

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Part III

THE HOLY SPIRIT

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

- 1) **The Spirit and creation** (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13).
- 2) **The Spirit and providence** (Ps. 104:24-30; Isa. 34:13-16; 63:14).
- 3) **The Spirit and the life of sinful man** (Gen. 6:3).
- 4) **The Spirit and prophecy** (2 Sam. 23:2; Neh. 9:30; Zech. 7:12; Mic. 3:8; Neh. 9:20).
- 5) **The inescapability of the Spirit** (Ps. 139:7).
- 6) **The Spirit's direct involvement with people:**
 1. *with Israel* (Isa. 63:11; Hag. 2:5).
 2. *with particular individuals at a specific time for a specific purpose:*
 - The 70 elders (Num. 11:17,25-26,29).
 - Balaam (Num. 24:2).
 - Othniel (Jg. 3:10).
 - Gideon (Jg. 6:34).
 - Jephthah (Jg. 11:29).
 - Samson (Jg. 13:25; 14:6,19; 15:14).
 - Saul (1 Sam. 10:6,10; 11:6; 19:23).
 - Saul's messengers (1 Sam. 19:20-21).
 - Amasai (1 Chr. 12:15).
 - Jahaziel (2 Chr. 15:1).
 - Zechariah (2 Chr. 24:20).
 - Ezekiel (Ezek. 2:2; 3:24; 11:5).

(a corollary of the temporary endowment was the possibility of the Spirit's departure [1 Sam. 16:14; cf. Ps. 51:11]).
 3. *with particular individuals as a lasting presence*
 - Joshua (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9).
 - David (1 Sam. 16:13).
 - Bezaleel (Ex. 31:3; 35:31).
- 7) **The Spirit and the new covenant promise:**
 1. *looking forward to the outpouring of the Spirit* (Isa. 32:15; 44:3; Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10).
 2. *two features of the new covenant reality:*

- i) the Spirit's permanent presence (Isa. 59:21).
- ii) the placement of the Spirit within God's people (Ezek. 36:27; 37:14).

3. the new covenant promise and the Messiah (Isa. 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

4. the personality of the Spirit (Isa. 40:13; 48:16; 63:10).

New Testament

1) The Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus:

1. as the fulfilment of prophecy (Matt. 12:18; Lk. 4:18)

2. in connection with key events in his life:

- his birth (Matt. 1:18,20; Lk. 1:35).
- his baptism (Matt. 3:16; Mk. 1:10; Lk. 3:22; Jn. 1:32-33).
- his temptation (Matt. 14:6; Mk. 1:12; Lk. 4:1).
- the commencement of his ministry (Lk. 4:14).
- his death (Heb. 9:14).
- his resurrection (Rom. 1:14; 1 Tim. 3:16).

3. in representative examples of his ministry:

- demon expulsion (Matt. 12:28).
- teaching (Ac. 1:2).

4. in the fact that he possessed the Spirit without measure (Jn. 3:34).

2) The Holy Spirit as the third Person of the Trinity (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

3) The Holy Spirit as the inspirer of God's Word:

1. The NT witness to the Spirit's inspiration of the OT:

- i) specific OT texts (Matt. 22:43; Ac. 1:16; 28:25; Heb. 3:7; 9:8; 10:15).
- ii) the OT in general (1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:21).

2. The NT's claim for itself (Eph. 3:5).

4) Jesus' teaching on the Spirit (Jn. 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-11,13-15).

1. Who the Holy Spirit is:

- i) the paraklitos.
- ii) the Spirit of truth.

2. Where the Holy Spirit comes from: the Father and the Son.

3. Where the Holy Spirit comes to:

- i) *negatively*: not to the world.

ii) *positively*: to Jesus' disciples.

4. When the Holy Spirit comes: when Jesus departs.

5. What the Holy Spirit does:

- i) his teaching ministry.
- ii) his evangelistic ministry.
- iii) his prophetic ministry.
- iv) his convicting ministry.

5) **Paul's teaching on the Spirit:**

1. The filling of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

2. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9).

3. The gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12,14):

two categories of gifts have ceased:

- i) sign-gifts designed to authenticate the ministry of the apostles.
- ii) word-gifts given as a temporary provision pending the completion of the NT.

4. The sealing of the Spirit (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).

5. The Spirit as a deposit (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14; cf. Rom. 8:23).

6) **The experience of the Spirit in 1 John** (1 Jn. 3:24; 4:13; cf. Rom. 8:9).

7) **The baptism of the Spirit**

1. A geographical reality (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:18; Lk. 3:16; Ac. 1:5; 11:16) – today we would call it 'revival'.

2. An individual reality (1 Cor. 12:3).

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

The Early Creeds

THE APOSTLES' CREED

1. *I believe in the Holy Spirit.*
2. It was through the Spirit that Jesus Christ was conceived.

THE NICENE AND ATHANASIAN CREEDS

1. The Son of God was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary.
2. The Holy Spirit is a distinct Person within the Godhead, and at the same time equally divine with the Father and the Son.
3. The Holy Spirit is the Life-Giver.
4. The Holy Spirit spoke by the prophets.
5. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

*Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy divided over the addition of the words and the Son (**filioque**).*

Robert Reymond argues that both positions wrongly introduced a subordinationism into the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Reformation Confessions

The Confessions gave comprehensive attention to the Holy Spirit.

1. The nature of the Holy Spirit.

1) As the third Person in the order of the Trinity the Holy Spirit is true and eternal God.

2) The Holy Spirit is the divine power in action.

3) The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Reymond suggests that the Confessions, while quoting the language of the ancient creeds, may have understood the Spirit's procession in terms of his

work rather than his being.

*Palmer Robertson believes that **filioque** is important as grounding the work of the Spirit in the atonement achieved by the Son, and so avoiding mystical tendencies.*

4) The Holy Spirit is to be worshipped with the Father and the Son.

2. The Holy Spirit and the Scriptures.

1) In their origin the Scriptures proceeded from the Holy Spirit.

2) In their permanent existence the Scriptures are the Holy Spirit speaking.

3) The whole counsel of God is in the Spirit-inspired Scriptures.

4) The Spirit works in conjunction with the Scriptures.

5) The witness of the Spirit persuades us that the Scriptures are God's Word.

6) The Holy Spirit alone is the true interpreter of Scripture.

7) The central message of the Holy Spirit as taught in the Scriptures is the gospel.

3. The Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.

1) The Holy Spirit and the birth of Christ.

- i. the conception of Jesus in Mary's womb was by the power of the Spirit.
- ii. The power of the Spirit came upon Mary so that she was able to bear the Son of God.
- iii. It was by the power of the Spirit that the Son of God took human nature from Mary.

| 2) The Holy Spirit and the baptism of Christ. |

| 3) The Holy Spirit and the death of Christ. |

| 4) The Holy Spirit and the ascension of Christ. |

| **4. The Holy Spirit and the conversion of a sinner.** |

| 1) Without the working of the Spirit we would remain dead in sins. |

| 2) The Spirit effectually calls the elect to Christ. |

| 3) All saving graces come from the Holy Spirit: |

- i. illumination.
- ii. regeneration.
- iii. faith.
- iv. repentance.
- v. cleansing.
- vi. separation from the world.
- vii. union with Christ.

| 4) In conversion the Spirit usually works through the Word. |

| **5. The Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.** |

| 1) The Holy Spirit is God's gift to his people. |

| 2) The Holy Spirit applies Christ to the believer. |

| 3) The Holy Spirit and Christian experience: |

- i. understanding.
- ii. sanctification.
- iii. assurance.
- iv. prayer.
- v. battle.
- vi. comfort.
- vii. the earnest.
- viii. joy.
- ix. perseverance.

| 4) The Holy Spirit and our final glorification. |

| 5) The Holy Spirit and the Christian's responsibility. |

| **6. The Holy Spirit and the Church.** |

| 1) The Spirit gathers and preserves the church. |

| 2) The Holy Spirit and church unity. |

| 3) The Spirit governs the church. |

| 4) The gifts of the Spirit. |

| 5) The Holy Spirit and Christian worship. |

| 6) The Holy Spirit and the sacraments. |

| **7. The Holy Spirit and the world.** |

| 1) The world of unbelievers:
 - who benefit from the common operations of the
 Spirit.

| 2) The world as the human race:
 - the Spirit makes Christ's Godhead, majesty and
 glory present everywhere.

- 3) The world as the entire creation:
- which is preserved by the Holy Spirit.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

A leading source of teaching on the Holy Spirit at present is **Nicky Gumbel's** *Alpha Course*.

It encourages the expectation of emotional and physical phenomena along with speaking in tongues as the sign of the filling of the Spirit.

Chris Hand in *The Alpha Course Examined* notes how different such experiences are from the normative experience of the Holy Spirit described in the NT.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- 1) Derive comfort from the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) Seek to be filled with Spirit as a constant, daily reality.
- 3) Live in obedience to God's law, and so bear the fruit of the Spirit.
- 4) Seek the assurance of faith which the Spirit gives.
- 5) Never separate the work of the Holy Spirit from that of Jesus Christ: remember that it is the benefits of Christ's redemption which the Spirit applies.
- 6) Take the Spirit-inspired Scriptures seriously, and pray for the Spirit's enlightenment as you read them and as you prepare to teach them to others.
- 7) Preach the gospel, praying always for the demonstration of the Spirit's power.
- 8) Long and pray earnestly for revival.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

The NT word for *church*: *ekklhsia* (people called out).

