

1. Christian Doctrine

Introduction:

When some hear the word "doctrine", they tend to have a negative response. Why is that?

They equate doctrine with dogma and dogmatic people; to debate and disagreement; to controversial matters that cause division. They equate doctrine to thoughts and concepts that are beyond the reach of the average person; ie, it's only for the highly intellectual.

Though some may have a negative view on doctrine, what actually is "doctrine"?

The word "doctrine" is derived from a Latin word which simply means "teaching". Therefore, Christian doctrine is Christian teaching. As Christians, we often use the term for a body of Christian teaching that describes what we believe the Bible says about key things. For example, creeds and statements of faith are doctrine, or doctrinal statements.

The Church of Christ forefathers had a negative view of doctrine (especially creeds). They had a slogan: "no creed but Christ". What are the positives/negatives of such a slogan?

Positives – it emphasises that Christianity is not all about having a right knowledge, and right knowledge on its own doesn't save. It's Christ and a personal relationship with Him that saves.

Negatives – without a creed (or doctrinal statement) how can we be sure that we are speaking about the true Christ? For example, Mormons say they believe in Christ, but not the Christ of the Bible, for according to them, he is a brother of Satan. They have a differing doctrine on Christ.

Thus, doctrine is important in helping us define what we hold to, or what we mean.

In church history, creeds were important to keep Christ's church away from error. They were doctrinal statements that summarised the most important truths in the Bible. A famous creed is the Apostles' Creed. What important statements are made by this creed? [read it together]

I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried: He descended into hell [hades]; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; I believe in the Holy Spirit; I believe in the holy catholic [universal] church: the communion of saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body; And life everlasting. Amen.

The Bible speaks of doctrine. What do we learn from the following verses?

1 Timothy 1:3-4 – there are false doctrines that damage the church, which need to be countered with sound doctrine

1 Timothy 4:15-16 – sound doctrine ensures us of our salvation and helps others to be saved

1 Timothy 6:3-5 – false doctrines lead to ungodliness and strife; sound doctrines lead to godliness

2 Timothy 4:3-4 – maintaining sound doctrine will always be a battle in a fallen world

Titus 1:7-9 – sound doctrine encourages believers in their faith, and it helps us to refute error

Titus 2:1 – we are called to speak that which is sound doctrine

The above verses from the pastoral letters, ought to help us see why it is important to do our best in maintaining and having sound doctrine. It ensures salvation and is important in our sanctification.

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be looking at various doctrines of the Christian faith. Can you think of some of the more important ones? (ie, ones you may find in a book on Christian doctrine?)

What is God like? What is the Trinity? Who is Christ? Who is the Holy Spirit? What is man? What is sin? What is the atonement? What is the resurrection? What is salvation? What is the church? Etc.

What is the foundation for all sound Christian doctrine? (cf. 2 Tim 4:1-4)

The Word of God is the source and foundation of sound doctrine. It's not theologians, or popes, or any other person. It comes to us when we submit ourselves to God's revealed truth (the Bible) and allow God's Spirit to teach us (1 John 2:26-27). Therefore, all sound doctrine will be supported by God's Word.

Next week, we will begin by looking at our first doctrine - the doctrine of the Bible; ie, what is the Bible, or more correctly, what does the Bible say about the Bible?

Before we meet, try and write down your own beliefs about the Bible. What is it?

Summary: Sound doctrine is essential for ensuring our salvation and helping others to be saved.

2. What is the Bible?

Review: *What is Christian doctrine? Why is sound doctrine important? (1 Tim 1:3-4, 4:15-16)*

Christian doctrine is simply Christian teaching – in particular, it's biblical teaching on various topics, such as "who is God?", "who is Christ?", "what is sin?", "what is salvation?", etc. Sound doctrine is essential for refuting error, for helping us know God's will, and for ensuring our own salvation and that of others.

Discussion: The first doctrine we will look at is on the Bible. The Bible was written over a 1500 year period by about 40 authors. But what is the Bible? Since all Christian doctrine is from it, we need to make sure we have a right view of it. Consider our church's Statement of Faith. It says:

"We believe that God has revealed all that is necessary to salvation and life in the sixty-six books of the Holy Scriptures, which are the Word of God. All Scripture is inspired of God, and is infallible and inerrant, and is the final arbiter [authority] in all disputes. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men." *What key points are mentioned in this statement? [discuss]*

Forming a Doctrine on the Bible

Why do we need to have an accurate statement on the Bible?

The Bible is attacked by the world and even by those who profess Christianity, over its accuracy and authority. Such attacks, left unchallenged, would see the Bible relegated to some outdated religious book. Contending for the faith (Jude 3-4) means contending for what the Bible is, as well as for what it says.

One of the first declarations we make in regard to the Bible is that it is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17). What do we mean by this? What don't we mean by this?

By inspired, we don't mean that the Bible just inspires us, or that its authors were inspired in the sense of how we would speak of a famous composer. Instead, we mean that God inspired people to write it. It's God-breathed. Because of this, we declare the Bible to be the Word of God (cf. 1 Thess 2:13).

In what way has God inspired its 40 or so authors to write the books of the Bible? (2 Pet 1:20-21)

Most of the Bible is not the "dictations of God". Instead, God has moved people to write, allowing them to use their personality and writing style. In essence, it's like the Bible has dual authorship – God and man – but with the primary author being God.

Another declaration we make is that the Bible is infallible and inerrant? What does that mean?

By infallible we mean that the Bible is completely trustworthy – it doesn't deceive. By inerrant, we mean that the Bible is not false or defective; it is free from error. Note 1): This doesn't mean we take a blind literal interpretation of the Bible. Eg, we allow for figurative and poetic language. 2) We also only declare that the original manuscripts are infallible and inerrant, as translations may have minor errors.

How can a Christian claim the Bible to be inerrant/infallible when it contradicts science, or where there are discrepancies between various accounts? (eg, consider Matt 28:1-6; Luke 24:1-7)

The Bible isn't a science book, but we believe that when it touches on science, it speaks accurately. In regard to differences between various accounts, let us remember that it often occurs with eye witness accounts – it's not that they are false – all eye witnesses see things differently, or make different emphases.

What gives the Bible the right to be our final authority on various matters?

Because God is truth, knows all things, and is the author of the Bible, then everything the Bible has to say on various matters is our final authority. Who knows about God and life more than God does? Therefore, our final authority is not the pope, or even what we think. The Bible is our final authority.

What is the Bible a final authority on? Everything? (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17)

It's not the final authority on everything (eg, accounting, physics), but it is on all matters of faith/conduct.

What helps convince you that the Bible is inspired, and that it is God's Word? [discuss]

- Fulfilled prophecies – eg, concerning Jesus (Isa 7:14, 9:1-7, 53:1-9), the present times (2 Tim 3:1-5)
- Jesus quoting the Bible – eg, Jesus often said "it is written" (Matt 4:3-10), confirming the Old Testament
- Archeology – verifies the various places and people that the Bible speaks about
- History – other books give proof that what the Bible says did happen (eg, Jesus in the writings of Josephus)
- Consistency – the Bible reads as one book - about what God has done to bring us back to Himself
- Accuracy – it accurately explains our human predicament (sin/death), and the solution (it is contemporary)

What do we learn about the Bible from Psa 119:160, Isa 40:7-8, Isa 55:10-11, Heb 4:12? Why?

It is truth, it endures forever (eternal), it is powerful and effective – all because it is inspired by God.

Summary: The Bible is God-inspired and our final authority on all matters of faith and conduct.

3. **What is God like? (The Character and Being of God) - Part 1**

Review: *What is the Bible? What confidence can we have in it?*

The Bible is the Word of God, inspired by God and is infallible and inerrant. It reveals God's truth, endures forever, is powerful and effective, and is our final authority on all matters of faith and conduct.

Discussion: Over the next few weeks, we will be exploring the topic: What is God like? Our church's Statement of Faith says: "*We believe in the one true and living God, in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who is eternal, immortal, unchanging, sovereign, holy, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, dependent on none, righteous, just, faithful, truthful, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering, gracious, and personal.*" What key points are mentioned here about the character and being of God?

The Character & Being of God

Why is it important to know what God is like in His character (nature) and being? [discuss]

There are lots of reasons we could give. One is that God made us to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. How can we glorify Him if we don't know what He's like? Or enjoy Him if we don't know who He is?

How do we know what God is like? [discuss]

In order to know God, we need Him to reveal Himself to us (Matt 11:27). God has revealed some things through His creation (eg His power, wisdom, greatness, etc) - Rom 1:18-20. However, God has revealed Himself most clearly through His Word – the written word and the Living Word (John 1:18, Heb 1:3).

If you had to choose one attribute of God as the most fundamental, what would you choose and why? [discuss] There are many attributes we could choose from. But it's hard to go past the one for which He is constantly worshipped in heaven – his holiness (Isa 6:1-3, Rev 4:8). His holiness encompasses His separateness, His uniqueness, His glory and His perfections.

One of the things that makes God "God" is His transcendence – He is infinite and transcends all natural limits. But what does Exod 33:11 & James 4:8 also tell us about God?

God is transcendent, but He is also personal and can be known. What a privilege He offers to us! Do you take advantage of it like you should? If not, why not? [discuss]

We speak of God as being independent of creation. What do you think this means? [discuss]

God's independence (or "aseity") means that God is not dependent on anyone or anything – He does not need us nor the rest of creation for anything. He is completely self-sufficient (Acts 17:24-25, John 5:26).

Did God create human beings or angels because He was lonely or needed fellowship? [discuss]

Absolutely not! God doesn't need us – we need Him and depend on Him for everything. How amazing it is then that God cares for us and takes delight in us – Psalm 8:3-9, Isa 62:3-5. You are precious to God.

Read Psalm 102:25-27. What does this reveal about God? [discuss]

Unlike the changing and decaying universe, God is unchangeable (or "immutable"). He is unchangeable in His being, perfections, purposes and promises (cf Hebrews 13:8 & James 1:17). Why is God's unchangeableness so important? [discuss] What comfort and assurance does this give you? [discuss]

If God doesn't change, why does He seem to sometimes change His mind (eg Jonah 3:4, 3:10)?

God responds differently to different situations (in this case, people turning from their wickedness), but this is not a change in God's nature or being. God's response to the people of Ninevah, for example, is still entirely consistent with His unchanging compassion and mercy.

We sometimes speak of the "unity" or "simplicity" of God. What does this mean? [discuss]

The "unity" (or simplicity) of God is just a way of affirming that God cannot be divided or separated into parts – all of His attributes are all at work all of the time (eg Exod 34:6-7).

What is one of the characteristics that makes God "God" in Psa 90:1-2? [discuss]

Unlike everyone and everything else, God is eternal - He has no beginning and no end (Rev 1:8). His eternal being is one of the qualities for which He is worthy of worship (Rev 4:8).

What else do we discover about God in the following verses:

- John 4:24 – God is Spirit - He does not have a physical body or material existence
- 1 Tim 1:17, 6:15-16 – God is invisible (because He is Spirit)
- Psa 139:7-10 – God is present everywhere. What effect should this have on us? [discuss]
- Heb 4:13 – God knows everything. What impact should this have on us? [discuss]

Summary: God is holy, independent, unchangeable, eternal – and worthy of our worship!

4. What is God like? (The Character and Being of God) - Part 2

Review: *What are some attributes of God's being that, by definition, make Him "God"? [discuss]*
He is holy, independent, unchangeable, eternal, all present and all knowing. And yet, even though He is transcendent, He is personal and can be known.

Intro: We are exploring the topic – What is God like? This week and next, we will consider more of God's character and attributes.

The Character & Being of God – Part 2

When we speak of God's sovereignty or omnipotence, what do we mean? [discuss]

God's sovereignty and omnipotence means that God is all-powerful, and that He able to do all that He decides to do (Jer 32:17, Job 42:2). What do the following passages affirm about God's sovereignty?

- Isa 40:22-26 – God is sovereign over all creation.
- Psa 2:1-6 – God is sovereign over nations and not threatened by anyone.
- Prov 21:1 – God is sovereign over the intentions of each human heart.
- Gen 50:20 – God is sovereign over evil and even uses it for His purposes.

Why is God's sovereignty important to us as Christians? [discuss]

Charles Spurgeon said: "There is no attribute more comforting to His children than that of God's sovereignty". In a world of upheaval and wickedness, God's sovereignty (when combined with His love) should bring peace and rest to our life. God's purposes will prevail, and our hope is secure (Eph 1:18-21).

God is not only sovereign, but also faithful. How would you explain faithfulness? [discuss]

God's faithfulness means He always does what He says and fulfils what He promises (Num 23:19). He can be relied upon and trusted. He also remains committed to His creation and to His people (Psa 100:5). *In what ways was God faithful to His old covenant people? [discuss]* (eg think about the Exodus, in the desert, in the land, in exile, etc). *In what ways has God demonstrated His faithfulness to us today? [discuss]* (coming of Jesus, commitment despite our sin, providing our needs, etc).

Related to God's faithfulness is God's truthfulness. What might this refer to? [discuss]

God's truthfulness means He is completely truthful in all He says and does. He is the final standard of truth, and we can take God at His word and confidently build our life upon Him.

What else do we discover about God in Rom 16:27 and 11:33-36? [discuss]

Although God knows everything and is all-powerful, He is also infinitely wise in the way He applies His knowledge and in the decisions He makes. He always chooses the best goals and the best means to those goals in light of all the consequences of an action. *What comfort does God's wisdom give you? [discuss]*

Read 1 Cor 1:18-25 and discuss how God's wisdom is seen in the work of Christ. [discuss]

What else is God praised for in Deut 32:4? What is it the saints wait for in Rev 6:9-10? [discuss]

Our God is a God of justice and righteousness. In the Bible, both terms stem from the same word. If we were to differentiate, God's justice ensures that wrongs will be dealt with rightly, and His righteousness means that God always does what is right. He is the final standard of what is right. Read Rom 3:25-26 and discuss how we see God's justice in the cross of Christ.

