



M28 - STATEMENT OF FAITH (STORY FORM)

Updated 06-20-2020

Preamble

The purpose of this Statement of Faith is to provide a succinct yet accurate summary of God's working in the world. Its intent is to present the essentials of what Christians should believe. It is to be used as a teaching and communication tool. While it is founded upon Scriptures, it should not supplant them. It is presented in story form to emphasize the historicity of God's revelation of Himself and of His work of salvation through His Son.

Creation

In the beginning, the eternally existent, all-sufficient, and triune God created all that exists, visible and invisible. On the sixth and final day of creation, God created Man in His own image, unique in value, identity and purpose within the creation. God made Man male and female, which are distinct and different expressions of God's image that only together fully make up the image of God. Man was also responsible to rule over the creation and bring good from it as an expression of God's image. The first man and woman walked with God in the garden in perfect relationship with Him and one another. All that God created was "very good," and the original world was devoid of sickness, suffering, conflict, and death. At the culmination of His creation, God instituted marriage, the lifetime covenant relationship between one man and one woman, through which Man is to express the love, unity, leadership and servanthood found within the character and Trinity of God. God decreed that a man should unite with a woman for life and so be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and develop it.

(Genesis 1-2)

The Fall

Man, as originally created, was a perfect expression of the character of God and lived in a perfectly united relationship with God. But the archangel Lucifer lifted himself up in pride, rebelled against God, and became the evil Satan. Many of God's angels followed him in rebellion, becoming demons. Satan tempted the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, who doubted God's goodness and love, disobeyed God, and so joined the rebellion. As a result, Man lost the perfect state that had given him relationship with the Creator. This alienation was so severe that God described it as death, though the Man still had physical life. The creation was also radically alienated from its original state as God subjected it to decay and death in response to Man's sin.

Because Man was created in God's image as an eternal creature, the alienation from God had eternal consequences as well. This alienation changed the course of human history, as all human beings since Adam have been born alienated from God, without the spiritual life that comes through relationship with God. Both the inherited alienation from Adam and each individual's own sin leaves every person in a state of separation, without relationship, and deserving judgment from God for sin. Yet, at the time of

this separation, God promised a future redemption for Man. He mercifully continued to bless His creation, reveal His goodness and pursue a restoration of relationship.

(Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 3, Isaiah 53:6, Isaiah 64:6, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 3:10-23, Ephesians 2:1-3)

The Flood

After Adam and Eve's fall, their offspring began to multiply on the earth. Because human life was now born without connection to God and His Spirit, it was bent toward selfishness, sin and evil. Although humans still bore the likeness of God, that likeness was significantly twisted and marred. Human culture rapidly became corrupt until the earth was filled with violence and evil. In grief, God judged such evil by destroying the earth and its inhabitants with a world-wide flood. He saved land animals and eight people in a ship constructed by Noah, a righteous man. This flood was a divine foreshadowing of the judgment God will bring upon the earth at the end of the age.

(Genesis 6-9)

Promise & Covenant

From Noah's descendants, God chose Abraham and promised to bless him, to make his grandson Israel's descendants a great nation, to give them the land of Canaan and bless the entire world through them. Through the ministry of Moses, God redeemed the nation of Israel from slavery in Egypt, gave them the law and gave them the land as an inheritance. God promised blessings to the nation if they would believe and obey and threatened curses if they rebelled and served other gods. Many years later, God anointed David as Israel's king and promised to set one of his descendants, the Messiah, upon the throne of Israel forever.

(Genesis 12:1-7, Genesis 15:1-20, Genesis 22:15-18, Exodus 3, 1 Samuel 15, 2 Samuel 7)

Blessing & Curses

Throughout Israel's history (spanning from Abraham until Jesus came — a period of almost 2000 years), God interacted with His chosen people. He gave His Law, spoke through the prophets, dwelt within the temple, and blessed the nation according to their faith and obedience. But, Israel treacherously spurned the Lord, again and again turning to idolatry. In the end (and in accordance with His warnings) God nearly destroyed the nation, exiling the survivors to Assyria and Babylon. After seventy years, God brought a remnant back to the land. Yet, Israel never fully regained its sovereignty, remaining subject to foreign domination and devoid of a king sitting on David's throne.

(The Prophets, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah)

Jesus & the Kingdom

In the climax of His plan to remove the alienation that had entered in Man's first sin, and to reconcile the world to Himself, God sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus, the second Person of the Trinity, came to inaugurate the Kingdom of God and fulfill God's promises of redemption and reconciliation to Israel and to the world. Jesus was a descendant of David, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. Eternally pre-existent, Jesus was fully God and also fully man. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and through a season of ministry lasting approximately three years, He worked mighty miracles, casting out demons and healing all diseases and infirmities, thus authenticating His claims to be the Messiah—the King of Israel and Judge of the world.

As the exact representation of God and the perfect human, Jesus lived a life without sin, though He was tempted in every way. As fully Man, Jesus brought to God what Adam and all human life had failed to

do. Jesus lived the perfect expression of what God has created human life to be through perfectly living a loving, honoring expression of the image of God before the Father. As part of this obedience to His Father, He allowed himself to be crucified, without sin of his own, in substitutionary payment of the sins of Israel and of the world. In this way, both Jesus' life and Jesus' death were an essential part of God providing what was necessary for our reconciliation with Him.