It had a secular use (cf. Ac 19:32,39-41) – the legislative assembly.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Two NT instances of *ekklhsia* point back to the OT foundations for the doctrine of the church:

Heb 2:12 (quoting Ps 22:22)

Ac 7:38 (referring to Israel's history)

Old Testament

DEUTERONOMY

(1) **4:10; 9:10; 18:16**

The assembly at Sinai, gathered to hear the word of the LORD; purpose: to fear the LORD.

(2) **23:1-3,8**

The assembly at the tabernacle; certain categories of people excluded: holiness demanded.

(3) **31:30**

The assembly at the Jordan, gathered to hear God's word.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

(1) **1 Chronicles 28-29**

The assembly of tribal leaders representing all Israel, gathered to hear the word of the LORD; purpose: to obey him, and so possess the inheritance through the divine blessing; response: worship.

(2) **2 Chronicles 6-7; 1 Kings 8**

(2 Chr 6:3; 1 Kgs 8:14,55)

Israel assembled under God's blessing; Solomon leads in prayer. The gathering centres around the offering on the altar, and the people depart full of joy.

2 CHRONICLES 29-30

The congregation assembles for worship, and the sacrifice is offered. Worship takes the form of Psalm singing with musical accompaniment. The sacrifices express thankfulness.

The congregation assembles to remember redemption. Joy marks the gathering. Worship is possible only when people are sanctified from sin. The slaughter of the lamb achieves this.

EZRA 10

A large congregation is convicted of sin. The people meet in smaller, local gatherings to put repentance into practice.

PSALMS

(1) 22:22,25

Brethren gather to hear the name of the LORD and join in praise.

(2) 26:12

The congregation blesses the LORD by kneeling and congratulating him audibly for his works.

(3) 35:18

The assembly: for thanksgiving and praise.

(4) 40:9

The congregation: the sphere for the proclamation of the good news of justification.

(5) 68:26

The congregation: the place for blessing God; the assembly for worship: the source of Israel's being.

(6) 89:5

The assembly is holy and its praise focusses on God's covenant grace.

(7) 107:32

The congregation: the place where the LORD is exalted.

(8) 149:1

The congregation: holy; its praise expressed in song.

Summary of OT implications for a doctrine of the church

- 1) Although the church exists outside its gatherings, it is gathering together which defines the church.
- 2) The one universal church is realised in local gatherings.
- 3) The purposes of gathering together include:
 - i. the proclamation of the gospel;
 - ii. the reading of God's Word;
 - iii. the declaration of God's mercy;

- iv. confession of sin;
 - v. thanksgiving;
 - vi. prayer;
 - vii. worship (expressed in singing of the Psalms with musical accompaniment)
- 4) The gatherings are led by appointed representatives.
 - 5) The focus of the church's gathering is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.
 - 6) Church membership is a form of brotherly relationship which requires the fear of the Lord leading to holiness.
 - 7) The result of the church's gatherings should be repentance and obedience.
 - 8) When God's people disperse their key emotion should be joy.
 - 9) The gatherings of the church form the place where God's blessing enriches his people.

New Testament

MATTHEW 16:13-23

One of only two places where Jesus uses the word *ekklhsia*. The only passage in the gospels which presents us with a theological understanding of the church.

- 1) The church is the continuation of the OT assembly.
- 2) The church is defined in relation to Jesus.
- 3) There is only one Christian church.
- 4) Jesus is the builder of the church.
- 5) The church is built on a rock.
- 6) What is Jesus referring to by 'rock'?

Rejection of the RC idea that Peter is here installed as the first Pope has led to various other interpretations:

Christ Himself?
Peter's confession?
Peter as representative of all the apostles?
Peter considered chronologically only?

- 7) The church is victorious against the gates of hell.
- 8) What is the ministry of the keys?

The tense is important:

Whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will have

been loosed in heaven.

MATTHEW 18:15-18

Steps to church discipline:

1. A private word
2. A word before two or three witnesses.
3. The church informed.
4. Excommunication.

At every stage there is the hope of recovery: heathen and tax-collectors are precisely the people whom Jesus came to save!

THE CHURCH IN ACTS

- 1) *The church at Jerusalem*
(the only Christian congregation in the world at first)

Acts 2:41-47

1. Entry to the church – by baptism (v. 41).
2. The activities of the church (v. 42).
3. The atmosphere in the church – fear and joy (vv. 43,47).
4. The growth of the church (v. 47).
5. The existence of the church – even when not gathered together (v. 46f).

Acts 8:1-3

1. The church persecuted.
2. The church scattered – so new churches emerge.

- 2) *The churches throughout the region*

1. The churches edified (9:31; 16:5).
2. The churches multiplied (16:5).
3. The significance of the plural *churches*:
it implies that every local congregation is truly and fully the church in that place.
4. The ministry of the churches.
 - 1) The plurality of ministries (13:1).
 - 2) The centrality of mission (13:1-3; 14:27).
 - 3) The vital role of eldership:
 - i. the appointment of elders turns a group

of disciples into a church (14:22f).

- ii. The task of elders: to shepherd the flock (20:17,28) by protecting the church from error (20:29-31).

THE CHURCH IN PAUL'S LETTERS

1) 1 Corinthians

1:2

1. The Church belongs to God (cf. 10:32; 11:22; 15:9).
2. The church exists locally.
3. The church defined:
it is composed of those who are sanctified, called, and saints.
4. The local church and the universal church.

12:28

The church must be governed by the word of God.

Ch. 14

1. The major purpose of church life is the edification of believers (vv. 4,5,12), which is achieved by teaching (v. 19).
2. Godly Christian worship is not confused but orderly (v. 33).
3. Women are not permitted a leadership role in the church (v. 34f).

2) Ephesians

1:22-23

1. The church is Christ's body (cf. Col. 1:18,24).
2. The Church is Christ's fullness – it completes him!
3. Christ's universal headship is given to the church.

3:10

1. God's manifold wisdom is to bring the world's numerous people groups together in one church..
2. The principalities and powers in the heavenly places include both good and evil angelic beings.
3. Evangelism is the means by which God's wisdom is displayed, because it brings the church into being.
4. The church's role in the present is to be an exhibition of God's saving wisdom.

5:23-32

1. Christ is the head of the church (v. 23).
2. The church is subject to Christ (v. 24).
3. The church was loved by Christ (v. 25).
4. Christ's purposes for his church.
 - i. The ultimate purpose – perfection (v. 27).
 - ii. The interim purpose – progressive sanctification (v. 26)
5. The means by which the church is perfected – the cleansing effect of the Word (v. 26)
6. Individual Christians are members of Christ's body (v. 29f).

3) The Pastoral Epistles

The word *ekklhsia* occurs only three times (1 Tim 3:5,15; 5:16). But the Pastoral Epistles are a kind of manual of church order.

Major Themes on the Church in the Pastorals:

- 1) The church and sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:2,3,9,10; 4:3,6, 13,16; 5:17; 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1).
- 2) The unity of the church (1 Tim 1:4; 6:4; 2 Tim 2:23; Tit 3:9-11).
- 3) The church's worship and witness (1 Tim 2:1-2,8; 4:13; 2 Tim 1:13f; 2:2,15; 4:2,5).

The following ingredients of worship are mentioned:

prayer, Scripture reading, exhortation,
preaching, teaching

Other aspects of church activity mentioned are:

evangelism, training.

- 4) Gender in the church (1 Tim 2:8-14).
 1. Men are to pray
 2. Women are forbidden to be teachers of men or to be in a position of authority over men
 - (i) this applies God's creative order;
 - (ii) this takes account of female psychology.
- 5) Officers in the church.

There are two permanent offices in the church:

1. ELDERS (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9).

- i. Elder = Bishop.
- ii. The qualifications of elders: blameless
 - (a) at home.
 - (b) at church.
 - (c) in the world.
- iii. The duties of elders
 - (a) teaching / preaching.
 - (b) ruling.

2. DEACONS (1 Tim 3:8-13).

– a servant ministry.

6) Love in the church (1 Tim 1:5; 5:3,9f,16; 6:18; Tit 3:14).

Summary of the NT doctrine of the church

- 1) The NT church is in continuity with the OT people of God.
- 2) The new thing is that the church is now defined in relation to Jesus, the head of the body.
- 3) The church is those people who live in subjection to Christ, living out his lordship in the world, and becoming progressively more Christlike.
- 4) The church exists for the edification of its members through the preaching and teaching of God's Word.
- 5) The Word is the chief means by which the church's members are led on in the Christian life.
- 6) The apostles were foundational for the Christian church.
- 7) Churches remain true as they hold fast to apostolic doctrine.
- 8) God has appointed ministries for his church.
- 9) Some ministries were temporary; permanent offices are elder and deacon.
- 10) Women are not permitted to have a leadership or teaching role in a mixed company, but may be allowed to serve as deacons.
- 11) There is only one church, but local churches, as part of that one church, are truly 'churches' in a full sense.
- 12) Because the church is one, unity and love are essential.
- 13) Church discipline is appropriate in the case of those who disrupt unity.