Why is God's righteousness & justice so important? [discuss]

Lots of reasons. eg confidence that God always does what is right, comfort that justice will be served, assurance that when all is revealed we will see that all God's decisions were good and right, etc...

What attribute of God is being revealed in Rom 1:18 and Rev 6:16-17? [discuss]

God's wrath, which is connected to His holiness and justice. God intensely hates sin.

Is God's wrath a good or bad trait? Why? What would the alternative look like? [discuss]

Since God loves what is good and right, God's wrath towards all that is evil and wrong should not surprise us. The alternative is unthinkable: imagine a God who either delights in evil or is indifferent to the wickedness and injustice in our world. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship.

Should we be embarrassed or apologetic for the wrath of God? [discuss]

No. God's wrath is sobering, but is an attribute we should thank Him for. It is good that God is angry at sin. We too were once under God's wrath, but in Christ, we now have nothing to fear (Eph 2:3-5).

Reflect on the phrase: "His works are perfect and all His ways are just." (Deut 32:4)

Summary: **God is sovereign, faithful & true, wise, just and perfect. Praise our great God.**

5. What is God like? (The Character and Being of God) - Part 3

Review: *What are some attributes of God we explored last week that give great comfort to us as Christians and for which God should be praised? [discuss]*

God is sovereign, wise, faithful, just, right in all He does, angry at sin and perfect in every way.

Intro: Next week we will consider the topic of the Trinity – ie what God is like in His being. This week, we will explore more of what God is like in His character (or nature).

The Character & Being of God – Part 3

When God proclaimed His name to Moses in Exod 34:6-7, what attributes does God choose to highlight about Himself? [discuss]

What fundamental attribute does 1 John 4:8 express about God? [discuss]

God is love. He not only acts in ways that are loving and for the benefit of others, but He is affectionate and loving in His nature. What do the following verses reveal about God's love?

- John 17:24: Even before there was a creation to love, God's love was eternally expressed in Himself.
- Deut 7:7-8, Eph 1:4-6: God loves us not because we are lovely, but because He chose to love us.
- 1 John 4:9-10: The pinnacle of God's love for us is seen in the death of Jesus.
- Rom 8:38-39: God's love is strong, unwavering and endures forever.
- Matt 22:37-40 – God's commands are an expression of His love.

Reflect on these words: "How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure, that He should give His only Son, to make a wretch His treasure..." How does this help you to understand God's love? [discuss] How does it make you feel towards God? [discuss]

How should we respond to God's love? [discuss]

God's love should melt us and move us to love God deeply, and to love one another (1 John 4:11).

What fundamental attribute of God does Peter refer to in 1 Peter 5:10? [discuss]

God is the God of all grace! Grace is the expression of God's love and goodness towards people who deserve only His punishment and condemnation. It is the complete opposite of what we deserve.

Where do we see God's grace? [discuss]

We see God's grace everywhere - it is on every page of the Bible. We see God's grace in the way He deals with His creation, and especially in the way He deals with His people who sin time and time again (eg Neh 9:9-19). We are saved by God's grace and continue to be sustained by God's grace (2 Cor 12:8-9, Heb 4:16). But we see God's grace most clearly in Jesus' life and death for us – John 1:14-17.

In what ways do you experience God's grace each day? Reflect and discuss. Give thanks to God.

How should we respond to God's grace? Titus 2:11-14.

First, we must be humble enough to receive God's grace – by definition, grace is undeserved, so we can't earn it. But then, God's grace should cause us to want to please God and live for Him.

God is also a God of mercy (Titus 3:3-6). How is mercy different to grace? [discuss]

Grace is kindness towards the undeserving, while mercy is help for the helpless. When we speak of mercy (or compassion), we refer to how God loves to help us in our misery and distress. He loves to rescue us because He knows we cannot rescue ourselves.

If time permits, reflect on God's mercy in one or more these passages – (a) Mark 5:1-8, 15-19; (b) Mark 10:46-52; (c) Eph 2:1-5. Praise God that He is rich in mercy and has compassion on us.

God is not only merciful, but very patient. In what ways has God shown His patience? [discuss]

God is far more patient and slow to anger than we are. He was patient with His rebellious people of old (Neh 9:26-31); is patient with humanity (2 Peter 3:8-10); and patient with you and me still today (think about how selfish, faithless, loveless and rebellious we can be, and how patient God is with us!). *How does God's patience help you to relate in a godly way to others? [discuss]*

Finally, what attribute of God is celebrated in Psa 34:8 and 106:1? [discuss]

God is good, and He is a good God. He is good to all and loves to give good gifts to all – every good gift comes from Him (James 1:17). *In what ways do you see God's goodness in your life? [discuss] How often do you thank God? How can you remember to thank Him more often? [discuss]* Invite people to respond: {leader}: *God is good.* {group}: *All the time!* {leader}: *All the time...* {group}: *God is good!*

Summary: **Love and adore our God who is loving, gracious, compassionate, patient and good!**

6. What is God like? (The Being of God) - Part 4

Review: *What are some attributes of God we explored last week that we love and adore Him for?*
 God is deeply loving, amazingly gracious, incredibly merciful, abundantly good and very patient!

Discussion: One of the most difficult Christian doctrines to understand is that of the "Trinity". It is a uniquely Christian belief. Our church's Statement of Faith expresses it like this: "*We believe in the one true and living God, in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...*" What parts of this are difficult to understand or explain? In what ways can this teaching be misunderstood? *Discuss.*

The Trinity

In many cultures around the world, people have believed in the existence of one ultimate God. *What does the Bible affirm in Isa 45:5 and 1 Tim 2:5?*

So where do we get the concept of the Trinity from? Consider Matthew 28:18-20.

The word "Trinity" is short-hand for referring to One God who exists in Three Persons – Father, Son & Spirit. The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but the reality it describes is.

The Bible refers to the Father as God, but is Jesus really God too? Consider John 1:1-4, Col 2:9.
 The Bible teaches that Jesus is fully divine – ie He is fully God! His works also affirm this - forgiving sins, exercising authority over nature & giving life to the dead are all prerogatives of God.

What does the Bible say about the Spirit's divinity? Consider Acts 5:3-4, 2 Cor 3:17, Heb 9:14.

The Spirit is referred to as "God" or "the Lord", and is eternal (only true of God). Like the Father and the Son, the Spirit is fully divine (& called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Jesus - Phil 1:19, 3:3).

Are the Father, Son & Spirit just different names for the same person? [discuss]

No. Read Matthew 3:13-17 and John 17:1-5 and discuss how these passages help us to understand the distinctions in the Godhead? *[discuss]* The Father, Son & Spirit are distinct persons.

If the Father, Son & Spirit are not the same person, do we worship three gods? [discuss]

No. As we have already seen, God's Word affirms that there is only one God. But God has revealed that He exists in three persons, all of whom live and work in complete unity together.

What do the following verses reveal about how the Father, Son and Spirit relate and function?

- John 10:30, 14:11, 16:12-15 – there is perfect & complete unity in how they live, work and relate.
- John 3:17, 14:26, 15:26 – there is an order to their relationship. The Father sends the Son, and both the Father and the Son send the Spirit.
- 1 Cor 15:24-28 – there seems to be an eternal, harmonious order within the Godhead.
- Rom 8:26, Eph 4:30 – the Spirit is not a force, but a person (eg He intercedes, grieves, etc).

Are there any analogies from creation we can use to accurately explain the Trinity? [discuss]

Unfortunately, there are not. Here are several common ones people use – what problems can you see?

- "*As one sample of water can be ice, water and steam, so God is one and three.*" What's the problem? This teaches the heresy of Modalism – one God, who wears different masks depending on the situation.
- "*As one egg is shell, white and yolk, so God is one and three.*" What's the problem? This teaches the heresy of Subordinationism – three persons, but they are not one (they have different characteristics).

Should we be embarrassed that we don't fully understand the Trinity? [discuss]

No. The mystery of it should cause us to stand in awe, not shy away in embarrassment. God is greater and grander than anything else we know. He is uncreated, eternal, and therefore, different to His creation. "He is One God, who exists eternally in three persons, each fully God and dwelling in perfect unity."

How important is the doctrine of the Trinity? Why? Give some examples...

eg If Jesus is not God, He could not pay for all our sins (unjust and insufficient). We shouldn't call Him Lord or give Him our life. If the Spirit is not Christ's Spirit, we don't have Jesus with us as He promised.

What can the doctrine of the Trinity teach us about: [discuss]

- *Relating to God?* He is a personal and relational God, and can be known and enjoyed.
- *Relating to others?* Submission or different roles should not be seen as inequality. Just as there is an order in the Godhead, so God has designed an order in creation (eg in the home, in the church, etc).
- *Relating to other Christians?* We must live together in unity, reflecting the character of the God who dwells in us and among us.

Summary: **There is One God, in three persons, each fully God and all three exist in perfect unity.**

7. How is Jesus fully God and fully man, yet one person?

Review: *How do we explain the Trinity? [discuss]*

The Trinity is a mystery which can't be fully explained. But God has revealed that He is One God, in three persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – each of whom are fully God and exist in perfect unity.

Intro: Another mystery of the Christian faith is the incarnation of God the Son. We believe that Jesus is one person who is fully God and fully man. *What questions and difficulties does this raise? <discuss>*

The Person of Jesus

As part of our study of the Trinity, we saw that Jesus is fully divine (eg Col 2:9). But unlike the Father and the Spirit, what special thing happened when Jesus came to earth? John 1:14. <discuss> Although Jesus is and has always been divine, He took on our humanity when He came into our world. That is, Jesus became a human being and is referred to as a "man" (1 Tim 2:5-6).

What evidence from Jesus' life confirms that He really was human? <discuss>

Jesus got hungry (Matt 21:18) - a human trait, because God has need for nothing; needed to sleep (Mark 4:38); learned things (Luke 2:52, Heb 5:8); had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39); got tired (John 4:6); was tempted (Heb 4:15, whereas God cannot be tempted cf James 1:13); even died (God is immortal).

How does it help you when you feel the limitations of your humanity? How does Jesus' humanity help you face temptation? How can it help you to pray? <discuss>

What parts of Jesus' humanity do you find hardest to understand? <discuss>

The early church had to struggle with many heretical teachings trying to explain how Jesus was both human and divine. Consider the following teachings and reflect on what problems they give rise to.

- Docetism – taught that Jesus only appeared to have a human body (like an apparition), but He was only ever really God. This arose in response to questions like: Why would God stoop to take on a body? How can God allow Himself to suffer?
- Adoptionism – taught that Jesus was fully human, but not really God. The Father adopted Jesus into divinity at His baptism as a reward for fully obeying the law.
- Apollinarians – taught that Jesus had a human body, but not a human mind or soul (these were divine). *The problem?* He's not fully human. Our fallen minds and souls need redeeming too.
- Nestorianism – taught that there were two Jesus' within the one body – one human, and one God. *The problem?* The Bible always presents Jesus as one person, not two working together.
- Eutychianism – taught that Jesus' human nature was absorbed into the divine nature (like fresh water dropped into the sea). His nature is no longer divine or human, but a mixture of the two.

So, how can Jesus be fully human and fully divine at the same time? <discuss>

This is part of the mystery of God, which we cannot fully explain (a bit like the Trinity), but are simply to marvel at. The best we can do is summarise what we see in the Bible: Jesus is both fully God and fully man (since His incarnation). He is one person, with two natures – divine and human. The two natures are without confusion, division or separation, but remain distinct, with each retaining its own properties.

So, did Jesus empty Himself of some of His divinity when He came to earth? (Phil 2:5-8)

Jesus did not give up any of His deity when He became a man, but He did take on humanity that was not his before. He "emptied" Himself (Phil 2:7 in some translations) by becoming a servant – ie He gave up His status in heaven to become a lowly servant, not lay aside certain divine attributes. While on earth, He chose not to make use of some of His divine attributes, in order to fully experience our humanity.

Attention Leaders: See reverse side for some difficult questions and suggested answers.

What is at stake if we don't affirm that Jesus is both fully God and fully man? <discuss>

Firstly, the truth is at stake. Secondly, salvation is at stake. If Jesus is not both God and human, He could not be our representative and earn righteousness for us (Rom 5:18-19); He could not be our substitute and take the penalty for our sin (Heb 2:14-17); He could not fully sympathize with us as our high priest (Heb 2:18, 4:15-16); and He could not be the mediator who represents us to God and God to us (1 Tim 2:5).

Is Jesus still divine and human now? Jesus did not give up His human nature after His death and resurrection (Luke 24:36-40). He has taken on our humanity for all eternity. What a love! What a cost! But now Jesus has a glorified body, which we too will one day enjoy.

Summary: Jesus is fully God and fully man in one person, and worthy of our praise.

Some difficult questions regarding the divinity and humanity of Jesus

Some difficult questions arise when we try to understand how Jesus' divine and human natures operate together. The following is an attempt to ask some of those questions, and provide suggested answers. We must remember though that God has not revealed everything about how Jesus' divine and human natures operate, so it is important to avoid speculation and not go beyond what God has revealed in His Word. Some questions we simply cannot answer, because the incarnation (God becoming man) is a mystery.