During His earthly life, Jesus promised that He would bring an eternal Kingdom that His followers would reside in forever. This Kingdom is in a new creation where the present alienation is completely gone. In this Kingdom there is no more mourning, crying, death or pain.

(Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1, John 20:28, Romans 9:5, II Corinthians 5:21, I Peter 2:21-23, John 20:30-31, Matthew 20:28, Ephesians 1:4, Acts 1:11, Romans 5:6-8, Romans 6:9-10, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 9:28, I Timothy 3:16, Revelations 21:3-5)

Resurrection, Commission, Ascension

Three days after His death, Jesus rose physically from the dead, forever substantiating His claims to be Israel's Messiah and Savior of the world. For forty days Jesus repeatedly appeared to His disciples, proving His resurrection to them. He announced to His followers that all authority in heaven and earth had now been given to Him, indicating that this present time was now a transition to the Kingdom He is bringing. In preparation for what is to come, He commissioned them to take to all nations the good news of the coming of the kingdom of God, the forgiveness of sins, and His resurrection from the dead. After this, He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God. He is awaiting the appointed time for His return to exercise judgment on every human life and to complete the establishment of His eternal Kingdom.

(Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20, Acts 1)

The Holy Spirit

On the day of Pentecost, ten days after His ascension, Jesus poured out upon His followers the Holy Spirit, whom He had received from His Father. The Holy Spirit is fully God, the third Person of the Trinity. This is a personal being, not a force. Previous to Pentecost, the Holy Spirit had actively worked in the world, primarily through Israel's kings, prophets and priests. Since Pentecost, He has indwelt every true believer in Jesus, male and female, young and old. The Spirit convicts people of their sins, draws them to Christ, gives them new life, gifts them for service and empowers them to do God's will. The Spirit is sealed in every believer so that he or she will be protected and preserved by God and will persevere in faith until death or until Jesus returns. On the day of Pentecost, thousands believed, and, in obedience to Jesus' command, were baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah. This is a practice that has continued throughout the age.

(John 14:16-17 & 26, John 15:26-27, John 16:9-14, Acts 1-2, Romans 8:5-17, I Corinthians 3:16, I Corinthians 6:19, Galatians 5:16-26, Ephesians 1:13-14)

The Church

Since Jesus, in His life, death, and resurrection, fulfilled the Law of Moses and made it obsolete, the barrier between Jew and Gentile has been removed. After Jesus ascended, His apostles preached the good news that people are now justified before God through repentance and faith in Jesus and His work. Their message to all people everywhere was this: Reconciliation with God is offered by Him as a gift, through His own freely given grace. It comes to people through faith in Jesus Christ, apart from any actions that merit that grace. Faith consists of both believing that God, in His love for those He has

created, has provided all that is necessary for reconciliation through Jesus. Choosing to receive that gracious gift from God allows entering an eternal relationship with Him.

The people of God now include all who truly believe in Jesus the Messiah, whether Jew or Gentile, male or female, rich or poor—people of all ages and races—whom God is bringing together into His church. Those who come to Christ become part of His Church Universal and should devote themselves to God's family and its mission by becoming part of a local church. They join others in devoting themselves to the teaching of the Bible, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

(Matthew 28:19-20, Ephesians 1:22-23, Ephesians 2:19-22, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:37-47, Ephesians 5:19-21, Hebrews 10:23-25)

The Bible

The Bible claims to be the supernatural communication God has given to Man, describing His actions in history and revealing His will. For thousands of years, certain writings have been given within the flow of that history that claim to be from God and have been acknowledged in the world as being so. In the centuries immediately after Jesus lived, died, and rose again, the church recognized the writings that had been passed down from the Apostles, men whom Jesus had appointed to proclaim the kingdom and lead the church. These New Testament writings and the Jewish scriptures of the Old Testament make up the 66 books of the Bible and are uniquely, verbally and fully inspired by the Holy Spirit. They reveal their supernatural nature through verifiable prophecies that span centuries of time. The Scripture also reveals its divine nature through the scope of its subjects, the accuracy of its history, the nature of its communication and the witness of the Spirit in human hearts. As a communication from an infinite, loving God, we can know it was written without error in the original manuscripts and passed down to us with great accuracy. God's authority over His church is mediated through the Bible, and in this way, it is the supreme and final authority for faith and life in this age, superseding all other sources of human knowledge.

(II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21, Mark 13:31, John 8:31-32, John 20:31, Acts 20:32)

Kingdom Consummation

In the future, Jesus, the same Man who died, rose, and ascended into Heaven, will physically return to earth. He will act as divine judge over the life of every human being, then consummate His kingdom in a new heaven and a new earth after this present creation has been destroyed by fire. Death will be abolished, pain will be no more and sadness and sorrow will flee away. Those who have been reconciled to God through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, will be physically resurrected to live as children of God, with Him forever. They will inherit an eternal Kingdom prepared for them and enter into the joy of God's family. All others (who have refused to believe and repent) will remain in alienation from God. They will be physically resurrected and banished forever from the presence of God into hell, a place of eternal suffering.

(Matthew 16:27, Mark 14:62, John 14:3, Acts 1:11, Philippians 3:20, I Thessalonians 4:15, II Timothy 4:1, Titus 2:13, I Corinthians 15, II Thessalonians 1:7-10, Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15, Revelation 21-22)