- 14) The elements of church life include prayer, Scripture reading, preaching, teaching, training, orderly worship, and evangelism.
- 15) In its evangelistic ministry the church is guaranteed success, and multiplication growth should be expected.
- 16) The entrance door into church membership is baptism.
- 17) The church continues to exist even when it is not gathered together, and the scattered church is as important as the gathered church.
- 18) Persecution is not an unusual feature of church life, but even then the church should gain people's respect.
- 19) The church displays God's wisdom in the spiritual realm.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

1. The Early Christian Creeds

i) 'One, holy, catholic and apostolic church'

- 1) The Church as ONE
 - one in any given generation.
 - one across the centuries.
- 2) The Church as HOLY
 - holy because of its special relationship to God.
 - in the past:* as eternally elect of God.
 - in the present:* as indwelt by the Spirit of God.
 - in the future:* as destined to share the glory of the Son of God.
- 3) The Church as CATHOLIC
 - diffused throughout the world.
 - orthodox, and distinct from heretical rivals.
- 4) The Church as APOSTOLIC
 - the apostolic word must be firmly at the centre of church life.

ii) 'The communion of saints'

- 1) The ultimate fellowship with the holy ones of all ages.
- 2) The partial realisation of this fellowship in the church on earth.

iii) The Church as the Spirit in action

The early creeds were Trinitarian in structure, and their statements about the church were set within the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Reformed Confessions and Catechisms

1. THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

1) The definition of the church universal

'Church' is synonymous with 'elect'. The church universal is the company of all the faithful everywhere and at all times, including those believers who lived before Pentecost.

Whereas the doctrine of election is personal and particular, the word 'church' emphasises the corporate nature of God's people.

2) The Church, one, holy, catholic, and apostolic

The Confessions take up these key terms from the Creeds.

1. The Church is ONE

- there is only one church;
- its unity is not in rites but in the truth.

2. The Church is HOLY

- those who belong to the church have been "separated from the world by the word and the Spirit".

3. The Church is CATHOLIC

- it is spread throughout the world, both in places and in times.

4. The Church is APOSTOLIC

- it rests on the foundation of apostolic truth, and as such is founded on Christ.

3) The Communion of Saints

The Confessions expound this phrase from the Creeds in two ways:

1. All believers have communion with God.
2. All believers have communion with one another.

4) Christ is the Head of the Church

He is the only universal pastor.

- for most of the Reformers this entailed the rejection of episcopacy, and more especially the rejection of the papacy.

Two aspects of Christ's headship:

1. He is the Church's head of government and

direction.

2. He is the Church's head of vital influence.

5) The Church invisible and visible

The Confessions distinguished between

- *the invisible church* (the full number of the elect, known only to God)
- *the visible church* (all who profess to be Christians and are associated with local churches)

Ideally, the two would be identical, but in this sinful world there will be some in the visible church who are not true Christians, and some true Christians who are not in the visible church.

There was a difference of opinion amongst the Reformers in the definition of the *visible church*:

- most of the paedobaptists defined the visible church as all who profess the true faith and their children.
- the Baptists defined the visible church as all who profess the faith of the gospel and live in obedience: for the Baptist no one is a member of the visible church until they become regenerate.

The paedobaptist includes children on the following grounds:

- i. in the OT children were included with their parents in Israel's privileges, and the NT does not exclude them.
- ii. Jesus suffers little children to come to him.
- iii. in the covenant God pledges his grace to believing parents with their children.

The Baptist replies like this:

- i. the NT equivalent of children in Israel is babes in Christ – those newly born again, not those chronologically young.
- ii. we too suffer little children to come to Jesus; we exhort them to be converted.
- iii. we accept that God's grace is pledged to believing parents with their children, and we look and pray for the fulfilment of that pledge in the conversion of our children.

6) The Church militant and triumphant

The church triumphant: those believers already in heaven.

The church militant: those believers still on earth battling

with the world, the flesh, the devil, sin, and death.

7) Outside the Church there is no salvation

This statement is used in two different ways:

1. There is no salvation outside the invisible church – which is true by definition.
2. There is no salvation outside the visible church – though usually some qualification is added, because of the pastoral awareness that occasionally some genuine believers may become detached from Christian fellowship.

8) God preserves his Church

- even though the church faces intense opposition in the world.

2. THE LOCAL CHURCH

1) The need for local churches

The dividing up of the universal church into local congregations is a matter of simple necessity to make gatherings for worship possible.

2) The fullness of the church in the local church

Every particular assembly is rightly entitled to the name of 'church': a local church is not merely a partial church.

3) The marks of a true church

Although the Confessions acknowledge that no church on earth is going to be absolutely pure, nevertheless, they mention three or four marks of a true local assembly:

1. The gospel is faithfully preached and heard.
2. The sacraments are properly administered.
3. Church discipline is uprightly ministered.
4. Public worship is performed purely.

4) The presence of unconverted members does not invalidate the title 'church'

The Confessions recognise that mistakes may be made in admitting people to church membership; however, if the marks of a true church are present, a local fellowship is still a church, even if it is a mixed company.

5) Membership of a local church is a duty

The Confessions regard schism as a very serious sin, while recognising that sometimes a church's apostasy may make separation the only option.

6) The duties of church members

1. Attendance at public worship.
2. The maintenance of unity.
3. The promotion of peace.
4. Submission to the church's doctrine.
5. Submission to the church's discipline.
6. Mutual service.
7. Relief of the needy.
8. Mutual edification.
9. Love.

CHURCH-RELATED ISSUES

In addition to this general statement of the doctrine of the church, universal and local, the Confessions also address a number of church-related issues.

1) Inter-Church relations

1. *The Presbyterian view*

All pastors are equal, though it is permissible to appoint superintendent ministers.

The later Presbyterian Confessions believed that synodical church government was part of God's revealed church structure.

2. *The Baptist view*

Each local church is complete in itself, and there should be no governing body over any group of congregations.

Nevertheless, assemblies for consultation are appropriate when needed, but they do not have authority over the churches.

2) Church Officers

1. *The permanent offices in the church*

There are two different understandings found in the Confessions:

- i. Only two categories of officer (elders, deacons).
- ii. Three categories of officer (pastors, elders, deacons).

The two category approach:

pastors are elders.

This may be understood in two different ways:

1. 'elder' means 'pastor' – so there are no further elders in a church in addition to the pastor or pastors.
2. the pastor is one of the elders – within the eldership there are differences of role, but the

pastorate is not a separate office and does not have a higher status.

The three category approach:

pastor and elder are distinct offices

This may be understood on two different ways:

1. the pastor is a teaching elder; the other elders are ruling elders.
2. the pastor is the main teaching and ruling elder; the other elders form an advisory council.

2. *The purpose of church officers*

1. to help organise and administer Christian assemblies.
2. to exercise leadership.
3. to ensure that true doctrine is maintained.
4. to correct error.
5. to deal with disciplinary matters.
6. to ensure that the poor and needy are helped.

3. *The appointment of church officers*

1. Men appointed should have a commission from God.
2. The appointment is made by the church.

4. *The qualifications for church officers*

In addition to the Biblical requirements, the following practical considerations are mentioned:

1. sufficient consecrated learning.
2. pious eloquence.
3. simple wisdom.
4. moderation.
5. an honourable reputation.

3) *The ministry of the word*

1. *The word is the pastor's tool*

Without the word he neither can, nor ought to, attempt anything.

2. *The work of the pastor therefore centres on the word*

His main work is to feed the sheep by preaching.

He also administers the sacraments and church discipline – both of which are subsections of the ministry of the word.

3. *The vital need for the Holy Spirit in preaching*

Urgency is essential: preaching includes instruction, but is never merely educational. Preaching has a sacramental aspect.

4. *The appropriateness of a paid ministry*

This is desirable and normal, where possible.

5. *The responsibility of the congregation in the preaching of the word*

True ministers must be heard as the voice of God himself.

6. *Wrong views of the ministry*

The Confessions reject three wrong approaches to the ministry:

- i. The RC priesthood view.
- ii. The work of false prophets.
- iii. The approach of 'visionaries'.

4) The Sacraments

Baptist Confessions sometimes prefer the word 'ordinances'.

1. *There are two sacraments*

This is stressed repeatedly, because of the RC teaching of seven sacraments.

2. *The terms used to describe the sacraments*

- the main term is *signs*
- other terms used are *shadows, mystical symbols, holy rites, sacred actions*.

3. *The sign and the thing signified*

The sign: a visible, tangible, ordinary thing.

The thing signified: an invisible, inward grace, a spiritual blessing.

There is a 'sacramental union' between the sign and the thing signified, which leads to an 'interchange of names'.

4. *The efficacy of the sacraments*

The sacraments do have a spiritual impact: in receiving the sign, the worshippers also receive the thing signified.

However, this is not an automatic transfer of grace, as Roman Catholicism taught. The power in the sacraments depends on the work of the Spirit. By his power the thing signified is received through faith.

5. *The reason why God gave the sacraments*

As a concession to our weakness, God proclaims his word to all our senses, not to our hearing only.

6. *The purposes which the sacraments achieve*

- i. they make a visible distinction between the church and the world.
- ii. they strengthen the believer's faith.
- iii. they engage church members in service for God.
- iv. they witness to the Christian faith in the presence of other people.

7. *The sacraments as seals*

The combination of 'sign' and 'seal' is the favourite way of describing the sacraments.

As seals, the participation by faith in the sacraments results in the Holy Spirit underlining the believer's assurance.

