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Understanding the Apostles' Creed

by Dr. Alex Tang

Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls
Jeremiah 6:16

The Apostles' Creed

*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;
the third day He rose again from the
dead;
He ascended into heaven,
and sitteth 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,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of the saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life
everlasting.*

Amen

1. What is a Creed?

1.1 The Meaning of Creed.

Creeds are simply statement of what an individual or organization believes about a particular subject or topic. Our English word 'creed' comes from the Latin *credo*, which means, "I believe". They often define the most fundamental beliefs that provide the guiding principles of the individual's or group's existence. In Christianity, creeds are the attempts to summarize in formal statements, the basic or essential beliefs that are regarded as Truth.

This earliest Christian creed was spoken by Peter at Caesarea Philippi. In response to Jesus' question, "But who you think that I am?" Peter inspired by the Holy Spirit replied, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29).

1.2 The Origins of Creeds.

The first creeds of the Christian church are called ecumenical creeds because they were decided in church councils that represented the entire church before the church were permanently divided into the Eastern (Orthodox) and western (Roman Catholic) branches in AD 1054. Creeds are usually produced to formalised beliefs when the church was threatened by various heresies.

1.3 Creeds to identify and avoid incomplete or inadequate versions of Christianity.

1.3.1 The Apostle's Creed.

Part of the Apostles' Creed was first drawn up in the first or second century in response to a religious movement called Gnosticism. The Gnostics argued that their tradition was directly from the apostles. They had special knowledge (the word Gnostic comes from the Greek word *gnosis* knowledge) which gave them deeper spiritual revelation. One example was

There is a legend that the twelve apostles were the authors of the Apostles' Creed. They wrote this creed on the tenth day after Christ's ascension into heaven, each apostle adding a clause to form the whole

Marcion. Marcion was a wealthy ship owner from Pontus who was a Gnostic. He believed that the God of the Old Testament was an imperfect God. The God of the New Testament was the good God who created Jesus. To prove his thesis, Marcion remove portions of the gospels and the epistles. Tertullian (c.150-c.215), a early Church Father named Marcion as "the Pontic mouse who nibbled away the gospels." Marcion was excommunicated in AD 144. In response to Marcion, the Old Roman Creed was developed:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of the world, and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of Mary the Virgin, crucified under Pontius Pilate; the third day he rose again from the dead, received in the heavens, sitting now at the right hand of the Father, about to come to judge the quick and the dead, through the resurrection also of the flesh.

Irenaeus (c.130-c.200), the bishop of the southern Gallic city of Lyon also faced a similar challenge from the Gnostics. He formulated a prototype of the Apostles' Creed, which emphasise the humanity including the physical body of Jesus, something, which the Gnostics denied:

" in one God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all the things that are in them, through Jesus Christ the Son of God, who, on account of his overwhelming love for his creation, endured the birth from the Virgin, uniting man to God himself, and suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rose again, and was taken up in majesty, and will come again in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved and the judge of those who are judged."

1.3.2 The Nicene Creed

The Nicene Creed was written specifically as an answer to the challenge of a group of Christians called Arians. The Arians were followers of Bishop Arius who taught that Jesus was a special created being but not God. Bishop Athanasius was the man who opposed Arius and stated that if Jesus is not divine, then he could not redeem fallen humanity. The Council of Nicea (June 325) was convened by Emperor Constantine to settle the matter of the nature of Jesus. The Council affirmed the divinity of Christ that He was of “one substance with the father”.

The Creed of Nicea – 325 A.D.

We believe in one God, the Father All-sovereign, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, and the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light, true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and descended into the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and comes again with glory to judge the living and dead, of whose kingdom there is no end.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.

We acknowledge one baptism unto remission of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come.

1.4 Creeds are to declare our faith.

Creeds are the way we and the church declare our faith. Luther said that a Christian should confess the Apostles' Creed eight times daily! Some churches recite the Apostles' Creed during their service, others during Easter and Baptismal services. One of the unique features of the

Apostles' Creed is that it is ecumenical. It affirms belief that Christians across all denominations and traditions can agree. In 1920 the Lambeth Conference recognise the Apostles' Creed as one of the four pillars of Christian unity. In 1927 the World Conference of Faith and Order, meeting at Lausanne, declared that this creed could be used by all Christians.

1.5 Creeds are based on Scripture.

2. *I Believe*

To say 'I believe' is not just to give intellectual assent to the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith and also encompass faith.

2.1 Key Bible Passages

2.1.1 Matthews 9:20, 27-30: *Two examples of faith during the ministry of Jesus.*

2.1.2 Hebrews 11:1-12:3: *A classic passage on what faith is, with examples from the Old Testament.*

2.1.3 James 2:14-24: *A passage that highlights the emptiness of faith without action.*

2.2 Faith

2.2.1 Faith means assent. Faith is believing certain things is true.

2.2.2 Faith means trust.

2.2.3 Faith means commitment.

2.2.4 Faith is obedience.

3. God the Father

3.1 *The Father Almighty*

3.1.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Psalm 105:8-11: *Part of a psalm expressing God's faithfulness in keeping His promises.*
- B. Matt. 6:9-13: *The prayer addressing God as Father which Jesus taught His followers.*
- C. Matt. 7:9-11: *Jesus using the analogy of human fatherhood to illustrate God's willingness to answer prayer.*
- D. John 14:5-14: *Part of what Jesus taught about His relationship with God the Father.*
- E. Romans 8:13-17: *The work of the Holy Spirit in making Christians aware of their identity as God's children.*

3.1.2 *God*

A. **God is a Creator.**

The God of history, the God who is the source of all nations and the determinator of all destinies, upholding all things by the word of His power. This is the God we believe in. He is not a God who set aside

the worlds in their place and then left them there, but a God who is there, ordering, moving, reigning and working His will through the generations of history. Why does this God take such an interest in this tiny planet of ours? The answer is in Acts 17:26-27: *that men might seek after Him and find Him.*

B. Covenant making God.

God makes covenants with man to show that He is sincere in His love for man and is a covenant keeping God.

