present Hermeneutics on a basic level is to begin with the obvious. The form of communication determines the means of interpretation. God chose to reveal Himself to human beings in the form of written communication. In this written communication He employed human languages. Appropriate interpretation of God's Word involves linguistic study. Universally recognized laws of language must apply to the Bible as they would apply to any other written communication in order for the thoughts of the One speaking to be properly conveyed.

Now, don't get the wrong impression here. The Bible is not like any other book in the history of the universe. It is Divine Revelation and unique in its origin, transmission, preservation, and application. Keeping all that in mind, the Bible is nevertheless a written communication composed through the medium of human languages. The form God chose to employ in transmitting His thoughts determined the method and means by which the recipients of His communication must employ in receiving and understanding His thoughts.

So, to state the obvious here: the Bible means what it says and says what it means. The nature of language itself demands that we approach the Bible on this basis. Obviousness must also address the thoughts behind the words. Dr. Clinton Lockhart also stated quite well: "The true object of speech is the impartation of thought." Keeping things obvious the baby believer can recognize that the words of the Bible impart the thoughts of God. "We have the mind of Christ" (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:16). "Thinking" is also a sphere which demands a particular science for interpretation. The science of the formal principles of reasoning is called "logic." Since the Bible communicates via human languages it must be interpreted linguistically. Since the Bible communicates God's thinking it must be interpreted logically.

This doesn't mean that every Bible class is a dissertation on logic, but it helps the student of God's Word to keep logical principles in his mind as he approaches the text. Oh what a favor the believer does for himself when he approaches God's Word logically rather than emotionally! Logically, we can appreciate that the Bible can serve to interpret itself. The laws of affirmation and non-contradiction help us to understand that Truth is absolutely true. God designed us to think, and communicated His thoughts to us. Therefore all of our approaches to Bible study should follow appropriate methods of inductive and deductive logical study.

Two obvious axioms: handle language linguistically, and handle thoughts logically. Now, with these two obvious matters out of the way, we can proceed with four general rules for hermeneutics. These come from Rollin Thomas Chafer, *The Science of Biblical Hermeneutics*.

1. Interpret grammatically; with due regard to the meaning of words, the form of sentences, and the peculiarities of idiom in the language employed.
2. Interpret according to context. The meaning of a word will often be modified by the connexion in which it is used.
3. Regard the scope or design of the book itself, or some large section in which the words and expressions occur.
4. Compare Scripture with Scripture.

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Intermediate and advanced studies in Hermeneutics will take the believer into a more detailed understanding of these two obvious axioms and four general rules. Some final thoughts here will serve to give the baby believer things to chew on and consider as they embark on their life-long study of God's Word. Interpreting grammatically sometimes runs into some snags. The snags come when Bible interpreters encounter figurative language, and don't handle it appropriately.

"The literature of all lands and tongues abounds in figurative language. The Scriptures are no exception to this universal fact" (R.T. Chafer, *ibid*). Figurative language can include allegories, parables, types, and symbols. Additionally, some literal terms can be employed metaphorically, metonymically, or synecdochially. Do you see why these matters are withheld to more advanced studies? E.W. Bullinger wrote a tremendous work entitled *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. In this work, Bullinger designated over 200 distinct figures of speech found in the Bible. Several of these have from 30 to 40 varieties. Many figures of speech have duplicate names, so the total number of terms employed in describing figures of speech exceeds 500 different names.

Figurative language is effective in the way it is designed to be taken, but it is also subject to misunderstanding (misinterpretation) if it is not taken in the manner in which it is designed. Tremendous damage can be done if a Bible student takes a figurative passage literally. Likewise, damage is done if a literal passage of Scripture is taken figuratively. The simple way for a baby believer to handle the Bible is this. Handle a parable like a parable. Handle an allegory as an allegory. Handle symbolism (such as an apocalyptic passage) as symbolism. Don't force an allegory into a non-allegorical text. Don't force symbolism into a non-symbolic text.

This is a red flag warning for believers against false teaching through inaccurate Bible interpretation. When a teacher starts to proclaim a figurative meaning for a text that gives no indication of being figurative, then sound hermeneutics have been abandoned. When the plain sense makes sense don't look for any other sense.

## Theology (Theology Proper)

The Doctrine of God. A study of His revelation, His essence, and His being in Trinity.

If God had wanted to remain unknown, then mankind would certainly never have come to know Him. He easily could have included Himself among the things which “eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man” (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9). However, God is both nearby and knowable (Acts 17:23,27). God has provided an undeniable witness to Himself in natural revelation (Rom. 1:18-20). Creation testifies to His glory (Ps. 19:1-6), and the element of creation made in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26,27) is left without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

The new believer already knows that there is a God, and that His Son Jesus Christ died on the cross for his salvation. What the new believer does not know is how much more about God there is to know. God wants us to grow into adult sons and daughters with capacity for mature fellowship (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3). Beyond the witness of natural revelation comes the particular testimony of special revelation. In God’s Word we are provided with the depths of God Himself (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:9-16).

It is through Biblical revelation that we can come to find out the glories of God’s Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Immutability, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Veracity. It is through His revelation of Himself that we come to know Him, and yet we realize that our finite beings will always struggle to comprehend the infinite (Job 11:7; Rom. 11:33).

The baby believer needs to begin his theological studies by learning the basic aspects of Trinity, and the basic attributes of Deity. Before he begins to learn his essence box though, the baby believer should keep in mind an underlying principle. Knowing about God is not the same as knowing God. Believers can accumulate tremendous factual knowledge about God and they can understand all sorts of Divine attributes without ever truly knowing God at all. A believer who knows what God is may sometimes overlook who God is.

Knowing God is a definition of eternal life (Jn. 17:3). Knowing God the Father through knowing Jesus Christ it a definition of salvation and eternal life (Jn. 14:6). “Thus says the LORD, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the LORD” (Jer. 9:23-24). This is the highest form of worship, and God desires it above any offering we might bring (Hos. 6:6).

J.I. Packer wrote a beautiful book titled “Knowing God.” Four paragraphs will strike the baby believer and the mature believer alike.

“The more complex the object, the more complex is the knowing of it. Knowledge of something abstract, like a language, is acquired by learning; knowledge of something inanimate . . . comes by inspection and exploration. These activities, though demanding in terms of concentrated effort, are relatively simple to describe. But more complicated. One does not know a living thing till one knows, not merely its past history, but how it is likely to react and behave under specific circumstances. A person who says ‘I know this horse’ normally means, not just ‘I have seen it before;’ . . . more probably, however, he means ‘I know how it behaves, and can tell you how it ought to be handled.’ Such knowledge only comes through some prior acquaintance with the horse, seeing it in action, and trying to handle it oneself.

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“In the case of human beings, the position is further complicated by the fact that, unlike horses, people cover up, and do not show everybody all that is in their hearts. A few days are enough to get to know a horse as well as you will ever know it, but you may spend months and years doing things in company with another person and still have to say at the end of that time, ‘I don’t really *know* him at all.’ We recognize degrees in our knowledge of our fellow-men; we know them, we say, ‘well’, ‘not very well’, ‘just to shake hands with’, ‘intimately’, or perhaps ‘inside-out’, according to how much, or how little, they have opened up to us when we met them.

“Thus, the quality and extent of our knowledge of them depends more on them than on us. Our knowing them is more directly the result of their allowing us to know them than of our attempting to get to know them. When we meet, our part is to give them our attention and interest, to show them good-will and to open up in a friendly way from our side. From that point, however, it is they, not we, who decide whether we are going to know them or not.

“Imagine, now, that we are going to be introduced to someone whom we feel to be ‘above’ us—whether in rank, or intellectual distinction, or professional skill, or personal sanctity, or in some other respect. The more conscious we are of our own inferiority, the more we shall feel that our part is simply to attend to him respectfully and let him take the initiative in the conversation. We would like to get to know this exalted person, but we fully realize that this is a matter for him to decide, not us. If he confines himself to courteous formalities with us, we may be disappointed, but we do not feel able to complain; after all, we had no claim on his friendship. But if instead he starts at once to take us into his confidence, and tells us frankly what is in his mind on matters of common concern, and if he goes on to invite us to join him in particular undertakings he has planned, and asks us to make ourselves permanently available for this kind of collaboration whenever he needs us, then we shall feel enormously privileged, and it will make a world of difference to our general outlook. If life seemed footling and dreary hitherto, it will not seem so any more, now that the great man has enrolled us among his personal assistants. Here is something to write home about!—and something to live up to!”<sup>1</sup>

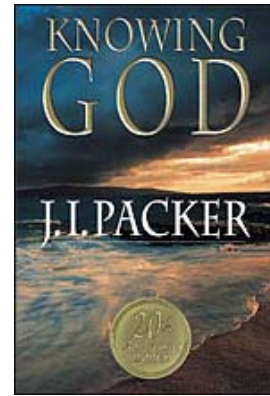
Packer’s illustration here pictures what the Bible communicates regarding God. He has invited us into His own counsel (Gen. 18:17; Jer. 23:18,22; Jn. 15:15) and has made us to be His fellow workers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9). Something to live up to indeed (Eph. 4:1; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 2:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 1:11).

### *Trinity*

It has already been observed that knowing a person is one of the most complex things there is to know. The process is made easier (possible, even) when that person is transparent and forthcoming in revealing themselves. In the case of the infinite God, He is transparent and forthcoming in revealing Himself, so that is a blessing. There are two matters though with respect to God that makes knowing Him to be somewhat difficult. Indeed, to the unbeliever these items are insurmountable, but even for the believer these two features are a challenge.

The first matter is the infinite nature of God. Particular aspects of infinity will be examined in light of the specific attributes of His essence that reflect that infinity. The finite nature of humanity and the infinite nature of deity is a circumstance that should make every believer rejoice over the omnipotent and omniscient teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The second matter which presents a snag to knowing God is the matter of God’s Being in Trinity. Knowing a person is a hard enough task. In knowing God, the believer will come to know three Persons. Three Persons in One Being is one of the great paradoxical revelations of



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<sup>1</sup> J.I. Packer, “Knowing God.” ©1973 InterVarsity Press, pp.30-31. Note: Packer is a Calvinist and an Amillennialist. A baby believer should be aware of that when reading Packer on matters of salvation and prophecy.



God's word. Human wisdom cannot apprehend three equaling one, and yet that is precisely how the Bible reveals God's Being.

The word "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible. It is a theological term that has been developed in order to communicate the sum total of what the Old & New Testaments reveal concerning God. The theological term "trinity" can be defined here in theological terms, but this study will not do so at this point. First, this study will take a baby believer through the logical and linguistic (hermeneutical) process of searching the Scriptures and seeing if these things are so.

The Bible plainly declares that there is only one true God (capital G). He has many names by which He is referred to, but He is the same unchangeable Being no matter what He is called. His personal name is אֶהְיֶה which means "I AM" (Ex. 3:14). He alone is the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One. The principle of אֶהְיֶה "I AM" was entrusted to Moses as the meaning behind the memorial-name of יְהוָה (variously translated as the LORD, YHWH, Yahweh, or Jehovah).

יְהוָה YHWH is the most common name for God in the Old Testament where it appears over 6800 times. אֱלֹהִים Elohim (a plural noun) is also widely used, appearing over 2300 times in reference to the one true God. Together these terms are employed in the great monotheism passages of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 4:35: To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD [יְהוָה YHWH], He is God [אֱלֹהִים Elohim]; there is no other besides Him. Verse 39: Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD [יְהוָה YHWH], He is God [אֱלֹהִים Elohim] in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

Other applicable passages include Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:39; Isaiah 43:10-12; 44:6-8; 45:5-7. In the New Testament, passages would include 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 8:4 & James 2:19.

There are some false gods (small g) out there—spirit beings (commonly called angels) who pridefully equate themselves to God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 8:5). These fallen angels are in open rebellion against God and that is a subject for later development in Basic Doctrinal Studies.

So, the basic understanding of God at this point is that there is only one true God. He alone is the eternal, self-existent, uncreated One. He is the only Being rightfully named "I AM." Yet . . .

There is also plainly revealed in Scripture three separate Persons that all have equal claim to the attributes and essence of God. All three Persons comprise one single essence, and all three Persons bear a single name. Matthew 28:19: Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The Father is recognized as God. John 6:27 "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. The Deity of God the Father, as Charles Ryrie puts it, "is seldom debated."

Jesus Christ is recognized as God. His disciple Thomas testified to His Deity (John 20:28). He forgave sins, which is only God's privilege to do (Mark 2:1-12).