8. *The right use of the sacraments*

- i. they should be administered only by ordained preachers of the word.
(some will see this as a hangover from the RC priestly mentality!)
- ii. they should be administered only in the way God has appointed in his word.
- iii. the reason for their institution should be understood by both ministers and receivers.

9. *Errors regarding the sacraments which should be rejected*

- i. the RC errors:
 - tying the thing signified so tightly to the sign that all who receive the sign are believed to receive the thing signified regardless of their life.
 - attributing the efficacy of the sacraments to a formula of words and the consecration of the minister.
 - worshipping the signs instead of Christ.
- ii. the 'Zwinglian' view:
 - treating the sacraments as nothing more than bare signs.
- iii. the enthusiastic view:
 - rejection of the signs as superfluous because we have the things signified.

THE PARTICULAR SACRAMENTS

1. BAPTISM

1. Who is eligible?

Most of the Reformers were paedo-baptist, and believed that believers' children should be baptized:

- i. because children are included with their parents in the covenant of grace.
- ii. because Jesus received children and said 'of such is the kingdom'.
- iii. because it is agreeable to God's word as parallel with circumcision.

Nevertheless, the Paedo-baptist Confessions tend to be apologetic about saying this! They admit that baptism is a sacrament of faith and repentance.

The ***Baptist Confessions*** insist that baptism is only for those who have professed faith, repentance and obedience.

2. What is the appropriate method?

Most of the Confessions taught sprinkling as the appropriate method.

However, the ***Baptist Confessions*** insist that immersion is essential.

3. What is the thing signified in baptism?

- i. the believer's cleansing from sin.
- ii. the believer's identification with Christ in his death and resurrection.
- iii. the believer's regeneration and adoption.
- iv. that the bodies of believers will be raised from the dead.

The fact that the Paedo-baptist Confessions agree with the ***Baptist Confessions*** on these points suggests the inconsistency of their position.

4. What is the main direction of movement in baptism?

The direction is from God to the baptismal candidate: God witnesses to the believer that he is graciously accepted for Christ's sake.

Here again the Paedo-baptist Confessions agree with the ***Baptist Confessions***. The logic of this understanding points to believers' baptism!

5. What function does baptism serve?

It is the sacrament of admission into the visible church, signifying God's admission of the believer into the invisible church.

6. *Who may baptize?*

The Confessions assumed that only an ordained minister of the word could baptize.

The link with the word is important, but some of us would dissent from this restriction.

The recognition that someone else has to baptize you emphasizes our passivity in regeneration. G.I. Williamson uses this as an argument for paedobaptism. However, believers' baptism has the advantage of also signifying the active side of the Christian life.

7. *How vital is baptism?*

It is an obligation but salvation does not depend on it.

8. *What baptismal errors must be avoided?*

- i. The Paedo-baptist Confessions reject the 'Anabaptist' doctrine that baptism should not take place until a person has faith and understanding.

The term 'anabaptist' means re-baptizers.

However, the Baptist replies that he does not re-baptize, since infant baptism is not true baptism at all.

- ii. The RC doctrine that grace is conferred in the mere outward act of baptism is to be rejected.

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER

1. *The Lord's Supper and the church*

The Lord's Supper is the sacrament of preservation in the church. It is only for members of the church, and is only to take place in the assembly of the church.

2. *Admission to the Lord's Supper*

- i. there is a duty of self-examination.

Each believer must examine (1) his faith, (2) his holiness, (3) his duty towards his neighbour.

- ii. the elders of the church are responsible for admission or exclusion.

3. *The significance of the Lord's Supper*

The things signified are Christ's broken body and shed blood. The Supper assures to believers the benefits of the cross.

4. *Spiritual nourishment in the Lord's Supper*

The main emphasis in the Confessions is that the Lord's Supper is a genuine feasting on the body and blood of Christ.

This is distinguished from the RC doctrines of transubstantiation and *ex opera operato*, because:

- i. the communication of Christ in the sacrament comes to those who have grace.
- ii. Christ works what he represents in the sacramental signs by his Spirit.
- iii. It is by faith that we receive the heavenly bread signified in the sacrament.

The 'real presence' of Christ in the sacrament although he is in heaven is like the effectual presence of the sun on earth even while it is in the sky.

5. *The Lord's Supper and the fellowship of believers*

The Lord's Supper undergirds the unity and love of church members for one another.

6. *The challenge of the Lord's Supper*

It is an engagement to duty.

7. *Right reception of the Lord's Supper*

- humility
- reverence
- thanksgiving.

8. *Errors rejected*

He Reformers saw the RC mass as idolatrous, and as undermining the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice.

5) Church Discipline

1. *Method*

The Confessions follow the pattern spelt out by Jesus in Matt. 18:15-17.

2. *Purposes*

The removal of sin from the sinner.

3. *Candidates*

Those who violate God's law persistently.

4. *Responsibility*

Some Confessions see discipline as the task of church officers, others of the congregation as a whole.

6) Worship

1. *The Form of Worship*

God must be worshipped according to his own prescription.

Two general approaches:

- i. what Scripture does not forbid is allowable.
- ii. what Scripture does not command is forbidden.

The Confessions saw a place for variety in forms of worship.

2. *Times of Worship*

i. WEEKLY WORSHIP

The Confessions support the use of the Lord's Day, some as a matter of principle, others pragmatically.

ii. FESTIVALS

All the Reformed churches rejected celebration of saints' days.

Some also rejected Christmas, Easter, etc. Others approved the celebration of festivals commemorating events in Christ's history, but as a matter of liberty.

3. *Place of Worship*

The Confessions advocated worship taking place in public buildings, not in private homes, except where persecution made public gatherings impossible.

Where churches own buildings they should be decent, but without excessive ornamentation.

4. *The Content of Worship*

Six ingredients of Biblically regulated worship:

1. prayer

for governments, all in authority, ministers, needs of churches, those suffering calamity.

2. thanksgiving

3. reading of Scripture

4. preaching

main purpose of gathering: to hear God's word in the power of the Spirit.

5. singing

Some Confessions see singing as optional.

Some specify that the Psalms are the only legitimate material for Christian singing

6. service to the needy

worship and lifestyle are tied together.

5. *The language of worship*

Everything must be in the common language of the people.

6. *The joy of worship*

Worship is the celebration of a completed redemption.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT**1) Edward Hiscox: *The New Directory for Baptist Churches (1894)*****1. *The Definition of a church***

- a company of regenerate people.
- an assembly of people who have professed faith in Christ.
- a community of people baptized as believers.
- a gathering of people living credible Christian lives.

2. *The Formation of Churches*

- avoid multiplication of weak congregations.
- avoid starting new churches on the basis of division.

3. *Church officers*

i) PASTORS

1. The nature of the pastor's work

- to win souls and edify saints.
- preparation for preaching a major part of his work.

2. The pastor's authority

- moral force, not dictatorial power.

ii) DEACONS

Hiscox thinks it likely that the origin of deacons is found in Acts 6:1-6

1. The duties of deacons

- to care for sick and needy members.
- to attend to the temporal affairs of the church.
- to act as counsellors and assistants of the pastor.

2. The number of deacons

- a matter of discretion for each church.

3. The qualifications for deacons

- found in Acts 6:3.

4. Deaconesses

- γυναίκοι (1 Tim 3:2) means female assistants or deaconesses for services to women in the church.

4. Church Government

Baptists usually affirm the independence of local congregations.

Hiscox argues for the Church Meeting as the ultimate seat of authority.

Some Baptists would qualify this: while the Church Meeting must appoint church officers, and therefore is the ultimate seat of authority, once officers are appointed the church delegates authority to them.

Hiscox sees limits to the independency and liberty of local churches:

1. limited by the laws of Christ.
2. limited by State law.
3. limited by the personal rights of members.
4. limited by the great commission.

5. The Ordinances

1. BAPTISM

1) The meaning of baptism

- the prerequisite for admission to the church.
- the first Christian act after an exercise of saving faith.

2) The administration of baptism

Arguments for baptism as immersion:

- i. Greek scholars constantly affirm that baptizw means 'immerse'
- ii. The NT avoids using other words for this rite of initiation because they do not so unambiguously mean immersion.
- iii. When Christ was baptized he went down into the water and came up again.
- iv. The reference to 'much water' (Jn 3:23) implies that John baptized by immersion.

- v. For Philip and the eunuch to go down into the water was only necessary if immersion was to take place.
- vi. Even paedo-baptist commentators admit that baptizw means 'immerse'
- vii. Paul's teaching about baptism presupposes immersion (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12).
- viii. Patristic writers speak of baptiam as immersion.
- ix. Baptism by immersion was the universal practice of the church in normal circumstances until the 13th century.
- x. Baptism by immersion continues to be the standard practice of the oriental churches.
- xi. The ancient practice of baptizing in rivers or the sea points to immersion as the norm.
- xii. Archaeology has discovered that churches in the first few centuries built baptisteries big enough for the immersion of adults.
- xiii. Holy Land explorers have affirmed that Jordan and other rivers and pools were amply deep enough for immersion.

3) *The administrator of baptism*

- a minister, or anyone appointed by the church.

4) *The subjects of baptism*

- believers only.

5) *The obligation of baptism*

- baptism is essential to discipleship.

6) *The repetition of baptism*

- Hiscox (I think unwisely) allows for the rebaptism of those who discovered, having been baptized as believers, that they were not then true believers after all.
- I think Hiscox over stresses the human side of exercising saving faith.