How can Jesus uphold the world while asleep in a boat (Heb 1:3), or grow in wisdom if He is all-knowing (Luke 2:52)? This is one of those mysteries we cannot adequately explain. It might be helpful to see that Jesus' divine nature does things that His human nature cannot – for example, His human nature got tired, but His divine nature remained all-powerful. His human nature learned, but His divine nature was all knowing (John 16:29-31). But at the same time, we must also affirm that the two natures never operate independently of each other – they are inseparable and completely united in the one person.

How can Jesus die on the cross when God is immortal?

This may be a little easier to explain, because when we die, it is only our body that dies, not our Spirit. Our Spirit (or "inside" person) continues to live beyond our body – this is the case with us, and would also have been the case with Jesus.

If no-one can see God and live (Exod 33:18-20), why could people look at Jesus without dropping dead?

Here is another mystery that the Bible doesn't really answer. The best way to answer this (based on what we know) is that Jesus "veiled" His glory from us so that we could look upon Him and be present with Him. The hymn writer tries to capture this when he writes, "*Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, Hail the Incarnate Deity*". But even this is only a guess, because Scripture doesn't explain all the detail. What we must reject is the idea that Jesus emptied Himself of, or put off, or laid aside, some of His divine qualities when He came to earth – this is not taught in the Bible, and would also mean that Jesus would cease to be fully God (Col 2:9).

What does Scripture affirm?

In 451AD, church leaders adopted the following statement known as the Chalcedonian Definition in an attempt to reflect the Scriptural boundaries about the divinity and humanity of Jesus. It is a good summary of what the Bible reveals. Here is an extract from it...

"...our Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man... in all things like us, without sin... to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of the natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in One Person... not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the Same Son..."

8. What is Mankind?

Review: *How do we explain the person of Jesus (after His incarnation)? [discuss]*

The person of Jesus is a mystery which can't be fully explained. He is both fully God (Col 2:9) and fully man (1 Tim 2:5) at the same time; one person with two natures. The two natures are without confusion, division or separation, but remain distinct, with each retaining its own properties. Jesus also continues to be fully God and fully man, after taking on a glorified human body after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-40).

Intro: We shall now consider the doctrine of man. Our fourth point in our church's statement of faith says "We believe that God made our first father Adam in His image, and He made him perfect, holy and upright. We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring death, condemnation and a sinful nature." *What key points are raised? <discuss>*

The Creation of Mankind

We sometimes declare that mankind is the crown of creation. Why? (Gen 1:26-28)

Man was made different to all other things – he was made in the image of God. Cf. also Psalm 8:4-6.

What do we mean when we say that mankind was made in the image of God?

It means that we resemble God in many ways. Although not transcendent like God, we are moral, spiritual, and we can relate and communicate, think and feel, design and create, etc. Above all, we can relate to God.

Adam and Eve were both made in the image of God, but they were also made different. What important truths flow from this? (cf. Gen 2:7, 2:18, 2:21-23, 1 Cor 11:7-9)

God made man first, from the dust. He was made for God and is the glory of God. God made woman from man's side. She was made for man and is the glory of man. This distinction is important in defining our purposes and roles. Although Adam and Eve both originate from God (1 Cor 11:12) and are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) to walk with God, man is to lead, and woman is to be a helper/supporter.

What else do we learn about mankind from the following verses? (1 Thess 5:23)

We are not just flesh and blood. We have a body, soul and spirit - triune. The body is a "tent" for our soul and spirit (2 Cor 5:1,4); the soul is our "real" person – the seat of our human personality; and our spirit enables us to have life (Jam 2:26), and to have communion with God (John 4:24). However, soul and spirit tend to be used interchangeably at times (eg, John 12:27 and 13:21); although cf. Heb 4:12.

Why was man created? <discuss>

Man wasn't created because God had a need – remember that He has need of nothing (Acts 17:24-25). Man was created to rule the earth on God's behalf (Gen 1:28), to have fellowship with God (Gen 2:15-17), to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31), and for us to know God personally (John 17:3).

The Fall of Mankind

God originally made man perfect, holy and upright, but what happened? (Gen 3:1-13)

Adam and Eve sinned (rebelled) against God by going against God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16-17). The devil deceived and enticed them, and by yielding to the desire to be like God, they sinned. Man became imperfect, unholy and not upright.

What was the consequence of their sin? (Gen 3:14-24)

Adam and Eve were evicted from the garden of Eden, and life was made difficult, but besides this, mankind died (as God had declared in Gen 2:17). Man began to die physically – through ageing. But above all, he died spiritually – he was separated from God; he was no longer in fellowship with God and right with God.

What effect has Adam & Eve's sin had on all of us? (Rom 5:18-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22; 1 Pet 1:17-18)

Adam and Eve's sin has totally affected us. We are not born inherently good, but have inherited a sinful nature from our first parents (we are born sinners and cannot help but sin – Rom 3:23); because of sin, we are all under condemnation (God's wrath), and we are all under the sentence of death – physical and spiritual. Besides this, we are not capable of choosing God and making ourselves right with God (Eph 2:8-9; John 6:44). We are truly in a state of helplessness.

Despite our sinfulness, what does the Bible say about how God sees us? (John 3:16-17; Titus 3:3-5)

We are still loved by God. He is compassionate toward us, and has sought to rescue us from the consequences of our sins and to reconcile us to Himself through His Son and by the work of His Spirit.

Summary: **Mankind was made in the image of God, perfect holy and upright, and in fellowship with God, but through the Fall, mankind was separated from God and inherited a sinful nature.**

9. What is Sin?

Review: *What important truths does the Bible declare about how and why we were made? (Gen 1:26-28)*
We were created by God, different to all other creatures, by being made in God's image. We were created to reflect His glory, to rule the earth on God's behalf, to have fellowship with God, and to know Him.

Consider our society and world. Mankind is far from what he was intended to be. Why?

Adam and Eve sinned against God, and plunged the whole human race into a state where we are not right with God. They also passed onto us a sinful nature. We are born sinners and therefore sin (Rom 5:19a).

Intro: In this study, we shall consider what sin is. *How would you define sin? <discuss>*
Why is it important to have a right understanding of sin? <discuss>

Original Sin

Consider the very first sin (Gen 3:1-6). What do we learn about sin, especially in vv.5-6?

The very first sin was about being like God (v.5). Instead of being under God, it was about being on par with God, and even independent of God. Sin is an act of insubordination and rebellion toward God's rule.

Consider how Eve sinned in Gen 3:6. What led to her rebellious act? What do we learn about sin?

Eve's sin wasn't because "the devil made me do it". She chose to sin, because of desire. She desired the forbidden fruit, and to be like God. She was not content under God's rule, but desired more. So, sin is often driven by desire – lusting after what "I want", regardless of God's rule. Cf. Eve's action to 1 John 2:16.

Consider how Adam sinned. What led to his rebellious act? (Gen 3:6, 17)

Adam sinned by choosing not to listen to God, but to his wife. He deliberately went against God's command. Such insubordination is an act of rebellion – this is what is at the heart of sin. It is rebellion.

The nature of sin

Consider Gen 4:1-8. What do we learn about sin in this passage?

God describes sin as "crouching at the door"; in other words, it is described like a beast, seeking to seize us. This is because sin is a powerful force or principle within (Rom 8:1-2). It is fuelled by desires that are seeking to rule and control us. God's challenge to Cain (and to us) is that we must master our desires.

Read James 1:13-15, 4:1-3; Eph 2:1-3? What do we learn about sin?

Evil desires from within cause us to sin and rebel against God's rule. The human heart is not intrinsically good, as philosophy teaches. It is fallen, and is a source of evil desires. Cf. Jer 17:9 and Mark 7:20-23.

How is sin described in 1 John 3:4?

Sin is not just breaking God's law; it is lawlessness - rebellion and anarchy; where we oppose God's rule.

Read Rom 7:7-25. What do we learn about sin in this passage?

God's law reveals our sin and sinful nature. Not only does it reveal when we fall short of God's standard, but where there is law, our sinful nature arises and seeks to break it. Our sinful nature is so rebellious.

What effect does sin have on us according to John 8:34, Rom 7:14 and Titus 3:3?

Sin enslaves us. As any sinner knows, it is not easy to break those chains of sin. Sin is addictive.

How does God view sin? (1 Sam 15:22-23; Rom 8:5-8; Col 3:5-6; Rom 1:18)

Sin is not just a "slip up". It's rebellion and arrogance. It's as witchcraft and idolatry. It's hostility to God. It opposes the rightful rule of God and His Son (cf. Psa 2:1-6). God's wrath is kindled because of sin.

The consequences of sin

Read Isa 59:2, Rom 3:23 and Rom 6:23. What are the consequences of sin?

Sin separates us from God. It causes us to fall short of the glory of God; ie, instead of reflecting God's glory through how we were made in God's image, sin mars the image of God. Sin brings death into the world (Rom 5:12). We die physically, and suffer spiritual death – separation from God.

Do Christians sin? What effect does it have? How are we to view sin? (1 John 1:8-10; 2:1-2, 3:6)

We do sin! Even though we have been forgiven of all our sins through Christ, and are guaranteed entrance into heaven, sin breaks our fellowship with God. We should hate it, confess it, and turn from it.

Why is it important to have a right view of sin?

We will not understand the trouble we are in with God, and our great need for Christ to rescue us from the consequences of sin. We don't need inspiration to try and live a better life, but salvation from God's wrath through what Christ has done for us. Only a right view of sin helps us to see this.

Summary: Sin is rebellion against God. It separates us from God, it mars God's image, it enslaves us, and it brings death and eternal punishment. Only Jesus Christ can rescue us from the consequences of sin.

10. Why did Jesus die?

Review: *What is sin? (1 John 3:4)*

Sin is lawlessness or rebellion against God. It's breaking God's commands, including doing our own thing.

What does sin result in? (Isa 59:2, John 8:34, Rom 3:23, Rom 6:23)

Sin results in separation from God. Sin enslaves us, mars us, and brings death and eternal punishment.

Intro: In this study, we shall consider what Jesus Christ has done for us sinners.

It's well known that Jesus died on a cross, but why? Consider the views in our society. <discuss>

Jesus died as a martyr of a new religion; He died to give us an example of love and sacrifice; He died an untimely death – He was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time.

Christ's death on the cross lies at the heart of the Christian faith. It is central and fundamental to every other doctrine of Scripture. So then, why is Jesus' death so important to Christianity? <discuss>

Our sacrifice for sin

Centuries before Jesus came, what did Isaiah prophecy concerning Jesus? (Isa 53:5-6)

He prophesied that Jesus would bear our sins, and He would be pierced, crushed and punished for them.

What news did the angels declare at the time of Jesus' birth? (Matt 1:21; Luke 2:11)

They proclaimed that Jesus would save (rescue) us from our sins and be our Saviour.

What did John the Baptist declare about Jesus, before He commenced His ministry? (John 1:29)

John declared Jesus to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"; ie, Jesus was God's sacrifice in order for our sins to be taken away (dealt with).

What did Jesus Himself declare about His death? (Mark 10:45)

He had come to give His life up in order to ransom us; ie, He came to lay down His life in order to free us.

The Bible affirms again and again that Jesus died as our sacrifice for sin. Look up the following key verses from the book of Hebrews and discuss what is declared: Heb 9:24-28; Heb 10:11-14.

Why did Jesus die on the cross for our sins? (Matt 26:27-28; Rom 3:21-26; 1 Peter 3:18)

He died so that we could be forgiven of our sins, so that we might be justified (made right) with God, and be reconciled (brought near) to God. For all who believe in Jesus, this is what His death accomplishes for us. As a result, we will not be judged for our sins, nor be rejected by God. We have been saved from this.

Key words used to in relation to Jesus' sacrifice for sin

REDEMPTION: *Jesus died to bring about redemption (Rom 3:23-24; Eph 1:7-8). What does this mean?*

Redemption means freeing people caught in bondage. For example, Israel was redeemed/freed from Egypt when they were in bondage to the Egyptians. In a far greater way, we have been redeemed from our bondage to the guilt of sin, the penalty of sin, and the power of sin (John 8:34) and Satan (Col 1:13-14).

PROPRITIATION (ATONEMENT): *Jesus died to bring about propitiation/atonement (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:1-2). What does this mean?*

Jesus died to avert the anger and wrath of God from us because of the sins we had committed against God. He died to cover/protect/atone us from what we deserved, by bearing the penalty Himself.

SUBSTITUTE: *Jesus died as our substitute (1 Peter 2:24). What does this mean?*

This means that Jesus died on the cross in our place and bore the penalty for our sins. Cf. a lamb in the Old Testament was sacrificed as a substitute for the person who had sinned, so they wouldn't have to die.

REPRESENTATIVE: *Jesus died as our representative (2 Cor 5:14,21; Rom 5:15-19). What does this mean?*
Jesus died as mankind's representative. He died for all, so that all may be saved through faith in Him.

Concluding questions

Is there any other way for us to be saved from our sins and made right with God? (John 14:6)

There is no other way. Jesus even asked if there was another way (Mark 14:35-36). It's only Jesus.

We sometimes stress that a perfect sacrifice was needed. Could an angel have saved us then?

No! Even though they're perfect, they're not able to. Cf. a lamb is perfect, but they can't save (Heb 10:4).

Why was only Jesus able to save us by His death on the cross?

Jesus is the only one because He is both fully God and fully man. Being fully man He could be our representative (1 Tim 2:5-6). Being fully God, He could be our substitute (Col 1:19-20). Cf: If Jesus was just a perfect human being, He, at best, could only be a substitute for one other human being. But being God, the Judge Himself not only had the right, but the ability, to be the substitute for all (2 Cor 5:18-19).

Summary: Christ died for our sins so that by faith in Him, we could be forgiven and saved.