The Holy Spirit is declared to be God. Lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) equals lying to God (Acts 5:4). God's attributes of Omniscience (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:10) and Omnipresence (Ps. 139:7) are ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

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The very first chapter of Scripture gives us an insight into the Trinity. In the beginning אֱלֹהִים Elohim (a plural noun) created (בָּרָא bara' <sup>Strong's #1254</sup> a masculine singular verb) the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1:1). Elohim is not a singular, not a dual, but a plural (3 or more) noun. In Genesis 1:26: אֱלֹהִים Elohim (plural) said (אָמַר 'amar <sup>Strong's #559</sup> a masculine singular verb), "Let Us make (1p.plur. עָשָׂה 'asah <sup>Strong's #6213</sup>) man in Our (plural) image (singular), according to Our (plural) likeness (singular).

Does Genesis 1 develop a thorough doctrine of Trinity? No, but it presents a narrative of creation that is consistent with the doctrine Trinity.

### *Personality*

One final area of study remains before launching into God's attributes of essence. God is not only a Being (therefore having essence) but as a Person He has personality. Strictly speaking, the three Persons of Trinity have three distinct personalities, and at the same time the One True God has one unique personality.

God's essence is often thought of as what God "is." God's personality can be thought of as "what kind of God" is God. "What is God?" can be answered with essence or attributes. "What kind of God is God?" can be answered with personality or character. There is often an overlap between personality and essence. God is love (essence), and He is a loving God (personality). God is righteousness (essence), and He is a righteous God (personality). Essentially, every element of essence will be reflected by a personality trait. Not every personality trait has a single attribute of God though. Some of God's personality traits are manifestations of multiple attributes or even all of God's attributes combined.

Attempts to paint too fine a line here will not only go beyond the scope of Basic Doctrinal Studies, but will in all likelihood result in incorrect conclusions. Theologians sometimes try to define God in human terms and the result is as flawed as the methodology. Nowhere in the Bible is there a "fruit of the spirit" type passage that reads: "The Essence of God is" (followed by a list). The study of God, then, is an inductive study taking in every description of God from Genesis to Revelation.

An exhaustive development of the personality, essence, character, attributes, & nature (think PECAN) of God is beyond the scope of this series. Here, we will equate personality, character, & nature under the Personality of God study, and we will equate essence & attributes under the Essence of God study.

The most common phrase in the Bible describing God is the declaration that He is Compassionate & Gracious. This description answers the question "what kind of God is God?" He is a compassionate and gracious God. Our God in Heaven is compassionate & gracious (Ex. 33:19; 34:6-7; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 24:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 30:9; Ps. 25:6; Lam. 3:32), slow to anger (Num. 14:18; Isa. 48:9; Rom. 9:22-23; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9) and abounding in lovingkindness (Ex. 34:6-7; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Ps. 106; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2) and truth (Ps. 57:10; 86:15; 89:14; 108:4; 138:2; Lam. 3:22-23; John 1:17).

One of the most overlooked personality traits of God is that He is Jealous. So much so that Jealous is even one of His own names (Ex. 34:14). God's jealousy is typically not thought of as a single attribute or a part of His essence. Rather it is a manifestation of all of His essence. We must be cautious in not approaching the Jealousy of God in the carnal human context that we usually associate jealousy with. Carnal jealousy stems from selfishness and pride. Godly jealousy

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(2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:2) is another matter altogether—stemming from unselfish and humble devotion to Jesus Christ. The following survey of Bible verses will help to understand God’s Jealousy (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Num. 25:10-13; Deut. 4:24 cf. Heb. 12:28-29; Deut. 32:16-17; ; Josh. 24:19; Nah. 1:2; Zech. 8:2).

Related to God’s jealous personality is His vengeful personality. Once again, we must not approach the Vengeance of God in the carnal human context that we usually associate with vengeance. Carnal vengeance stems from selfishness, pride and anger. The following survey of Bible verses will help us to understand God’s Vengeance (Deut. 32:34-43; Ps. 94:1; Nah. 1:2; Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

Another aspect of God’s Personality is His Sense of Humor. What a wonderful blessing for us in developing and maintaining a relaxed mental attitude! God Himself has a relaxed mental attitude! He possesses a sense of humor, or a mental delight in that which He observes. Even the worst of human volitional rebellion can spark a mental delight in His thinking and prompt His laughter enjoyment of His unthwartable purpose (Ps. 2:4; 37:13; Prov. 1:26; 8:30-31).

Finally, we must also conclude that as a trait of God’s Personality, He is supremely Confident or Secure. He needs nothing from any creature. He is confident, secure, and completely perfect in His Being. The only “need” that He has is His “need” to be consistent with His own personality, essence, character, attributes, and nature (Acts 17:25; Ps. 50:8-15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13).

### *Essence*

Having dealt with God’s personality, character, and nature, we can now turn to God’s attributes and essence. Although differences will appear from study to study and from list to list, the following 10 aspects of God’s *being* will serve here as a Basic summary of God’s *essence*. The “essence box” that I learned as a child includes these 10 attributes: Sovereignty, Righteousness, Justice, Love, Eternal Life, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Immutability, & Veracity.

Before examining each attribute of essence, let us bear in mind that God is so much more than a compilation of various “parts.” Each finite term by which we study one aspect of God’s Being will never fully define the infinite nature of that aspect. God is infinitely Sovereign, and any study we pursue on Sovereignty will fall short of an infinite understanding. So it is with each element, and so it is especially with the sum total of God’s Being.

“Can you discover the depths of God? Can you discover the limits of the Almighty? They are high as the heavens, what can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know?” (Job 11:7-8).

We must also keep in mind that no part of God’s essence is ever manifest at the expense of any other part. God is Love, but He cannot express that Love in violation of His own Righteousness and Justice for example. God is Sovereignty, but He cannot manifest Sovereignty in a way that would change Himself and violate His own Immutability. God’s essence must be studied as a whole and not limited to the parts.

### **Sovereignty**

God is not subject to any authority higher than His own. He alone is uncreated and He alone has created. As the source of all things God is master of all things. Absolute Sovereignty, however, does not mean that God is not subject to anything. God is, in fact, subject to Himself.

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God is self-existent but not self-made. God did not create Himself and so God is not master of (sovereign over) Himself. To be precise: God's Sovereignty does not enable Him to violate His being.

Bible passages on Sovereignty make these comments quite clear. Job 23:13; Psa. 115:3; Isa. 46:9-11; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11.

No being can overrule God's Sovereignty, but neither can God's Sovereignty overrule His own essence. He cannot deny Himself (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13b). Moses even had the confidence in God's character to tell God what He could not do! In effect, Moses pointed out to God that His Sovereignty was not free to destroy Israel because God's Veracity would not allow Him to go back on a promise He had made to Israel (Ex. 32:9-14; Num. 14:11-19).

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of God's Sovereignty is the significance of His sovereign creation of volitional creatures. The provision of volition in the angelic and human realms of creation sometimes prompts a conflict within our finite minds. Does the human exercise of volition actually overrule God's Sovereignty? Not at all! When man takes an action contrary to what God directs he is acting within the sphere of what God allows. God's Directive Will and God's Permissive Will are both within the realm of God's absolute Sovereignty. Since God sovereignly bestowed volition, the use of volition does not diminish Sovereignty. To the contrary, volition magnifies Sovereignty.

Volition will be studied in greater depth under Anthropology, but the Scriptures are very clear that God takes no pleasure in compulsion, but takes pleasure in voluntary service (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 9:7; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2; Philem. 14). Since Sovereignty by definition is the achievement of God's pleasure, volition is essential to Sovereignty, and determinism (no volition at all) is antithetical to it.

## Righteousness

Righteousness is the first of two attributes which together comprise God's Holiness. Our God is a holy God and He expects us to be holy (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:16). Righteousness and Justice form a two-edged sword by which God's Holiness is possessed and expressed.

God is absolute righteousness (Deut. 32:4), not the relative righteousness of humanity (Gen. 38:26; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:17; 1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 2:32). Righteousness means being right and doing right (Isa. 24:16a). The opposite of righteousness is treachery (Isa. 24:16b). The terms good and evil are used synonymously with righteous and unrighteous (Matt. 5:45).

God's absolute Righteousness is the eternal standard by which He may be approached. No human being measures up to absolute Righteousness (Isa. 64:6). Any sin falls short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23), and separates us from His holiness (Isa. 59:2). By faith in Jesus Christ, we may become the Righteousness of God in Him (Rom. 3:22; 5:19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:21).

God's righteousness is a theme often celebrated in the Psalms (7:9,11,17; 9:4,8; 11:7; 31:1; 116:5; 119:75,137,142; 129:4; 145:17). The walk of righteousness is the walk of wisdom according to Proverbs (1:3; 2:9,20; 3:33; 4:18; 10:2,3,6,7,11,16,20,21,24,25,28,30,31,32 etc.).

## Justice

The Holiness counterpart to Righteousness is the Justice of God. God possesses the absolute unchangeable standard of Righteousness, and when He administers that standard judicially He manifests His absolute unchangeable Justice.

Absolute Justice means God is absolutely *fair* in all of His judgments. The LORD our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe (2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 19:7). God's Justice cannot be bought (Deut. 10:17). This is the only form of Justice that can exist consistent with God's absolute Love (Deut. 10:18).

As already noted, He is Righteous and upright, and this finds expression in His faithful exercise of Justice. All His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and without injustice (Deut. 32:4). Because He is an impartial Judge, God's gracious and compassionate personality must be consistent with His Righteousness and Justice (Isa. 30:18).

The absolute Justice of God can form the basis of a bold and confident prayer life (Gen. 18:25). Notice a similarity between Moses' prayer life already mentioned and the prayer ministry of Abraham on behalf of Sodom.

Quite often finite creatures bound by time (i.e. human beings) fail to apprehend God's Justice. We become impatient in our frustrations and we cry out "how long?" to the Judge of All the Earth because He is not blasting sinners to smithereens in a manner that we can approve of. God is not slow, as some count slowness, but rather patient (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9). He is slow to anger, and patient towards sinners as an expression of His compassionate personality. His compassion though does not negate His Justice. In the case of the unbeliever, He is patiently awaiting repentance so that His Justice can be administered to His undeserving Son on the cross rather than upon the deserving sinner (Ezek. 18:23,32).

In the end though, when patience has run its course, Justice is exercised and it is administered without any partiality. God will not be mocked (Gal. 6:7). He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Ex. 23:7; 34:7; Nah. 1:3).

God's impartial Justice is essential for our salvation. Specifically, the blessings of Justification can be faithfully counted upon only if our God is a God of impartial Justice (Rom. 2:11; 3:5,6,21-26). More will be seen on this in the Soteriology doctrine of Justification.

## Love

Now we come to perhaps the most misunderstood attribute of God—His Love. The kosmos world system and carnal humanity have developed some of the most perverted things and called them love. It is no wonder, then, that human understanding of God's love is off track.

Beneath most false understandings of love is the feature of gratification. A person can "love" activities such as hunting, fishing, or golf. These activities can gratify and supply a personal enjoyment. A person might also "love" certain foods like fajitas, pizza, or chocolate. In such cases these foods gratify our palate and supply a personal enjoyment.

All too often in personal relationships this pseudo-love is generated through gratification in one form or another. So long as self is being benefited, the "love" continues. All of this is

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contrary to God's form of Love. God's love is not selfish, but sacrificial. It does not center on what the one loving "gets" but rather on what the one loving "gives."

Even a brand new baby believer needs to learn the Greek word "agape" (ἀγάπη). The primary Love of God is agape love. The concept of agape is totally outside the realm of human experience. It is entirely within the realm of God, as the source and motivation for its expression.

Agape is defined in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:4-8. In a 16 part detailed description, agape love is presented as an ideal standard for a believer's life. No human being can live up to such an ideal standard through human effort. God Himself maintains the absolute standard of agape love in all of His thoughts and deeds.

A Biblical study of God's attribute of Love must also consider 1<sup>st</sup> John 4:7-8. It is a passage that addresses believers as "beloved" (agapetos, ἀγαπητός). It is a passage that exhorts believers to love (agapao, ἀγαπάω) one another. In a short, alliterative passage, the Christian Way of Life is here described. Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους: Beloved, let us love one another.

The basis for believers to love one another is not because one or the other believer is worthy of love. Agape love does not depend on the object being loveable. The basis for Christian love is God's essence of Love (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 4:7-8). Our love for one another is not only beneficial to one another, but is also a testimony to the Love of God that so loved the world (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 4:9-11; Jn. 3:16).

