

Personal Doctrinal Statement (2025)

by Joshua D. Vajda, upd. 1/28

The following represents what I have received about the faith and wish to pass on to others. It seeks to be faithful to the truth of God in all things but represents a work in progress as one whose convictions and understanding are limited, at times inconsistent, and always imperfect. ~JDV

I. GOD

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth—all things visible and invisible. He is the first person of the Trinity, which is one God in three persons, undivided in essence. Each person is unblended with the others, eternal and uncreated, and equal in divinity, glory, and majesty. I believe God is metaphysically simple, not composed of any parts. He does not depend on His creation in any way, but all Creation depends on Him in every way. Without Him nothing was made. He is utterly transcendent and everywhere present. He knows all things in virtue of His deity and not by experience. He is perfect in power, in wisdom, in glory, in goodness, and in holiness. He is before all time and present in all of time, unchanging and yet revealing Himself in time. He is hidden in His essence but revealed in His words and His works.

Scripture: Gen. 17:1; Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:15–17; Matt. 5:48; Matt. 28:19; Rom. 1:20; Heb 1:3; John 1:1–3; Jer. 23:23–24; Psalm 139:1–18; Ex. 34:6–7; Num. 23:19; Ex. 33:20–23; Deut. 29:29.

II. JESUS CHRIST

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, our Lord. He was begotten of the Father before all ages—God from God, light from light, and of the same essence. He was not made, but rather through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He forevermore is one person with two natures, fully God and fully man without confusion, change, separation, or division. He lived a sinless life, perfectly kept the Law, taught truth without error, and demonstrated the power of God against sin, death, sickness, and the devil. Surrendering Himself willingly, He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to the place of the dead. On the third day He rose again from the dead, and was seen by many witnesses. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead and throw death and Hades

into the lake of fire. His kingdom will never end. He is the head of the church, our Good Shepherd and Righteous King, full of grace and truth.

Scripture: Matt. 16:16; Rom 1:1-6; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; Luke 1:31-37; John 1:29-30; Heb 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; Luke 11:20; John 10:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:3-5; Acts 7:55-56; Matt. 19:28; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 20:12-15; Rev. 11:15; Col. 1:18; John 10:11; 1 Tim. 1:17; John 1:14.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT

I believe the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, equal in glory and deity with both Father and Son. He proceeds from the Father and the Son, and with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. He is neither an impersonal force nor a lesser person. Through Him comes the second birth, new life in Christ. He unites believers to Christ through the church. He indwells all who believe and ministers to them by guiding them to the truth, sanctifying them in holiness, and gifting them for service. It is by this Spirit that the prophets and apostles spoke the words of God.

Scripture: Matt. 28:19; Matt. 12:31; John 15:26; Acts 21:11; Rom. 8:16; Rom. 8:26-27; Eph. 4:30; Acts 5:3; John 3:5; Rom. 8:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:13; 1 Cor. 3:16; John 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:12-14; 1 Cor. 6:11; 1 Cor. 12:7; 2 Pet. 1:21.

IV. MANKIND

I believe that out of love and of His own free will, God made mankind in His own image and likeness. He made male and female distinct yet equal in dignity. Every person is a complex unity of material and immaterial aspects, body and soul. The purpose of mankind is to glorify God by following His direction and enjoying a right relationship with Him. I believe that God directly created Adam and Eve, and every human being on earth is their descendant.

To mankind, God gave marriage, which is intended to be one man and one woman, united for life. Marriage is the only proper context for sexual contact and the intended context for procreation and childrearing. Marriage is not required for all people, and neither is childbirth. Marriage does not continue after death nor resume after resurrection.

To mankind, God also gave stewardship of all creation. Everything belongs to God, but has been entrusted to our care. As such, it is our duty to subdue, nurture, and further cultivate the created world. I believe that everything God made was good when He made it.

Scripture: Gen. 1:26–28; Gen 2:7; Mark 12:30; Mic. 6:8; 1 Cor. 15:22.

