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DOCTRINE

GLOSSARY OF KEY CHRISTIAN TERMS¹

- ❖ **ABRAHAMIC COVENANT** – God’s covenant with Abraham (hence “Abrahamic”) in which God promised and outlined his intentions to save a people for himself and bless them.
- ❖ **ADOPTION** – “An act of God whereby he makes us members of his family.”
- ❖ **ANGEL** – “A created, spiritual being with moral judgment and high intelligence, but without a physical body.”
- ❖ **ANGEL OF THE LORD** – “A form that God took on at various times in Scripture in order to appear to human beings.”
- ❖ **ANTICHRIST** – This term is used to describe figures that oppose Christ and his church. Many believe there will also be a final antichrist prior to when Christ returns.
- ❖ **APOCRYPHA** – “The collection of books included in the canon of Scripture by the Roman Catholic Church but not included in the canon by Protestants....”
- ❖ **APOLOGETICS** – “The discipline that seeks to provide a defense of the truthfulness of the Christian faith for the purpose of convincing unbelievers.”
- ❖ **APOSTLE** – “A recognized office of the early church. Apostles are in several ways the New Testament counterpart to the Old Testament prophet and as such had the authority to write words of Scripture.”
- ❖ **ASCENSION** – “The rising of Jesus from the earth into heaven forty days after his resurrection.”
- ❖ **ASEITY** – “Another name for the attribute of God’s independence or self-existence.”
- ❖ **ASSURANCE** – “The internal sense we may have based upon certain evidences in our lives that we are truly “born again” and will persevere as Christians until the end of our lives.”
- ❖ **ATONEMENT** – “The work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation.”
- ❖ **BAPTISM** – Baptism is a sign that the believer shares in Jesus’ death and resurrection. We are submerged under water, which symbolizes being buried with Christ in his death.
- ❖ **BIBLE / SCRIPTURE** – “The writings ... of the Old and New Testaments, which have historically been recognized as God’s words in written form.”
- ❖ **CANON** – “The list of all the books that belong in the Bible.” Likewise, “canonical” is a “term describing preserved writings that are deemed to have divine authorship and therefore which are to be included in the canon of Scripture as God’s authoritative words in written form.”
- ❖ **CHRIST / MESSIAH** – God’s anointed king. Jesus is God’s ultimate Messiah.
- ❖ **CHURCH** – “The community of all true believers for all time.”
- ❖ **CHURCH DISCIPLINE** – The church’s task of holding each other accountable, confronting those in sin, and, if necessary, expelling those who are unrepentant from the church.
- ❖ **CHURCH MEMBERSHIP** – Officially belonging to a church, being a part of a church.
- ❖ **CHRISTIAN** – One who trusts in and follows Christ.
- ❖ **CLARITY OF SCRIPTURE** – “The idea that the Bible is written in such a way that its teachings are able to be understood by all who will read it seeking God’s help and being willing to follow it.” This is sometimes referred to as the “perspicuity” of scripture.

¹ All material in quotations is taken from the glossary in Wayne Grudem’s *Systematic Theology*.

- ❖ **COMMON GRACE** – “The grace of God by which he gives people innumerable blessings that are not part of salvation.”
- ❖ **CONVERSION** – “Our willing response to the gospel call, in which we sincerely repent of sins and place our trust in Christ for salvation.”
- ❖ **COVENANT** – “An unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man that stipulates the conditions of the relationship.”
- ❖ **CREATION** – “The doctrine that God created the entire universe out of nothing. The universe was originally very good; and he created it to glorify himself.”
- ❖ **CREED / CONFESSION** – A document or statement that expresses Christian beliefs.
- ❖ **DAMNATION** – The state of being sentenced to hell.
- ❖ **DAVIDIC COVENANT** – God’s covenant with David (hence “Davidic”) that there would be an ultimate ruler/king from David’s lineage. That king is Jesus.
- ❖ **DAY OF THE LORD** – A time that the prophets anticipated in which God would demonstrate his justice and salvation in history on behalf of his people.
- ❖ **DEACON** – “A church officer whose responsibilities involve various forms of service, including financial oversight, administrative responsibilities, and caring for the physical needs of the congregation.”
- ❖ **DEATH** – “The termination of life brought about by the entrance of sin into the world.” Because of sin, we die both physically and spiritually.
- ❖ **DECREES OF GOD** – “The eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens.”
- ❖ **DEMONS** – “Evil angels who sinned against God and who now continually work evil in the world.”
- ❖ **DEPRAVITY / TOTAL DEPRAVITY** – “Man’s total lack of spiritual good and inability to do good before God.”
- ❖ **DISCIPLE** – Literally a “learner” or “student.” Someone who learns from and follows Jesus.
- ❖ **DISCIPLESHIP** – The process of following Christ, or leading others to follow Christ.
- ❖ **DOCTRINE** – “What the whole Bible teaches us today about some particular topic.”
- ❖ **EFFECTUAL CALLING** – “An act of God the Father, speaking through the human proclamation of the gospel, in which he summons people to himself in such a way that they respond in saving faith.” Sometimes referred to as “inner” or “special calling.”
- ❖ **ELDER / PASTOR / OVERSEER** – “The main governing group in a church in the New Testament.” These three terms are used interchangeably in scripture to refer to the same position.
- ❖ **ELECTION** – “An act of God before creation in which he chooses some people to be saved, not on account of any foreseen merit in them, but only because of his sovereign good pleasure.”
- ❖ **END TIMES** – Those things referring to the final stage of history (also called the “last days”) when God will bring about his final judgment, salvation, and restoration of creation. This stage began with Christ’s first coming and will culminate at his second coming. Things related to the end times are sometimes described as “eschatology.”
- ❖ **EPISTLE** – A term used to describe the letters in the New Testament (i.e., Romans – Jude).
- ❖ **ETERNAL SECURITY** – Those whom God truly saves will never lose their salvation. Their salvation is “secure.” This security is “eternal” because it’s rooted in God’s predestination from eternity past.
- ❖ **EVANGELISM** – “The proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers.”
- ❖ **EXEGESIS** – “The process of interpreting a text of Scripture.”