7) *The Directionality of Baptism*

- baptism looks back to Christ in his death, burial and resurrection.
- baptism looks forward to the resurrection of the dead.

8) *The unifying power of baptism*

- the one baptism demonstrates the fellowship of all the true people of God

2. THE LORD'S SUPPER

1) Participation in the Lord's Supper

- Hiscox restricts legitimate participation to baptized believers.

(Many Baptist churches make a charitable concession to members in good standing in paedo-baptist churches.)

2) The obligation of participation

- it is a solemn duty for baptized believers to remember the Lord in the way he appointed; it is not an optional extra.
- it is a responsibility of pastors to instruct church members in the nature, significance, and claims on them, of the Supper.

3) The corporate nature of the Lord's Supper

- as a church ordinance the supper is not something to be observed in private.
- the church can decide to meet in a sick-room so as not to exclude a sick member.

4) The administrator of the Lord's Supper

- a minister, or anyone appointed by the church.

5) The Directionality of the Lord's Supper

- the Lord's Supper looks backwards to commemorate the death of Christ for human redemption.
- The Lord's Supper looks onwards to the triumph and glory of Christ's second coming.

6) The message of the Lord's Supper

- the Lord's Supper proclaims Christ's love to the believer and declares that the believer's spiritual nourishment is from Christ
- I think that Hiscox fails to give the element of communion with one another in the Lord's Supper sufficient prominence.

6. Church Discipline

Three laws for Christ's household:

1. for every disciple: the law of love.

2. for the offender: the law of confession.
3. for the offended: the law of forgiveness.

1) The object of discipline

- to remove evil.
- to encourage and protect the right.
- to regain the offender.
- to edify the church.
- to sustain a witness to the world.

2) The spirit of discipline

- brotherly pleading.

3) The duty of discipline

- from faithfulness to Christ and to his members.

4) The limit of discipline

- only for matters contrary to God's law.
- not to infringe personal liberty.

5) The method of discipline

- following the procedure of Matthew 18:15-17.

6) The types of offence calling for discipline

- (1) false doctrine; (2) disregard of authority; (3) contention and strife; (4) immoral conduct; (5) a disorderly walk; (6) a covetous spirit; (7) an arrogant deportment; (8) going to law with brothers.

7. Christian Worship

Hiscox refers to 'the preaching service'.

1. the object of preaching: the salvation of sinners and the edification of the saints.
2. the character of preaching: plain, simple, spiritual, practical, instructional, clear, interesting.

Hiscox considers the place of song in the service of worship:

1. singing should be the united expression of the worship of the congregation.
2. the style of music should be what the people can sing.

8. Christian Mission

The church is in the world with an evangelistic mandate. Every pastor and every church should be on the lookout for areas which still need the gospel, and should also have the whole world in their sights.

2) The Emergent Church

- a new movement seeking to be the church appropriately for a postmodern world.

- a diverse movement which challenges us to examine the cultural appropriateness of our forms of church life.

An emergent participant: Scot McKnight

Postmodernism as it relates to the emergent church movement:

- 1) Postmodernism says that no worldview can be proved to be true.
- 2) Some postmodernists deny that there is such a thing as truth.
- 3) The postmodernist accepts that our knowledge is limited and we are fallible.
- 4) The postmodernist Christian recognises that only God has an infallible grasp of absolute truth.
- 5) The postmodernist Christian realises that to acknowledge the limits of our knowledge is to face up to our human fallenness.
- 6) The postmodernist Christian teaches that God's truth is found in Jesus Christ and in the church's Scriptural witness to that truth.
- 7) The Christian in a postmodern context believes that orthodoxy is defined as much by practice as by articulation.
- 8) The postmodernist Christian sees theology as narrative, not as propositions only.
- 9) The postmodern form of certainty found in the emergent movement emerges from love and trust of God.

1. What is the emergent church protesting against?

- 1) The fake in evangelical churches.
- 2) The divisions in the church.
- 3) The cocksure certainty to which evangelicals are prone.
- 4) The tendency to separate action from proclamation.
- 5) The individualistic emphasis in Evangelicalism.
- 6) The marketing approach to evangelism.
- 7) The idea that church is what happens on Sunday.
- 8) The hierarchy and pyramid structure of many churches.
- 9) The separation of social action from the gospel.
- 10) The otherworldliness of Evangelicalism.

2. What does the emergent church stand for?

- 1) Missionality.
- 2) Jesus.
- 3) Church.

- 4) Culture.
- 5) Sensory Worship.

An critic of emergent: Walter Henegar

- 1) He commends missionality,
but criticizes the tendency to compromise.
- 2) He commends community,
but criticizes the tendency to moralism.
- 3) He commends artistic involvement,
but criticizes the tendency to undervalue the word.
- 4) He commends the rediscovery of patristics,
but criticizes the loss of authority.

Henegar's conclusion:

The emergent church poses a legitimate challenge,
but risks blurring the line between church and world.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. As the ekklesia, we must live as those called out from the world and its ways.
2. As the church, we must be a joyful people.
3. The church must be governed in all things by God's word.
4. Worship must be regulated by Scripture.
5. As pastors, we must fulfil our ministry:
 - do not neglect study;
 - seek to be a soul-winner;
 - seek to edify God's people;
 - do not become a dictator.
6. Aim to develop a family atmosphere of love and unity in the local church.
7. Take great care in assessing applicants for membership.
8. If discipline becomes necessary, be scrupulous to exercise it according to Jesus' pattern.
9. Develop relationships with other churches, welcoming diversity in a humble, teachable spirit.
10. Keep mission and evangelism at the forefront of the church's programme:
 - keep looking out for new pioneering opportunities;
 - seek to be culturally appropriate.
11. Be ready for persecution – but do not provoke it through foolishness.
12. Keep Christ and Calvary at the centre of the church's life: ensure that your ministry is always grace-shaped.

13. Pray for God's blessing – we can do nothing without the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS AND DEMONS

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

ANGELS

Old Testament

GENESIS 3:24

It was the task of angels to prevent the tragedy of everlasting life while still in sin.

GENESIS 28:12

Angels carried God's message to Jacob.

1 SAMUEL 4:4

The LORD dwells between the cherubim (cf. 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kings 19:15; 1 Chr 13:6; Pss 80:1; 99:1; Isa 37:16). This truth is represented by the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:22). It speaks of the LORD's universal sovereignty.

PSALMS

Angels are agents of God's judgement (78:49).
Angels are agents of God's protection of his people (91:11).
An angel is a mighty being who obeys God instantaneously (103:20), and a spiritual servant (104:4).

ISAIAH 6:2,6

The radiance of the seraphim emphasises the greater glory of God.

New Testament

THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

- 1. Angels carried God's messages concerning the incarnation of his Son** (Matt 1:20; 2:13,19; Lk 1:11,26; 2:9-10,13).
- 2. Angels served Christ in his times of need** (Matt 4:11; Mk 1:13; Lk 22:43; cf. Matt 26:53).
- 3. Angels were involved at the resurrection of Christ** (Matt 28:2,5; Lk 24:43; Jn 20:12).
- 4. Jesus' teaching about angels.**

- 1) Angels will serve as reapers in the final harvest (Matt 13:39,41,49; 24:31; Mk 13:27).
- 2) Angels will appear with Jesus at his second coming (Matt 16:27; 25:31; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26).
- 3) Angels care for believers (Matt 18:10; Lk 16:22).
- 4) Angels do not marry in heaven (Matt 22:30; Mk 12:25).
- 5) The angels are not omniscient (Matt 24:36; Mk 13:32).
- 6) Angels participate in the joy of a conversion (Lk 15:10).
- 7) Angels are immortal (Lk 20:36).

5. The early church and its experience of angels.

- 1) Early Christians experienced angelic care (Ac 5:19; 12:7; 27:23).
- 2) Early Christians received guidance through the ministry of angels (Ac 8:26; 10:3).
- 3) Early Christians observed angels as agents of judgement (Ac 12:23).

HEBREWS 1:6-7,13-14

- 1) The angels are worshippers of Christ.
- 2) The angels are spirit-beings.
- 3) The angels are God's servants.
- 4) The service of the angels is directed towards Christian believers.

1 PETER

Angels are fascinated by the gospel story (1:12).
The angels are subject to the ascended Christ (3:22).

DEMONS

Old Testament

Idols are the embodiment of demons (Lev 17:7; Deut 32:17; 2 Chr 11:15; Ps 106:37).

New Testament

The NT makes the same identification of demons with idols (1 Cor 10:20-21), and notes that demons are the angels who sinned (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6).

THE GOSPELS

1. The devil was determined to frustrate the work of Christ (Matt 4:1,5,8,10; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2,3,5,6,8,13).

2. The devil is the ruler of the demons (Matt 9:34; 12:24,26,27; Mk 3:22,23,26; Lk 11:15,18,19).

3. Demon-possession and the victory of Christ .

- 1) Demons knew who Jesus was (Matt 8:29; Lk 4:33-34,41; cf. Mk 1:34).