11. What is the Resurrection?

Review: *Why did Jesus die? (Matt 26:27-28; Rom 3:21-26; 1 Peter 3:18)*

He died to rescue us from our sins, to make us righteous, and to reconcile us to God.

Why is only Jesus able to save us from our sins? (1 Tim 2:5-6; Col 1:19-20)

Only Jesus is fully man (and perfect) to represent us, and fully God to adequately deal with our sin.

Intro: *The resurrection of Jesus Christ has been furiously attacked by opponents of Christianity. Why?* They know that if they can show that Jesus didn't rise from the dead, then Christianity collapses.

Why should we believe in the resurrection?

All four gospels declare that Jesus rose from the dead. What's so convincing about the accounts?

Matthew and John were eye witnesses, and Mark and Luke knew eye witnesses, and so the resurrection accounts are reliable; which is verified by the way they differ slightly. The accounts also reveal that it was no made up story - the resurrection was the last thing Jesus' disciples expected.

Read Luke 24:1-7, 36, 49. Why should we believe that Jesus rose from the dead?

There are three reasons: no body in the tomb, Jesus appeared to believers, the empowering of the church.

Since no body was in the tomb, what does that mean about the resurrection? (Luke 24:36-43)

Jesus was not just raised spiritually – but His body was raised to life. As a result, the disciples could touch Him and He could even eat food with them. He was no spirit or ghost. He was raised bodily.

Some argue that Jesus was resuscitated or reincarnated. What are we to make of this?

Jesus was not resuscitated – He didn't come to life and live a few more years on earth. He also was not reincarnated, where a soul passes from one body to another one; proven by the tomb being empty.

Some argue that the disciples of Jesus made up the story or were hallucinating. Why should we not accept this position? (Acts 1:1-3; 1 Cor 15:3-8)

The disciples weren't hallucinating – they were extremely rational, doubting Christ had risen because it was humanly impossible. That's why Jesus had to give them many convincing proofs – revealing Himself to one person or many people, on a mountain or room or a beach, at morning or evening, many times over.

Why also should we believe in the resurrection? (Luke 24:25-27, 45-46; Acts 2:23-31)

The resurrection was prophesied; Jesus showed this to His disciples. Peter even quotes from Psalm 16 in Acts 2, to help people know that the resurrection was foretold by God. Consider also Isa 53:10-11.

Implications of the resurrection

What does the resurrection declare about Jesus? (Rom 1:4; Acts 2:36)

Jesus is God's Son, as well as Lord and Christ – all His life showed this, but especially His resurrection.

What does the resurrection mean in regard to our salvation? (Rom 4:25; Heb 7:25; 1 Peter 1:3)

The resurrection is our justification; ie, it affirms that Christ's atoning death on our behalf was acceptable to God. We also have a living Saviour who continues to live and justify us before God forever. Also, we have a living hope. Thus, the resurrection means our salvation is sure and secure.

What else has the resurrection accomplished for us? (John 11:25-26; 1 Cor 6:14, 2 Cor 4:14)

Death has been defeated. If we are in Christ, we will not remain dead, and one day at His return, our body will be raised to life (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-57). We will have a new body like His glorious body (Phil 3:20-21).

If Christ hadn't risen from the dead, what would be the implications for us? (1 Cor 15:12-19)

It means that we are still in our sins and heading for judgment, condemnation and eternal death. It also means that we have no hope, and those who have died in Christ have perished. Consider also that we have "wasted" our lives in holy living, and we have also been deceivers, falsely testifying of Christ.

What else has the resurrection resulted in, for believers? (Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:7-8)

The resurrection has enabled believers to be clothed with power by the Holy Spirit and to be His witnesses. We also have "resurrection" power to live out our lives for Christ (cf. Rom 8:11).

Through the resurrection, what has happened to Jesus, and what is to come? (Acts 2:32-33, 1:11)

Jesus has been exalted to the Father's right hand (Phil 2:9-11), where He rules and reigns. One day He'll come back in great power to receive us to Himself (John 14:1-3), and to judge the world (Acts 17:30-31).

How does the resurrection fit in with sharing the gospel—Christ and Him crucified? (Acts 3:11-16)

It is absolutely essential. In the book of Acts, the apostles always mentioned the resurrection of Christ as they preached the gospel. Without the resurrection there is no gospel, and there is no Saviour to call on.

Summary: **Jesus rose from the dead. He is God's Son, our salvation is sure, and death is defeated.**

12. What must we do to be saved? (Doctrine of Salvation)

Review: *Why should we believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ? <discuss>*

Authenticity of the gospels; the tomb was empty; Jesus' many convincing proofs; fulfilment of prophecy.

What are the main implications of the resurrection? (Rom 1:4; Rom 4:25; John 11:25-26)

Jesus is God's Son; we are justified and God has accepted His Son's death for us; death has been defeated.

Intro: *We all desperately need saving, but saving from what? <discuss>*

The necessary response of humans

In the light of Christ's atoning death for us and His mighty resurrection from the dead, what must we do to be saved from the consequences of our sins? (Acts 16:31, 17:30-31, 20:21)

We must repent toward God and put our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. If you like, repentance and faith are the two essential hinges on the door of salvation.

What is repentance toward God? (Acts 19:18-19; 1 Thess 1:9-10)

Repentance is where we turn away from our own way (cf Isa 53:6a), which is sinful and selfish, and where we turn to God and His way. It involves a change of direction; a change of mind; a change of heart.

Is repentance where I never sin again? How do I know if I have repented enough?

The repentance we are called to do in order to be saved is all about a change of heart and mind, rather than a changed life. We cannot change our life anyway, where we never sin again (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:1). God simply calls us to turn –to turn from sin and self, and where we turn to Him. It's all about a turn.

What does it mean to have faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? (cf. James 2:18-20)

It does not mean just acknowledging the facts about who Jesus is and what He has done for us, nor just accepting the facts to be true. True saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ means acting upon those facts. It is where we personally trust in (rely on) Jesus to save us because of who He is and what He's done for us.

In order to understand what true saving faith looks like, what do we learn from Romans 10:8-13?

Besides believing in our heart about the facts of Jesus, true saving faith requires us to confess Christ; ie, we don't keep it a secret. It also requires us to call out to the Lord Jesus to rescue us. We must put our knowledge of Christ into action. If He alone can save us, then we need to ask Him to do it (Luke 18:13).

What are the opposites to repentance and faith? (Luke 18:9-14)

The opposite of repentance is to do things our way and even to come to God on our terms; it's about self and pride. True repentance, on the other hand, involves brokenness and humility (cf. Psa 51:16-17).

The opposite to faith is not just unbelief, but in the Bible, it's putting our faith in other things – especially in good works or religious rituals. Our good works will never be able to save us (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).

The necessary work of God

Some argue that we are saved by our works – the works of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Yet, what does Eph 2:8-9 say? How should we view repentance and faith?

Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus should not be considered as our work that saves us. Rather, our whole salvation is of grace, and even repentance and faith does not come from ourselves – but is of grace.

What do we learn from the following verses that help us see that repentance and faith do not just naturally spring up from the human heart? (Rom 3:10-11; Eph 2:1-3, 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Cor 2:14)

No one seeks for the true God; we are spiritually dead; we are spiritually blind; we are spiritually ignorant. In other words, left to ourselves, no one is able to turn to God and trust in Jesus (cf. Matt 19:25-26).

So how does a person come to repent and put their faith in Christ? (John 6:44, 65; Titus 3:5)

It is through God working in us by His Spirit – we call this regeneration. It is God's Spirit that convicts us of our sin (John 16:8), who opens our spiritual eyes (2 Cor 4:4-6) and who draws us to Christ. Repentance and faith are simply the response we have as God graciously works in our life. It's all of grace!

Notice in Acts who is acknowledged for people being saved? (Acts 2:47; 11:18; 16:14)

Not only did God give us Jesus through whom we are saved, but He brings us to repentance and faith through the work of His Spirit. Indeed, regeneration must come first before salvation (or conversion).

When it comes to helping others be saved, what do we need to be aware of? (1 Cor 2:1-5)

Not only must we declare Jesus (the word of the cross), but we must depend on the work of the Spirit.

Summary: **We are saved by repentance toward God and faith in Christ; and this by God's gracious work in us. All of salvation is of God, and thus, we should boast in Him (1 Cor 1:30-31).**

13. Why are Some Saved and Others Not? (Doctrine of Election)

Review: *What must we do to be saved and be made right with God? (Acts 16:31, 17:30-31, 20:21)*

We must repent of (turn from) our sins and put our faith in Jesus Christ (as our Saviour and Lord).

What must God do so that we can repent and put our faith in Christ? (John 6:44, 16:8; Titus 3:5)

God must show us our sin and our need for Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (regeneration).

Intro: *In our last study we saw how we cannot turn to Christ and trust in Him without the work of God's Spirit. This leads us to the doctrine of election (or predestination) which states that God chooses people to be saved. This teaching has caused some controversy in Christ's church. Why? <discuss>*

Is the doctrine of election in the Bible?

Is the doctrine of election in the Bible? What do we discover in the following passages?

Acts 13:48 God has "appointed" certain people to eternal life; that's why they believe.

Eph 1:4-6 God chose and predestined (decided beforehand) who would be saved.

Rev 17:8 The names of believers were written in the book of life before the foundation of world – implying God chose or elected people even before they were born.

In the light of this, what are Christians called? (Matt 24:22-24, Col 3:12; Tit 1:1; Rev 17:14)

Jesus called us the "elect" (elected by God), and we are called the "chosen" ones (chosen of God).

Read John 6:37-39. How does Jesus describe those who come to Him and trust in Him?

They are whom the "Father gives" to Him; that is, not all would come, but only those the Father had given.

In 1 Peter 1:1-2, what do we learn about those who are "chosen"?

They were chosen according to God's foreknowledge (ie, before we even lived, God appointed people to believe), and those who are chosen come to Christ by the sanctifying work of God's Spirit.

What is the basis of God choosing us? (Eph 1:11; 2 Tim 1:8-9)

God did not choose us because of how good we are, or because of our good works, but because of His own purpose and grace. It had nothing to do with us – it was according to His sovereign choice.

What is the purpose of this doctrine of election?

Why has God revealed to us that we were chosen or elected? (1 Cor 1:26-31)

God revealed this to us so that we might be humble and give all the glory to Him. Without this teaching, we can tend to boast about how we found God, and how we saved ourselves through our faith.

This doctrine is often mentioned when Christians are being persecuted (1 Peter 1:1-6). Why?

It brings great comfort to our soul. It assures us that God will save us, right to the end, no matter what we have to endure, because He has appointed us to salvation. What a reassuring truth this is.

Read Romans 8:28-30. What comforting truths do you read in this passage?

For those who have responded to God's call to trust in Christ, everything is well with our soul. That calling was part of God choosing us and predestining us to salvation. Not only have we been justified (made right with God), but we will be glorified (ie, be with Christ in glory). What assurance!

How should this doctrine affect the way we evangelise? (2 Tim 2:10)

Instead of abandoning evangelism and saying "God will save who He wants", we ought to be like Paul who did everything he could for all to hear (1 Cor 9:22), so that the chosen might hear and be saved. This doctrine actually should encourage us to evangelise, for God has predestined people to respond and believe.

What's wrong with the doctrine of election?

Why don't we like the doctrine of election? (Rom 9:14-21)

- We don't think God is being fair by choosing some and not others. But what is fair? The fallen angels perished (2 Peter 2:4). We should all perish too, and we would have, if God had not chosen people to be saved. Praise God that He has chosen many (Rev 7:9). The reality is God is sovereign. He is sovereign over creation, but He's also sovereign over salvation. He has the right to do as He pleases.
- Also, deep down we really like to think that "I deserved" being saved. But we didn't. Nothing in us commends us to God. He saved us according to His own purpose and grace.

What are some real dangers if we misunderstand this doctrine? <discuss>

- We can glory in how we have been chosen, and look down upon others as rejects.
- We can dismiss our responsibility before God. God calls all people to repent and be saved (Acts 17:30). So, on the one hand God chooses, but He also holds us accountable with our choices. It's a mystery.

Summary: Every true believer of Christ was chosen by God – therefore, all glory be to Him.

14. What's "Justification" all About? (Doctrine of Justification)

Review: *God has chosen people to be saved (Acts 13:48). What if He hadn't? How many would be saved?* No one! Being spiritually dead and blind, we aren't able to turn to Christ by our own strength and ability.

How should God choosing us affect us? (1 Cor 1:26-31) What about in evangelism? (2 Tim 2:10)

We should be humble and profoundly thankful for His choice of us. We should also have a positive view of evangelism, knowing that as we faithfully declare the gospel, there will be people who respond.

Intro: During the 16th century Reformation, the battle between Roman Catholics and Protestants was mainly over the doctrine of justification. We shall consider this doctrine, which the reformer Martin Luther called "the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine". *What do you think of this statement? <discuss>*

What is Justification?

In regards to the Christian faith, what do we mean by the term "justification"? (Rom 5:16-18)

Justification is a judicial act of God by which, instead of condemning us for our sins, He pardons our sins and declares us to be righteous. It's "just as if I have never sinned". In other words, justification is God's act of declaring a sinner righteous. It is the very opposite act to God condemning us for our sins.

How is a person justified before God (this debate raged in the Reformation)? (Rom 3:21-24)

As Luther rightly declared from God's word, a person is justified before God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. We don't deserve to be justified (declared righteous) as we have all sinned, but by God's grace we are justified freely (we receive the gift of God's righteousness) by faith alone – faith in Christ.

What were the opponents to Luther (the Roman Catholics) arguing in relation to how a person is justified before God (Paul argues against this in Rom 3:19-20 and Gal 2:15-16)?