Matt. 19:4–6; 1 Cor. 7:2–5; 1 Cor. 7:8; Rom 7:2–3; Matt. 22:30.

Psa. 8:5–6; Gen. 1:31.

V. ANGELS & DEMONS

I believe that although man is the pinnacle of God’s earthly creation, God also created spiritual beings called angels who are greater in glory and power than man. They exist to serve and worship God, act as messengers to mankind, and are holy unto the Lord. They sometimes minister in disguise, but angels cannot actually become human, nor do humans ever become angels.

I believe that before the fall of man, a number of angels rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. These angels now separated from God’s glory and service are the beings we call demons. They follow Satan, the chief demon whose pride caused him to challenge God in the first place. Demons retain their power as supernatural beings, but they choose to war against God by deceiving, tormenting, and drawing all mankind away from God. They are able to tempt all mankind and to possess those not already indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit. Their end is the Lake of Fire, and their defeat is sure. Although Satan has no right to rule, he is called the ruler of this world due to his influence over sinful man. He is not omnipresent, but roams the earth as a roaring lion seeking people to devour. His power is in no way comparable to God’s. Although he is crafty, his wisdom is foolishness. Although he masquerades as an angel of light, in him is all filth and ugliness.

Scripture: Psa. 8:5; Psa. 103:20; Psa. 91:11; Psa. 148:2; Luke 2:8–14; Heb. 13:2.

Rev. 12:7–9; Luke 10:18; Isa. 14:12–15; Eze. 28:11–19; 1 Tim. 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Gen. 3:1–19;

Matt. 15:22; 1 Thess. 3:5; Matt. 25:41; Matt. 4:10–11; Eph 2:2; John 12:31; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev.

20:10; John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:14.

VI. SIN & THE FALL

I believe that sin entered God’s good creation by the work of the tempter, who caused our first parents to fall. God does not will evil or cause sin, but in His loving wisdom He allowed sin to enter the world

for His greater purposes. Sin is lawlessness, missing the mark, and falling short of God's goodness either in deed, word, or thought. When Adam and Eve fell, sin, death, suffering, and corruption entered God's creation for the first time. I believe that every human being is tainted by sin even from conception, every aspect of his or her nature corrupted by its presence. Each person is born spiritually dead, unresponsive to God. The image of God in man was defaced by the fall, but was not lost or erased. The only exception from these truths is the man Jesus Christ, who was supernaturally conceived and preserved from original sin, total depravity, and spiritual death, thus also retaining the fullness of the image of God. The wages of sin is death, and man is unable to save himself from this penalty, unable to live a sinless life, and helpless before the judgment seat of a Holy God. All of creation groans because of the Fall. The sinful nature of each person places them under the power of the devil, enslaved to sin.

Scripture: Gen. 3:1–24; Psa. 5:4; Mal. 2:17; Jam. 1:13; Gen. 50:20; 1 John 3:4; Rom 3:23; Mark 12:30; Matt. 5:21–22; Rom 5:12; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 3:10–12; Rom. 7:18; Jer. 17:9; Eph. 2:1–3; Jam. 3:9; Luke 1:35; Rom 6:23; Ecc. 12:14; Rom. 8:19–23.

VII. SALVATION

I believe salvation is the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus because of what He did on the cross. Jesus, having lived a sinless life, is the only perfect offering for sins, and in His death He made atonement for all mankind. Salvation in this age and every other comes by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. Salvation is found in no other name, and there is no salvation in this age outside of the church. While God may, in His mercy and by His grace, make allowances for those who are unable to trust Him because of infancy or significant mental handicap, no one who ultimately denies Christ, trusts in false gods, or trusts in himself or herself for salvation will be saved. I believe there is no second chance to accept Christ after death.