- 2) The effects of demon possession were varied: fierceness (Matt 8:28); life stultified (Matt 9:32; 12:22; Lk 11:14); self-harm (Matt 17:15; Lk 8:29); insanity (Lk 8:27); exaggerated sin (Lk 4:33); helpless bondage (Lk 13:16).
 - 3) Jesus' victory – with a word (Matt 8:16); by the Spirit (Matt 12:28); by God's finger (Lk 11:20).
- 4. It was at demonic instigation that Judas betrayed Jesus** (Jn 13:2; Lk 22:3; Jn 6:70).
 - 5. Hell was prepared specifically for the devil and the demons** (Matt 25:41).
 - 6. The devil's work has a general effect on human life as a whole** (Jn 8:44).

ACTS 26:18

Conversion involves a turning away from Satan, a change of allegiance.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

1. The Early Christian Creeds

God is *the Maker of all things, visible and invisible.*

2. The Reformation Confessions

- 1) The invisible spiritual beings are created by God.
- 2) Some angels continued in their created state of goodness.
- 3) Some angels fell into perdition.
- 4) Even evil spirits are included within God's providence.
- 5) Evil spirits are the force behind sin and deception.
- 6) Evil spirits oppose God's true church.
- 7) False doctrine and false worship are inspired by the devil.
- 8) Jesus destroys the works of the devil.
- 9) Teachings which deny the existence of a spirit-world or which see the devils as self-existent are rejected.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The teaching of **Bill Subritzky**:

He "attributes all problems, whether physical, spiritual, emotional, or psychological, to the influence of demons".

He claims that angels have bodies, but demons are on the constant lookout for bodies to inhabit. Both statements are questionable.

He lists 12 ways in which demons may enter a person. All are speculative, and his use of Scripture is dubious.

Subritzky claims that there is an unholy trinity: the spirits of Jezebel, antichrist and death-and-hell. This is based on a total misuse of the Bible.

NOTE: anything we say about demons must be soundly based in an honest and accurate reading of the Bible.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Be very thankful that God uses angels for our protection.
2. Do not underestimate the power of the devil – we face a real foe.
3. Do not overestimate the power of Satan – we face a defeated foe.
4. Praise God for Christ' victory over the devil.
5. Pray that the power of the gospel may liberate people from Satan's clutches.
6. Rejoice in the ministry of angels (2 Kings 6:15-17).

THE DOCTRINE OF ESCHATOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

There is no 'correct' Reformed eschatology. Bible-believing Christians hold a range of views. A person's views on eschatology should never become the basis for judging their orthodoxy.

On most elements of eschatology, we are in agreement. Where we differ, we need humility.

EXEGESIS OF KEY PASSAGES

Old Testament

We find our eschatology, strictly defined, in the NT: the OT looked forward to the coming of the Messiah, and tended to conflate his two comings.

Anthony Hoekema identifies seven 'revelational concepts' in which the eschatological outlook of the OT is embodied.

1. The Expectation of the coming Redeemer

- 1) The promise of Gen 3:15 sets the tone for the whole OT.
- 2) The coming redeemer is designated the seed of Abraham (Gen 22:18), of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10), and a descendant of David (2 Sam 7:14-15).
- 3) The coming redeemer will fulfil the three special offices of prophet (Deut 18:15), priest (Ps 110:4) and king (Zech 9:9).
- 4) As king, the coming redeemer will sit on David's throne (Isa 9:7).
- 5) The coming redeemer is identified with God coming to his people (Isa 7:14; 9:6).

- 6) The coming redeemer will be God's suffering servant (Isa 42:1; 49:5-7; 52:13; 53:11).
- 7) The coming redeemer is the 'son of man' (Dan 7:13-14).

2. The kingdom of God

Human sin means that God's rule is only imperfectly realised in Israel's history. A day will come when his rule will be fully experienced by the whole world (Dan 2:44-45; 7:13-14).

3. The new covenant

(Jer 31:31-34)

4. The restoration of Israel

The prophets predicted a gracious restoration of Israel with ethical as well as geographical and political overtones (Ezek 36:24-28; Isa 24-27).

This gave rise to the doctrine of the remnant.

5. The prediction of the future outpouring of the Spirit

(Joel 2:28-29)

6. The Day of the LORD

- a day of judgement (Isa 13:9-11; Amos 5:18; Isa 2:12,17; Zeph 1:14-15) and salvation (Joel 2:32).

7. The new heavens and the new earth

(Isa 65:17; 66:22)

The coming of Jesus as the Redeemer is the key to the fulfilment of all the other elements in OT prophecy:

- the kingdom of God (Matt 4:17).
- the new covenant (Matt 26:28).
- the restoration of Israel (Ac 1:6-7).
- the outpouring of the Spirit (Ac 2:16,23-24,33).
- the day of the Lord (2 Pet 3:10; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14).
- the new heavens and the new earth (2 Pet 3:4,13).

New Testament

MATTHEW 24-25

The disciples ask about signs of the end (24:3).

- 1) They recognised that there would be an end.
- 2) They knew that the end would be marked by the coming of Jesus.

However, their concern about the end is mixed up with the question of the destruction of the temple (24:1-2).

The Lord's reply:

- 1. Things which are not signs of the end (24:4-12).**
- 2. A redirection of the disciples' focus (24:13).**
- 3. One indication of the timing of the end (24:14).**
- 4. A more imminent catastrophe (24:15-26).**
- 5. The unmistakable nature of the end (24:27).**
- 6. The occurrence of disasters from time to time before the end (24:28).**
- 7. What the end will be like (24:29-31):**
 - 1) the end of life on earth as we know it (v 29).
 - 2) the appearance of Jesus in divine glory (v 30).
 - 3) the cry of those who have left it too late to put their trust in him (v 30).
 - 4) the everlasting safety of Christ's people (v 31).
- 8. The danger of expecting the end prematurely (24:32-36):**
 - 1) 'all these things' (v 33) means everything that happens throughout the present age.
 - 2) 'near' emphasises the absence of intervening signs.
 - 3) the events mentioned in vv 7 and 24 will be underway while Jesus' own generation is still alive (v 34).
 - 4) we delude ourselves if we think we can work out God's timetable (v 36).
- 9. The duty of constant watchfulness (24:37-25:30).**
 - 1) life will carry on as normal (vv 37-38).
 - 2) the sudden intervention of the Lord's coming will divide the human race in two (vv 39-41).
 - 3) we must make sure that we are ready for a happy outcome on that day (24:42-25:30).
- 10. The two alternative outcomes at the final judgement (25:31-46).**

JOHN 14:2-3

1. There are many apartments in God's palace.
2. Jesus has gone to prepare our places.
3. Jesus will come again to collect us.
4. After Jesus' coming his people will be with him.

ROMANS 8:18-25

1. These verses speak about the future tense of salvation (vv 24-25).
2. What this future involves is spelt out (vv 18-23):

The chief feature is the redemption of our bodies, which

is called our 'adoption'.

3. God's glorious future involves the whole creation (v 19).
4. We wait with eager patience (v 25).

ROMANS 11:25-32

God has a future purpose for Israel (as a people, not as a nation-state). All the Jews of the final generation will turn to Jesus as the true Messiah.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-58

In the days of the early church there was a teaching around which denied physical resurrection. The apostle replies:

1. The fact that the dead are raised is proved by Christ's resurrection (v 12-13).
2. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee that all the dead shall be raised (v 20).
3. The resurrection of Christ's people will take place at his second coming (v 23).
4. The general resurrection marks the beginning of the end (vv 24-26).
5. After the end, God is all-in-all (v 28).
6. It is a general human assumption that the dead will be raised (v 29).
7. The resurrection of the dead is what makes risk-taking logical (vv 30-32).
8. Resurrection includes transformation (vv 42-57).
9. Because the dead will be raised we do not waste our lives if we serve the Lord (v 58).

2 CORINTHIANS 4:14-5:10

1. God will raise us up with Jesus (4:14).
2. The glory to come will be disproportionately great in comparison with present affliction (4:17).
3. The things which we cannot now see are eternal (4:18).
4. The glory will include an eternal, heavenly body (5:1).
5. The believer's deep desire is for that heavenly body (5:2-4).
6. There is a judgement to be faced (5:10).

PHILIPPIANS 1:21,23

For the believer death results in being in Christ's presence to a degree not possible now, even though that interim condition falls short of the full glory of resurrection.

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven.
2. Eager waiting for Jesus' coming is part of Christian commitment.
3. When Jesus comes our bodies will be transformed.

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-5:11

- 1. The fact that believers have died is not a reason for loss of hope (4:13).**
- 2. What will happen when the Lord returns?**
 - 1) SUMMARY (vv 14-15)
 - i) Christians who have died will be brought out of the grave.
 - ii) Christians who are alive will not have any advantage over those of earlier generations.
 - 2) THE ORDER OF EVENTS (vv 16-17)
 - i) The descent of the Lord from heaven, accompanied by
 - (1) his own shout (cf. Jn 11:43),
 - (2) the archangel's voice,
 - (3) the trumpet's blast.
 - ii) The resurrection of the believing dead.
 - iii) The rapture of living believers to meet the Lord in the air [*the word 'rapture' comes from the Latin rendering of 'caught up' – it need not imply a secret rapture*].
 - iv) The eternal inseparability of Christ and his people.
- 3. We are not privy to the timing of these events (5:1-3).**
- 4. Because believers are expecting the Lord's return the day will hold no terrors for them (5:4-5).**
- 5. The truth of the Lord's return challenges believers (5:6-8):**
 - to watch
 - to be sober

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-10

1. The coming of Jesus will be his revelation.
2. The significance of the second coming:
 - FOR BELIEVERS: rest.
 - FOR UNBELIEVERS: vengeance and punishment.