They believed that faith alone (in Christ) was not sufficient to justify a person. They believed a person was justified by faith and by what they called the "means of grace" – ie, a person needed to be baptised, confirmed, and do penance, which interestingly enough included donating money to the church. In other words, justification was based on charity and good deeds – the very thing Paul argued against.

Why is faith alone (in Christ) sufficient for us to be justified before God? (Rom 3:23-26)

It's all because of what Christ has done for us. In Christ we have redemption – ie, Jesus paid the penalty for our sins so that we are no longer in debt to God for them (Col 2:13-14). Christ also is our "sacrifice of atonement"; ie, through His sacrifice and shedding His blood, He has spared us (covered us) from what we deserved - God's wrath and condemnation – for He Himself bore this for us. As a result, God can be just in justifying us, for He has dealt with our sins by dealing with them in Christ – our sin bearer.

When is a person justified before God? (Luke 18:13-14)

A person is justified before God instantly they repent of their sins and trust in Christ. It's not something given with spiritual maturity. NB: Roman Catholic theology states that a person is never fully justified until they have died and been purged of their sins in purgatory (something the Bible never says).

Reflect on what we enjoy by being justified by faith. (Rom 4:3-5, 5:1; 5:9; Gal 3:6-9; Tit 3:4-7)

We have righteousness, peace with God, are not under wrath, are blessed, and are saved for eternity.

Sin, Works and Justification

Does sin affect our state of being justified? Why or why not? (Rom 8:31-34; 1 John 2:1-2)

No! The moment we turned to Christ, we were justified and we remain justified forever. That's because Christ paid the full penalty for all our sins – past, present and future. Justification does not depend on our "track record" but on what Christ has done for us. However, sin does affect our fellowship with God.

James says that a person is justified by works (Jam 2:18-26). Does this contradict Paul?

When James says that a person is justified by works (Jam 2:21, 24, 25) he is not contradicting Paul, but he is using "justified" in a different sense. He is not meaning "declared righteous by God", but "shown to be righteous before other people", as is clear from the context (he talks about outward evidence that a person has faith). Luther put it this way: "We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone".

How important is the truth that we are justified by faith and not works? (Gal 2:21, 5:4)

It is extremely important. If we don't hold to this truth, then we spurn God's grace, we are declaring that Christ died needlessly, and we are alienated from Christ. Indeed, the law was not given so that by keeping it we might be justified before God, but rather, the law leads us to put our faith in Christ (Gal 3:24).

Summary: Justification: It is God's judicial act of declaring a sinner righteous. It's by God's grace to all who put their faith in Christ; and all because of what Christ did for us (Rom 4:25).

15. Why Have We Been Saved? (Doctrine of Sanctification)

Review: *How can a "sinner" be justified before God (be made right with God)? (Rom 3:21-24)*

We are justified by faith in Jesus Christ and through God's grace (it's God's gift). It is not by works!

How can God the righteous judge be just in justifying us sinners? (Rom 3:24-26)

God can be just because Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins (in Him we have redemption and atonement).

Intro: *Why have we been saved (is it just so that we can live forever in glory)? <discuss>*

Sanctification - what God wants us to experience

Why did God choose us and save us in Christ? (Eph 1:3-4; 11-12)

God chose us and saved us in Christ so that we might be holy and blameless; ie, so that we might walk in God's ways, obeying Him. This then results in us being for the praise of His glory.

Read 1 Thess 4:1-8. As Christians, how are we to live our life?

We are to please God by living a holy (sanctified) life. This is God's will. This involves turning from sinful desires, and being controlled; ie, we don't continue to do our own thing and please ourselves.

Justification is an instantaneous and permanent state we enjoy the moment we turn to Jesus and trust in Him (Luke 18:13-14). What about sanctification? (2 Cor 3:18)

Sanctification is a lifelong process that starts the moment we are justified or saved.

What is the end result of this process of sanctification? (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18)

It is for us to be like Christ – obedient and pleasing to the Father in every way (Matt 3:17).

Sanctification – whose work is it?

Who is primarily responsible for this work of sanctification in our life? (Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23)

Sanctification is primarily God's work. Just as He worked to save us, He graciously works to sanctify us.

How does God perform His work of sanctification in us? (2 Thess 2:13; 1 Peter 1:1-2)

God does this work by His Holy Spirit, whom we receive the moment we turn to Christ (Acts 2:38). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of holiness (Rom 1:4). As He lives in us, He produces holiness in us.

What does the Holy Spirit do to help us be sanctified? (Ezek 36:26-27; John 16:8; Gal 5:22-23)

Ezekiel records that God (under the New Covenant) would give us the Spirit so that we could walk in God's ways and know His law (Jer 31:33). It is the Spirit that convicts us of sin, so that we might repent of it, and who helps us produce the fruit of the Spirit (which is the character of Christ).

Do we have a part to play in being sanctified? (Phil 2:12-15)

We do have a part to play. We are to "work out" our salvation. This means obeying God's commands, such as not complaining or arguing (v.14).

NB: We are not to "work for" our salvation (ie, to earn it, for we can't), but to "work out" our salvation.

Practically, what does it mean for us to "work out" our salvation, according to Col 3:5-10?

We are to "put off" our old sinful nature (put it to death thru the Spirit – Rom 8:13) and "put on" Christ.

Romans 6 tells us our part in the process of sanctification. What do we learn in vv. 11-14?

We are to die to sin and be alive in Christ. This includes making our body an instrument of righteousness.

Sanctification – will we ever get there and should we care

The work of sanctification is leading us to be like Christ – to be perfect. Will we ever get there?

Yes and no! We will never be perfect in this life. That's why we will need to continue to ask for forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9). But one day we will be perfect - when we see Christ (1 John 3:2)

Consider Paul's words in Phil 3:12-14. What hasn't he attained, but what does he do?

Paul knew he hadn't arrived at perfection yet, and so that made him strive all the more for this goal of being like Christ. Interestingly, he forgot what lay behind him; ie, failures of the past that can discourage us, or successes of the past that can puff us up with pride – things that will hinder our sanctification.

What can we do to help ourselves be more sanctified?

Read God's word as the truth sanctifies us (John 17:16-18); look to Christ's return (1 John 3:2-3); remain in Christ and His word (John 15:5-8); wrestle and pray for God to help us (Matt 26:41).

Consider the Puritan saying "No holiness; no heaven". Is this true? Why or why not? (Heb 12:14)

Yes it is true! Without sanctification (holiness) there is no evidence that God's Spirit lives in us, and without the Spirit we have no part with Christ (Rom 8:9-10). NB: The key is "growing" in holiness.

Summary: By God's grace, His Spirit is at work in us to sanctify us – to make us like Christ.

16. Will We Make it? (Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints)

Review: *Why did God choose us and save us? (Eph 1:3-4, 11-12; Rom 8:29)*

So that we might be holy and blameless, and that we might be like Christ for the praise of His glory.

Who is responsible for helping us be holy (sanctified)? (Phil 1:6; 2:12-13, 3:12-14)

God is, through the work of His Spirit; but so are we by "working out" our salvation and seeking Christ.

Intro: *We are to grow in holiness (sanctification) through the work of the Holy Spirit. But what if that work in us ends? Does that mean we are no longer a Christian? Will we be saved? <discuss>*

Perseverance – is it important?

Christians are called to persevere. What does it mean to persevere or endure? (Rev 13:10; 14:12)

It means that we continue to hold onto Jesus no matter what we may endure; even to the end. We remain faithful to Christ, and this includes having a heart to follow Him and to obey God's commands.

Why is it important that we persevere (endure) to the end? (Matt 10:21-22; 24:12-13)

Jesus taught us that we will not be saved unless we persevere ("stand firm") to the end. This includes persevering through testings and trials and persecution. *Are you surprised by this? <discuss>*

Jesus gave important concluding words to all seven churches in Revelation? (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21-22). What were they all commanded to do in order to share in the blessings of salvation?

They had to overcome; ie, they had to prevail over trials and temptations, and remain faithful to Jesus. In other words, Jesus stipulates that persevering to the end (being an overcomer) is essential to salvation.

What did Paul teach in regard to endurance and salvation? (Col 1:22-23; 1 Tim 4:16, 2 Tim 2:12)

Like the Lord Jesus, he taught the need to continue in the faith, to persevere in sound doctrine, and to endure, so that we might not be disowned by Jesus, but saved. Perseverance is essential (cf. also Heb 3:14).

In the parable of the sower what distinguished the true believer from the others? (Luke 8:11-15)

The true believer heard the gospel (the good seed), and retained it, and by perseverance continued in it, producing the fruits of salvation (eg, righteousness). The other hearers (false believers) didn't persevere in the gospel – they either rejected it instantly, or during tribulation, or for the things of this world.

Read Hebrews 10:35-39. What do we learn from this passage?

If we shrink back we will perish; if we persevere in Jesus we will be saved. We must persevere!

Perseverance – is it all up to us?

It may appear that it's all up to us to persevere. What encouragement do we get from Rom 15:4-6?

God gives us endurance and encouragement so that we can persevere to the end. He does this by strengthening the inner man through His Spirit (Eph 3:14-17a) and through His Scriptures (Rom 15:4).

Consider the words of Jesus in John 6:38-40 and John 10:27-29. What does Jesus promise us?

He promises to not lose one of us, and to never let anyone snatch us from His hand, as long as we have looked to Him and believed in Him (6:40), and are a true "sheep" listening to & following Him (10:27).

How should we view perseverance? As a work we must do to be saved? (Eph 2:8-9)

We are not saved by works – any works. Even when it comes to perseverance, we need to understand that it is not a work we must do to be saved, but rather, the proof that God is in us by His Spirit (Eph 1:13-14) and that we are saved. Therefore, all true Christians will persevere, because of God's Spirit in them.

What do you make of the statement "Once saved, always saved"?

This statement is true, as long as we are truly saved (born again); and we will show it by persevering.

Perseverance – what if a person doesn't persevere?

What does it show if we don't persevere to the end but fall away? (cf. Matt 24:24)

It shows that we were never truly saved, and born of God's Spirit. NB: This doesn't mean a true Christian never "slips up" or "falls away" for a time. However, they will return to the Lord because of the Spirit.

Read Heb 6:4-9. This is a challenging passage. What solemn warning should we heed from it?

This may be a difficult passage to interpret, but is not the person being described here, nothing more than the faulty hearers in the parable of the sower (who heard the Gospel and tasted of the Lord's goodness)? They were not truly saved, and therefore they fell away. This is a solemn warning to us all.

What can we do to help us not fall away but persevere to the end?

We can read the Bible (Rom 15:4); heed the warning of falling away (Heb 6:4ff); encourage one another (Heb 10:24-25); look forward to our reward (Jam 1:12); and fix our eyes on Jesus (Heb 12:1-3).

Summary: All true Christians will persevere, and only those who persevere are true Christians.

17. How Can We Be Sure We're Saved? (Doctrine of Assurance)

Review: *According to the Lord Jesus, what must we do to be saved? (Matt 10:21-22 and 24:12-13)*

We must persevere (endure, or stand firm) to the end to be saved. Cf. also what Paul says in Col 1:22-23.

In the light of our need to persevere, what comfort do we find in Rom 15:4-6 and John 6:38-40?

God will help us persevere, and Christ guarantees it. Indeed, perseverance shows that we are a true Christian.

Intro: *Can a Christian be sure he/she is saved, or is that being presumptuous? <discuss>*

Does God want us to be sure (consider 1 John 5:13)? Why? <discuss>

Christian Assurance – what is its basis?

Many have the hope and the assurance they will go to heaven one day, but they won't be. What are some common wrong assumptions when it comes to having an assurance of making it to heaven?

Living a good life; doing more good things than bad things; being baptised as an infant (some denominations teach that infants enter God's kingdom when they are baptised); "going forward" at a Christian meeting; getting baptised as an adult; attending church, etc.

The people that Jesus spoke of in Matt 7:21-23 would have thought they were saved. Why?

They knew Jesus was the Lord, and called Him "Lord". They also did amazing things in His name.

But why wouldn't these people, who looked like Christians, be saved? (v.23)

They didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus, and they were not under His rule (but lawless).

From Matt 7:21-23, what two things must be true of us before we can begin to be sure we're saved?

Firstly, we must know Jesus personally – ie, we must have called out to Him to save us (Rom 10:13), and be in relationship with Him. Secondly, we must be under His rule (not doing our own thing).

Consider Jesus' words either side of Matt 7:21-23 (Matt 7:15-20; 24-27). How can we tell that we know Jesus personally and are under His rule, and therefore that we will not be turned away, but saved?

We can be sure if we bear "good fruit" (ie, practice righteousness), and if we don't just hear Christ's words, but put them into practice; ie, we seek to be a doer of the word (cf. also James 1:22-25, 2:14-26).

In Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt 25:31-46), what's the difference between the two?

As the song writer Keith Green put it, "the difference between the sheep (believers) and the goats (non-believers) is what they did and didn't do". The sheep did selfless acts, and the goats were not selfless.

It may appear that the Bible verses we have considered are telling us that we are saved by our good deeds. How are we to understand works in relation to salvation? (Eph 2:8-10)

We are saved by God's grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, but we show this reality by the good works we do. Indeed, we have been saved to do good works. Good works, then, SHOW that we know Jesus and are under His rule. Therefore, it's our works that assure us that we are a genuine Christian.

Christian Assurance – the evidence of the Spirit

Read 2 Cor 13:5. What are we encouraged to do? How can we be sure we are saved?