I believe that salvation is God in love justifying the ungodly, and is sure upon profession of faith. Salvation is not earned, either by works accomplished or merit foreseen by God. Salvation is not earned by repentance or baptism, although these are the natural effects of salvation, to be expected of every believer. A saving profession of faith begins the process of making imputed righteousness imparted righteousness. While maturity in the faith takes time and occasionally suffers setbacks, faith will always eventually result in the fruit of obedience to Christ and perseverance in that faith. If anyone who once claims Christ later persists in denying Him, that person should be understood to have revealed that he or she was never a Christian to begin with, and should be pursued once more through evangelism as one of the lost. Salvation will culminate in our resurrection from the dead, our glorification, and

everlasting life with God. I believe that perfect sinlessness awaits our glorification and cannot be achieved in this life.

I believe that before creation, God predestined or chose in advance those who would be saved. I believe that all who are not predestined to salvation reject God willingly, though as those bound by sin and deceived by the devil. I believe that faith in God is a gift from God, and that this gift is irresistible in the sense that no one who has tasted it would ever want to resist it. I believe that every person who desires salvation can know they will find God willing to save them and need never fear rejection nor concern over God's hidden plans. I believe that God almost exclusively carries out the salvation of the predestined through normal human means like evangelism, preaching, the testimony of believers, and direct contact with the Scriptures. I believe that every human being should be pursued with the Gospel without hesitation and without reference to or speculation about God's hidden plans.

Scripture: Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:9; Acts 10:43; Matt. 1:21; John 1:29; 1 John 2:2; Eze. 33:11; Eph. 2:8–10; 2 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 10:33; Luke 13:24–28.
Rom. 5:8; Rom. 4:5; Eph. 2:8–10; Acts 16:31; John 20:31; Acts 2:38; Acts 26:20; Matt. 3:8; Rom. 4:3; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 4:22–24; Rom. 7:4; Col. 1:10; 1 John 2:19; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Cor. 15:12–26; 1 Cor. 15:42–44; Rom. 8:17; Rom. 8:30; 1 John 3:2–3; John 3:16; 1 John 1:8. Eph. 1:3–6; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:30; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 2:11; Eph. 2:8–9; Matt. 8:2–3; Rom. 10:13–17; Matt. 28:19–20; 2 Pet. 3:9.

VIII. THE CHURCH

I believe those who have been saved are added to the church, which is itself the people of God. She is metaphorically the bride of Christ, the body of Christ, the flock of Christ, and the building set with Christ as its cornerstone. She is literally the family of God, those adopted by the Father and co-heirs with the Son by the work of the Spirit. Her members are a royal priesthood, the fellowship of all the saints. There is only one church, holy unto the Lord, uniting believers around the world and across time, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

I believe the universal church is expressed in local congregations, and that every believer ought to participate in the life of a local church unless one does not exist. Believers ought to meet weekly on the Lord's Day to devote themselves to the disciples' teaching, to prayer and fellowship, and to corporate singing. I believe that a true local church is one where the Word of God is rightly preached, the ordinances are rightly administered, and where leaders take spiritual responsibility for their flock. I believe that the Bible directs all churches to appoint qualified elders (sometimes called overseers or

pastors) and deacons, who serve under the authority of Christ and His Word. I believe that just as God ordained the husband to be head of his household, so the office of elder is reserved for men only.

I believe that every believer is called to ministry, and that the Holy Spirit gifts each person for the work of building up one another in love. I believe that following Jesus means submitting to Him in every area of life, so that there is no part of life or the world that is separate from Him as Creator, Redeemer, and Lord. I believe that God intentionally separated the power structures of the world from the power structures of the church so that Christ's present rule over all things does not manifest itself in the church's power over society. I believe that God calls the church to poverty, suffering, and weakness until His return, and that we should be cautious about pursuing money, influence, and worldly power.

Scripture: Matt. 16:18; Rom. 16:5; Rev. 19:7; 1 Cor. 12:12–13; John 10:11–16; Eph. 2:18–22; Gal. 4:4–7; Eph 1:11–14; 1 Pet 2:9–10; Eph. 4:4–6.
Acts 11:22; 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 10:24–25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Acts 15:30; 1 Cor. 11:17–21; Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:1–5; Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1–5; Tit. 1:5; 1 Tim. 3:1; 1 Tim. 3:8; 1 Tim. 3:2–5.
Eph. 4:11–16; 1 Cor. 12:7; Luke 18:22; Matt. 28:18; Deut. 10:14; Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:13–17; Matt. 19:27–30; 1 Cor. 1:27–29; 2 Cor. 12:9–10; 1 Pet 4. 12–16.