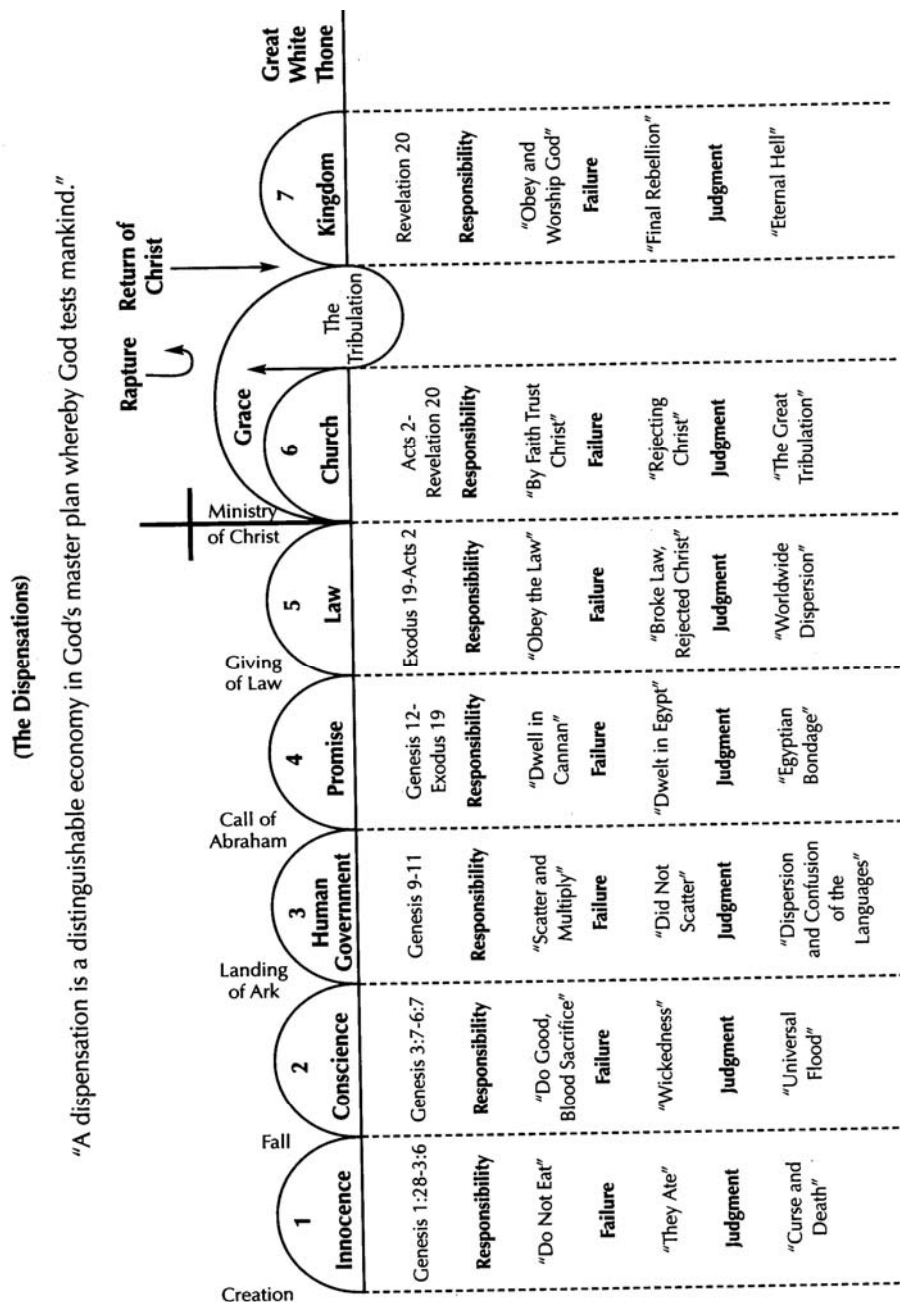
Signs of the Covenants

God has made several covenants with man throughout the ages. With several of them he has attached a sign or memorial on an ongoing basis. These function as reminders of his and/or our responsibilities to keep these covenants.				
COVENANT	DEFINITION	PROMISE	FULFILLMENT	SIGN
Noahic	Unconditional promise not to flood the earth again	Ge 9:12-17	No more sea (Rev 21:1)	Rainbow (Ge 9:12-17)
Abrahamic	Promise to provide Israel a land, rule, and spiritual blessing	Ge 12:1-3; 15:13-18	Continues at present (Gal 3:17), but Israel still has a future in the new covenant (see Ro 11:25-27)	Circumcision (Ge 17:11)
Mosaic	Conditional stipulations for blessing on Israel	Ex 19:31; Dt 28	Death of Christ (Ro 7:4-6)	Sabbath (Ex 31:13)
Palestinian	Promise of <i>physical</i> land from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River	Dt 30:1-10	Land blessed (Am 9:13-15) No sign (that I know of)	
Davidic	Promise of eternal, <i>political</i> rule of a descendant of David	2Sa 7:12-17	Rule renewed (Am 9:11-12)	Christ seated at the Father's right hand (Ac 2:34-36)
New	Promise of <i>spiritual</i> indwelling of the Spirit (law written on hearts), forgiveness, and total evangelization of Israel	Jer 31:31-34	Paul and the apostles (2Co 3-4) All Israel saved (Ro 11:26-27)	Cup of the Lord's Supper (Lk 21:20; 1Co 11:25)

Adapted from Griffiths, *Eschatology*, 25c. Used by permission.

C. God's Master Plan.

The dispensations are periods of time in human history in which God deals with man. In each dispensation, man is given a responsibility. With each failure comes judgment. But God never gave up on man and forgets His covenants and offer man another chance (dispensation).



Thomas Ice, *Bible Prophecy Charts* (Arlington, TX: The Pre-Trib Research Center, n.d.). Used by permission.

3.1.3 Father

After establishing the existence of God, the Apostles' Creed continues by calling God 'Father' because Jesus taught His disciples that is how they are to pray. The word 'Father' speaks of authority but also of dependability and of personal, individual care.

3.1.4 Almighty

God is not just an 'ordinary father'. The Apostles' Creed also stresses that God is also almighty and as such is beyond our grasp and understanding. The Christian church always uses three words to describe God.

A. Omnipotence

OMNI=All POTENS=powerful

It means God is all-powerful and can do anything He wants to do.

B. Omnipresence

OMNI=All Presence

God is not limited as we are, by space and time. God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present in every point of space and time with His whole being. Jeremiah wrote, *"Am I only a God nearby," declares the LORD, "and not a God far away?"*²⁴ *Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD.* (Jer 23:23,24).

C. Omniscience

Omniscience means 'all knowing'. Nothing we think or speak or do is secret from God. Hebrew 4:13: *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

3.2 Maker of Heaven and Earth

3.2.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Genesis 1-2: *The Bible's accounts of creation.*
- B. Psalms 8, 19, 104: *Three psalms that focus on God as Creator.*
- C. Isaiah 40:21-31: *Some implications of the fact that God created everything.*
- D. Romans 1:20: *Paul's explanation of why no one can truly be an atheist.*
- E. Revelation 4:11: *The worship due to the Creator.*

It pleased God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or to making of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

The Westminster Confession of Faith

3.3 Symbols of God the Father Almighty

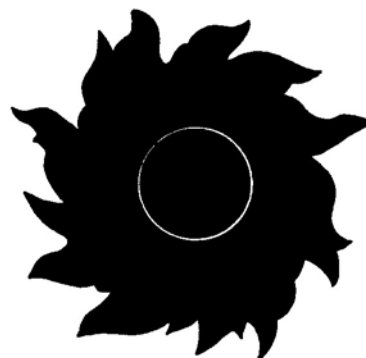
HAND



The primary physical representations of God the Father are a hand and an eye. In early Christian art, the hand of God was shown appearing from a cloud with fingers gesturing a blessing. In Scripture, the hand is used as a symbol for God's power. The hand is also used as a metaphor for support, security, judgement, vengeance and punishment. The hand of God creates and protects, but if thwarted, it also destroys. The right hand of God is the hand of blessing and the left hand, the hand of cursing.

FIRE

In the Old Testament, fire represents the presence of God in His glory. In the New Testament, fire represents the presence of God in the Holy Spirit. Fire is used as a metaphor for cleansing and spiritual power.



CLOUDS

Clouds represent the presence of God. When God led the Israelites through the desert, he was present to them "in a cloud by day,... and in a pillar of fire by night." Clouds are also associated with Christ's ascension and His Second Coming.

WHEEL

The wheel as a symbol is derived from Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God carried on flaming wheels and Daniel's similar vision. The wheel was used on early Christian gravestones as a symbol of God and eternity.



Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the names you will give to God? What will be some adjectives you will use to describe God? Write it down in the space below.

Now calm yourself. Take some time to meditate on the attributes and names of God you have written down. What does God mean to you? Take some time to pray in worship, adoration and praise.

2. In the sixteenth century, a German theologian, Philip Melancthon coined the word '*adiaphora*'- matters of indifference. For Melancthon, the Gospel consists of a central core, centering on the person of Jesus Christ. This central core is surrounded by a concentric ring, containing doctrines of secondary importance. Doctrines in the central core is not negotiable, but there could be tolerance within the church on matters outside.

What do you think are the doctrines that make up of the central core?

What do you think are the doctrines that are of secondary importance and thus negotiable or tolerable?

4. God the Son: His Identity and Birth.

4.1 *Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son.*

4.1.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Mark 1:1-8: *Mark's account of how John the Baptist prepared the way for the arrival of Jesus.*
- B. Mark 2:1-12: *One of the early incidents that marked Jesus out as special.*
- C. John 1:14: *John's understanding of the significance of Jesus' life on earth.*
- D. John 5:16-27: *How Jesus saw His identity as the Son of God.*
- E. John 17:1-26: *Jesus' prayer to His Father on the night before He died.*
- F. Romans 1:3-4: *Paul's summary of the dual human and divine identity of Jesus.*

4.2 *Our Lord.*

The word 'Lord' is used almost six hundred times of Jesus in the New Testament. In the Greek, the word is *kurios* and it expresses ownership.

4.2.1 Key Bible Passages.

- A. Matt. 7:21-22: *A warning about what it really means for Jesus to be 'Lord'.*
- B. Acts 2:14-39: *Peter's explanation of how a crucified criminal could be Messiah and Lord.*
- C. Romans 10:9, 1 Corinthians 12:3: *The significance of saying, "Jesus is Lord".*
- D. Philippians 2:5-11: *An early Christian hymn about Jesus.*

4.3 *He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.*

4.3.1 Key Bible Passages. The Incarnation.

- A. Matt. 1:18-25: *The circumstances leading up to the birth of Jesus from Joseph's viewpoint.*
- B. Luke 1:26-38: *The circumstances leading up to the birth of Jesus from Mary's viewpoint.*
- C. Heb. 4:14-16: *One of the implications of the humanity of Jesus.*

4.3.2 Virgin birth

- A. It makes important connection with Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23).
- B. It stresses that Jesus is divine by name, not by adoption at a later date.
- C. It provided an important defense against early Jewish opponents of Christianity who suggested that Jesus was the illegitimate child of Mary. (maybe alluded to in John 8:41).

4.3.3 Fully Human, Fully God

A. Humanity

Having affirmed in opposition to the Gnostics that God has created the world and it is good, the Apostles' Creed then proceed to affirm that God had taken on human flesh. Jesus is "God with skin on".

Infinite and an infant. Eternal, and yet born of a woman. Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast. Supporting a universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arm. King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph. Heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's son.