We ought to examine ourselves to see if we are a genuine Christian. Such self-examination is not showing a lack of faith, but showing that we take serious our salvation. To be sure we're saved, we need to see the evidence that Christ lives in us – ie, that we have been born again by Christ's Spirit (John 3:3; Rom 8:9).

If the Spirit of Christ lives in us, what will be evident? (cf. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 5:22-23; Rom 8:15-16)

We will have experienced a change in our life (which is ongoing – 2 Cor 3:18), we will be bearing the fruit of the Spirit, and we will have the testimony of God's Spirit within our spirit that we are God's child. This is especially expressed by the heartfelt prayer from the depths of our heart – "Abba Father".

NB: No amount of activity nor having amazing spiritual experiences can ever give us assurance. <discuss>

Read 2 Peter 1:5-10. How can we make sure (assure ourselves) that we are saved?

We do this by bearing godly characteristics, which come from the Spirit's work in our life. One quality that was mentioned in last week's study is perseverance. Persevering to the end shows that we are saved.

In 1 John, false and true believers are distinguished. What's the difference? (1 John 2:4-6, 2:9-11)

True believers seek to obey Jesus' commands (come under His rule), and they love God's children.

Read 2 Thess 1:3-5. Why was Paul sure the Thessalonians were saved?

They had a growing faith and a growing love for each other, and they persevered in their faith in Christ, despite the trials; in other words, their lives showed that they were genuine Christians. *Does yours?*

Summary: **Christian assurance comes from good deeds that are the result of Christ living in us by His Spirit; ie, assurance comes from affirming that we have been born again.**

18. What is the Spirit all about? (Doctrine of the Holy Spirit)

Review: *Can a Christian be sure that they are saved, or is that being presumptuous? (2 Tim 1:12)*

We can be sure and are to be sure; God wants us to be sure (cf. 1 John 5:13).

How can we be sure that we are a genuine Christian? (Matt 7:15-20; Gal 5:22-23; Matt 7:24-27)

We can be by bearing the fruit of God's Spirit, and obeying Christ's commands and doing good deeds.

Intro: In this study we shall consider the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. However, we have already considered His work in our life before we believed.

What has He done for us to bring us to Christ? (John 16:8; Tit 3:5) He has convicted us of sin, and has regenerated us so that, though we were spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-3), we were enabled to trust in Christ.

The Spirit – prophesied, promised and His coming in power

In the Old Testament, God's Spirit only came on certain individuals. He would come and go. Yet, what was prophesied many years before Jesus came? (Ezek 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29)

God spoke about what would happen under the new covenant in Jesus. His people would all have the Spirit. As a result, they would know God and be able to walk in His ways (cf. also Jer 31:31-34).

What did Jesus promise to His disciples and to us who also believe? (John 14:15-24)

He promised to not leave us as orphans, but to send the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. He would be just like Jesus ("another Counsellor"), and to have Him in us equates to the Father and Jesus being in us.

NB: Jesus taught that it was even better for Him to go so that the Spirit may be in us (John 16:4-7).

When did the followers of Jesus first receive the promised Holy Spirit? (John 7:37-39)

The Spirit was not given until Jesus was glorified – ie, after He was raised to life and ascended on high.

In Acts 2:1-4 we read when the Holy Spirit first came. How would you describe it?

He came with power upon the disciples and they became changed men. For example, in Acts 2, we read of Peter preaching with great courage, even though earlier he had denied the Lord three times.

How can we be sure that we also receive the Spirit, just like the disciples? (Acts 2:37-39)

The Bible promises that everyone who repents and turns to Jesus will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, without the Holy Spirit, we have no part with Christ (Rom 8:9).

The Spirit – His work in the believer

By the Spirit, we have a living relationship with God the Father, and have His very presence dwelling within us. The Spirit also enables us, in every way, to live for Christ. What does He do in us? (look up the following verses and discover the work of the Spirit in our lives)

John 16:12-14 He guides us in the truth, for He is the Spirit of truth (cf. also John 14:26), and He glorifies Christ, and proclaims Christ as Lord (1 Cor 12:3).

1 Joh 2:26-27 He keeps us from deception and error, because of how He teaches us the truth.

1 Cor 2:10-16 He reveals the things of God to us, and gives us the mind of Christ.

2 Cor 3:17-18 He transforms us so that we become like Christ (cf. also Rom 8:29).

Rom 8:12-13 He helps us put to death our old sinful nature (cf. also Gal 5:16-18).

John 16:8-11 He convicts us of sin, not just at conversion, but throughout our life, so that we may repent.

Gal 5:22-23 He produces in us the fruit of the Spirit (the character of Christ).

Rom 8:14-16 He affirms that we are God's children, and that God is our Father (cf. also Gal 4:1-7).

1 Cor 12:4-11 He blesses us with spiritual gifts so that we may help build up Christ's body – the church.

Rom 8:26-27 He helps us to pray, by interceding for us.

Eph 3:14-16 He empowers us to live for Christ, by strengthening us.

Acts 1:8 He enables us to be witnesses for Christ, giving us boldness to speak (cf. also Acts 4:31).

Eph 1:13-14 He assures us of our future inheritance (our future hope in Christ) – cf. also 2 Cor 5:1-5.

Because of the Holy Spirit coming to dwell in us, how should we view ourselves? (1 Cor 6:19-20)

Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit – therefore, we are not our own, and are not to do as we please.

In the light of the Spirit's work, what are we commanded to do and not do? (Eph 5:18; 4:30)

We are commanded to be filled (keep on being filled) with the Spirit. This is not about getting more of the Spirit, as we already have the Spirit, but having Him completely control us. We are not to grieve the Spirit or quench the Spirit (1 Thess 5:19) by wrong living. Praise God we have the Spirit forever (John 14:16).

Summary: **Be filled with the Spirit, so that we may be like Christ and be witnesses for Him.**

19. Why is there a battle? (Doctrine on Spiritual Warfare)

Review: *The Holy Spirit brought us to Christ, and now as a believer, what does the Holy Spirit do for us?* He enables us to have a living relationship with God as He lives in us; He transforms us into the likeness of Christ; He teaches us and guides us into all the truth; He convicts us of sin and enables us to put to death our sinful nature; He blesses us with spiritual gifts; He empowers us to be witnesses for Christ; etc.

Since the Spirit is instrumental in helping us live as a Christian, what are we to do? (Eph 5:18)

We are to be filled (keep on being filled) with the Spirit. We do that by yielding to and obeying God.

Intro: *We are blessed with the Spirit indwelling us. Yet, is the Christian life "a piece of cake"? Why not?* We are engaged in a spiritual battle. We battle the desires of our sinful nature (Gal 5:17), and the world that lures us away from doing God's will (1 John 2:15-16), and we are under attack from Satan.

This study will consider our enemy, Satan, and the spiritual warfare we are engaged in.

Knowing Your Enemy

Who is our enemy? (Eph 6:12; Genesis 3:1; Revelation 12:9, 17)

Our enemy, from of old, has been Satan. He is also called the serpent and the devil. Together with his demons (fallen angels) they wage war against Christ and His followers.

What characterises our enemy? (1 John 3:8; Gen 3:1; John 8:44; Eph 2:1-2)

He's been a sinner from the beginning and he seeks to make us sin and be in rebellion to God – like he is. He is also a liar and a murderer, and the prince of this fallen world.

What is Satan's ultimate aim? (Matt 4:8-9; Rev 12:12, 13:8)

He longs to be worshipped. He also desires to get back at God by making us turn and rebel against God.

Knowing the Strategies of Your Enemy

Look up the following verses and discover what strategies Satan uses:

Genesis 3:1-6	He tempts us to sin by twisting the truth and encouraging us to indulge in our desires.
Matt 4:1-4	He tempts us to sin by going against God's will and command.
2 Cor 4:3-4	He blinds our mind to the truth.
Ephesians 4:26-27	He's an opportunist – do not give him a foothold to get in and "trip" you up.
2 Cor 11:13-14	He comes as an angel of light to deceive us. He is right into counterfeiting all that is to do with God (Gal 1:8 – a counterfeit Gospel; 2 Cor 11:14-15 – counterfeit ministries; 1 Timothy 4:1 – counterfeit doctrine; 2 Thess 2:8-10 and Matt 24:24 – counterfeit Christ, counterfeit saviours, and counterfeit signs and wonders)
2 Cor 11:3	He is crafty in seeking to lead us away from Christ and the Gospel.
Revelation 12:9-10	He falsely accuses us in order to wear us down and make us give up.
1 Peter 5:8	He seeks to frighten us into submission to obey him.
Ephesians 6:10-12	He schemes against us so that we fall and bring disgrace to God.

In summary, he is opposed to God, His Son, God's work, and His children.

Knowing Victory over Your Enemy

Look at the following verses to learn how we can have victory over Satan.

Colossians 2:15	Christ defeated Satan at the cross (cf. 1 John 3:8). We're no longer under Satan's rule and in his kingdom, but under Christ's rule and in His kingdom (Col 1:13).
1 John 4:4	Because Christ lives in us by His Spirit, and because He is far greater than Satan, we have victory over Satan – but only through Christ.
1 John 5:18	Christ protects us from the evil one.
Matt 4:4	We are to use God's word to overcome Satan.
James 4:7	We have victory as we submit to God, and resist the devil.
2 Cor 2:10-11	We are to be aware of Satan's schemes.
1 Peter 5:8-9	We are to be alert about Satan's tactics and we are to resist him.
Ephesians 6:14-18	We are to stand firm by daily putting on the armour of God.

When we do yield to temptation, we can still experience victory. How? (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2)

We can experience full forgiveness through Christ. Christ's precious blood goes on cleansing us of our sins and making us right with God, no matter how much the devil accuses us (Revelation 12:10-11).

Summary: We cannot overcome Satan by ourselves, but we can through Christ. Amen!

20. What is the Church?

Review: *As a Christian, we are under attack from Satan. What is he seeking to do? (Matt 4:8-9; Gen 3:1)*
He is seeking our worship, and he is seeking to get us to come under his rule and to rebel against God.

How can we overcome Satan? (Eph 6:14-18)

We can overcome him by submitting to God, resisting Satan, using God's word, being alert and aware of his schemes, and standing firm with God's armour on.

Intro: *What is church? A Sunday service, a building, or something else? <discuss>*

What is the Church?

What does the word "church" mean? (1 Cor 1:1-2)

In the New Testament, the word "church" refers to the assembly of God's people in Christ. Thus, "church" refers to God's people, and not to a building or to a particular service.

Look up Rom 16:5, Acts 8:1, Acts 9:31, Eph 5:25. How is the word "church" used?

It's used to describe different types of groups of believers – a house church, the church of an entire city, the church in an entire region, and the church throughout the whole world. But though "church" may refer to different types of groups of believers, we all have one thing in common: we are followers of Christ.

*The Greek word for church, *ekklesia*, means "called out ones". Why is this fitting? (1 Pet 2:9-10)*

Christians have been called by God, out of this fallen world and out of Satan's kingdom, to be part of Christ's glorious kingdom (Col 1:13). We have been rescued out of this present evil age (Gal 1:3-5).

What is the Church likened to?

How is the church described in Eph 3:14-15 and 1 Tim 3:14-15. What does this imply?

The church is God's family – God's household. Thus, we are to view other believers as brothers and sisters, and God as our Father, and Jesus as our elder brother (Heb 2:11-12) – though He also is our King and Redeemer. Consider Jesus' words in Mark 3:32-35 ("mother" is referring to spiritual leaders).

In Eph 5:32, 2 Cor 11:2 and Rev 19:7-9, what is God's church referred to? What does this mean?

God's church is referred to as a bride; Christ's bride. We are married to Christ, and as His bride, we are to be submissive and faithful to Him. Jesus, on His part, loves us and will nurture and care for us - forever.

In 1 Cor 12:12-13, 27 and Eph 4:12, 15-16 how does Paul describe the church? Why?

We are the body of Christ. Just as our natural body has various members, so in Christ, we are different from each other, as we have different spiritual gifts and have different abilities and responsibilities. But we are members of Christ's body, and together we make up His body – with Jesus being the head.

Consider 1 Peter 2:4-5. What are we and what is the church, according to this passage?

Every Christian is a "living stone", founded on Christ the cornerstone, and together we have been put together with other believers to form a spiritual house (a temple). So, the church is God's temple, which He dwells in, and collectively, we are called to offer sacrifices of praise and to minister to our God.

What should Church look like?

When did the church start? What was significant on the day the church was born? (Acts 2:1-4)

The church started on the Day of Pentecost – some 50 days after Christ's resurrection. Every follower of Jesus was filled with His Spirit, and was instantly enabled to live for Him and to be His witnesses. Ever since that day, new believers have been given the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) upon repenting and trusting in Jesus. As a result, the church is a group of believers who are blessed with the indwelling Spirit of God.

What characterised the New Testament church, according to Acts 2:42-47?

They were devoted to the apostles' teaching (which is now the New Testament), to fellowship (encouraging one another in Christ), to breaking of bread (remembering Jesus through communion) and to prayer. They met together regularly to worship God together and to encourage and care for each other.

What do we also learn about the church in Acts 4:32-35?

There was unity (cf. Eph 4:3-4). This showed in the way they shared their belongings with each other, and made sure no one was in need. They were also abounding in grace. This is what church should look like.

Because of the importance of "church" what are we commanded to do in Heb 10:24-25?

We are not to stop meeting together, but come together and encourage one another.

Summary: **The church is God's people in Christ, who have been called out of this world, filled with His Spirit and who meet together for mutual encouragement and edification.**

21. What is the Church's Purpose?

Review: *What is the church? (1 Cor 1:1-2; 12:27)*

The church is God's people who follow Christ. We are also the body of Christ.