### Eternal Life

God is outside of space & time as the creator of space & time. God alone is uncreated Being (I AM), without beginning and without ending. God infinitely transcends space (see below for Omnipresence) and time (Eternal Life). Therefore we can speak of God as "having" eternal life, although it may be more accurate to say that God is eternal. God is the eternal God (Deut. 33:27). He dwells in eternity (Isa. 57:15).

Psalms 90:2 is a great definition of eternal life. "Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The realm of time is bounded by eternity past (alpha) and eternity future (omega). That's the realm of God. God's timelessness is an element of His unchangingness (see below for Immutability).

Psalms 90 establishes the stark contrast between God and fallen man. God is the refuge for all generations of mankind (Ps. 90:1) as the eternal Creator (Ps. 90:2). Fallen humanity is finite in physical life of dust to dust (Ps. 90:3-6). The Judgments of Adam (Ps. 90:7-8), and the flood (Ps. 90:9-10) have produced shorter life spans with greater urgency for wisdom (Ps. 90:11-12). Redeemed humanity can rejoice throughout the entire process of physical life because of God's eternal perspective and the grace promises of eternal rewards (Ps. 90:13-17).

Other passages for eternal life include Isa. 44:6; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 6:16; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:8; & Rev. 1:4.

### Omniscience

God knows everything. The Lord is a "God of knowledge" (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 2:3). Ah, but don't stop there! That one statement contains such depth of Truth! Unlike temporal creatures, God's knowledge is not an accumulated knowledge achieved through steps and stages of time. God's

past, present, and foreknowledge are features of His timelessness (Eternal Life) but are more so a feature of His infinite Mind. He is truly One “perfect in knowledge” (Job 36:4; 37:16).

God’s knowledge is not simply limited to facts. God possesses infinite knowledge, understanding and wisdom. His knowledge has not only observed all things, but has thoroughly analyzed all things, and related all things to one another in His infinitely perfect plan. This aspect is overlooked as it relates to His omnipotence (Job 36:5).

God possesses knowledge of every reality and every potential reality as a result of His creating volitional creatures. God knows all the would’ve’s, should’ve’s, and could’ve’s for individuals, nations, and indeed all of humanity (Matt. 11:20–24; 23:30).

God is patiently working out His own plan, allowing us to realize and understand certain things only after He brings them about (John 13:7). Ultimately, He works all things together for good (Rom. 8:28), and we creatures of time bound by time claim this by faith.

The finite human mind can only grasp the fringes of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. 11:33; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 16:7; Job 26:14; Isa. 55:9).

### Omnipresence

God is everywhere. If omniscience was a difficult concept to grasp for those of finite knowledge, omniscience may be an even more difficult concept to grasp for finite creatures limited to being in one place at one time. God transcends both space and time. We’ve already studied His transcendence of time in our examination of Eternal Life. Omnipresence focuses on His transcendence of space.

In terms of both space and time, God’s transcendent position gives Him a perspective to interact with His creation at any point in space and at any point in time. Omnipresence is not only spatial, but also temporal—God is everywhere, and God is everywhen!

Now, for those of us who like to think in concrete rather than abstract terms, David has supplied a remarkable Psalm. Psalm 139 describes Omnipresence in such a way that we can understand perfectly. Running away from God is not possible. Neither is it possible to hide from Him (Jer. 23:24). God’s omnipresence is a great comfort for believers who can cling to the promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5–6).

God’s infinite Omnipresence cannot be contained or confined within finite boundaries (1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 8:27; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 2:6; Isa. 66:1; Jer. 23:24). The Holy of Holies did not “contain” God. His particular presence there did not exclude His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence there did supply a point of time & space in which creatures of time & space could have a particular interaction with His glory.

So it is with the indwelling of believers today. God’s presence within each of us (Jn. 14:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 3:24; 4:13,15,16) does not exclude or limit His omnipresence everywhere else. His particular presence within each of us supplies a particular manner in which we can interact with His glory (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:3).

### Omnipotence

God is all powerful. His titles **אֱלֹהֵי שַׁדַּי** El Shaddai (Gen. 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; Ex. 6:3) and **παντοκράτωρ** Pantokrator (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:18; Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:6,15; 21:22) rightly

refers to Him as God Almighty. He possesses all power (Eph. 1:19), and nothing is impossible for Him (Job 42:2; Jer. 32:27; Lk. 1:37). He does whatever He pleases (Psa. 115:3).

Omnipotence does not mean that God can do anything and everything. There are things God cannot do. The list of “cannots” is not by virtue of a power deficiency, but rather by virtue of an immutable consistency. God cannot violate His own character, nature, & essence (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13). God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). God cannot abide iniquity in the solemn assembly (Isa. 1:13).

The answer to the question “Can God do everything?” is No, for He cannot do that which is out of harmony with His character. The question posed by some agnostics, “Can God make a stone so great that He cannot lift it?” is nonsensical for the same and other reasons—like asking can God make a square circle, an impossibility by definition, and so an absurdity.<sup>2</sup>

### Immutability

God cannot and does not change. He never has changed, and never will change. He is the eternal “I AM” and never “became” such. Malachi 3:6a “For I, the Lord, do not change.”

The Gospel of John begins with a declaration of the eternal Being of God the Son (the Word). This passage also makes it clear that God alone is uncreated and self-existent. “All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.” (John 1:3). Only God “is.” Everything else “became” or “came into being.”

The immutability of God is perhaps the most important attribute of His essence. Sovereignty is wonderful to behold and worship, but if it could change tomorrow, then it would not be worthy of true celebration. Likewise, we may cling to His grace for our salvation only so long as God remains gracious. In fact, no attribute of God’s essence would be the same without the attribute of Immutability to establish its absolute nature. We have already noted in the study above on Eternal Life that God’s timelessness is a manifestation of His immutability.

God is not only unchanging on a large scale, but He is also unchanging in the smallest detail. He has “no variation of shifting shadow.” (James 1:17b). Given that God is absolute perfection in His Being, even the smallest change would be a move to imperfection. Think about somebody physically standing at the absolute north pole of planet earth. Any step he takes—in any orientation—is going to be a step south. So it is with God’s perfection. Any step away (change) from that would be a movement of imperfection.

God is unchangeable and His purpose is unchangeable (Heb. 6:17). God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11), and this is referred to as His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11). Any Divine attribute of essence sets God apart from humanity, but His immutability and veracity are the two that we find explicitly stated (1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:29; Num. 23:19).

Sometimes the Scriptures use language that infers a “change of mind” on God’s part (Gen. 6:6-7; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 15:11,33; Jonah 3:10). Even such language of accommodation is testimony to God’s unchangeable purpose (Jer. 18:7-10; Isa. 46:10; Exek. 33:7-20).

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<sup>2</sup>Smith, J. H. (1992; Published in electronic form, 1996). *The new treasury of scripture knowledge : The most complete listing of cross references available anywhere- every verse, every theme, every important word*. Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson.



See [Great Doctrines of the Bible](#)

## Veracity

The final element of God's essence that we will examine is His attribute of Veracity. God is Absolute Truth, and everything He declares is absolutely true. YHWH is God of Truth (Ps. 31:5).

אֱמֶת אֱלֹהֵינוּ. κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῆς ἀληθείας. “He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that God is true” (Jn. 3:33).

God's Veracity is such that every single promise is a “yes” promise worthy of our human “amen” (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:20). God's promises are certain because it is impossible for God to lie (Num. 23:19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:13; Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18). When the God Who cannot lie swears an oath by His own holiness, the infinite value of Veracity is infinitely multiplied (Ps. 89:35; Am. 4:2; Heb. 6:18). ∞<sup>∞</sup>

Human beings may doubt God's Truth because our finite nature cannot grasp His timetable (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:8-9). Our limitations do not alter God's veracity (Hab. 2:3).

Another term for the Veracity of God is His Faithfulness. Jesus Christ is The Amen, the faithful and true Witness (Rev. 3:14). He will even take this name into the Battle of Armageddon as one of His two great battlefield names—Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11).

Like all of God's attributes, Veracity is a stark contrast between Deity and humanity (Rom. 3:4).

Veracity also supplies a stark contrast with the Adversary! He “does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks the lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44). How could such a murderer and liar claim to ever become “like the Most High God” (Isa. 14:14)?

Just as with Immutability, our own salvation is meaningless if God is not Veracity. If God is personally capable of communicating falsehood then why should I trust His promise of eternal life? In fact, the Bible describes rejection of the gospel as rejection of God's Veracity (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:10).



## Anthropology

The Doctrine of Man. A study of his essence, lost estate, and eternal purpose.

Has there ever been a more misunderstood creature? False religions promote false gods to be sure, but they also promote a false view of man. It is this aspect of their lies that can be just as deceptive and evil. The Word of God portrays an accurate view of mankind that must be understood by the new believer.

The new believer has a frame of reference to understand that he once was lost, but is found, twas blind, but now he sees. He does not totally understand how lost he truly was or how blind. A Biblical study on anthropology will help him to understand his body, soul, and spirit.

Basic Doctrinal Studies will outline the tripart nature of redeemed man, as body, soul, and (human) spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:23). Basics will also teach the bipart nature of unredeemed man, being spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5). Basics will also cover the current condition of our mortal bodies as dead and dying, even while the human spirit has been made alive (Rom. 8:10-11).

### *The Tripart Nature of Redeemed Man*

Adam was created by God and imparted with “lives” (Gen. 2:7). Adam’s body was formed from the dust of the ground. God breathed into him the breath of lives (נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים nishmath chayyiym), and Adam became a living soul (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה nephesh chayyah).

The New Testament provides the clearest testimony to redeemed mankind’s tripart nature: (human) spirit, soul, and body (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:23). Although sometimes used interchangeably, there is a distinction to be made between spirit and soul (Heb. 4:12). When the visible is contrasted with the invisible, there is no need to be particular on the soul & spirit distinction (Rom. 7:22-23; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16). The general term “heart” is another term that applies to the invisible, inner man (Matt. 15:18-19; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 9:7).

### *The Bipart Nature of Unredeemed Man*

Only believers have living human spirits. The unbeliever is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13). Salvation is described as a passing from death into life (Jn. 5:24). This life is an eternal life, and is one free from condemnation judgment (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 8:1).

The part of Adam which died “on the day” that he partook of the forbidden tree was his spirit (Gen. 2:17). The wages of sin is spiritual death (Rom. 6:23). The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the Divine provision for the universal problem of spiritual death (Rom. 5:12-21).

### *Dead and Alive*

Believers continue to function in a dead (dying) body (Rom. 8:10-11). The human spirit is now alive, through the righteousness and presence of Jesus Christ, but the mortal body remains in need of a future promised salvation (Rom. 8:23; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:44; Phil. 3:21).

Although our bodies are dead and dying, we are still instructed to present them as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), glorify God in them (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6: 20), and use them for His service in sanctification (Rom. 6:19).



## Soteriology

The Doctrine of Salvation. A study of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man, and the work of God to remove that barrier. Includes Evangelism and Ambassadorship.

The brand new believer knows that he is saved, but does not have any doctrinal framework to understand all that God did on his behalf in order to save him. He has an experience of salvation, which was easy enough for him to receive, but he now needs doctrinal information to understand the glories of what he has experienced.

The new believer needs to know fully what is meant by “it is finished.” The new believer needs to know fully the duration of eternal life. The new believer needs to know fully the security of his salvation, and that there is nothing he can do, or indeed even that God could do to reverse the Justification he has been given.

### *The Barrier*

Perhaps the best way to examine the work of God in achieving our salvation is to recognize the nature of the barrier between the holy God and fallen man. William Blankenship has developed a clear picture for teaching the Barrier, and his table is reproduced here.<sup>3</sup>

<b>The Barrier Removed (William Blankenship’s teaching)</b>		
<b>The Problem</b>	<b>The Solution</b>	<b>Comments</b>
The Penalty of Sin	Expiation (Col. 2:14)	Reconciliation (Will of God plus Act of God-Man)
Sin	Redemption (1 Cor. 1:29,30) Unlimited Atonement (1 Jn. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:1)	
The Character of God	Propitiation (1 Jn. 2:2; Rom. 3:25)	
The Character of Man	Justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:1) Imputation (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:2)	Salvation (Act of God plus Will of Man)
Spiritual Death	Regeneration (Jn. 1:11,12; 3:3; Gal. 3:26)	
Physical Death	Positional Truth (1 Jn. 5:11,12) Eternal Life (Jn. 3:15)	

In examining everything God did to remove this barrier stone-by-stone it becomes evident that in order for a believer to lose their salvation, each and every one of these works of God would have to be undone. The evidence for each of these items is that they are once and for all, irreversible events. The overwhelming evidence for all of these items combined is that salvation is a once and for all, irreversible event.