FOR THE LORD: glorified and admired.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

There were those at Thessalonica who were teaching *either* that the Lord's coming was purely spiritual and had already happened, *or* that it was so much on the point of happening (vv 1-2) that any further involvement in the life of this world was pointless (cf. 3:11).

This is the only passage in the Bible which appears to spell out prerequisite signs which must happen prior to the second coming.

However, we must note two things:

- (1) even here the 'sign' is too vague to be useful in fixing a timescale.
- (2) Paul is not contradicting the NT emphasis on constant anticipation of the Lord's return, but correcting a misapplication of that attitude.

Before the Lord comes, there must be the falling away associated with the revelation of the man of sin (v 3). He will claim divine powers and rights (v 4). He will be lawless (v 8), energised by Satan, deceptively misleading, and aiming to promote unrighteousness (vv 9-12).

In principle this phenomenon is already at work, though under restraint (vv 6-7) – probably by providentially ordered powers of government.

REVELATION

Five main approaches:

- (1) Revelation is about the ultimate future – everything in the book is future until the final stage of history.
- (2) Revelation is an account of the whole of Christian history in pictures.
- (3) Revelation is a vivid description of life in John's own time.
- (4) Revelation is a portrait of that final decade of the first century, plus its immediate future.
- (5) Revelation is a picture book of timeless truths – Christ is always triumphing over evil.

It is not necessary to choose one to the exclusion of all the others: with the exception of (2), all the others have something to say. We cannot be dogmatic about the meaning of Revelation.

1:1-3

1. The word **MUST** emphasises God's sovereignty.
2. The word **SHORTLY** implies:
 - i) God is working to his schedule.
 - ii) The next great event is the return of Christ.
 - iii) We must reassess what is important in history.

1:4-8

The eternal God will bring everything to its appointed goal (vv 4,8), which is the Lord's coming gloriously, visibly, and startingly (v 7).

1:9-20

The vision of the glorified Christ leads up to vv 19-20 – the only significant things in the vision are the lampstands and stars (vv 12-13,16), the churches and their angels (perhaps the churches seen from an idealistic perspective). The seven churches represent the entire church in every time and place.

1. Christ moves among the churches (vv 12-13).
2. Christ holds the churches in his right hand (v 16).

2:1-3:22

Christ speaks to his churches: "Overcome!"

4:1-5:14

The scene is set for the ascension of Jesus Christ.

The rest of Revelation is the disclosure of God's sovereign purpose in history in view of the fact that Christ is ascended to the throne.

6:1-8:6 – The Seven Seals

1. SEALS 1-5

Seals 2-4 (6:3-8) symbolise violence, economic crisis and death – a description of the world as we know it.

In such a world the people of God must expect to suffer [Seal 5 (6:9-11)].

But Christ shall triumph [Seal 1 (6:1-2)].

2. SEAL 6

- 1) 6:12-17: the whole world is collapsing – a vivid way of illustrating what is always going on in the present age, where God's wrath is at work.
- 2) 7:1-17: the church is secure in its salvation.

3. SEAL 7

The introduction to the rest of the book.

8:7-14:20 – The Seven Trumpets

1. TRUMPETS 1-4

Disasters on land (8:7), at sea (8:8-9), affecting the water supply (8:10-11), and in the air (8:12).

Throughout the course of history disasters serve as warnings.

2. TRUMPETS 5-7

Each of the remaining trumpets has a 'Woe' attached (8:13). They have a more sinister feel.

Trumpet 5 / Woe 1 (9:1-12): there are sinister forces of evil at work in the disasters of the present time.

Trumpet 6 / Woe 2 (9:13-11:14): God's judgement is also at work in the disasters of the present time. However, the church, though it will suffer, will be vindicated.

Trumpet 7 / Woe 3 (11:15-14:20):

1. *A preview of God's ultimate goal* (11:15-19)
2. *A flashback which sets the end in context*: the end began with the first coming of Christ: (i) he was born out of Israel [12:1-2]; (ii) he was opposed by Satan [12:3-4]; (iii) he was enthroned [12:5]; (iv) his crucifixion was the moment when Satan was cast out of heaven (12:7-12).
3. *An overview of the present age*: two features are highlighted: (i) God protects Israel [12:13-16, briefly mentioned in v 6]; (ii) Satan fights the church: this is summarised in 12:17, and 13:1-14:20 enlarge on it.

The first beast (13:1-10) represents the spirit of restless wickedness underlying all human organisation (cf. Isa 57:20). Three things characterise the beastly system: (1) the beast embodies the power of Satan; (2) the beast claims a loyalty due only to God; (3) the beast survives against expectations. However, God's people are secure (13:8).

The second beast (13:11-14:5) represents particular expressions of the general beastliness, and is later equated with the false prophet, indicating the religious basis of human politics. But God's people are secure (14:1-5).

Even in such a world the gospel is being preached (14:6-11), and this section ends with a word for the believer – endure! (14:12-13) and a word for the unbeliever – prepare! (14:14-20).

15:1-19:10 – The Seven Bowls

At this point we begin to move beyond the general character of the present age towards the final stage of history.

15:1-16:21: *a brief summary* of the end times.

Bowls 1-5 (16:2-4,8-10) are very similar to Trumpets 1-5. The final events will not be different in kind from the warnings along the way.

Bowl 6 (16:12-14,16) shows the world demonically united to do battle with God.

Bowl 7 (16:17-20) portrays the sudden shattering of demonic unity by divine division.

Even in the end times the church is secure in its Saviour (15:2-3; 16:5-7).

17:1-19:10: a more detailed summary of the end times.

The scarlet beast is the first beast of chapter 13 – the all-pervading godlessness of human society – but more intense at the end.

Christ wins the victory – and his victory is absolutely complete.

19:11-22:6 – The Order of Events at the End

1. *The Lord's return to earth* (19:11-16).
2. *The overthrow of the evil system of anti-God rebellion* (19:17-21).
3. *The Lord's millennial reign on earth* (20:1-15).

There are four main views of chapter 20:

- (1) Historic Premillennialism.
- (2) Amillennialism.
- (3) Postmillennialism.
- (4) Dispensationalism.

My reasons for opting for number (1):

- 1) It was the earliest interpretation of this chapter: people who knew John or people who had known John (eg. Papias, Irenaeus) believed that this was what John meant.
- 2) It is the interpretation which best does justice to Revelation as a whole: compare 20:4 with 12:9; 13:4; 18:23; 19:20. If all these texts are referring to the same period, it is hard to see how 20:4 can be reconciled with the others.
- 3) It is the interpretation which best makes sense of this chapter: on some readings the word 'lived' mean different things in v 4 (lived spiritually) and v 5 (were raised from the dead); however, it seems more likely that the word will mean the same thing in both cases, given how close together they come – they both refer to resurrection.

The structure of chapter 20:

1. Verses 1-4a are a summary:
 - 1) Satan will be bound for 1000 years so that there will be no more deception (vv 1-3a).
 - 2) Satan will be released after the 1000 years for a little while (v 3b).
 - 3) Judgement will take place (v 4a).

2. Verses 4b-15 fill in the details:

- 1) During the 1000 years that Satan is bound the saints, raised from the dead in the first resurrection, reign with Christ (vv 4b-6, amplifying vv 1-3a).
- 2) When Satan is released, the nations are deceived again, battle with God resumes, God intervenes, his victory is finalised and the devil is despatched to his final doom (vv 7-10, amplifying v 3b).
- 3) The second resurrection takes place: unbelievers are raised for condemnation to the second death at the great white throne judgement (vv 11-15, amplifying v 4a).

4. *The end of the story* (21:1-22:6).

The new heaven and new earth – God’s people in deep union with their God.

22:7-21

Revelation ends with a threefold reminder that Jesus is coming quickly.

FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE

1. The Early Christian Creeds

- 1) **Jesus will come.**
- 2) **He will judge the living and the dead.**
- 3) **His kingdom shall never end.**

This statement was designed to assert the full eternal deity of the Son.

4) **The dead will be raised.**

(i) Redemption embraces the whole of human personality.

(ii) Very early the church had to contend against those who had a purely spiritual view of salvation.

(iii) The denial of the resurrection was motivated by the desire to deny the judgement.

5) **Everlasting life will follow.**

(i) Believers will never die again.

(ii) Everlasting life is the true and blessed life.

2. The Reformation Confessions

1) The coming of God's kingdom in the course of history.

(i) The calling of the Jews.

(ii) The fullness of the Gentiles brought in.

2) The expectation of the rise of Antichrist.

The Confessions identified Roman Catholicism with Antichrist. Many people still expect a specific Antichrist to appear before the end.

3) Death and the intermediate state.

For the believer death has lost its sting.

(i) The intermediate state for the believer

On death the soul of the believer is received into heaven with Christ.

However, this is not the final state, but a time of waiting for the complete glory of resurrection.

(ii) The intermediate state for the unbeliever

The soul of the unbeliever is immediately cast into hell.

The Confessions explicitly reject two teachings:

1. Purgatory
2. Soul sleep

4) The return of the Lord.

1. Christ's coming will occur at the appointed time.
2. Christ's coming will result in the destruction of Antichrist.
3. Christ's coming will be his vindication.