S.H.Spurgeon

Jesus was fully human, sharing all our frailties and limitations:

- He became tired (John 4:6)
- He experienced physical thirst (John 19:28)
- He can be tempted (Matthew 4:1-10)
- He knew physical hunger (Matthew 4:2)
- He experienced physical weakness (Matthew 8:23-25)
- He died (Matthew 27:50)

Jesus was completely human.

B. Divine

The Greek word Christ means Messiah which is given to Jesus, meaning that Jesus is the anointed one. Jesus is the one in whom all human history and the promises of God find fulfillment. Jesus has a special relationship with God. The Jews were furious with Jesus for calling God his father, for they recognised that he was making himself equal with God (John 5:18).

The Gospel of John contains some of the most explicit teaching about the unity of the Son and the Father:

- The Son knows the Father as the Father knows the Son (John 10:15)
- The Father shows the Son what he is doing (5:20)
- The Father taught the Son (8:28)
- What the Son says is what he has already heard the Father say (8:38, 12:50)
- No one comes to the Father in any other way than by the Son (14:6)
- The Father has given to the Son to judge others (5:22)
- What the Father has is the Son (16:15)

- The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (10:38, 14:10)
- To see the Son is to see the Father (14:9)
- I and the Father are one (10:30)

4.3.4 Symbols of Jesus Christ



LIGHT, CANDLE

In the Old Testament, light came to signify God's presence and holiness. In the New Testament, the children of God are called 'children of light'. In early Christian paintings, light or source of light denotes divine presence. Light is primarily used as a symbol for Christ. John's gospel called Jesus as the Light of the world, often symbolised by a candle. In some churches, it is common to put two candles on both side of the altar or communion table to signify the two natures of Christ- divine and human. These two sources of light combine at the central illuminated space where the Eucharistic cup and bread are placed.

GRIFFIN

The griffin is a creature of fantasy, important for its domination of both the earth and the sky. This mythological creature has a lion's body and an eagle's head and wings. In medieval times, the griffin represented Christ's power. Dante used the griffin as the symbol of Christ because of its dual qualities, qualities that allude to Christ's dual nature (divine and human) and to His mastery of earth and sky.



Lamb

Christ is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. The lamb is the principal element in several representational variations with other elements-it is shown with a cruciform halo, with blood flowing into a chalice, and with the banner of the Resurrection

5. God the Son: His Death and Resurrection.

5.1 *suffered under Pontius Pilate.*

5.1.1 Key Bible Passage

- A. Isaiah 52:13-53:12: *A remarkable prophecy looking forward to the death of the Messiah.*
- B. Matt. 27:11-56: *Part of Matthew's account of the trial and execution of Jesus.*
- C. John 19:16: *Part of John's account of the trial and execution of Jesus.*

5.1.2 Pontius Pilate

- A. The reference to Pontius Pilate anchors the Creed firmly in history.
- B. It brings out the public nature of Jesus' trial and execution.
- C. Pilate represents the rejection of Jesus by the world

5.2 *was crucified, died and buried.*

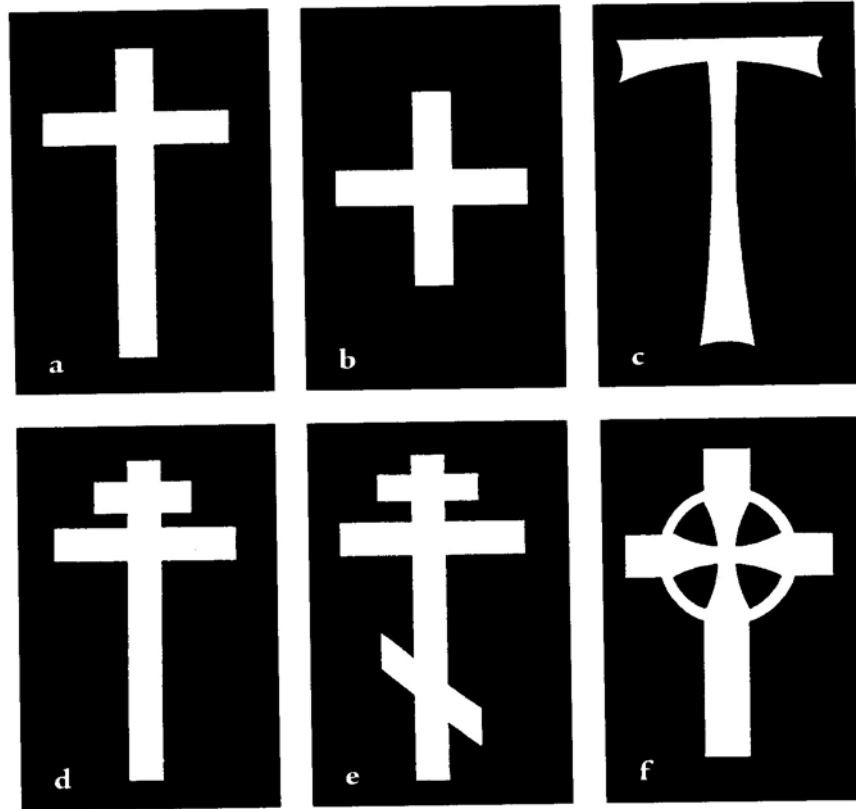
5.2.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Luke 23:26-56: *Luke's account of the death and burial of Jesus.*
- B. John 19:16-42: *John's account of the death and burial of Jesus*

“And can it be, that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain-
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou, My God, shouldst die for me?”

Charles Wesley

5.2.2 Symbols of the Cross



There are about four hundred variations on the basic shape of the cross.

- a. The most common are the Latin cross, with the intersecting horizontal post about three-quarters of the way up the vertical.
- b. The Greek cross, in which the horizontal post bisects the vertical.
- c. The Tau or Advent cross, which is shaped like the letter 'T'.
- d. The Patriarchal cross which has two graduated transverse arms.
- e. The Eastern Orthodox cross which has two horizontal arms and a third slanted arm.
- f. The Celtic cross which has a circle enclosing the cross beams.

The cross is seen as a sign of complete resolution between the vertical life force and the horizontal death or 'rest' force. It also represents life's polarities: the spiritual or otherworldly (vertical) and the physical or worldly (horizontal).

5.3 *He descended into hell.*

5.3.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. 1 Peter 3:19: *He preached to the spirits in prison.*

5.3.2 Purgatory or second chance

5.4 *the third day, he rose again from the dead.*

5.4.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Matt. 28:1-20: *Matthew's account of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection.*
- B. John 20:1-23: *Part of John's account of the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection.*
- C. 1 Corinthians 15:1-28: *What Paul says about the central importance of the resurrection of Jesus.*

5.4.2 Symbols of the Resurrection



BANNER

Symbols like the banner symbolises the victory of Christ's resurrection. The banner or flay-usually white with a red cross-is the symbol of victory over death carried by the resurrected Christ. This symbol is derived from the vision of Constantine the Great and his adoption of a cruciform on the Roman standard. In Christian art, this banner is carried by military saints and depicts Christ the Sacrificial Lamb

BUTTERFLY

In many Christian art, the butterfly represents resurrection. Its life cycle from caterpillar to crystalis to butterfly symbolises the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The Greek uses the same word for soul and butterfly: *psyche*. In western France the 'Cleopatra' butterfly is used as the symbol of the resurrected Christ. This butterfly emerges from its cocoon only at Easter, as if from the tomb.





EGG

The egg is the Christian symbol of the Resurrection because the small chick breaks from the egg at its birth, just as Christ broke forth from the tomb. The egg, like the seed, contains the promise of new life and hope. The egg also represents chastity and purity, since the chick is protected in its shell. The egg has come to symbolise Easter.

6. God the Son: His Present Activity and Future Role.

6.1 *He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*

6.1.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Acts 1:1-11: *The ascension of Jesus.*
- B. Acts 2:32-36: *What the ascension of Jesus says about Him.*
- C. Colossians 3:1-3: *The way all Christians participate in the ascension of Jesus.*

6.1.2 Jesus with the Father

- A. Our Divine High Priest (Heb.4:15,16; 8:1;9:11,12)
- B. Our Divine Intercessor (Heb.7:25; 1 John 2:1)

6.1.3 Coming of the Holy Spirit (John14:16)

6.2 From hence He shall come to judge the quick (living) and the dead.

6.2.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. Matt. 25:31-46: *Part of the teaching of Jesus about His coming again as judge.*
- B. Acts 10:42: *Judgment as an integral part of the message of the gospel.*
- C. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11: *Paul's teaching about the return of Christ and its implications*

6.2.2 Symbols of Christ Triumphant



PANTOCRATER

Pantocrater is a Greek word meaning “all-sovereign, ruler of all”. As early as the sixth century, this word has come to refer to Christ as Judge. In most depiction of the Sovereign Christ, he is heavily bearded with long hair. His right hand is raised in blessing or points to the Gospel book in his left hand. Behind his head is a cruciform halo.