What should the church look like? (Acts 2:42-47)

As God's people we are to be devoted to His word, to fellowship, to breaking bread (communion) and to prayer, as well as to being loving and caring of each other, and doing our best to maintain unity (Eph 4:3).

Intro: *What's the purpose of the church?*

To help the poor? To maintain morality in society? To guard the path to heaven? <discuss>

In this study we shall consider the three main purposes of God's church in Christ.

To minister to God

According to 1 Peter 2:9-10, what purpose does God have for His church?

God desires us to be "declaring His praises"; ie, we are to be worshippers of our God. God's church is to do this as we have tasted of His goodness and grace. Indeed, God seeks such worshippers (John 4:23-24).

In 1 Pet 2:4-5 a picture is given of the church. What does this picture declare about our purpose?

We are to be like a spiritual house (a temple), where each person is a holy priest offering sacrifices to God. Under the New Covenant, such sacrifices are not animal sacrifices, but offering ourselves as a living sacrifice to God (cf. Rom 12:1). So, worship isn't just praising God, but giving ourselves to His service.

What do we also see in Eph 1:11-12?

God chose us and predestined us to salvation in Christ so that we might be for "the praise of His glory". This passage highlights how worship is a major purpose for individual Christians and the church.

Eph 3:15-17 highlights how a worshipping church should be. What do you observe?

We are to be peaceful, united, on the truth, and thankful to God. We are to sing songs with gratitude to God, and we are to do acts of service for the glory of God. *Are we fulfilling our purpose?*

To minister to God's people

Not only are we to minister to God, but according to Heb 10:24-25, who else are we to minister to?

We are to minister to each other by encouraging one another and spurring one another on. This means that we need to be meeting together. We can't do this ministry if we are living independently of each other.

Read Eph 4:11-13. What's the reason why we even have spiritual gifts in the church?

God has given us spiritual gifts so that we can equip each other for works of service, and help each other in our faith and knowledge of God, and thereby enable one another to become mature and full in Christ.

Read Eph 4:29-32. What do we learn from this passage in regard to our purpose?

Even our very behaviour and our talk is to be such that we build each other up and help one another.

What other ways can we minister to each other? (Eph 3:14-19; 1 John 3:16-18; John 13:34-35)

We can pray for each other, and help one other, and above all, we can love each other with Christ's love.

God has called us to minister to each other, but who are we really ministering to? (Matt 25:24-40)

When we minister to fellow believers, we are ministering to Christ Himself, for He lives in them.

To minister to God's world

What's our purpose in relation to God's world? (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

We have the purpose of helping non-believers become followers of Christ. We are to "make disciples", baptising them and teaching them Christ's way, and we are to be Christ's witnesses.

As we fulfil the Great Commission, what two things must we maintain according to Phil 2:14-16?

We must seek to live holy lives in the midst of a perverted world, and we must hold out the "word of life"; ie, the Gospel. Holiness is needed to commend the Gospel to others, and the Gospel is needed so that people can believe in Christ and be saved. The Gospel is the power of God to salvation (Rom 1:16).

Read 1 Tim 3:14-15. What is the church? How does this tie into our purpose in the world?

We are the pillar and support of the truth. We have been entrusted with God's revelation and Gospel. This we must keep and preserve, so that we can accurately declare God's truth to others (cf. 1 Tim 4:15-16).

Even if not many respond to the gospel, what must we always do? (Acts 2:40; Ezek 3:17-19)

We must warn people of the coming judgment and the need to be saved. Like Christ, we must warn them.

How are we to fulfil this purpose God has given His church? (Phil 3:3; Eph 4:29-30; Acts 1:8)

We are to do it by the Spirit. He enables us to worship, to minister to believers, and to be witnesses.

Summary: The church is to worship God, to nurture God's people, and to witness to God's world.

22. What is Baptism?

Review: *What is the purpose of the church? (1 Peter 2:9-10; Heb 10:24-25; Matt 28:18-20)*

The church is to worship God, to help encourage God's people, and to witness to God's world.

How are we enabled to fulfil our purpose? (Phil 3:3; Acts 1:8)

We are enabled and empowered by the Spirit. That's why we need to be filled with Him (Eph 5:18).

Intro: *This study will look at the Christian practice of baptism. We refer to this (and the Lord's Supper) as an "ordinance" rather than a "sacrament" (as other denominations do). Why? <discuss>*

An ordinance is a term used to indicate that a particular Christian practice, like baptism, is an outward expression of faith. We do not use the term "sacrament", as it indicates that a certain practice is done to receive God's grace. We believe that God's grace comes only through faith in Christ.

Why baptise?

Why do Christians baptise? (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 2:38-41)

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples (followers of Christ), and then to baptise them. As soon as the church was born, this practice immediately began, as we see throughout the book of Acts.

John the Baptist baptised. Are Christians simply following John's practice? (Acts 19:1-5)

No! John's baptism was in the context of calling people to repentance; it was a public act to declare that a person was repenting of their sins. Christian baptism is different. It's a public act to declare that we belong to God through faith in Christ. That's why we baptise people "in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19), or baptise them "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5).

According to Acts 2:38, do we get baptised to be saved? Is baptism necessary for salvation?

No! Even though baptism is mentioned in Acts 2:38 as something that Peter called the people to do to be saved, baptism is not a condition of salvation, but an act that Peter assumed would happen after people repented and believed in Jesus – after all, that's what the Great Commission calls us to do.

How can we be sure that baptism isn't essential for salvation? (Rom 10:8-13)

There is no mention of baptism in many key texts that tell us what we must do to be saved. If baptism was essential, then it would have to be mentioned each time. (cf. also Luke 23:42-43 – the repentant thief).

What must we always emphasise in regard to how a person is saved? (Eph 2:8-9)

We are saved by God's grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not of works, which means it's not through baptism or anything else, otherwise that would be a work we must do to be saved.

Consider Acts 16:25-34. What do we learn from this incident in regard to salvation and baptism?

Salvation is purely based on faith in Christ – not baptism (v. 31). But we are baptised, not to be saved, but to express our faith, and that's why the jailer was baptised that very night.

Who should be baptised and how should it be done?

Who should be baptised? (Acts 10:44-48; 16:14-15)

In the New Testament only people who believe in Jesus are baptised. That's why we often refer to it as "believers' baptism". Faith must precede baptism. Therefore, it is not for unbelievers or infants.

NB: Although there are some references to households being baptised, that does not mean children were baptised. Households included parents and servants. All those who believed would have been baptised.

How should we baptise? (Acts 8:36-39)

The Greek word for baptism means to immerse. There is no hint in the New Testament that it is to be done by sprinkling or pouring. This practice was wrongly introduced over time. People were baptised in rivers and lakes, and it was important for a person to be immersed, due to what baptism symbolises.

What's the point of baptism?

Baptism is a strange act to unbelievers but it's full of meaning. What does it signify? (Rom 6:1-4)

Baptism signifies what happened the moment we trusted in Jesus. When we go under the water it symbolises how we died to self. When we come up out of the water, it symbolises how we have new life through Christ's resurrection. Baptism itself is not when this happens – this occurs when we trust Christ.

What else does baptism symbolise according to 1 Peter 3:21-22?

Baptism symbolises us being washed clean of our sins – again, we stress that it doesn't happen when we are baptised but when we appeal to God through Christ for mercy and forgiveness. Because baptism is so closely connected in meaning to our salvation, that's why baptism can appear in such texts as this one.

Summary: Baptism is for believers; it shows that we belong to Christ and have a new life in Him.

23. What is the Lord's Supper?

Review: *Why should a person be baptised? (Matt 28:18-20)*

Christ commanded His followers to be baptised; it is Christ's way for us to publicly declare our faith in Him.

Do we need to be baptised to be saved? (Acts 16:30-34)

We are saved by faith in Christ (Eph 2:8-9); but we ought to be baptised to show our faith.

Intro: *This study will look at another Christian practice known as the Lord's Supper. It is also known as Communion and the Eucharist. What do these various terms indicate? <discuss>*

The term "the Lord's Supper" reminds us where this meal came from; "Communion" indicates that we commune with Christ as we remember His death; "Eucharist" means giving thanks for Christ.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper came from the Jewish Passover feast (Luke 22:14-16). What are the links between the Lord's Supper and the Passover? (Exod 12:1-13)

The first Passover was a meal eaten just before God delivered His people from Egypt. An unblemished lamb was killed and its blood sprinkled on their doors to deliver the firstborn from death. The Lord's judgment passed over because of the blood. Likewise, the first Lord's Supper was a meal eaten just before Christ delivered us from sin and Satan. Our Saviour, the unblemished Lamb of God (John 1:29), would shed His blood so that we could be delivered from eternal death and have God's judgment pass over us.

What significant things do we learn about the Lord's Supper from Luke 22:17-20?

Two items were taken from the Passover feast and given special meaning as the disciples shared in them. A piece of unleavened bread was taken and broken, by which Jesus asked His disciples to remember how His body was given for them. A cup (of red wine) was taken, by which Jesus asked His disciples to remember how the New Covenant was made possible through His blood.

In Luke 22:19, the word "given" is used. Why? (Matt 26:51-54; John 10:18; 18:4-8)

Jesus truly gave His body to be crucified for us. His life was not taken from Him by force.

In Luke 22:20, the words "poured out" are used. Why? (cf. Phil 2:17)

Like the drink offering in the Old Testament, Jesus' blood was poured out to atone for sin.

What has Jesus' blood achieved for us? (Luke 22:20; Heb 9:11-22)

Through pouring out His blood and atoning for our sins, Jesus has made the New Covenant possible. In the New Covenant we are forgiven of our sins and made right with God through faith in Christ.

In 1 Cor 11:17-34 we have the most extensive teaching on the Lord's Supper – all because of how the Corinthian church had been abusing it. What does Paul remind us of in vv. 23-26?

He reminds us that the Lord's Supper is tied to an historic event (the last night Jesus was with His disciples – the night He was betrayed when He had the Last Supper), and that it's all about remembering Christ's death. The Lord's Supper is not the time to remember Christ's birth, life, resurrection or return. It's specifically about remembering Jesus' death for us. This is what we proclaim as we partake.

In 1 Cor 11 and in the Gospels, Jesus says "remember Me". What's meant by this?

We are to specifically remember as we eat the bread of how Christ gave His body for us. We are to specifically remember as we take the cup that Christ poured out His blood for us – He did this to save us. Of course, we are not remembering a dead Saviour, but a living One, and therefore we can speak to Him (commune) and give thanks to Him, for He is present with us as we share.

How long are we to take the Lord's Supper and how often? (1 Cor 11:26; Acts 20:7)

We are to celebrate the Lord's Supper until Jesus returns. In regard to how often, it was the New Testament practice to do it as often as they met (which ended up being the first day of the week).

What warnings do we have in 1 Cor 11 about the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 11:17-22, 27-34)

The Lord's Supper is to be done as a church family; without divisions. Besides being a believer, we are to be right with each other. We are also to discern that the bread and the cup are not just food to nourish our body, but emblems that point us to Christ. It's sacred, and God may discipline us if we abuse them.

At Mass, Catholics believe that the bread turns into the real body of Christ, and that the wine turns into the real blood of Christ through the priest's words. Is this true? Why or why not?

Although Jesus said "this is my body", clearly it wasn't the "bread" that was given for us and crucified on the cross. Jesus was speaking figuratively. He had no intention of us committing cannibalism.

Summary: In the Lord's Supper we remember Jesus giving His body and shedding His blood for us.

24. What Happens When a Person Dies?

Review: *What is to be our main focus when we partake of the Lord's Supper? (1 Cor 11:23-26)*

We are to remember how Jesus gave His body and shed His blood for us – we are to remember His death.

What warnings are we given in regard to partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20-22, 27-29)

We are to share together (in harmony) and we are to rightly understand what the emblems stand for.

Intro: *There are many views in society in regard to what happens after death. What are they? <discuss>*

There is nothing after death (it's "game over"); that we live life again in another form (reincarnation); that the body perishes but the spirit is free to wander through the universe.

Death is not the end

What did Jesus teach in Luke 16:19-24 in regard to what happens after we die?

Death is not the end. The rich man, after his death, went to hell and was suffering in great agony. Lazarus, after his death, went to "Abraham's side" (heaven) and was enjoying this blessed state. There are but two places we go to after death: heaven or hell.

What do we learn in Luke 16:25-26 about our state after death?

Where we go to is determined by the way we lived. Although not spelt out here, it's not that all the rich go to hell and all the poor go to heaven, but those who trust in Jesus go to heaven (John 3:16) – and the way we live shows this. Also, where we end up is fixed after death. We cannot change our eternal state.

What can we glean from Luke 16:27-31?

Most people, in this life, either dismiss or do not take seriously the prospect of one day being in heaven or hell. If we did, we would do everything to ensure we made it to heaven, as well as those around us.

The Day of Judgment

When will it be determined where we go after death? (Matt 11:20-24; Rom 2:3-6; Heb 9:27)

The Bible speaks about the Day of Judgment. After death, we will be judged for what we did.

Jesus spoke of the Day of Judgment. What do we learn from Matt 25:31-33?

Jesus will be the One who judges (John 5:21-22, 26-27; Acts 17:31) at the end of the age. All people will be assembled before Him, and He will separate everyone into two groups – the "sheep" and the "goats".

What happens to the "sheep" and who are they? (Matt 25:34-40)

The sheep will be welcomed into the new kingdom and will enjoy eternal glory. This is because they were found to be righteous. NB: They stand for those who trusted in Jesus and were therefore made righteous (Rom 3:21-22), and they show this by living a righteous life through the help of the Spirit.