IX. ORDINANCES & SACRAMENTS

I believe that there are only two practices ordained in Scripture that may rightly be called either sacraments or ordinances. These ordinances confer grace only in the sense that obedience to God comes with a blessing, and that these are a means by which God encourages us, unites us, and strengthens our faith. They are no empty or ineffective symbols. These ordinances are to be practiced by the local church, and should only be undertaken by the elders or those they authorize and approve.

I believe that baptism is the ordinance by which a person publicly declares his or her faith, identifies with Christ, and is received by the church. It ought to be done only by believers, and only following the pattern of immersion in Scripture, signifying the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Those who were baptized by another mode as believers should be accepted without requiring them to be immersed. Those who were baptized prior to faith in Christ ought to be encouraged to be re-baptized, with no disrespect intended to the original baptizing church. Baptism is to be undertaken based on any credible profession of faith and not based on reaching a certain level of maturity.

I believe that communion—also called the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table, and the Eucharist—is the ordinance by which the congregation corporately celebrates its identity in Christ and the blessings of salvation. It is ordinarily to be enjoyed by anyone who has been baptized and is in right relationship with the church. Those who are in conflict with other members ought to seek reconciliation before taking communion together. As a picture of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the elements of communion ought to be wine and bread or some very close substitute. As a corporate practice, communion should not be undertaken alone unless unable to join the congregation, and then only under the care of an elder or those they authorize and approve. It should be taken either weekly or monthly as it is a central element of gathered worship.

Although marriage and footwashing are treasured practices of the church that point to aspects of the Gospel, they are not required of all believers, nor must they be practiced as a gathered congregation, and therefore are not to be counted as sacraments or ordinances.

Scripture: Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Acts 10:47; Rom. 6:3–4; Acts 19:3–5.

Matt. 26:26–29; 1 Cor. 11:17–34.

X. MIRACLES & SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I believe that God continues to do miracles to this day, including through His people, but that the practice of gifts like prophecy, tongues, and healing are not normative in places where the testimony of the Gospel has been established. I believe that the office of apostle has ceased, being limited to eyewitnesses of the Resurrection. I believe that God may still direct and guide His people by promptings of the Spirit within, but that these are not the normal way of making decisions and should not cause believers to forsake wisdom, personal responsibility, church community, or most of all the Bible. I believe that God answers prayers offered by faith, but that He has not bound Himself always to do what we want. Prayer should never be construed as giving God permission, nor should those who pray confuse their authority with God’s. I believe God’s power is more often manifested in the faith and character of a believer than in his or her abilities.

Scripture: 1 Cor. 9:1; 1 Cor. 15:8–9; 1 Cor. 6:3–6; Col. 1:28; Col. 3:16; Jam. 3:13; Matt. 25:18, 24–27; Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 12:8–10.

XI. DISPENSATIONS & COVENANTS

I believe that God ordered redemptive history by dispensations punctuated by biblical covenants. These dispensations are different arrangements between the Creator and man as His stewards of creation. I believe that relationship between God and man does not by nature require covenant, but that God arranged biblical covenants between specific parties as a gracious way of meeting mankind in forms familiar to him. I believe that in all times God saved people by grace through faith in what He had revealed. Prior to Christ's appearing, this meant keeping God's commands by faith and not by works. Sins committed in this time were atoned for by Christ alone even though the LORD God and not the person of Jesus Christ in particular was their conscious object of faith.