FOOTSTOOL

The footstool is a figurative place of submission where the conquered belong. This illustration shows Christ sitting on a throne and placing his feet on the footstool of the earth, which is divided into three sections: earth, sky and sea.



6.2.3 Second Coming of Jesus Christ

A. Different Views of the Last Days

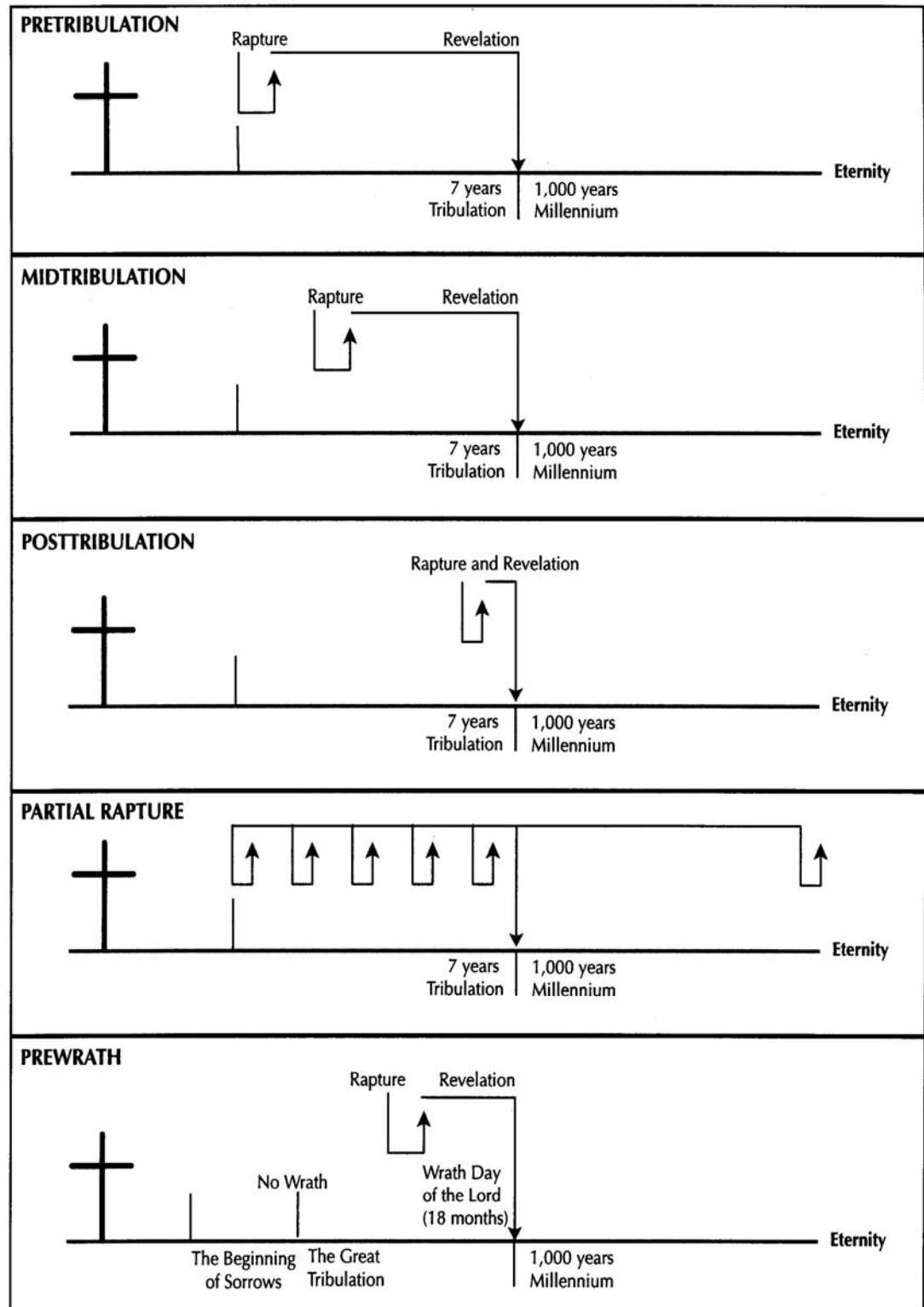
Views of the Last Days

	AMILLENNIALISM	POSTMILLENNIALISM	HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM	DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM
Second Coming of Christ	Single event; no distinction between Rapture and Second Coming; introduces eternal state.	Single event; no distinction between Rapture and Second Coming; Christ returns after Millennium.	Rapture and Second Coming simultaneous; Christ returns to reign on earth.	Second Coming in two phases: Rapture of the church; Second Coming 7 years later.
Resurrection	General resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Second Coming of Christ.	General resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Second Coming of Christ.	Resurrection of believers at beginning of Millennium. Resurrection of unbelievers at end of Millennium.	Distinction of three resurrections: 1. The church at Rapture; 2. Old Testament/ Tribulation saints at Second Coming; 3. Unbelievers at end of Millennium.
Judgments	General judgment of all people.	General judgment of all people.	Judgment at Second Coming, at end of Tribulation.	Distinction of three judgments: 1. Believers' works at Rapture; 2. Jews/Gentiles at end of Tribulation; 3. Unbelievers at end of Millennium.
Tribulation	Tribulation is experienced in this present age.	Tribulation is experienced in this present age.	Posttribulation view: the church goes through the future Tribulation.	Pretribulation view: the church is raptured prior to Tribulation.
Millennium	No literal Millennium on earth after Second Coming. Kingdom present in church age.	Present age blends into Millennium because of progress of Gospel.	Millennium is both present and future. Christ is reigning in heaven. Millennium not necessarily 1,000 years.	At Second Coming Christ inaugurates literal 1,000-year Millennium on earth.
Israel and the Church	The church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and the church.	The church is the new Israel. No distinction between Israel and the church.	Some distinction between Israel and the church. Future for Israel, but the church is spiritual Israel.	Complete distinction between Israel and the church. Distinct program for each.
Adherents	L. Berkhof, O. T. Allis, G. C. Berkhouwer	Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield, W. G. T. Shedd, A. H. Strong	G. E. Ladd, A. Reese, M. J. Erickson	L. S. Chafer, J. D. Pentecost, C. C. Ryrie, J. F. Walvoord

Adapted from Paul Enns, *Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 383. Used by permission.