What happens to the "goats" and who are they? (Matt 25:41-46)

The goats will be turned away and suffer hell. This is because they weren't righteous. They hadn't trusted in Jesus and weren't following Him, but living for themselves in rebellion to God.

Another key passage on the Day of Judgment is Rev 20:11-15. What do we learn from this?

The Day of Judgment will be absolutely frightening. Imagine standing before the throne when earth and sky flee. Also, we read here of books. There is the book of life. All those who have trusted in Jesus are in this book. They will be spared judgment. But the rest will have books opened that record all the wrongs they have done. They will be judged for their sins and sent to the lake of fire (hell).

Why won't Christians (whose names are in the book of life) be judged? (John 5:24; Rom 8:1)

We will not be judged because another took our judgment. On the cross, Jesus was punished for our sins so that we could be spared being judged and condemned on the Day of Judgment (Isa 53:5-6).

Until that day

Until the Day of Judgment, what happens to a non-believer who dies? (Rev 20:13)

They go to a place called Hades – the abode of the dead. Here they wait for the Day of Judgment (2 Peter 2:9). Notice that all those in Hades will be judged and thrown into hell, for no believer goes to Hades.

Until the Day of Judgment, what happens to a follower of Christ who dies? (2 Cor 5:6-9)

The moment we die, we do not go to Hades, but our soul goes to be with the Lord. Indeed, when Jesus returns, those who have died with Christ will be returning with Him (1 Thess 4:13-14).

Paul uses the term "sleep" to refer to Christians who have died. Why? (1 Cor 15:50-53)

The soul is not asleep, but is very with it in heaven (cf. Rev 6:9-11). However, our body "sleeps", because it's not the end for it. One day Jesus will raise it up and our soul will be clothed with a new glorious body.

Summary: **Death is not the end – there is a Day of Judgment, and there is a heaven and a hell**

25. What is Hell?

Review: *What happens after we die? (Heb 9:27)*

After death comes the Day of Judgment, and then people will either spend eternity in heaven or hell.

What determines where we go after death? (Matt 7:21-23; John 3:16)

What we did with Jesus determines where we spend eternity. If we came to know Jesus personally and followed Him as our Lord then we will be with Him in glory, but all others will be in hell.

Intro: *One of the most unpopular Christian truths is our teaching on hell. Why? <discuss>*

Hell – is it for real?

Is hell just a metaphor to describe the state of the unbeliever, but it's not actually real? (Matt 10:28)

Jesus believed in a literal place called hell. He spoke more about hell than anyone else. Although many these days are dismissing hell (including in the church), we need to heed Jesus' words. It's real alright!

The word "hell" comes from the Greek word Gehenna; an actual place immediately south of Jerusalem. What was this place and why did Jesus use this word?

Gehenna literally means "the valley of the sons of Hinnom". It was the name of a ravine where constant fires were kept burning to consume the dead bodies of animals and criminals. Jesus used this word to describe the state of the unbeliever because they will also be in a fire that continually burns.

Hell – is it so bad?

Will an unbeliever be annihilated in hell so that their suffering is brief? (Rev 20:10, 14-15)

No! Many Scriptures teach that the unbeliever will experience eternal torment; just as the devil will. It's an eternal punishment (Matt 25:46) and the torment is forever.

Consider the description of hell in Rev 14:9-11, 19:20, 20:10. What frightening things do we learn?

Hell is described as a fiery lake (or lake of fire) where people will be tormented forever with burning sulphur, suffering every day the wrath of God. There will be no rest, no easing of their suffering (Luke 16:22-24). It is sure not a place where you "hang out" with your mates and are free to do what you want.

If hell is a terrible place, why is there even such a place? Why did God make hell? (Matt 25:41)

Hell was made for the devil and his fallen angels. It wasn't made for humans. But because we have rebelled against God, like the devil, and sided with him, we will also go there unless we repent and turn to Jesus.

How can a loving God send anyone to hell? Does He delight in seeing people suffer? (Ezek 33:11)

God does not delight in the death of the wicked, which also means He doesn't delight in them dying in their sins and suffering in hell. However, God is also a just God, and if we sin and have not repented and sought forgiveness through Christ, then He must execute His judgment on us rebels.

Why can we affirm that God is loving, even though He will send people to hell? (John 3:16)

Out of great love for us, our God sent His one and only Son Jesus to rescue us from our sins and from eternal punishment. What love that God should cause Jesus to suffer to rescue us sinners (Rom 5:6-8).

In the light of the reality of hell, what did Jesus teach us in Mark 9:42-48?

Hell is to be avoided at all costs; it is the very worst place. Although we are not to literally cut off body parts, we are to do anything to avoid it – and that, of course, is by turning from sin (no matter how much we like it) and trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour (no matter what it takes).

In Matt 10:28 Jesus teaches us that we are to fear Him "who can destroy both soul and body in hell". The word "body" is used. Will the unbeliever have a body in hell? (John 5:28-30)

Jesus teaches that all people, both the righteous and the wicked, will be raised to life. Our bodies will be raised to life by Him. These new bodies will be indestructible and imperishable. So it appears that even the unrighteous will have a body, and will suffer eternally in their body in hell. What a frightening thought!

Hell – what should we do?

How should this teaching on hell affect a non-believer? (cf. Luke 16:22-28)

It should cause them to repent and turn to Jesus. It was too late for the rich man in Luke 16, but if he had known what hell was like, he would have become a believer. All he could do now was to hope that his brothers didn't come to the same place. NB: This is why it is important that we warn people of hell.

How should this teaching on hell affect a Christian? (Jude 20-25)

We should be so grateful for God's grace and for what we have been rescued from through Christ. We also should be highly motivated to witness to others so that they can be rescued as well.

Summary: **Hell is real. We are to avoid it at all costs by repenting of our sins and trusting Jesus.**

26. What will Happen When Christ Returns?

Review: *Jesus taught that hell is real. How did He and His apostles describe it? (Mark 9:42-48; Rev 14:9-11)* It's the most dreadful place of all, where people suffer eternal torment, without any respite.

Why will people be in hell? (Matt 25:41; John 3:16)

It's not because of how many or great their sins were, but because they did not trust in Jesus to save them.

Intro: *One of the most divisive Christian doctrines has been on the return of Christ. Why? <discuss>*

NB: This study will look at the key points in regard to Christ's return. We will especially centre on the New Testament, knowing that through Christ and His apostles, we have the clearest teaching.

When will Jesus return?

There should be no doubt that Jesus is returning. Why? (Acts 1:11; John 14:1-3; Rev 22:20)

Jesus Christ rose from the dead and He is coming back according to God's trustworthy word.

When will Jesus return? (Matt 24:36-44)

No one knows; not even Jesus. Only God the Father knows. That's why we are not to guess the date, or pay attention to people's predictions. Indeed, Jesus will return at a time when we don't expect Him.

Jesus spoke about signs before His return. Read Luke 21:5-27. We can break up this passage into three distinct sections: a) vv. 8-19; b) vv. 20-24; c) vv. 25-26. What is each section describing?

a) This section describes the signs that would happen during the whole period from Christ's resurrection to Christ's return. There would be false Christs, wars, earthquakes, plagues, famines, persecutions, etc. (remember that in the Bible, the "last days" refers to the whole church age (cf. 1 John 2:18).

b) This section specifically describes the signs concerning the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD

c) This section describes the signs immediately before the return of Jesus. There would be huge cosmic events such that the sun, moon, and stars are shaken and altered, and even the oceans will be stirred up.

In 2 Thess 2:1-4 what else will occur immediately before Christ returns?

There will be an apostasy (a great falling away from the faith), and the "man of lawlessness, the anti-Christ will arise. He will be ruling over the world when Christ returns.

How will Jesus return?

What do we learn from Acts 1:9-11 concerning the return of Jesus? What does this imply?

Jesus will be coming back on the clouds; ie, He will not arise from the earth, but will come from heaven.

How would you describe Jesus' return? (Matt 16:27; Mark 13:26; 1 Thess 4:16; 2 Thess 1:7)

It is going to be spectacular. Jesus will return in **great** power and glory, together with His holy angels. He won't be coming secretly or discreetly, but publicly and powerfully – as the God of heaven and earth.

Will everyone be aware of His coming? (Matt 24:30; Rev 1:7)

Everyone will see Jesus – all the people of all the nations. It won't just be Christians beholding Him.

What will happen when Jesus returns?

When Jesus returns, what will happen to Christians? (1 Thess 4:13-17; 1 Cor 15:50-52)

Those who have died will return with Jesus and receive their new body. Those alive on earth will be lifted up to be with Jesus, and be changed and given new bodies. Our salvation will then be complete.

When Jesus returns what will happen to the "man of lawlessness", or the anti-Christ? (2 Thess 2:8)

Though he be the greatest earthly ruler ever known, he will be destroyed effortlessly by the Lord Jesus. His tyrannical reign over the earth and his persecution of Christians will be broken.

When Jesus returns what will happen to unbelievers? (2 Thess 1:6-9; Rev 6:12-17)

They will experience God's wrath (NB: this is but a foretaste of their eternal suffering in hell).

Will Christians near Christ's return experience God's wrath? (1 Thess 1:9-10; Rom 5:9-10)

We'll experience tribulation and persecution and Satan's wrath, but we'll never experience God's wrath.

Jesus' return will mark the end of all things. In what way? (2 Peter 3:10; 1 Cor 15:23-28)

The heavens and earth will be destroyed, as well as all rule opposed to God, and Christ will rule over all, under His Father. A new heavens and new earth will be established where only righteousness dwells.

In the light of Christ's return how should we be? (Phil 3:20-21; Luke 21:28, 36; Rev 22:20)

We should wait eagerly and expectantly, being alert and ready, and even saying "come Lord Jesus".

Summary: **Be ready. Christ is coming. He will save believers and bring judgment on the rest.**

27. What is the Final State of the Believer?

Review: *How will Jesus return? (Matt 24:30; 1 Thess 4:16)*

He will return suddenly in power and great glory with the holy angels, and with those who died in Christ.

What will happen at Jesus' return? (1 Thess 4:13-17; 2 Thess 1:6-9)

Believes in Jesus will be taken up to be with Him forever, but unbelievers will experience God's wrath.

Intro: *What do you find so difficult and trying in this life? <discuss>*

When you think of life beyond the grave, what comes to mind? <discuss>

A new earth to enjoy

After the end of this age, what has God revealed concerning this universe? (2 Pet 3:10; Rev 21:1)

God will completely destroy the present heavens (stars) and earth and create a new heavens and earth. This was prophesied back in Isa 65:17 and confirmed by Jesus in Matt 24:35. This present earth will not just be patched up or renewed, but be completely destroyed and removed to make way for a new creation.

Read Rom 8:18-22. How does Paul describe the present creation? Why?

The creation is groaning and decaying. This began when man sinned, and when God pronounced judgment on man and creation (Gen 3:17-18). However, the creation knows that this groaning will one day end.

Things will be different on this new earth. What's some of those differences? (Rev 21:1-3, 22:3-5)

There will be no sea, no night, no sun, no curse. But the amazing thing is that God the Father and our Lord Jesus will dwell on the new earth in all their glory, and their glory will be our light.

A new city to live in

On the new earth we will live in a new city. How is it described? (Rev 21:2; cf. also John 14:1-3)

It is a holy city that will come down from heaven and that has been made by God. It will be beautifully adorned. It is referred to as the new Jerusalem. This city is probably what Jesus was referring to when in John 14 He spoke about His Father's house having many rooms, and that He was preparing a place for us. It was also the city that Abraham longed for (see Heb 11:9-10).

The new Jerusalem is further described in Rev 21:10-21. What do you notice?

It will be absolutely glorious – beautiful and brilliant – full of the glory of God. It will be huge (2200km cubed), with a massive wall and foundations, with even angels at the twelve gates, and streets of gold.

What else do we learn about the new Jerusalem in Rev 21:22-23, and Rev 22:3?

There will be no temple (21:22), symbolising God's presence with us, for the actual throne of God the Father and the throne of our Lord Jesus (22:3) will be in the city. The presence of the Father and the Son will illuminate the whole city – that's why there will be no night and no need of a sun.

What do read of in Rev 22:1-2 and what does this signify?

From the throne of the Father and the Son will flow the river of the water of life, from which will grow the tree of life; a picture of the abundant life we will enjoy – there will be full health and perfect peace.

A new life to live

What will life be like for us on this new earth? (Rev 7:16-17; 21:4-5; Psa 16:11)

It will be so different to what we've known. There will be no hunger, no thirsting, no death, no sadness, no crying, no pain, but fullness of joy and pleasures forever. Our new bodies will never age or tire or be sick, we'll be without sin, and every relationship will be pure. The things of this former age will be forgotten (Isa 65:17), and every tear will be wiped away by God Himself – how tender and loving.

What will be doing in eternity? (Rev 7:15; Rev 22:5)

There is no mention of us sitting on clouds with harps. Rather, we will be serving (worshipping) God, in His presence, with Jesus as our shepherd. We will also rule with Christ over the new earth. Everything will be done according to His will and for His glory. Also, we will enjoy an eternal rest (Heb 4:1-9).

What do you think will be the greatest thing about what is to come?

I believe our greatest joy and longing is not walking the streets of gold or enjoying our mansion in the new Jerusalem, but seeing our God and Father and our Lord Jesus, and ever being in their presence.

So in our final state, do Christians go to heaven?

No and Yes! No, because we will dwell on a new earth, but in another sense the answer is yes, because God will constantly be with us, or if you like, heaven will be upon the new earth.

Summary: The best is yet to come; our salvation will be complete and we'll be with God forever being in the presence of His glory and experiencing great joy (Jude 24-25).