5) The resurrection of the dead.

The Confessions teach a general resurrection at the time of the second coming.

Resurrection means the eternal reunion of soul and body.

The believer's greatest glory will be to have a body conformed to Christ's resurrection body.

6) The transformation of the living.

Christians alive when Christ returns will be changed.

7) The rapture of all the saints.

All the faithful caught up to meet Christ in the air.

8) Jesus will judge the living and the dead.

1. The judgement will be in perfect righteousness.
2. The purpose of the day of judgement is the manifestation of God's glory in both his mercy and his justice.

The outcomes of the judgement

(1) For unbelievers

- i) The punishment of sense
– the experience of torment forever.
- ii) The punishment of loss
– banishment from the presence of God.

(2) For believers

- i) Perfect freedom from all sin and misery.
- ii) The full enjoyment of God

9) The renovation of creation.

The refreshing and restitution of all things.

10) The appropriate responses to eschatological doctrine.

1. On the part of the unbeliever

The dreadful consideration of judgement should lead to repentance.

2. On the part of the believer

- 1) The sense of comfort in a world of trial.
- 2) The bridling of sin and worldliness.
- 3) Watchful readiness.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The origins of Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism began with John Nelson Darby (1800-82).

Darby believed that the history of the closing seven years of this dispensation and the character of the dispensation to follow (the millennium) were clearly predicted in Scripture.

The sequence of events, according to Darby:

1. The first resurrection and the secret rapture of the saints.
2. The commencement of the first half of the seventieth week of years: antichrist will emerge as world ruler; the apostate church will associate itself with him.
3. The return of the Jews to their own land: most Jews will ally themselves with antichrist, but a small

remnant will look to the Lord and bear witness during the first 3½ years of the seventieth week.

4. A period of prosperity for the nation of Israel.
5. Antichrist's breach of covenant: after 3½ years antichrist will break his agreement with the Jews and terminate the witness of the remnant.
6. The casting of Satan out of heaven on to earth.
7. The great tribulation: the fierce persecution of the Jews, which will last for the next 3½ years.
8. Christ's public appearance along with his saints: antichrist will be destroyed; the apostate church will be judged; Israel will recognise Jesus as the Messiah and be re-established in the promised land.
9. The judgement of the living: the judgement of Gentile nations; those spared will acknowledge the Lord as God.
10. The millennium: Satan will be bound; the saints will reign with Christ; the Lord will be King of all the earth, with his throne at Jerusalem; Israel will be blessed; peace will reign on earth.
11. The loosing of Satan at the end of the 1000 years: the nations will be deceived; their attack on Jerusalem will fail; Satan will be cast into the lake of fire.
12. The second resurrection: the resurrection of the unbelieving dead.
13. The judgement of the dead.
14. The new heavens and the new earth.

From 1826-28 Darby had been a member of a group who met at Albury Park to study Scripture prophecy. The Albury Park Conferences reached six conclusions:

1. This Dispensation will end cataclysmically with the judgement and destruction of the Church.
2. The Jews will be restored to Palestine during the time of judgement.
3. The judgement will fall principally upon Christendom.
4. When the judgement is over, the millennium will begin.
5. The second coming of Christ will occur before the millennium.
6. The prophesied 1260 days / 42 months represents a 1260 year period from the reign of Justinian to the

French Revolution: in the 1820's the bowls of Rev 16 are being poured out and the second coming is imminent.

Darby came to differ from point 6 in two ways:

1. The doctrine of the secret rapture of the Church before the tribulation was not put forward at Albury Park.
2. Darby rejected the tendency to predict a time for the second coming by trying to make sense of contemporary European politics – this was because he came to reject a 'historicist' reading of Revelation in favour of a 'futurist' interpretation.

The doctrine of the secret rapture emerged for the first time in 1833 at a second series of prophetic conferences which ran from 1831-34 at Powerscourt.

Dispensationalism arose from a misunderstanding of the covenant with Abraham. Darby's concern with the Abrahamic covenant arose from his perplexity at the disunity and unholiness of the visible Church.

The Church was in ruins and it was now a duty of believers to separate from it. The true Church had nothing to do but to await a speedy translation to heaven in the secret rapture.

Darby recognised that God's promises to Abraham were unconditional. However, he failed to read them in the light of the NT fulfilment.

He therefore read the Bible as the history of the Jews, and his eschatology was the future projection of the history of Israel.

Darby held that in the Jews two things were united: (1) the calling of God; (2) government on earth.

However, because of Israelite idolatry, the two were separated: Israel remained the called people, but government passed to the Gentiles, and the times of the Gentiles still continue.

With the rejection of the Messiah, God's concern with the earth was put on hold. A parenthesis in God's revealed programme began. God stopped the prophetic clock.

During the parenthesis God has brought in the Church – the heavenly people. The interlude in prophetic history extends from the time that Christ was taken up to the time when the Church is taken up.

When the Church is raptured, earth's history will resume from the point reached when Christ ascended – the seventieth week of years will begin.

After the Church has left the world, antichrist will emerge, the tribulation will take place, after seven years Christ will

appear, the dispensation of the Gentiles will be finished, and the millennium will ensue.

In Dispensationalism's philosophy of history six dichotomies emerge:

1. The Church – Israel

For Darby OT believers are not part of the Church: the two dispensations are totally distinct. The tribulation and the millennium are the restoration of the OT story. The Church is a 'mystery' in the sense that it was entirely unrevealed in the OT.

2. Heaven – Earth

Darby speaks of the Church as the centre of heavenly glory, and the Jews as the centre of earthly glory.

3. Father – Jehovah

Darby claimed that God has revealed himself differently to his two peoples: to the Jews he made himself known as Jehovah, to the Church he makes himself known as Father.

4. Christ – Messiah

Darby said that when the Jews believe in Jesus it will not be as Christ but as Messiah. Conversely, the Church does not relate to Jesus as the earthly Messiah, but as the exalted Christ.

5. Atonement – Calling

Darby associates the death of Jesus with the salvation of the Church. However, Jesus did not die (and did not need to die) for the Jews, because they are the called people.

One of Darby's early associates parted company with him over this issue. B.W. Newton rightly saw the teaching of two different schemes of salvation for Jews and Gentiles as quite contrary to Scripture: all God's dealings with sinners are an integral unity.

6. Grace – Faithfulness

Darby saw the Church as a witness to sovereign grace, because it was given a place with Christ even though no such promise had been made. Israel, on the other hand, was a witness to God's faithfulness to the promises he had made.

These are all false dichotomies, but they result in a portrayal of the fulness of the times with everything gathered, not into one (Eph 1:10), but into two:

The Church is in heaven in relationship with the Father through Christ on the basis of atonement by

grace.

Israel is on earth in relationship with Jehovah through the Messiah on the basis of the calling by God's faithfulness.

- a fundamental dividedness in the works and ways of God.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Eschatology is entirely practical in its intent: the last things are not revealed merely to satisfy our curiosity or to stimulate our ingenuity.

1. APPLICATION FOR BELIEVERS

1) In Jesus' Teaching

- 1. The doctrine of heavenly reward is a source of joy in life's trials.**

Matt 5:11-12; Lk 6:22-23.

- 2. The doctrine of the heavenly future presents a challenge about life's priorities.**

Matt 6:19-20; 19:29.

- 3. The doctrine of the glorious consummation contains the stimulus to endure.**

Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mk 13:13.

- 4. The assurance of a heavenly reward is an encouragement to service.**

Matt 10:42.

- 5. The uncertainty of the timing of the end is a call for vigilance.**

Mk 13:33-37.

2) In Paul's Defence

- **The doctrine of the general resurrection is a powerful incentive to maintain a clear conscience both Godward and in human relationships.**

Ac 24:15-16

2. EVANGELISTIC APPLICATION

The truth of the second coming is one which we may use in preaching the gospel to unconverted people. It is a message which the Holy Spirit may use powerfully to alert unbelievers to their danger and need.

1) *In Jesus' Teaching*

1. Eschatological truth implies a warning.

- (i) Hell is real.

Matt 10:28; Mk 9:43-48.

- (ii) Judgement is worst for those who reject the gospel.

Matt 10:14-15; 11:20-24.

2. Eschatological truth issues a challenge

- (i) Do not lose your soul for the sake of present gain.

Matt 16:26-27; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26.

- (ii) Do not leave it too late to believe the word.

Lk 16:23-31.

3. Eschatological truth delivers an invitation.

Jn 14:4-6

2) *In Paul's Preaching*

- **The coming judgement day is the basis for the command to repent.**

Ac 17:30-31

3) *In Peter's Writing*

2 PETER 3:3-15a

1. The background issue:

the denial of the second coming by the scoffers.

2. The second coming a definite future event:

- (i) The Lord's coming will be like a thief in the night.
- (ii) The present creation will be burned up.
- (iii) The works in the earth will be burned up.
- (iv) Ungodly people will face God's judgement.
- (v) A new heavens and a new earth will arise.

3. The reason for the apparent delay:

- (i) God's timescale is different from ours.
- (ii) The 'delay' is not due to divine laziness.
- (iii) The 'delay' is an expression of God's patience:

and God is patient because he does not wish any to perish.

4. **The challenge of the eschatological 'delay':**

- we must be holy, godly, spotless, blameless, servants of the Lord.
- to achieve these things we must be saved.