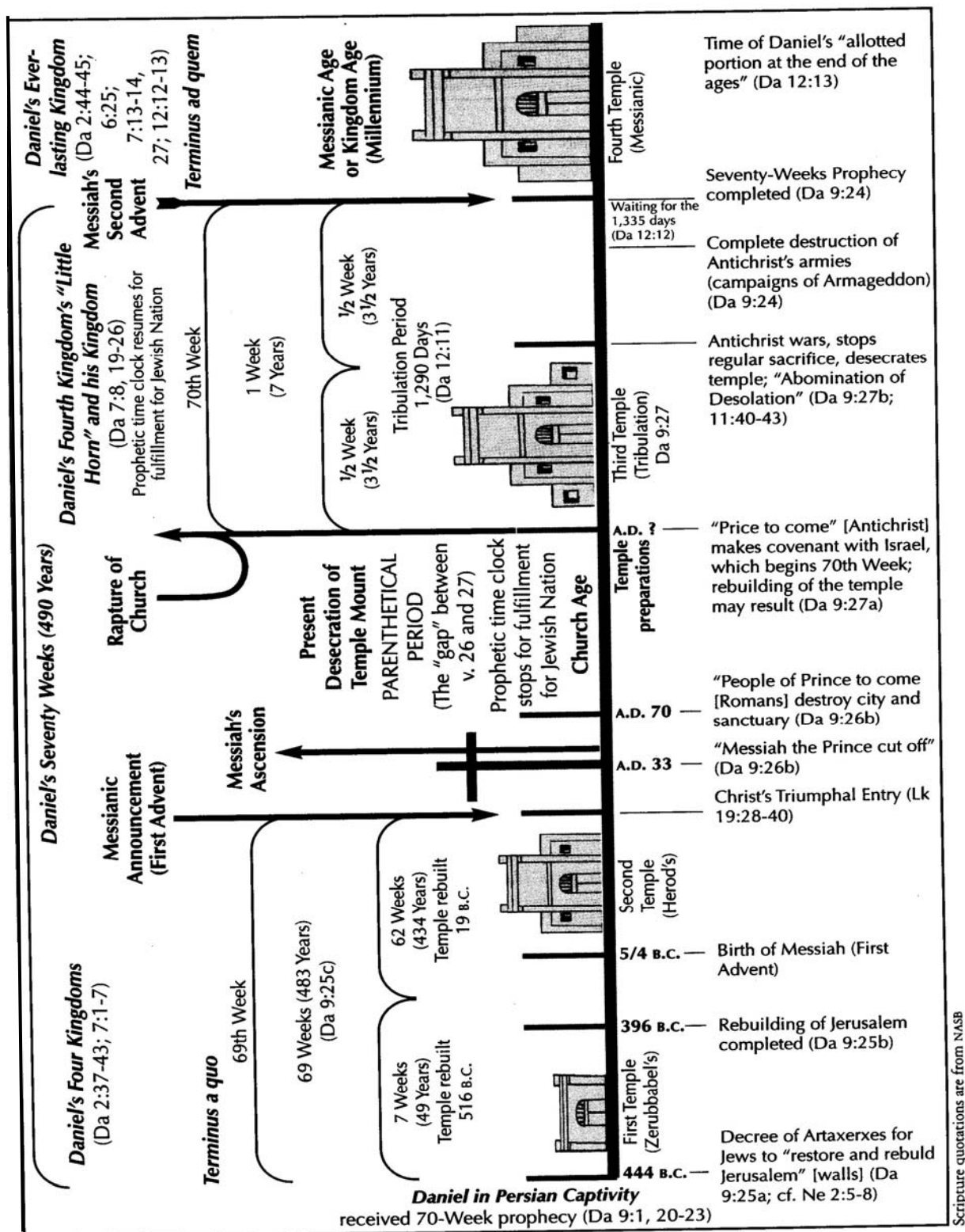
B. Different Views of the Rapture

Views of the Rapture



C. Daniel and the Last Days

Daniel and the Last Days



1. What does the resurrection of Jesus tell us about God and His Son? How does it help you to know that God understands exactly what it's like to be human?
2. There are many theories about the events of the last days. Which do you believe? Why?

3. How does the Second Coming of Jesus Christ affect us? How do we prepare for Jesus' coming? Will it make a difference to you if Jesus is to come tomorrow?

7. God the Holy Spirit.

7.1 *I believe in the Holy Spirit.*

7.1.1 Key Bible Passages

- A. John 14:15-27: *Part of what Jesus told His disciples about the work of the Holy Spirit.*
- B. Acts 2:1-21: *The events surrounding the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.*
- C. 1 Corinthians 14:1-25: *Paul addresses some issues surrounding the use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church.*

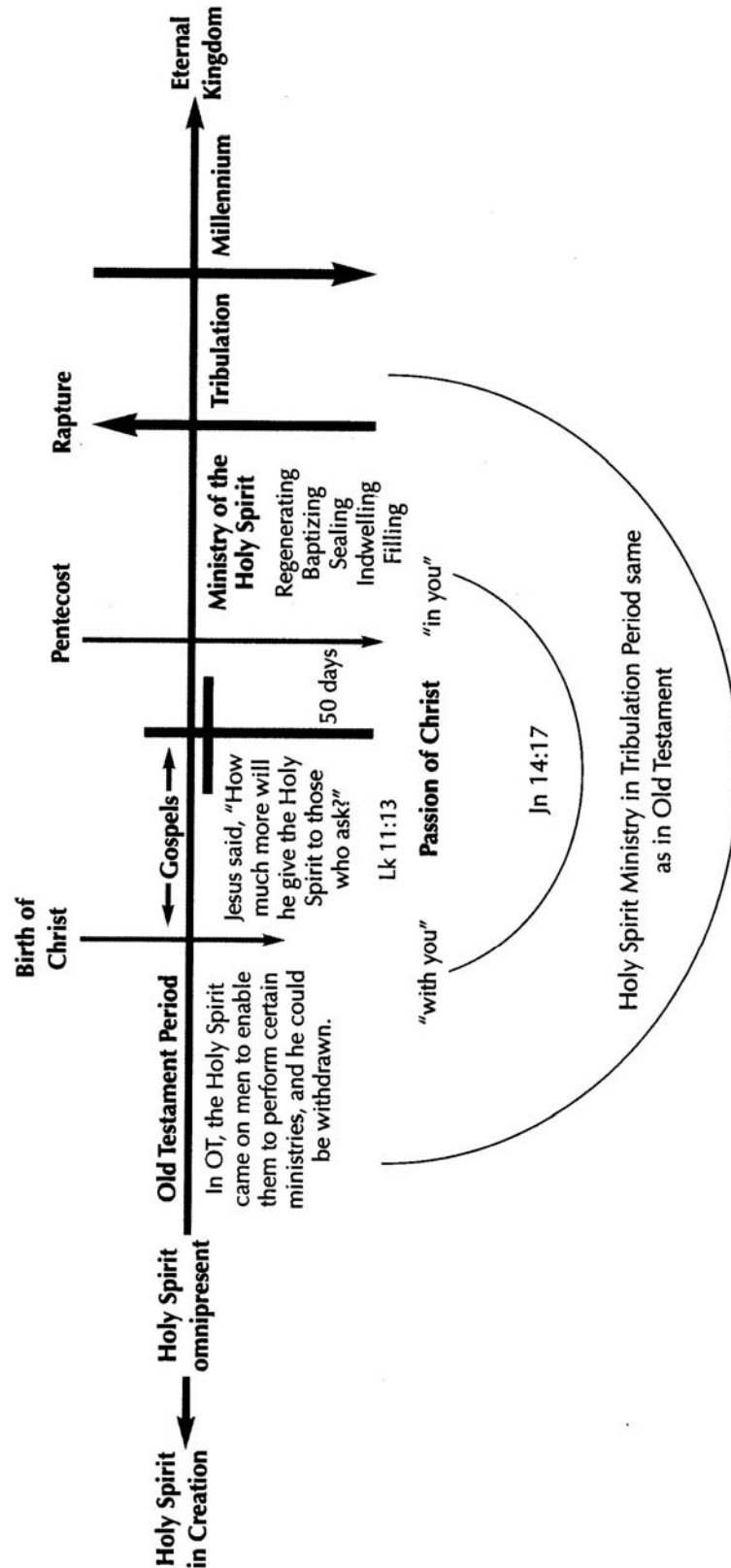
7.1.2 Characteristics of the Holy Spirit

- A. The Holy Spirit is a person.
- B. The Holy Spirit brings life (John 1:12,13; Rom.8:14)
- C. The Holy Spirit brings power.
- D. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin (John 16:8)
- E. The Holy Spirit is a pledge of our salvation.(2 Cor.1:22)
- F. The Holy Spirit is our comforter (John 14:16,16; 14:26; 16:7)
- G. The Holy Spirit opens our eyes to spiritual truths (John 14:26;16:13; 1 John 2:20,27)
- H. The Holy Spirit helps us to bear fruit (Gal. 5:22,23)
- I. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts

Spiritual Gifts In the Bible

1 Corinthians 12:8-10	1 Corinthians 12:29-30	Romans 12:6-8	Ephesians 4:11
Word of Wisdom			
Word of Knowledge			
Gifts of Healing	Gifts of Healing		
Miracles	Miracles		
Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophecy	Prophecy
Discerning of Spirits	Discerning of Spirits		
Tongues	Tongues		
Interpretation of Tongues			
	Apostles		Apostles
	Teachers	Teaching	Teaching [or Teaching Pastors]
	Helps		
	Administration	Ministry	
		Encouraging	
		Giving	
		Leadership	
		Showing Mercy	
			Evangelists
			Pastors

7.1.3 The Ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testament



7.1.4 The Symbols of the Holy Spirit



DOVE

The dove is the primary symbol of the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is present as a dove at the baptism of Christ. The dove also becomes the symbol of man making peace with God when it is offered as a sacrifice. Medieval art uses the dove to refer to the seven gifts of the Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, godliness and the fear of the Lord – Isa.11:2). In the New Testament, twelve doves symbolise the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control-Gal.5:22).

FIRE, TONGUES OF FIRE

Fire is a symbol of both God and the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament fire represent the presence of God in His Glory. In the New Testament, fire is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Tongues of fire representing the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples on Pentecost.



COLUMBINE

The seven blooms of the columbine symbolise the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Columbine means 'like a dove' because its flowers were thought to resemble doves in flight. Because of this association, it became the symbol of the Holy Spirit who descended in the form of a dove.