As with all these Basic Doctrinal Studies, the Barrier can be re-examined on an intermediate and advanced basis. The nature of Redemption, Atonement, Propitiation, etc. has been debated by the greatest theologians throughout the history of the Church. This study will not equip anyone to become a leading authority on such subjects, but it will equip all believers to clearly understand the bottom-line principles for these very important soteriological doctrines.

<sup>3</sup> The Building in the Soul: A Survey of Basic Bible Doctrine, by William D. Blankenship ©1992. Willow Publications, Grace & Truth Ministries.

## Soteriology

The only significant change that Pastor Bolender will make to William Blankenship's table above is that Pastor Bolender moves Eternal Life to being a solution for Spiritual Death (rather than Physical Death) and adds Resurrection to being a solution for Physical Death. Pastor Bolender has also changed some of the Scripture citations in the table.

<b>The Barrier Removed (Pastor Bolender's teaching)</b>		
<b>The Problem</b>	<b>The Solution</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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The Character of Man	Justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:1) Imputation (Rom. 3:22; 2 Cor. 5:2)	Salvation (Act of God plus Will of Man)
Spiritual Death	Regeneration (Jn. 1:11,12; 3:3; Gal. 3:26) Eternal Life (Jn. 3:15; 6:40; 11:26; 1 <sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:11-12)	
Physical Death	Positional Truth (1 <sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:18-22) Resurrection (Jn. 6:40; 11:25)	

The penalty of sin is spiritual death. The full and satisfactory payment must be made in order to remove the Penalty of Sin as a barrier between God and man. Jesus Christ made a full and satisfactory payment in our place, and thus the Penalty of Sin has been executed upon Him. This is the first facet of Reconciliation, and it is called Expiation. By virtue of His full and satisfactory punishment, the penalty has been executed and the decrees against us are taken care of (Col. 2:14).

Although the penalty is paid in a full and satisfactory way, the estate of Sin continues to be an issue that requires God's work. Fallen mankind's position in the slave market of sin requires Redemption (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:29-30) and Atonement (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 2:2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 2:1). These are two other facets of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

The fourth facet of Reconciliation is the facet that solves the Character of God as being a barrier between God and man. This is called Propitiation, which means that God's character is totally satisfied by the works of Expiation, Redemption, and Atonement.

The first three stones of the Barrier are removed through the four facets of Reconciliation. The final three stones are removed through the six facets of Salvation. The character of man is a barrier stone because fallen mankind is unrighteous. Justification (Rom. 3:24; 5:1) and Imputation (Rom. 3:22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:2) are the works of God that remove this barrier stone. Imputation is God's judicial impartation of His own righteousness to our account. Justification is God's judicial declaration of our positional righteousness.

Spiritual death is a barrier between fallen man and God. God is Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). Thus, spiritual death is a barrier. Regeneration (Jn. 1:11-12; 3:3; Gal. 3:26) and Eternal Life (Jn. 3:15; 6:40; 11:26) are the works of God that remove this barrier stone.

## Soteriology

Physical death is another barrier between fallen man and God. Eternal life for soul and spirit would only be partially beneficial if our bodies were of finite duration. Thus, the final Divine Work for our salvation is the provision of Resurrection in the promise of our eternal resurrection bodies of glory (Jn. 6:40; 11:25; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:18–22).

### *Salvation*

Keeping things simple, what is salvation, and how is a person saved? Intermediate and Advanced Doctrinal Studies will take Soteriology to extraordinary depth and development, but Basic Doctrinal Studies will keep it simple.

The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas what he must “do” to be saved (Acts 16:30). In terms of deeds in righteousness (meritorious) there is nothing that he could “do” in order to earn his salvation (Eph. 2:9; Tit. 3:5). In terms of human volitional activity (non-meritorious) there is only one thing that he could “do” in order to receive salvation—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31; Jn. 3:16,18,36; Eph. 2:8).

The verb “believe” and the noun “faith” (πιστεύω and πίστις) are terms that describe the human volitional activity designed by God as the one and only non-meritorious mechanism by which His grace gift of salvation is accepted and received.

Believing is a human volitional activity, and it is even called a work (Jn. 6:28,29), but salvation by grace through faith is specifically defined as a non-meritorious work (Eph. 2:8,9).

### *Evangelism*

Although there is a spiritual gift of Evangelist (Acts 21:8; Eph. 4:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:5), the responsibility to “bring good news” (evangelize) belongs to every believer.

Romans 10:14&15 cites Isaiah 52:7 and describes the believer’s great privilege and responsibility to bring good news. “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Rom. 10:4). This passage deals with all born-again believers and not simply a small group of which with the gift, ministry, and effect of Evangelist.

The key to understanding the universal evangelism responsibility of the Church is identifying the “preacher” of Rom. 10:14&15. Acts 8 makes it clear that the entire Church is called to be evangelizers (v.4) & preachers (v.5).

The great New Testament passages on preparation & readiness also relate evangelism to all believers, and not simply to those with the spiritual gift (Eph. 6:15; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:15).

### *Ambassadorship*

The armor passage of Ephesians 6 (vv. 13–17) leads into a context of ambassadorship (vv. 18–20). Evangelism is not just an individual exercise on the part of one person witnessing to another person. Evangelism is a corporate function of the Church. Paul requests corporate prayer by the local church for his ongoing gospel ministry. The Ephesian believers are just as much a part of the gospel mission to Rome as Paul is. Paul is there in person. Ephesus Bible Church is there in spirit.

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Paul's title "Ambassador in Chains" demonstrates that his gospel ministry is ongoing despite the earthly imprisonment. As he says elsewhere, "the Word of God is not imprisoned" (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:9). Circumstances and details of temporal life in no way alter the Ambassadorship function of eternal life.

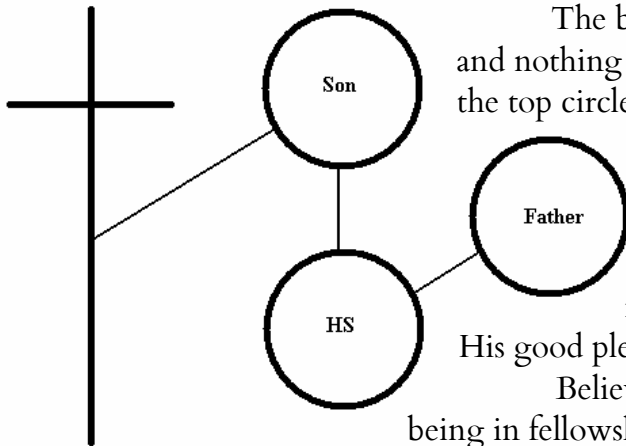
An Ambassador represents a kingdom or nation. Specifically, the Church operates in the Ambassadorship capacity for the Kingdom of Heaven. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:18-21 describes the Ambassadorship function, and the nature of the ministry of reconciliation. This is a ministry that is entrusted to all reconciled individuals. All the reconciled become Ambassadors to those who remain unreconciled.

Our appeal is God the Father's appeal. The Father who desires for none to perish (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9) makes an urgent appeal, begging the unreconciled to volitionally accept the work of Jesus Christ on their behalf. Begging denotes a sense of urgency (Lk. 5:12; 8:28; 9:40; Acts 8:34; 21:39; 26:3; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 8:4; Gal. 4:12), and perhaps with a study of Christian Ambassadorship, believers will develop a sense of urgency in their evangelism pursuits.



## Peripatology

The Doctrine of the Christian Walk. A study of the cross and three circles for the believer's daily life. Includes Positional Truth, Filling of the Holy Spirit, Priesthood function of Prayer.



The born-again believer is placed “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3), and nothing can separate him from this (Rom. 8:38,39). This is the top circle in the cross and three circles diagram. In the Basic study of Soteriology this has been made clear, but now the believer needs to be grounded in the principles of the Christian Walk. Salvation is not the end of God’s plan for us, but rather the beginning of our walk for His good pleasure and the eternal glory of Jesus Christ.

Believers have the operational volitional choice of being in fellowship or out of fellowship. This is an absolute state, of either/or and not both. The Apostle Paul referred to this as the operational volitional choice of walking by and being led by the Holy Spirit or carrying out the desire of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). The Apostle John referred to this as the operational volitional choice of walking in the light versus walking in darkness (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:6,7). This is the bottom circle in the cross and three circles diagram.

A believer in Christ, functioning in the power of the Holy Spirit, can then engage in his Priesthood function before God the Father in the Holy of Holies. This is the third (right) circle in the cross and three circles diagram. When a Church Age Believer steps into his priesthood and actively functions before the Father, the Father’s fulness becomes his own (Jn. 16:23-28; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-25).

### *Walking*

The term Peripatology is derived from the Greek verb περιπατέω peripateō. It means “to walk” and is often used of both physical walking, and metaphoric applications. Used metaphorically, a person’s walk describes the manner of life in which they function. The modern English idiom “walks of life” reflects this metaphoric use of walking.

The New Testament describes the believer’s walk with the prepositions “in,” “by,” and “according to.” These three expressions will define the scope of Peripatology on a basic level.

### **Walking in.**

Perhaps the simplest Biblical expression for the believer’s walk is the phrase “walking in the light” (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:7). The smallest of children comprehend light and darkness. The option of walking in light versus darkness is entirely a volitional one for believers.

1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:6 makes it clear that believers can volitionally walk in darkness, choosing to function in a manner contrary to the Truth of God’s word. Verse 7 is just as clear. Believers can

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volitionally choose to walk in the light, choosing to function in a manner consistent with the Word of God. This is the only walk that God will find to be acceptable. The believer-priest so walking is not only ceremonially cleansed, but literally cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The barrier between walking in the light and walking in darkness is the barrier of personal sin. A believer who denies the Sin Nature within him is under a dangerous self-deception (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:8). Likewise, a believer who lives in denial of the personal sins he has committed makes God a liar, and once again is subject to the sphere of darkness (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:10).

The answer in every case is the simple process of confession (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 1:9). This is the great cleansing process for believers. This is the laver of our tabernacle service, and a brand-new believer **MUST BE TAUGHT** how to confess their sins.

Aaron and his sons were ceremonially cleansed at the beginning of their priestly service. They were consecrated, and set apart to serve as priests to the Lord (Ex. 29:1-8). That cleansing was an entire body cleansing, and was only done once—representative of salvation. Even with the total body cleansing at the beginning of their ministry, Aaron and his sons required subsequent cleansings at the bronze laver (Ex. 30:17-21). The laver cleansing was a hand and foot cleansing, and was done daily—representative of confession.

Jesus Christ taught these principles to his disciples, although Peter was a little slow in picking up the concept (Jn. 13:5-15).

Confession of sin is a vital doctrine taught throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament (Lev. 16:21&22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 12:13; Ps. 32:3-5; 51:1-4; 130:1-4; 1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 8:46-53; Prov. 28:13; Jer. 3:12-14; Dan. 9:4-20; Ezr. 10:1; Neh. 1:6; Job 33:27,28; Mt. 3:6; Lk. 15:21,22; 18:13,14).

Walking “in” is the sphere in which the believer functions. “In the light” is also called “in fellowship” or “in the bottom circle.” Personal sin moves us from light to darkness, causes us to lose fellowship, and moves us out of the bottom circle. Confession of sin returns us back to the light, restores fellowship, and moves us back into the bottom circle.

### Walking by.

Walking “by” speaks of the method, means, or instrument that believers can utilize in order to walk “in” the light. Most of us came to church by car. Those who live close enough may have come by foot. Perhaps someone came by bus. Notice the expression of method, means, or instrument. The same concept is given in the Bible for the Christian Walk. We must walk “by” something. Two somethings actually: the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16,25) and faith (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:7).

Walking by the Holy Spirit is the key to rejecting the temptations of personal sin, and remaining in the light (Gal. 5:16). Walking by the Holy Spirit is defined as being led by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:18). The Holy Spirit dwells within each believer—teaching, empowering, and guiding us for the Christian Way of Life. This is why it is vital that believers do not grieve (Eph. 4:30), quench (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:19), or resist (Acts 7:51) the Holy Spirit.