I believe that God has always been gracious in His dealings with man, but that the present age is a unique time of grace. I believe the church was a new creation at Pentecost, marked by a new relationship with the Holy Spirit, and thus Israel is not properly called the church. Israel is the original shoot by which salvation came, and the church is grafted on to it. In this age and every age to come, people of all nations are saved only through the church. I believe that Old Testament laws are not to be disregarded in this age of grace, since they reveal the character and will of the Savior. I believe that God will keep His promises to Israel, and that Israel has a future, being careful not to confuse believing Israel with merely ethnic Israel or the modern political state Israel. I believe that any future restoration of Israel will not include a return to former ways of worship.

Scripture: Eph. 3:1–13; Gen. 15:7–21; Rom. 4:1–10; Rom. 9:30–32; Heb. 9:11–28.

Exo. 34:6–7; Num. 14:17–20; Rom. 6:14; John 14:15–17, 26; John 16:7; Acts 1:4–5, 8; Eph. 2:11–22; Rom. 11:11–24; Matt. 5:17–20; Psalm 119; Rom. 11:25–33.

XII. END TIMES

I believe that one day Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. The time of His appearing is known only to God, and it is not to be sought out but longed for by a church striving to be always ready. The judgment of Christ is perfect, and will result in the gracious acceptance of believers and the just punishment of unbelievers. There are no second chances for salvation, and those judged will proceed to eternal life either in blessedness with Christ or in torment away from His presence. I believe that the New Earth is the old creation cleansed, redeemed, and restored, and that heaven will come down to earth so that we will forever inhabit the New Heavens and the New Earth together with God. Likewise, I believe that the resurrection body is a spiritual body made from the physical body.

I believe that those who die in Christ prior to Christ's return enter a state of disembodied blessedness in the presence of God commonly called Paradise, awaiting the resurrection and their final home. Those who die apart from Christ prior to Christ's return enter a state of disembodied torment commonly called Hades, awaiting final judgment and its consequences. I believe that there is no such place as limbo or purgatory, since a person's final destination is already sealed upon his or her death.

Scripture: Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 20:12–13; Matt. 24:36; Rev. 22:20; Matt. 24:44; Luke 13:25; Matt. 25:31–46; Rev. 21:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:35–49.
Luke 23:42–43; Luke 16:22–23.

XIII. THE BIBLE

I believe that the apostles and prophets spoke the very words of God, carried along by the Holy Spirit as an instrument in the hands of a skilled musician. I believe their words have been preserved in the Bible, fully human and fully divine. Although their human authors were imperfect, their divine author is pure truth and in Him is no falsehood, so that every word of the Bible is trustworthy and true. I believe that the Bible does not contain all of God's words, but every word God intended to instruct and edify His church. I believe that God has preserved these words throughout the ages, so that any human errors in transmission do not touch the essentials of the faith or muffle the voice of God.

I believe that the church receives and recognizes the canon, which is the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. The books of the Apocrypha may be helpful, but are not divinely inspired. The Bible is sufficient for salvation and everything necessary for life and godliness, but is not exhaustive. The Bible is clear to those who seek to understand it in love and humility, with the help of the Holy Spirit. I believe that as God's written revelation to the church, the Bible is the norming norm that cannot be normed, bringing God's authority to bear on all things. As God's written, public revelation, it is the final authority in all matters. It is the guide for understanding and interpreting the rest of God's revelation, and judges the actions, thoughts, and hearts of men. It is to be revered, studied, and obeyed by all believers because it is the very words of God. All the Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read or understood until it leads to Him.

Scripture: 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Cor. 13:3; John 10:35; Matt. 4:4.
2 Pet. 3:15–16; Mic. 6:8; 2 Tim. 3:16–17; Matt. 4:5–7; Matt. 22:29; Acts 17:11; Rom. 15:4; 1 Tim 4:13; Luke 24:27.

Appendix

CREEDS

I believe that creeds may be a help to believers, representing the wisdom of the saints in unity under the authority of the Word of God. They serve to summarize and clarify what we believe about what God has revealed. As such, I affirm the following creeds—not as having the authority of Scripture, but rather the wisdom of elder brothers.

- The Apostles' Creed (**understanding that Christ went to the place of the dead and not hell*)
- The Nicene Creed
- The Chalcedonian Definition
- The Athanasian Creed