8. The Church.

8.1 *The holy catholic church.*

8.1.1 Key Bible Passages.

- A. 1 Corinthians 12:4-31: *Paul's teaching on the church as the body of Christ.*
- B. Ephesians 5:25-33: *Paul uses marriage to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the church.*
- C. Colossians 1:18: *A reminder of who is in charge.*

8.1.2 Features of the church.

A. The church is one.

B. The church is holy.

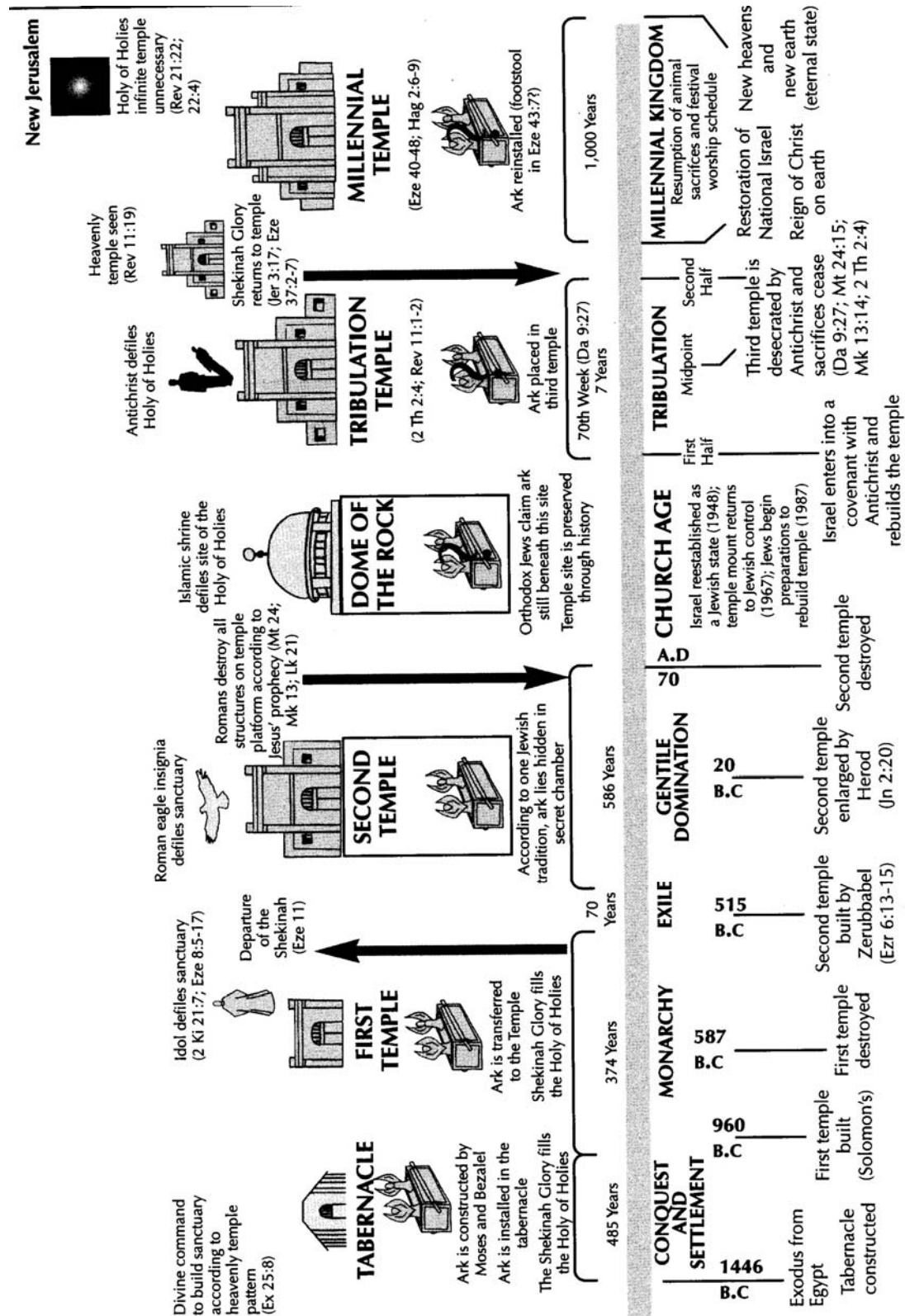
C. The church is catholic.

Many people have come to associate the word 'catholic' with the Roman Catholic Church. This is not true. The Greek word *katholikos* means "according to the whole" or 'universal'. In saying that the church is catholic, we are affirming that its message is valid and relevant to every age and situation. It is relevant to the second century as it is now in the twenty first century. Catholic is an affirmation of the universal validity and relevance of the gospel.

D. The church is apostolic.

The church continues in the faith and teaching of the first apostles (Acts 2:42) and accepts the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) entrusted to them. The faith and tasks of the apostles have become ours.

8.1.3 The Sacred Sanctuary in History and Prophecy

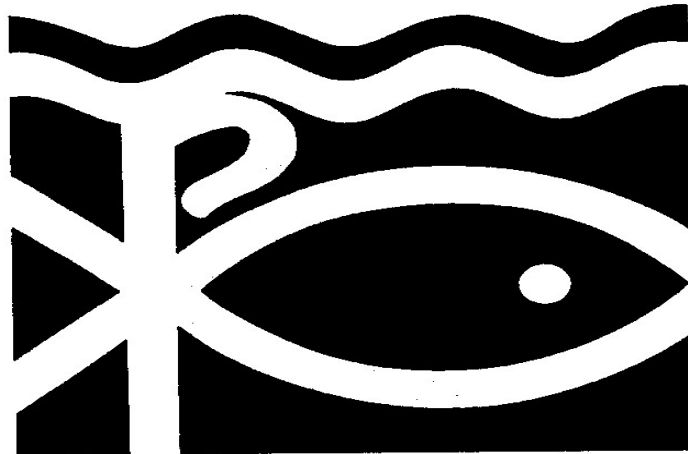


8.2 *The communion of the saints.*

8.2.1 Key Bible Passages.

- A. Acts 4:32-37: *An insight into the life of the early church.*
- B. Romans 12:3-11: *Paul's teaching on how Christians are to relate to one another.*
- C. Ephesians 4:11-16: *The purpose of leadership within the church.*
- D. Hebrews 11:1-12:3: *The roll call of those who have gone ahead of us.*

8.2.2 Symbol of the Church



In the early church, believers called themselves “son of the celestial Icthus” (Greek for fish). The five letters spelling out fish in Greek came to represent the slogan “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour”.

In the second century, Tertullian wrote, “We small fish, like our Fish, Jesus Christ, swim in the [baptismal] water, and we can be saved only by remaining in it.” In the third century, Cyprian wrote, “It is in the water that we are reborn, in the likeness of Christ our master, the Fish”.

The fish became a common sign used by persecuted Christians to identify themselves as believers – a secret sign of faith.

9. Forgiveness and Eternal Life.

9.1 *The forgiveness of sins.*

9.1.1 Key Bible Passages.

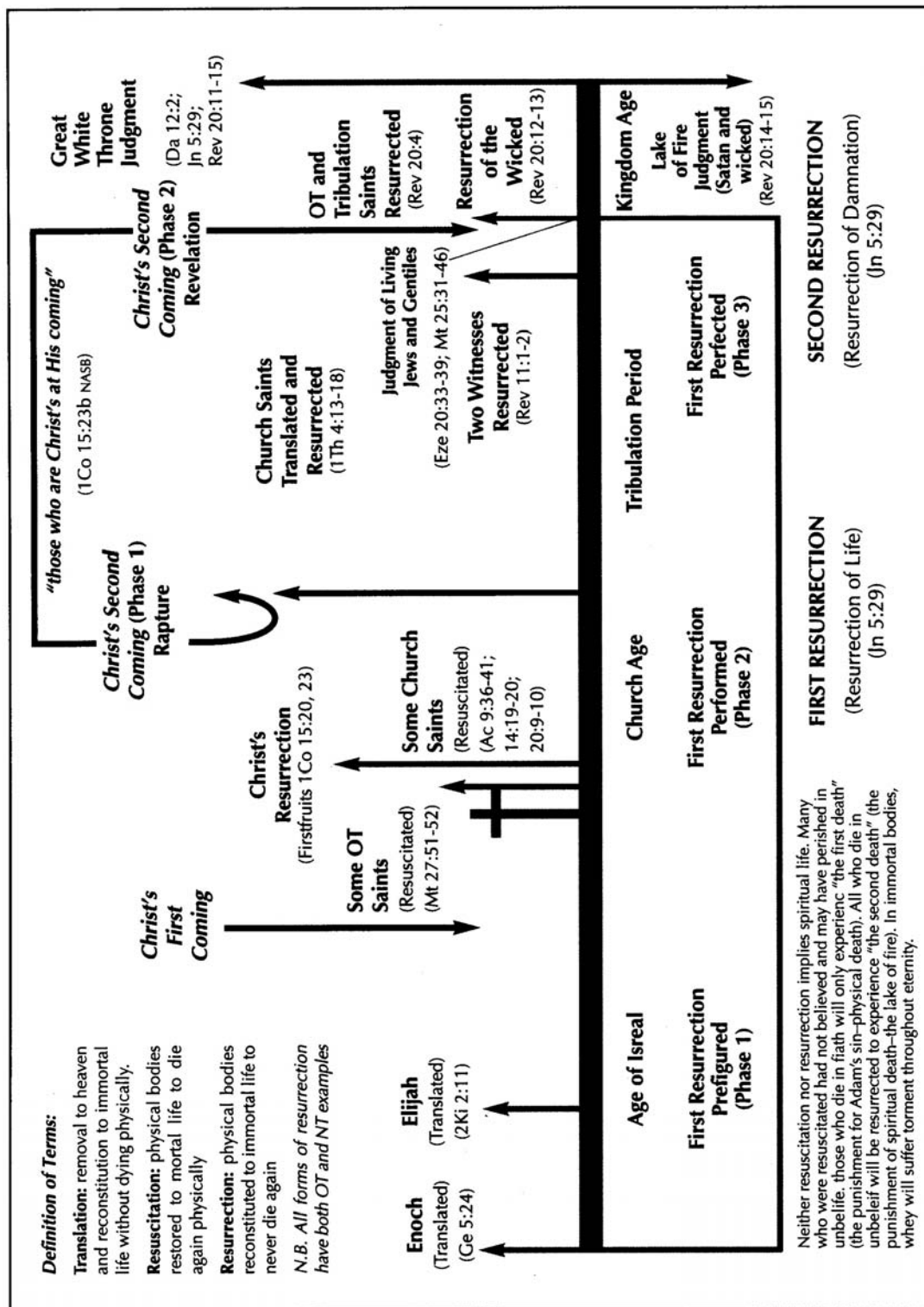
- A. Isaiah 59:1-15: *Why forgiveness is necessary.*
- B. Matt. 18:23-35: *When forgiveness is impossible.*
- C. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21: *Passing on the good news.*
- D. 1 Peter 1:14-17: *The high standards to which we are called.*