Something else also lives within each human being—the flesh (Gal. 5:16,17). The flesh is also referred to as “no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), the old man (Eph. 4:22), sin (singular) (Rom. 7:17), or the Old Sin Nature. Walking by the flesh is defined as being led by the flesh (Gal. 5:16,17,19-21). Notice how the flesh is an active agent living within each human being. It has desires, and it

## Peripatology

actively works against the Holy Spirit's teaching, guiding, and empowerment. So, choose you this day whom you will serve (Josh. 24:15; Rom. 6:16)!

Submitting to the Holy Spirit's teaching, empowerment, and guidance is a preventative measure against the influences of personal sin (Gal. 5:16). The fruit that the Holy Spirit supplies is a mental-attitude provision that spiritually inoculates the believer against mental-attitude sin (Gal. 5:22-24). In this way, walking in the light becomes a garment: the armor of light (Rom. 13:12,14). One facet of the Holy Spirit's fruit is highlighted as a particular means of walking: faith (Gal. 5:22; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 5:7; 4:16-18; Hab. 2:4).

### **Walking according to.**

We've studied the sphere in which, and the means by which believers ought to walk. Now we must consider the absolute standard according to which believers ought to walk.

The baby believer should learn quickly that walking in the light and walking by the Holy Spirit fruit of faith is not a mindless mystical experience. The sphere and the means are achieved in the context of a standard.

That standard is the Word of God, and believers learn that Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Therefore we say, believers are to walk according to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4). Just as the Spirit and the flesh are contrasted when viewed as means for walking, these two competing influence are contrasted when viewed as the standard for walking (Rom. 8:5-8).

One facet of the Holy Spirit's fruit is highlighted as a particular standard for walking: love (Rom. 14:15). The Holy Spirit's standard supplies more than simply doctrinal information which believers can walk according to for a Godly walk. The Holy Spirit also supplies love which believers can walk according to for a Christ-like walk (Eph. 5:2; 2<sup>nd</sup> John 6).

The Holy Spirit's fruit of Love becomes yet another garment when believers choose to conduct their lives according to that standard (Col. 3:14).

### ***Third Circle***

This last aspect of peripatology will be covered on a basic level, but really needs to be studied on an intermediate basis, and restudied under advanced doctrinal studies. The third circle of the believer's daily walk is the prayer circle of God the Father.

The believer's relationship comes in the top circle in Christ. The believer's fellowship comes in the bottom circle through the filling of the Holy Spirit. The believer's leadership comes in the third circle by way of a face-to-face prayer life with God the Father.

Unbelievers do not enjoy access to God the Father in prayer (Jn. 14:6). Carnal believers also have their prayer privileges suspended until such time as they are restored to fellowship (Ps. 66:18; Isa. 1:10-15; 59:1-2; Zech. 7:13).

Believers (top circle) in fellowship (bottom circle) have confident access to the Throne of Grace 24-7-365 (Heb. 4:16). The third circle is the sphere of paterological prayer privilege. The pattern for paterological prayer is given in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:9-13).

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Our Father who is in heaven	Paternity
Hallowed be Your name	Praise
Your kingdom come	Plan
Your will be done	Purpose
On earth as it is in heaven	Province
Give us this day our daily bread	Provision
And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors	Pardon
And do not lead us into temptation	Priorities
But deliver us from evil	Protection

Believers operating in the sphere of paterological prayer privilege have the greatest peace imaginable (Phil. 4:6,7). They're not left to fend for themselves. They don't resort to the world, the flesh, or the devil for alternative supply.

## Thelematology

The Doctrine of the Will of God. A study on how believers may know and obey the will of God for their life.

The Greek word for “will” or “desire” is θέλημα thelema <sup>Strongs #2307</sup>. Thelematology is therefore the study of God’s will. God has a good, acceptable, and perfect will for every area of our lives (Rom. 12:2), and our blessing is to learn that will and submit to it (Rom. 12:1-2).

Basic Doctrinal Studies will keep the Will of God to a simple structure. More advanced studies will include greater developments of the various realms of God’s Will.

In temporal life, God designed volition (individuality), marriage, families, and nations. God has a will for each individual, marriage, family, and nation. In spiritual life for this dispensation God has a good, acceptable, and perfect will for individuals and for local churches.

Most believers place the cart before the horse when it comes to God’s will. We want to know God’s particular will concerning a specific circumstance or event. This study will attempt to restore the horse to its proper position in pulling the cart. Believers ought to learn the general truths of God’s will as a first priority. Once those principles are mastered, then particular and specific aspects of the Will of God will follow right along.

It has already been observed that not knowing the Will of God is foolishness (Eph. 5:17). In the context of that passage, we can conclude that God’s Will is *knowable* and *understandable*. Do not throw your hands up in despair and fall back to “Oh well, the Lord works in mysterious ways” as if He is beyond what we can grasp. His ways are above and beyond our ways (Isa. 55:8-9), but His ways are still knowable and within the limitations of what we can know, we are accountable for how we live.

General truths of the Will of God are like a soldier’s General Orders. Every soldier memorizes these General Orders. They apply all the time, every time. The General Orders for Guard Duty are as follows:

1. I will guard everything within the limits of my post and quit my post only when properly relieved.
2. I will obey my special orders and perform all my duties in a military manner.
3. I will report violations of my special orders, emergencies, and any thing not covered in my instructions to the commander of the relief.

God’s will for believers is not that far off from what these US Army General Orders are communicating. They exist by virtue of the person’s posting [guard duty in the Army, Christian Way of Life for believers]. They incorporate special orders for particular circumstances, and those special orders are communicated clearly [guard duty briefings in the Army, Bible Class for believers]. A chain of command and control is in place for handling all matters that do not have explicit instructions in either the General Orders or Special Orders [radio HQ for the Army, prayer for believers].

In these terms, all born again believers can function under the Bible’s “General Orders.” That is, all believers operate under common principles of God’s will. It is God’s will for each one of us to be saved, for example. By accepting Christ, the brand new believer has already passed beyond the first General Order for the angelic conflict human foot soldier.

## Thelematology

The Bible also contains our “Special Orders” for elements that are specific to our gifts, callings, and ministries. Pastors, for example, have Special Orders that pertain to their work-assignments as shepherds of local assemblies. These Special Orders are contained in the Bible, and all Pastors are accountable for them.

The Bible also outlines the procedures by which prayer may be utilized to bring other believers alongside and to request additional guidance from God for all matters not specifically addressed in the General or Special Orders. These procedures include seeking Godly counsel, and enjoining in fervent effectual prayer. These mechanics of Divine Guidance will be seen in this study.

The cross and three circles help us to illustrate our General Orders for the Will of God. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks. Those are the top-circle general orders for all believers “in Christ” (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:16-18). Sanctification is the bottom-circle general order for all believers (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 4:3-8). Specific prayer fellowship with the Father is the third-circle general order for all believers (1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:14-15).

The primary means for learning the Will of God is for the believer to abide in the Word of God (Rom. 12:1-2). The renewing of the mind is specifically detailed in Eph. 4:20-25 as learning Christ as a part of His Body. Believers “willing” to do God’s Will can rely upon accurate Biblical teaching (Jn. 7:17).

Staying on a basic level then, God’s will for every believer can be summarized:

1. Accept the offer of Jesus Christ for salvation (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2:4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:9).
2. Grow in Grace and Knowledge (Eph. 4:15; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:2; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:18).
3. Glorify Jesus Christ with every thought, word, and deed (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 10:5).
4. Edify fellow believers (Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 10:23; 14:26; Eph. 4:12,29).
5. Operate within the flock of a local assembly (Heb. 10:25; Eph. 5:19-21; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:7-11).
6. “Prove” or “demonstrate” the Will of God as a living sacrifice on a daily basis (Rom. 12:1-2).

Basic Methods for apprehending God’s Will can also be summarized:

1. Study to show yourself approved (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15).
2. Consult the wisdom of elders (Ex. 18:19; Prov. 1:5; Acts 8:34-35; 18:24-26).
3. Ask the Father in prayer (Jms. 1:5; 3:17; Prov. 2:3-7).
4. Consider carefully providential circumstances, and evaluate them according to Biblical understanding of God’s will (Acts 8:36; 11:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 7:8-9; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:4).
5. Examine your heart motivation (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 7:3).

## Agonology

The Doctrine of Struggle. A study of the believer's daily struggle against the world, the flesh and the devil.

The new believer must be immediately oriented to the battlefield conditions of the angelic conflict. The youngest and weakest of any species is the most vulnerable to hostile predators. So it is with the preying enemies of Jesus Christ. A baby believer without armor or weapons, and the training to use them is a very attractive target. The world, the flesh and the devil are hostile predators against born again believers in Jesus Christ. Consequently, Basic Doctrinal Studies needs to orient the babe in Christ to this struggle, and begin equipping him to deal with it.

A disciple is not above his master (Lk. 6:40). Our Lord faced agony in His struggle (Lk. 22:44), and we must likewise do the same (Jn. 15:18-20).

The key word for this study is *agony*. Our English word comes from the Greek words that form the substance of this study. The nouns ἀγών Greek Strongs #73 & ἀγωνία Greek Strongs #74, and the verb ἀγωνίζομαι Greek Strongs #75 are very fruitful word-studies. The very sound of agonizomai says "agonize, oh my!"

Believers in Christ will encounter tribulation, and various multiplied trials, but ours is a struggle with a guaranteed victory (Jn. 16:33). The believer who thinks that they somehow should not have to experience such hardship is a believer who has no desire to truly know his Savior (Phil. 3:10). Neither will they truly know victory (Rom. 8:17; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:12).

The babe in Christ can draw comfort from his hedge of protection, and the Sovereign protection he receives from the Lord (Job 1:10; Ps. 34:7; 91:11-16). That said, the babe also needs to understand that the Father who protects him calls for him to grow up and become an active participant in the struggle (Heb. 5:12-14; 10:32). It is a good fight that we must fight (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:18; 6:12; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:7). This is the race (ἀγών Strongs #73) set before us at the moment of our salvation (Heb. 12:1).

The struggle will be manifest on three simultaneous fronts: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

We are in the world, but no longer of the world (Jn. 17:6,11,14,16). We must identify with our blessings in Christ (Jn. 17:6). We must identify with our Father's name (Jn. 17:11). We must occupy our minds with the Word of God (Jn. 17:14). We must function in our new nature (Jn. 17:16).

We are not to submit to the flesh (Rom. 6:19). The desires of the flesh in opposition to the Holy Spirit have already been detailed in the study of Peripatology.

We must resist the devil (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:8-9), put on our armor and stand firm (Eph. 6:12-17). Some may object that these angelic conflict passages are more descriptive of mature believers than baby believers. Perhaps its best to consider that the essence of these passages is humility (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:6) and as such it is applicable even by the babe (Matt. 18:3-4). Are there deeper and more advanced areas of teaching that relate to Satanology, Demonology, and the Angelic Conflict? Of course! The schemes of the adversary must be learned and countered at every stage of maturity, but at the most basic level the angelic conflict can be summarized: casting all your anxiety on Him (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:7).





## Boulology

The Doctrine of the Plan of God. A study on God the Father's grace eternal plan of the ages for the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ. Includes the nature and description of Dispensations.

God the Father is the author of the Plan. God works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). Everything He has planned, and everything He does is perfect in His eternal wisdom. God's eternal purpose is the maximum glorification of Jesus Christ (Jn. 5:23; Phil. 2:10,11; Col. 1:18,19; Eph. 1:10).

Pastor Bob's expanded title for the Plan of God: God the Father's grace eternal dispensational plan of the ages for the maximum glorification, pleasure, and blessing of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Plan of God is presently underway and fulfilling the Father's purpose (Eph. 1:11). Believers in the Church are God's fellow workers (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:9), and must therefore be adjusted to the Father's plan (Prov. 19:21). God's purpose is for all things to work together for Good (Rom. 8:28).

God has unfolded His plan to and through a variety of vested stewards. This progressive unfolding began with the angels, then progressed to the creation of man in Adam, then the race and nation of Israel, and presently the unfolding of the Plan of God is revealed through the Church. Understanding the basic outline of this dispensational progression is an important part of Boulology.

### *The Unfolding Plan*

Two important foundational principles need to be established at this point. First, Basic Doctrinal Studies has already established that God is outside of His created realm of time. As angelic and human beings apprehend God's unfolding plan, we come to identify it as unfolding from our viewpoint in time. From God's viewpoint, the plan is an eternal plan (Eph. 3:11).

Secondly, it must be understood that the unfolding plan withheld certain information until its proper revelation. The Dispensation of the Church is most especially this sort of "mystery" doctrine (Eph. 3:3,4,9). Along with a progressive revelation, the eternal plan of God entails particular planned obsolescence (Heb. 8:13; 2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:7; Rev. 21:1).

### *Key Passages to Establish the Alpha to Omega Overview*

There are certain passages that are "mile markers" so to speak providing vital assistance in diagramming the Plan of God from eternity past (Alpha) to eternity future (Omega).

Eph. 1:10 establishes the end-game objective that God the Father has never allowed Himself to lose sight of: The Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. As already demonstrated, the Father's plan is dedicated to eternally exalting The Son.

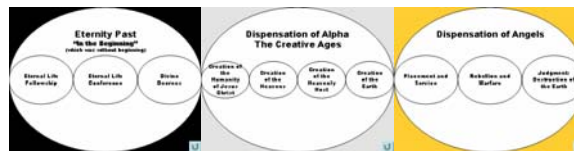
Prov. 8:22-31 portrays the hypostatic union of God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. True humanity and undiminished Deity are united forever in the Person of Christ. The Father's "begetting" of the "only begotten Son," the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15) is an unfathomable glory.

## Boulology

Col. 1:16 demonstrates that creation encompassed both the visible (human, physical) and invisible (angelic, spiritual) realms of existence. No time-frame or sequence is there indicated, and the Gen. 1&2 account only details the physical realm.

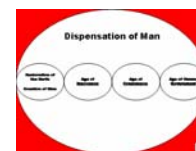
Job 38:7 ascertains the angelic presence at the creation of the Earth. Isa. 45:18 demonstrates that the Earth was not created a waste place (תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ *tohu wabohu* HebrewStrong's #8414) and Jer. 4:23-

26 describes the rebellion and Divine judgment that caused the formless and void (תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ *tohu wabohu*) condition (Gen. 1:2). Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-19; Rev. 12:3 do not supply any time markers, but provide additional context for the fall of Heylel ben Shachar (Satan) and his angels.



Heb. 1:14; 2:5; & 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:3 delineate the exalted place that man has over the angels in God's eternal plan. Unlike the angels, Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27a). Unlike the angels, Man was created male & female (Gen. 1:27b) with procreative privilege (Gen. 1:28).

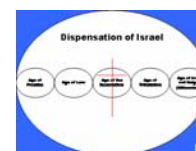
The Dispensation of Man (Gentiles) encountered great angelic conflict. The fall of Adam and Eve was prompted by Satanic temptation (Gen. 3:1-7). The flood of Noah (Gen. 6-8) was judgment in the context of fallen angelic intrusion into the human realm (Gen. 6:1-4,11-12). The empire of Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-12; 11:1-9) fixed Babylon (Babel) as the apex of rebellion against God (Isa. 13:1-14:27; Rev. 17:1-18:24).



Gen. 12:1-3 highlights the exalted place that the descendants of Abraham have over the Gentiles. Gen. 26:3-5 fixes Isaac over Ishmael as the heir of Abraham. Gen. 28:13-15 fixes Jacob over Esau as the heir of Abraham. Jacob is given the new name of Israel (Gen. 32:28) and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex. 3:6) guarantees the stewardship blessings upon Israel (Gen. 50:24; Ex. 2:24).

The Dispensation of Israel is a vital study for understanding the Alpha to Omega plan of God. The Jewish race had every advantage and benefit in contrast with the Gentiles. A prime advantage was the written Word of God (Rom. 3:1-2). No part of the Bible was written during the Dispensation of Man (Gentiles). Other prime advantages for Israel include their national adoption, national glory, eternal covenants, standard of perfection, temple holiness, prophetic hope, and patriarchal heritage (Rom. 9:4-5a). The greatest advantage of Israel is the birth of the Christ (Rom. 9:5b) through Whom all the nations of the earth are blessed (Gen. 12:3).

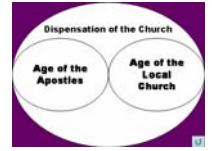
The Covenants are matters for Intermediate and Advanced Doctrinal Studies. As far as Basic Doctrinal Studies is concerned, two observations will be made. First: the Adamic and Noahic Covenants were enacted by God during the Dispensation of Man (Gentiles), and the Abrahamic, Palestinic, Davidic, and New Covenants were enacted by God during the Dispensation of Israel. Secondly: The Church is made up of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 9:24; Eph. 2:16,18) and our understanding of the Covenants reflects that. On the other hand, The Church is made up of neither Jews nor Gentiles (Gal. 3:28; Eph. 3:15) and our relationship to the Covenants must also reflect that. Thirdly: unconditional and eternal covenants cannot be broken or superseded.



## Boulology

Matt. 16:18-19 pinpoints the establishment of The Church as a future work of Jesus Christ. This passage also stipulates the activity of The Church to be both earthly and heavenly, engaging both the physical and spiritual realms of creation.

Eph. 3:1-12 expounds the nature of the Mystery of Christ: how The Church was purposefully hidden throughout former Dispensations. Other passages to support this include Rom. 16:25; Heb. 11:39-40; & 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 1:10-12.



So, we arrive in this study to the present. Here we are right now in The Church. Unlike history books which can only look backward through time, we have in the Bible the privilege to look forward through time. Prophetic studies are for the most part Intermediate and Advanced, but Basic Doctrinal Studies will include short studies on prophetic matters in order to complete the Alpha to Omega overview.

There remains an unfulfilled promise pertaining to the conclusion of The Church. The Rapture of The Church is a prophetic study which in the Alpha to Omega overview marks the conclusion of the Dispensation of The Church and the resumption of the Dispensation of Israel.

There remain MANY unfulfilled promises pertaining to the unconditional and eternal covenants with Israel. Tribulational and Millennial prophetic studies develop these matters and help us to diagram the future Age of Tribulation and Age of iron-rod (Millennial) Reign. It is important to note that the time-limited iron-rod Reign of Jesus Christ does not totally satisfy Israel's covenant promises. Something beyond the Millennium must take place.

There also remain unfulfilled elements of the Father's plan pertaining to the unconditional and eternal Adamic & Noahic covenants with the Gentiles. Additionally, unfulfilled promises by the Father to exalt and magnify Jesus Christ require fulfillment beyond the time-limited iron-rod Reign (Millennium). These matters are developed in the Advanced Doctrinal Study of the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times.



Now . . . does all of this overwhelm a babe in Christ? Maybe. Don't let it! The babe in Christ can grasp an overview or a framework. The babe in Christ can pinpoint his place in that framework. The babe in Christ can be encouraged that all his future studies will properly fit within this basic framework. The babe is now equipped to rightly divide the Word of Truth (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15).

In summary: God has unfolded His eternal plan progressively. God has entrusted stewardship responsibilities mostly in sequence. The glitch in the strict sequence is the Dispensation of the Church which exists within the Dispensation of Israel during a period in which God's dealings with Israel are momentarily set aside.

The babe in Christ ought to be able to properly identify the stewardships (Dispensations) of Angels, Man (Gentiles), Israel (Jews), Church, and Fullness of the Times within the Alpha to Omega overview.





## Ecclesiology

The Doctrine of the Church. A study on the Universal Church and the purpose and function for the local church.

In the study of God's plan, several distinct stewardships were detailed. The present stewardship of the Church needs to be accurately taught in order for believers today to function appropriately. The Basic Doctrinal Study of Ecclesiology will have three overall objectives: 1. Establishing the distinctions between Israel and the Church. 2. Teaching the aspects of The Church (universal) and the local church. 3. Describing the basic structure of local church organization.

### *Israel and the Church Contrasted*

Lewis Sperry Chafer developed twenty-four contrasts between Israel and the Church (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 4, p.47). These contrasts are simple, short, and presented for even the baby believer to appreciate. Eleven of Chafer's contrasts are now to be considered.

III. The seed of Abraham. The seed of Abraham promise was given with two different figures—the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16) and the stars of heaven (Gen. 15:5). Jacob's children are the earthly descendants and constitute the nation of Israel. When Abraham's promise is confirmed to Jacob, only the dust of the earth figure is given (Gen. 28:14), and not the stars of heaven figure. Members of the Church are the heavenly "descendants" of Abraham on the basis of faith (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:6,7,9).

IV. Birth. Israelites become what they are by physical birth. Christians become what they are by spiritual birth.

VII. Nationality. Israel belongs to the earth and to the world-system. Though above all nations in Jehovah's reckoning, they are still in the world as one of its nations. Over against this and forming the strongest contrast is the fact that the Church is composed of all nations, including Israel, and sustains no citizenship here, but instead the believers are strangers and pilgrims.

XII. The Father. To Israel God is known by His primary titles, but not as the Father of the individual Israelite. In distinction to this, the Christian is actually begotten of God and has every right to address Him as Father.

XIII. Christ. To Israel, Christ is Messiah, Immanuel, and King with all that those appellations imply. To the Church, Christ is Savior, Lord, Bridegroom, and Head.

XIV. The Holy Spirit. Only in exceptional instances and for unusual service did the Holy Spirit come upon an Israelite, and the Spirit withdrew as freely as He came, when the purpose was accomplished. The strongest contrast is to be seen here, in that the Christian is indwelt by the Spirit; in truth, he is not saved apart from this relation to the Spirit (Rom. 8:9).

XV. A Governing Principle. For fifteen centuries the Law of Moses was Israel's rule of daily life. Unlike this, the members of Christ's Body, being wholly perfected in Him, are under the beseechings and directions which grace provides.

XVI. Divine Enablement. The law provided no enabling power for its achievement. To the Church, however, as certainly as superhuman requirements are laid on her members, so certainly supernatural power is provided for every demand (Rom. 6:14).

XVIII. The Promise of Christ's Return. Christ returns to Israel as her King in power and great glory, at which time she will be gathered from every part of the earth by angelic ministrations and into her own land (Deut. 30:1-8; Jer. 23:7-8; Matt. 24:31). Over against these great events promised to Israel is the return of Christ for His own Bride, when He takes her with Him into heaven's glory (Jn. 14:1-3).

XXI. Priesthood. Israel *had* a priesthood. The Church *is* a priesthood.

## Ecclesiology

XXII. Marriage. As a nation, Israel is likened by Jehovah to His wife—a wife untrue and yet to be restored (Jer. 3:1,14,20; Ezek. 16:1-59; Hos. 2:1-23; Isa. 54:1-17; cf. Gal. 4:27). In marked distinction to this situation respecting Israel, is the revelation that the Church is to Christ as one espoused and to be married in heaven (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9).

### *The Universal Church and the Local Church*

The Church is the Body (Col. 1:18,24; Eph. 1:22-23) and Bride (Jn. 3:29; Eph. 5:25-33; Rev. 19:7-8) of Jesus Christ. Every born-again believer from Pentecost to Rapture is a Member of that Body (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:27; Eph. 5:30). When referencing the universal Church, it is customary to capitalize the word.

A local church is a small portion of The Church. Specifically, a local church is a particular flock entrusted to a gifted shepherd. Jesus Christ is the Chief Shepherd, and He oversees the flock of the entire Church, but He has designated and delegated under shepherds (pastors) to shepherd the flock of God “among them” (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:1-4). A local church is a family/body in a given geographical location assembled together for the corporate functions of the body and bride (Rev. 2&3). A local church is not a building, but a living body of believers in Jesus Christ. Any assembly of believers under the shepherding oversight of a Pastor-Teacher is a local church.

A local church may be without a Pastor for brief periods of time, but they cannot stay that way for very long! Sheep without a shepherd become scattered and devoured. A true local church must have at least one man with the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher. That one man exercising that one gift cannot fully edify the body of Christ. All believers exercising every gift supplies the maximum edification for each Member and provides the maximum glory for the Head of the Body—Jesus Christ.

### *Local Church Organization*

The Church is an edifice (Eph. 2:19-22; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:19; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 2:5) and all things in the Church must be done for edification (Rom. 15:2; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:12,26; Eph. 4:29). This principle helps define the parameters for local church organization.

The local church must maintain order rather than allow confusion to reign (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:33,40). Jesus Christ provides order to each local church by walking in the midst of each lampstand, by holding each star in His right hand (Rev. 1:12-16,20), and by providing written instruction in the New Testament (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:15).