9.2 *The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.*

9.2.1 Key Bible Passages.

- A. John 11:21-27: *Jesus' response to death.*
- B. 1 Corinthians 15: *The implications of the resurrection of Jesus*
- C. Revelation 21:1-22:6: *Something to look forward to.*

9.2.2 Future Judgement and Resurrections



9.2.3 Rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ (1Cor. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:10)

	Description	Biblical Reference
Crown of Life	Martyr's crown for those who have suffered for Christ and have been "faithful until death"	James 1:12; Rev.2:10
Crown of Glory	Elder/pastor (shepherd's) crown for faithfully preaching and teaching the Word.	1 Peter 5:1,4
Crown of Righteousness	A crown reserved for those who long for the coming of Christ has kept them prepared, leading holy lives while watching for His return.	2 Timothy 4:8
Crown of rejoicing	Special crown reserved for faithful witnesses of Christ whose testimony has been behaved.	1 Thess. 2:19
Crown of Victory	An incorruptible crown given to those who discipline themselves to live a life consistent with their testimony.	1 Cor. 9:25-27

Reflection Questions

1. What gifts has God given you? In what ways can you use them?
2. What are the four characteristic marks of the church? Why are they so important? What suggestions can you offer for our church to become a church with these characteristics?

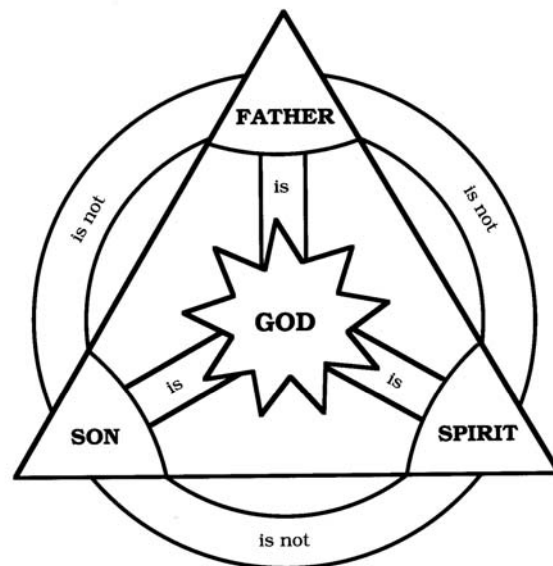
3. Why is real forgiveness so difficult to offer and to accept? How does this apply to you in your relationship with God? How does this apply to you to other members of your church?

10. Living Theologically

The basis of living theologically is a 'theology of everyday things'. It is encompassed by three mysteries - Trinity, incarnation and grace.

10.1 Trinity

A. Ancient Symbol of the Trinity



B. Biblical Perspective of the Trinity

Introduction	<p>The word "Trinity" is never used, nor is the doctrine of Trinitarianism ever explicitly taught in the Scriptures, but Trinitarianism is the best explication of the biblical evidence. The theological exposition of the doctrine arose from clear, but not comprehensive, scriptural teaching. It is a crucial doctrine for Christianity because it focuses on who God is, and particularly on the deity of Jesus Christ. Because Trinitarianism is not taught explicitly in the Scriptures, the study of the doctrine is an exercise in putting together biblical themes and data through a systematic theological study and through looking at the historical development of the present orthodox view of what the biblical presentation of the Trinity is.</p>	
Essential Elements of the Trinity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God is One. 2. Each of the persons within the Godhead is Deity. 3. The oneness of God and the threeness of God are not contradictory. 4. The Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) is eternal. 5. Each of the persons of God is of the same essence and is not inferior or superior to the others in essence. 6. The Trinity is a mystery which we will never be able to understand fully. 	
Biblical Teaching	Old Testament	New Testament
God is One	Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one (Deut 6:4; cf. 20:2-3; 3:13-15).	Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen (1 Tim. 1:17; cf. 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; James 2:19).
Three Distinct Persons as Deity	The Father: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (Ps. 2:7).	... who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father ... (1 Peter 1:2; cf. John 1:17; 1 Cor. 8:6; Phil. 2:11).
	The Son: He said to me, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father" (Ps. 2:7; cf. Heb. 1:1-13; Ps. 68:18; Isa. 6:1-3; 9:6).	As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).
	The Holy Spirit: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ... and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters (Gen. 1:1-2; cf. Exod. 31:3; Judg. 15:14; Isa. 11:2).	Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit ... ? You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4; cf. 2 Cor. 3:17).

<p>Plurality of Persons in the Godhead</p> <p>The use of plural pronouns points to, or at least suggests, the plurality of persons within the Godhead in the Old Testament. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness. . . .'"</p> <p>The use of the singular word "name" when referring to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit indicates a unity within the threeness of God. "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).</p>				
<p>Persons of the Same Essence: Attributes Applied to Each Person</p>	Attribute	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
	Eternality	Ps. 90:2	John 1:2; Rev. 1:8, 17	Heb. 9:14
	Power	1 Peter 1:5	2 Cor. 12:9	Rom. 15:19
	Omniscience	Jer. 17:10	Rev. 2:23	1 Cor. 2:11
	Omnipresence	Jer. 23:24	Matt. 18:20	Ps. 139:7
	Holiness	Rev. 15:4	Acts 3:14	Acts 1:8
	Truth	John 7:28	Rev. 3:7	1 John 5:6
<p>Equality with Different Roles: Activities Involving All Three Persons</p>	Benevolence	Rom. 2:4	Eph. 5:25	Neh. 9:20
	Creation of the World	Ps. 102:25	Col. 1:16	Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13
	Creation of Man	Gen. 2:7	Col. 1:16	Job 33:4
	Baptism of Christ	Matt. 3:17	Matt. 3:16	Matt. 3:16
	Death of Christ	Heb. 9:14	Heb. 9:14	Heb. 9:14

Persons of the same essence: Attributes applied to each person

Eternality

Ps. 90:2

Before the mountains were born
or you brought forth the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

John 1:2

He was with God in the beginning.

Heb 9:14

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Power

1 Peter 1:5

who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time

2 Cor 12:9

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Rom 15:19

by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

Omniscience

Jer. 17:10

"I the LORD search the heart
and examine the mind,
to reward a man according to his conduct,
according to what his deeds deserve."

Rev.2:23

I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know
that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay
each of you according to your deeds.

1 Cor.2:11

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the
man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the
thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

Omnipresence

Jer. 23:24 Can anyone hide in secret places
so that I cannot see him?"
declares the LORD.
"Do not I fill heaven and earth?"
declares the LORD.

Matt. 18:20

For where two or three come together in my name,
there am I with them."

Ps. 139:7

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?

Holiness

Rev. 15:4

Who will not fear you, O Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."

Acts 3:14

You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a
murderer be released to you

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you;
and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Truth

John 7:28

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, "Yes,
you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here
on my own, but he who sent me is true. You do not know him,
but I know him because I am from him and he sent me."

Rev. 3:7,8

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who
holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and
what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have
placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know

that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

1 John 5:6

This is the one who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

Benevolence

Rom.2:4

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?

Eph.5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

Neh.9:20

You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst.