One man trying to do everything gets worn out (Ex. 18:17-26). The Apostles recognized this, and also recognized the necessity for priorities in the local churches (Acts 6). Deacons were appointed to take care of various matters and free the spiritual leaders to pursue prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-4).

As the foundation of the Church was laid by the Apostles and Prophets (Eph. 2:20; 3:5), the local churches began to be identified by their Overseers and Deacons (Phil. 1:1; Bishops & Deacons, KJV). These offices describe functionality within a local church, and do not speak to gift or maturity status.

### *Gifts, Offices, and Maturity Statuses*

The study of spiritual gifts (Charismatology) will comprise Basic Doctrinal Studies #10 at the conclusion of Ecclesiology. The discussion here will simply contrast gifts & offices, as well as the separate aspect of maturity status within the grace and knowledge growth spectrum (2<sup>nd</sup> Pet. 3:18).

Spiritual gifts are given by grace at the moment of salvation. No believer may earn or deserve any gift. The offices of Overseer and Deacon on the other hand are described with particular qualifications and disqualifications. First Timothy 3 breaks down the Overseer (vv.1-7) and the Deacons (vv.8-13). These are the only two offices cited in Phil. 1:1 and stipulated with qualifications and disqualifications 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:1-13. Modern English typically refers to the Overseer office as Pastor. Thus, many church constitutions describe a Pastor, Assistant Pastor(s), and Deacons. The basis for the Pastor and Deacons governance of a local is church is the New Testament pairing of Overseers and Deacons.

There is no spiritual gift of Deacon. Tested men of any gift may serve in the office of Deacon (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:10), provided they do not forfeit that trust in some way. In a similar way, there is no spiritual gift of Overseer (or Elder; the interrelated terms Overseer & Elder will be examined shortly). Non-novice men of any gift (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:6) may “aspire” to the office of Overseer (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:1), provided they do not forfeit that trust in some way.

The terms Elder and Overseer are used in parallel, and thus we observe an interrelationship between these two terms. Neither term is a gift; Elder is a maturity status and Overseer is an office. The Elders of Acts 20:17 are called Overseers in Acts 20:28 and are expected to shepherd the flock. Likewise, the Elders of Titus 1:5 are called Overseers in Titus 1:7. The Elders of 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:1 are commanded to shepherd and oversee the flock in 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2.

So, even though an Overseer/Elder may have any gift, the spiritual gift of Pastor-Teacher is the one most supernaturally adapted to the shepherding expectations of the Overseer/Elder. There are actually two present-day gifts which may propel a man into the Overseer office and the Elder maturity status faster than other gifts. Ephesians 4:11-12 outlines a total of four spiritual gifts that the Lord Jesus Christ assigns to local churches for the edification of those local churches. Apostles and Prophets are spiritual gifts that ceased when the foundation of the Church was completed.

Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers continue to be given to local churches for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:13-16). Men with these gifts may be appointed to the office of Overseer at younger biological ages than men with other spiritual gifts. Men with these gifts may be set apart for full-time financial support sooner than Overseers with various other gifts. Men with these gifts may serve in the office of Deacon while they train and prepare for the office of Overseer.

A good example in the New Testament is Philip. He’s called Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8), and presided over his four virgin daughters in their gift of Prophetess (Acts 21:9). The Lord used him to witness to the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:5ff.), but prior to all of that he served as one of the first seven deacons (Acts 21:8 cf. 6:5). So, Philip received the spiritual gift of Evangelist the moment he was saved. After being tested, he served in the office of Deacon. Ultimately, he grew

into the maturity status of Elder and the interrelated office of Overseer in the local church at Caesarea.

Timothy is another excellent example. Although still biologically youthful (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 4:12), Timothy was gifted, trained, and placed into office as an Overseer in the local church at Ephesus (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 1:3). He was expected to appoint other such Overseers as well as Deacons in that local church (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:14-15; 5:17-22). A young man, still growing in maturity status may be placed in the office of Overseer as a consequence of his spiritual gift (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 4:11-16).

So, while an Overseer/Elder may have any gift, the shepherding function of the Overseer/Elder makes it natural for men with the gift of Pastor-Teacher to be placed in that office. A Pastor-Teacher by gift will be spiritually empowered to fulfill the Overseer office better than an Evangelist by gift. Both the Pastor-Teacher and the Evangelist by gift will naturally fall into the office of Overseer as per Eph. 4:11-12., but other non-preaching and non-teaching Elders are certainly possible (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:17).

Now, all of this may seem to unduly exalt the Pastor-Teacher above all other gifts. This is absolutely not the case. Every spiritual gift is needed for the benefit of the Body. This study actually encourages the Evangelist, Exhorter, Leader, Administrator, Teacher, etc. to serve in the office of Deacon during their maturity status of Young Man, and enter into the office of Overseer when they “retire” from their ministry as Deacons, or when they are promoted into a vocationally full-time ministry upon their maturity status of Elder.

### *Plurality of Elders, Singularity of Angels*

Local churches in the Age of Apostles had a plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23; 20:17 & often). Multiple Elders did not cause confusion or violate the need for orderliness as every Elder fell under the authority of the Apostles.

Beyond Paul’s instructions in the Pastoral Epistles, the Apostle John gives us a tremendous insight into post-apostolic local church polity in his letter to the seven local churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3). Each of these local churches undoubtedly had a number of Elders. Nevertheless, in each case, there was one and only one man held in Jesus Christ’s right hand and addressed as the Angel of that particular local church (Rev. 2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14).

If a given local church has three Pastors (for example) two of those Pastors must acknowledge that they fall under the Pastoral authority of the one Angel (messenger) that Jesus Christ holds in His right hand. In our common terminology, these Pastors are referred to as Assistant Pastors. In New Testament vocabulary, all three men would be considered Overseer/Elders, but only one would be considered the Angel of that local church.

Another way to think of it is that the Angel is the one Overseer/Elder in the local church who does not fall under the authority of any other Overseer/Elders. He falls immediately under the Lord Jesus Christ as he is held in His right hand.



### ***What About Women?***

In Christ there is no male nor female (Gal. 3:28), and thus we have gender equality within the Body of Christ. In terms of authority orderliness, however, Jesus Christ has established that a woman is not “to teach or exercise authority over a man” in the operation of a local church (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2:12). This is not a social peculiarity limited to the first century and outdated by the twenty-first century. This is a principle that stems from the pattern of authority and help-mate structure of Adam and Eve.

Women in the Apostolic Age of the Church received the spiritual gift of Prophecy and are rightly called Prophetesses (Acts 21:9). Having a communication gift, it is expected that these Prophetesses communicated. Indeed the practice was for them to do so with heads covered (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:4-5), so as to make very clear in the angelic conflict that they were not usurping the place of the men in the local assembly (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 11:10). In the event where multiple Prophets were communicating to a local church (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:29-33,37-40), the women (Prophetesses) were to remain silent (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:34-36).

In the present Age of the Local Church, prophecy has been done away (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8). There are no more prophetesses, but how might we handle an Evangeless, Exhortationess, Teacheress, etc.? 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 2:12 precludes a woman from the office of Overseer, but communication gifts are certainly valid in ministries and effects that edify other women as well as ministries and effects that edify children.

### ***What About Denominations?***

There is no New Testament basis for any structure of hierarchy above or outside the local church. Each individual “star” of each individual “lampstand” is equally within the right hand of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cooperation and fellowship between local churches is Biblical (Acts 11:27-30; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 8:1-4,23-24; 9:1-5), but apostolic jurisdiction over multiple local churches ended when the Apostolic Age of the Church ended.



## Charismatology

The Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts. A study on the grace provision for the spiritual gifts of believers in the Dispensation of the Church. Technically, Charismatology intersects Ecclesiology (Doctrine of the Church) Pneumatology (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, a primary division of Theology), and Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things—End Times).

### *Old Testament Spiritual Gifts*

Spiritual gifts were given here and there prior to the Dispensation of the Church. Craftsmen were gifted for the construction of the Tabernacle and the Temple (Ex. 31:1-11; 35:30-35; 36:1-2,8; 1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 7:14; 2<sup>nd</sup> Chr. 2:7,13,14). Various prophets were gifted and sent to Israel (Jer. 7:25; 25:4; 26:5; 35:15) and even an occasional Gentile nation (Num. 22:5).

### *Millennial Spiritual Gifts*

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit will be a feature of the coming Millennium (Joel 2:28-29), and that coming aspect of pneumatika is rightly considered under Eschatology (Doctrine of Last Things). Peter cited the Joel passage to describe the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:16ff.), but the inception of the Church does not fulfill the promises made to Israel. The context of Joel 2 is clearly Millennial, and the promised blessings are for Israel—not the Church.

Differences Between Joel 2 and Acts 2	
Joel 2:28-29	Acts 2
“After this” follows the zealous deliverance of Israel from the Gentiles (Joel 2:18-20).	No such parallel with the inception of the Church.
The Spirit is poured on all mankind (Joel 2:28).	The Spirit is poured out upon a select group of believers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4).
The Jewish people (your sons and daughters) will receive gifts of prophecy (incl. dreams & visions) (Joel 2:28). No mention of tongues.	The Spirit-filled Church Members began speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4). No mention of prophecy.

The future role of Israel with a prophetic ministry towards the Gentiles is an eschatological study and a pneumatological study that touches upon Ecclesiastical Charismatology but must be as clearly distinguished as the Old Testament manifestations of spiritual giftedness.

### *Ecclesiastical Spiritual Gifts (Ecclesiastical Charismatology)*

Our present stewardship of the Church features grace/spiritual gifts (χάρισματα charismata <sup>Strong's #5486</sup> & πνευματικά pneumatika <sup>Strong's #4152</sup>) given on a universal basis. Every believer today has at least one spiritual gift (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

The new believer needs to understand that the impartation of Divine power is not given for the pursuit of miraculous events or the participation in ecstatic experience. Spiritual gifts are provided for grace service to Members of the Body of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10).

### ***Scriptural Authority for Spiritual Gifts***

The primary texts for spiritual gift studies are as follows. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12-14 is the longest and most thorough passage. The great love passage is contained within the context of a three chapter discourse on spiritual gifts. The most complete listings of individual gifts is given in this passage. A secondary text which compliments 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12 very well is Rom. 12:6-8.

Secondary texts for spiritual gift studies also must examine Eph. 4:11 and relate it to the function of local churches for the equipping of the saints. Finally, 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:11 is another passage which casts illumination upon the subject.

### ***Varieties and Sameness***

The introduction to the primary New Testament text concerning spiritual gifts presents three facets of gifting that ought to be recognized (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:4-6). Gifts, ministries, and effects are related yet distinct concepts as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit equip Members of the Church. Significantly, only the concepts of gifts and the person of the Holy Spirit are amplified in the following context of the passage.

### ***The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts***

Ecclesiastical Spiritual Gifts have both general and particular purposes. In general, every gift is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:7) and are to be utilized for the edification of the Body of Christ (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:7; 14:26; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 4:10). In addition to the general purpose of all gifts, particular gifts either had or continue to have particular purposes. Of paramount importance, it must be understood that the ecclesiastical gifts of Apostle and Prophet had the particular purpose of building the foundation of the Church, and revealing the mystery Doctrine of Christ (Eph. 2:20; 3:5). This is why a distinction is drawn between the Apostolic Church and the Post-Apostolic Church.

*Biblical Lists of Spiritual Gifts*

1 Cor 12:8–10	1 Cor 12:28	1 Cor 12:29–30	Rom. 12:6–8	Eph 4:11	1 Pet 4:11
word of wisdom λόγος σοφίας	apostles ἀποστόλους	apostles ἀπόστολοι	prophecy προφητείαν	apostles ἀποστόλους	speaking τις λαλεῖ serving τις διακονεῖ
word of knowledge λόγος γνώσεως	prophets προφήτας	prophets προφήται	service διακονίαν	prophets προφήτας	
faith πίστις	teachers διδασκάλους	teachers διδάσκαλοι	teaching ὁ διδάσκων	evangelists εὐαγγελιστάς	
gifts of healing χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων	miracles δυνάμεις	miracles δυνάμεις	exhortation ὁ παρακαλῶν	pastor-teachers ποιμένες καὶ διδασκάλους	
effects of miracles ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων	gifts of healings χαρίσματα ἰαμάτων	gifts of healings χαρίσματα ἔχουσιν ἰαμάτων	giving ὁ μεταδίδους		
prophecy προφητεία	helps ἀντιλήμψεις	tongues γλώσσαις λαλοῦσιν	leadership ὁ προϊστάμενος		
distinguishing spirits διακρίσεις πνευμάτων	administrations κυβερνήσεις	interpret διερμηνεύουσιν	showing mercy ὁ ἐλεῶν		
kinds of tongues γένη γλωσσῶν	kinds of tongues γένη γλωσσῶν				
interpretation of tongues ἐρμηνεία γλωσσῶν					

Shaded areas indicate a gift that has not been mentioned in any previous column. Red text indicates a permanent spiritual gift.