Equality with different roles: Activities involving three persons

Creation of the world

Psalms 102:25

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

Col. 1:16

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Gen.1:2

Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

Creation of man

Gen. 2:7

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Col.1:16

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Job 33:4

The Spirit of God has made me;
the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Baptism of Christ

Matt. 3:17

And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matt.3:16

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him

Death of Christ

Heb. 9:14

How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Living theologically depends on Trinitarian thinking.

Examples of Trinitarian thinking are

- (a) in the church, we Christians must be always reminded that we are *children of the Father, body of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit*. All our worship, communion, baptism and church life is done in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- (b) Trinitarian thinking puts the *family* as the foundational unit of existence;
- (c) in the world, the *recognition of equality and value of all human beings* is based on the co-equality of the persons in the Trinity and *everybody works for the whole*;
- (d) time: to be in Christ as the Son means to be in the Father and in the Holy Spirit. To be truly in the present also means to be in the past and future. In Trinitarian thinking, the past, present and future are united and become *whole time*, just as the Father, the Son and the Spirit are one.

Reflection Questions

C. How does the understanding of the Trinity affects your life?

D. How does the understanding of the Trinity affects your relationship
with other people?

10.2 Incarnation

Living theologically means living a life of incarnation as our Lord Jesus has done. God became fully human. Incarnational lifestyle means living as Jesus did and to be the *light and salt* of the world.

Reflection Questions

A. How does the incarnation of God affect your everyday life?

B. How will you apply the incarnation in your everyday living?

10.3 Grace

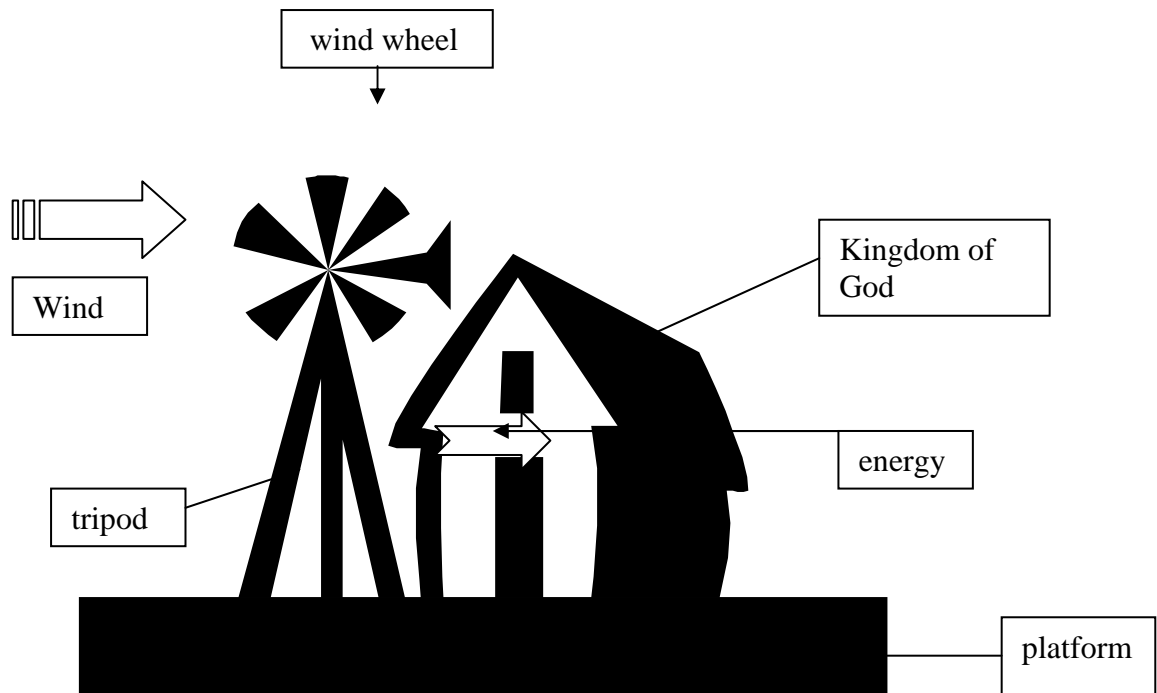
Living theologically also recognise that our lives is purely by grace. Everything we have is from God and by the grace of God. Therefore living theologically is a *lifestyle of thanksgiving*.

Reflection Questions

A. How has the Grace of God affected your life?

B. What are the means of Grace?

11. An Integrated Life: A Living Theologically Lifestyle



A windmill and a simple farm house is my symbol of an integrated life that is living theologically. Living theologically is living our lives firmly based on our beliefs.

Tripod

The tripod forms the base for the windmill. It has three pillars which represent orthodoxy (right beliefs), orthopathy (right feelings) and orthopraxy (right action). For an integrated life, these pillars need to be of equal length i.e. balanced so as to provide a firm and stable base for the wind wheel.

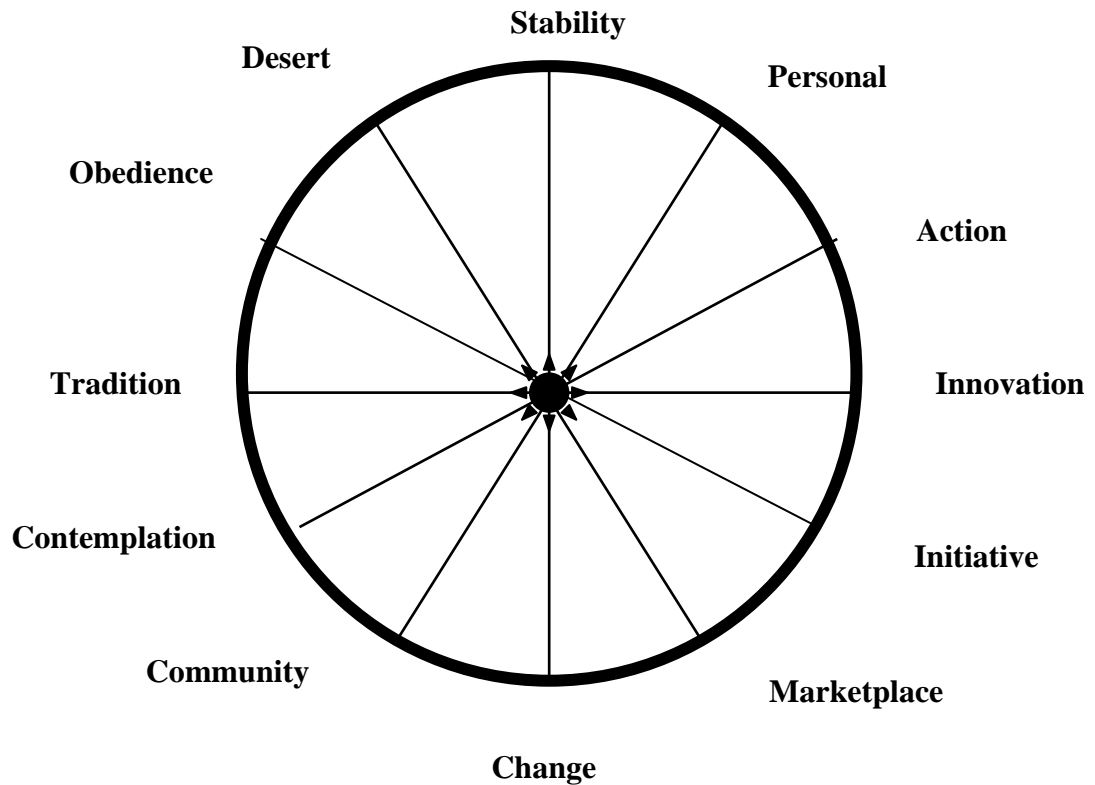
The Platform

The platform is the foundation on which the tripod and windmill stands. For it to be a strong platform, it needs to be formed from the tenets of our belief-the Apostles' Creed and informed by the Word of God.

Living Theologically is a 'Trinitarian, incarnational and full of grace' lifestyle

Wind-wheel

The blades of the wind wheel represent the areas in our lives that need to be in balance.



The 6 blades of the wind-wheel are:

- (1) *stability* versus *change*
- (2) *personal* versus *community*
- (3) *obedience* versus *initiative*
- (4) *tradition* versus *innovation*
- (5) *contemplation* versus *action*
- (6) *desert* versus *marketplace*

For the wind wheel to be stable, we need to be in the centre, balancing all these aspects of our lives.

Wind

This represent *pneuma* the Holy Spirit. The wind blows the wind wheel which then moves and produces energy. The Holy Spirit energizes our lives.

Wood

Wood that the windmill is made up represent the Cross of Christ. Christology is the basis of an integrated life.

Energy

Energy represent the fruits that will be produced by an integrated life.

Farmhouse

This energy (fruit) is given to build the Kingdom of God.

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Soli Deo Gloria