### *Cessation of Particular Spiritual Gifts*

The Old Testament giftings illustrate something very important for us. When the particular purpose for a gift is complete, the distribution of that gift ceases. Tabernacle-building and Temple-building are good examples for temporary giftedness. Nobody today receives the gift of Tabernacle-building because it would be ludicrous for God to distribute such a gift.

The Church originally featured twenty spiritual gifts. Some of particular purposes that some particular gifts had in the early (Apostolic) Church are no longer features of the present (Post-Apostolic) Church. It has already been observed that the particular purpose for the Apostles and Prophets was foundational. Since those particular purposes are no longer extant, those particular gifts are no longer distributed. Those gifts have “ceased” to be distributed.

Other such gift cessation is clearly outlined in the New Testament. 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8ff. explicitly marks the cessation of certain gifts, and implicitly marks the cessation of others. Explicitly marked are Prophecy, Tongues, and Word of Knowledge. Implicitly marked are Distinguishing Spirits, Interpretation of Tongues, & Word of Wisdom.

Tongues is actually a separate matter from Prophecy and Word of Knowledge (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8). Tongues “ceases,” but Prophecy and Word of Knowledge are “done away.” The end of Prophecy and Word of Knowledge is developed in the final portion of 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13. The particular purpose of Tongues is given its own full development (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:1-19) and the understanding of Tongues cessation comes when it is related to its Old Testament prophecy (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:20-22 cf. Isa. 28:1-29 exp. vv.11-13). Tongues ceases when its particular purpose for warning Israel of destruction is complete. No believer has been given the gift of Tongues since the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD.

Prophecy and Word of Knowledge have another basis for their being abolished (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:8-12). These gifts functioned in a revelatory manner during the Apostolic Age of the Church (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:6,26; Eph. 1:17). Without a New Testament to unfold the wisdom and knowledge of the Old Testament for Church application, these revelatory gifts served to do just that. Remember: the foundation of the Church was laid by the Apostles and the Prophets (Eph. 2:20; 3:5).

1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:9-13 describes a condition of the Church where Word of Knowledge gives a partial mirror-like view. View of what? A view of a believer’s own heart and how accountable we are to God (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 14:14-25 cf. Heb. 4:12-13). Prophecy gives a different partial mirror-like view. These different parts must be put together and even so the view is mirror-like. By extension, the gifts of Apostle and Word of Wisdom would be other revelatory gifts supplying these partial mirror-like views.

As more and more of the New Testament was written, there would be less and less need for these revelatory gifts to unfold the wisdom and knowledge of the Old Testament for Church application. The New Testament text would be fulfilling that function. So, the arrival of “the perfect” would supply a complete face-to-face-like view of our stewardship responsibility before God. With no further particular purpose for these particular gifts, God the Father abolished their distribution.

Phil. 2:25-30, 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:23, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:20b would add Healing to the gifts which were disappearing as the New Testament was being completed and the Apostolic Age was drawing to a close. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:12 and Heb. 2:2-4 would add Miracles to the gifts which had particular purposes tied to the various apostolic ministries.

### *Permanent Ecclesiastical Gifts*

The gifts which have ongoing particular purposes for the edification of the Church have an ongoing distribution throughout the Dispensation of the Church, Age of the Local Church. Such gifts include Faith-Worker, Teacher, Helper, Administrator, Server, Exhorter/Encourager/Comforter, Giver, Leader, Mercy Shower, Evangelist, and Pastor-Teacher. These gifts can be described based upon their Biblical descriptions, but the varieties of ministries and working effects for each gift can be described by Biblical illustrations and present experiential illustrations.

**Faith-Worker** (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:9; 13:2; cf. Jas. 2:17 & Heb. 11:33-38). A fruit of the Spirit is faith, and every believer ought to express faith to one another (Gal. 5:22). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary “proportion” of faith (Rom. 12:6) enabling them to come alongside and help other believers who may be weak in faith (Rom. 14:1). Such believers would obviously anchor congregational prayer meetings (Jas. 1:6). Such believers would also thrive in hospital or visitation ministries.

**Teacher** (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:28,29; Rom. 12:7). Every believer ought to grow to a maturity status that will equip them for teaching (Heb. 5:12), and those who are growing into a teaching position of responsibility in a local church must pay heed to the accountability warnings (Jas. 3:1). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that communicates the Word of God with power (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:13; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 1:5). Such believers would have teaching ministries in and out of local churches, and would be expected to step into the Office of Overseer upon reaching the Maturity Status of Elder.

**Helper** (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:28). Every believer ought to be helpful to one another as well as towards those outside the church (Acts 20:35; Rom. 8:23-26). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that compliments other believers’ giftings in the coordinated achievement of work. Such believers could provide logistical support functions for a local church ministry (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:16). Helpers may serve in the Office of Deacon (Rom. 15:24; Rom. 16:2), or may serve as helpers without any Office for years and years.

**Administrator** (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 12:28). One who steers, pilots, or guides. Governments (KJV, ASV, Darby); Administrators (Ampl., ISV, NASB, NIV, NKJV); Managing (HCSB). Guidance is always necessary for all believers of all dispensations (Prov. 11:14). Believers with this particular gift manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that is able to pilot particular ministries through dangerous waters. Such believers would supply needed management functions for any number of local church ministries, and fit logically into the Offices of Deacon

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or Overseer. Stephanas is sometimes taught in this context (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:15-18). Edersheim affirmed his conclusion that Judas Iscariot was an Administrator<sup>4</sup>.

**Server/Minister** (Rom. 12:7). The diakonia service/ministry is related etymologically to the Office title of Deacon (diakonos). Every believer is expected to serve/minister every other believer in the body (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 3:5; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:4; Eph. 4:12). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that not only serves but edifies in that personal service ministry. Tychicus is an example of such a faithful Minister (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7), and Epaphroditus also engaged in such personal service ministry (Phil. 2:25). Though not illustrative of NT spiritual giftedness, the OT examples of Joseph (Gen. 39:4), Joshua (Ex. 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28), and Gehazi (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 4:12,25; 5:20-25) portray the equivalent function of the personal server/minister. Note also that Elisha filled this role while training under Elijah (1<sup>st</sup> Kgs. 19:21).

**Paraclete (Exhorter/Encourager/Comforter)** (Rom. 12:8). One of the most difficult spiritual gifts to describe and define is the spiritual gift that is revealed as a participle of the Greek verb parakaleo. The difficulty lies in the broad spectrum that this verb represents—from exhort to encourage to comfort. So, which is it? Does a believer with this gift exhort? Does he encourage? Does he comfort? Yes. Of course, each of these areas are areas where all believers would be expected to accomplish such activities. Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that comes alongside a fellow believer in ways that only the Paraclete could (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7). This gift might be exercised through prayer ministries, music ministries, visitation ministries, etc. As a speaking gift, such believers compliment other speaking gifts in wonderful ways, and are valuable in both the Office of Deacon and Office of Overseer.

**Giver** (Rom. 12:8; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:3). Sharing with one who has need is a responsibility for all believers (Eph. 4:28; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 8:1-5; 9:10-15). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that provides abundantly, cheerfully, and vitally for particular ministries (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 6:17-19). Believers with this gift receive potentially the greatest personal inner-happiness (Acts 20:35; Phil. 4:17). The Lord had a number of women with a grace orientation to support His ministry in a way that foreshadows the nature and function of this ecclesiastical charisma (Lk. 8:3).

**Leader** (Rom. 12:8; 1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:12). Believers with this particular gift manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that takes initiative, stands in front, and charts a course for other believers to follow. The exercise of this gift requires diligence and exhausting labor (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 5:12). Believers with this gift are valuable for every ministry and every effective work within a local church. Believers with this gift will fit logically into the Office of Deacon where they can be put in charge over various tasks (Acts 6:3; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 3:12). Believers with this gift will fit logically into the Office of Overseer when they grow into the Maturity Status of Elder (1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:17; cf. 3:4; Heb. 13:7,17,24).

**Mercy Shower** (Rom. 12:8). All believers are expected to demonstrate mercy towards one another. Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an

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<sup>4</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. 2, Page 472.



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extraordinary grace enablement that extends mercy to others with a power that keeps them from losing heart (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 4:1). Tabitha is a superb NT illustration of this gift which was manifest through a clothing ministry (Acts 9:36,39). Another common ministry for the gift of Mercy Shower is the ministry of hospitality. The Shunammite woman demonstrated this grace orientation to support Elisha (2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 4:10). Lydia demonstrated this aspect of hospitality in the NT (Acts 16:14-15). Other ministries which show mercy could include spheres of nursing, prison visitation, etc. (Heb. 13:1-3; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:16-18). This gift may be a large factor in a fervent effectual prayer ministry (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:16).

**Evangelist** (Eph. 4:11; Acts 21:8; 2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 4:5). All believers are expected to proclaim the Gospel to this lost and dying world (1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 3:15). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that drives them into such Gospel ministries (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:14,16). Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers are specifically given by Jesus Christ to local churches for the equipping of the saints for the work of service. As the two primary equipping-gifts, Evangelists and Pastor-Teachers are Divinely suited to the Office of Overseer within a local church ministry.

**Pastor-Teacher** (Eph. 4:11). The final gift in our study is the one that is often over-emphasized to a point of undue prominence. Given that a flock without a shepherd is in serious trouble, it is often recognized that every local church (flock) must have a pastor (shepherd). All Overseers and Elders, regardless of their spiritual gift are commanded to shepherd the flock (Acts 20:28; 1<sup>st</sup> Pet. 5:2). Believers with this particular gift, however, manifest the Holy Spirit through an extraordinary grace enablement that fulfills the spiritual expectations of shepherding better than any other spiritual gift. Like the Evangelist, the Pastor-Teacher is Divinely suited to the Office of Overseer, once his preparation and training for that ministry is complete. This gift has perhaps more Scripture to define and describe it than any other individual gift. Psalm 23, the Good Shepherd (John 10), and Ezekiel 34 provide extensive doctrinal information for the role of a shepherd in a local church.

### *Recognizing Spiritual Gifts*

How does a believer recognize his gift? Should we make use of the great American answer-anything device? Tyco's Magic 8 Ball can supply 20 different answers, but if you purchase it for \$7.99 at amazon.com you will also want to order Inside the Magic 8 Ball: The Complete User's Guide for \$23.59. This amazing American answering accessory has been available since 1946, but what did generations of believers do prior to that when faced with a crisis in decision making?



Seriously, then, identification of one's spiritual gift is not child's play and should not utilize a child's toy. The bottom-line reality is that each believer's spiritual gift is a matter for personal application of the will of God for your life. It is no different than any other particular application of God's will, and the principles learned in Thelematology all apply.

1. Study to show yourself approved (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 2:15).
2. Consult the wisdom of elders (Ex. 18:19; Prov. 1:5; Acts 8:34-35; 18:24-26).
3. Ask the Father in prayer (Jms. 1:5; 3:17; Prov. 2:3-7).
4. Consider carefully providential circumstances, and evaluate them according to Biblical understanding of God's will (Acts 8:36; 11:11; 2<sup>nd</sup> Kgs. 7:8-9; 1<sup>st</sup> Sam. 24:4).
5. Examine your heart motivation (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Jn. 5:15; 2<sup>nd</sup> Sam. 7:3).

### *Better than Spiritual Gifts*

Inserted into the Spiritual Gift "cradle" of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12-14 is the precious "baby" Love (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 13:1-8a). The great Love poem is a matter for the deepest of all Biblical studies. God is Love, and plunging into the depths of Love is to plunge into the deep things of God.

The sphere of love is the primary realm in which believers need to operate. Spiritual gifts are important, but when used apart from the agape love mindset, their use is worse than not knowing your gift in the first place!

### **Conclusion to Basic Doctrinal Studies**

A believer who has grasped these 10 categories of Basics, culminating with teaching on Spiritual Gifts, is equipped to step into active service in and for the Lord Jesus Christ according to the Father's purpose for saving him in the first place (Eph. 2:10).