- ❖ **FAITH** – “Trust or dependence on God based on the fact that we take him at his word and believe what he has said.” With regards to salvation, faith specifically refers to relying on Christ to save us.
- ❖ **FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT** – Being filled with the Spirit refers to being under the control of the Spirit. As such, the Bible will also speak of individuals being filled with the Spirit for specific empowerment in ministry.
- ❖ **FINAL JUDGMENT** – “The last and ultimate proclamation by Jesus Christ of the eternal destinies of all people....”
- ❖ **FLESH** – A word used by Paul to describe our tendency towards sin before but also after we have been saved.
- ❖ **FOREKNOWLEDGE** – God’s knowledge of all things future. Sometimes called “prescience.”
- ❖ **GENERAL CALLING** – “The general gospel invitation offered to all people that comes through human proclamation of the gospel. ... This call can be rejected by people.” Sometimes referred to as “external calling.”
- ❖ **GENERAL REVELATION** – “The knowledge of God’s existence, character, and moral law that comes through creation to all humanity.” Sometimes called “natural revelation.”
- ❖ **GLORIFICATION** – That final stage in salvation in which God will resurrect our bodies and remove all sin from our lives. This will happen when Christ returns.
- ❖ **GLORY** – “The created brightness that surrounds God’s revelation of himself. In another sense of the term, it refers to God’s honor.”
- ❖ **GOD** – The ultimate being who created all things. He has no beginning or end. He has always existed. He is absolutely good, perfect, and limitless.
- ❖ **GOSPEL (MESSAGE)** – The “good news” of what God has done to save us through Jesus’ death and resurrection.
- ❖ **GOSPEL (BOOK)** – The first four books of the New Testament, which recount the story of Jesus and portray the gospel message.
- ❖ **GRACE** – “God’s goodness toward those who deserve only punishment.”
- ❖ **HEAVEN** – The place where God is described as dwelling. This is also the location where believers go when they die, prior to Christ’s return and their dwelling in the new creation.
- ❖ **HELL** – “A place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.”
- ❖ **HERMENEUTICS** – “The study of correct methods of interpreting texts.”
- ❖ **HOLINESS / HOLY** – When describing God, it refers to the fact that God is in a class all to himself and totally separated from sin. When describing everything else, it describes that which is dedicated or consecrated to God and his purposes (i.e., sacred, or the opposite of common).
- ❖ **HOLY SPIRIT** – “One of the three persons of the Trinity whose work it is to manifest the active presence of God in the world, and especially in the church.”
- ❖ **ILLUMINATION** – The work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand scripture.
- ❖ **IMAGE OF GOD** – “The nature of man such that he is like God and represents God.”
- ❖ **IMMUTABLE** – Refers to the fact that God does not change, nor do his decrees and purposes.
- ❖ **IMPECCABILITY** – “The doctrine that Christ was not able to sin.”
- ❖ **IMPUTATION** – This refers to the crediting of Christ’s righteousness to our account in justification. Just as Adam’s sin is imputed to us and counted as ours, making us sinful (“original sin”), so too Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us and we are counted as righteous.
- ❖ **INCARNATION** – “The act of God the Son whereby he took to himself a human nature.” This “union

of Christ's human and divine natures in one person" is sometimes referred to as the "hypostatic union."

- ❖ **INDWELLING** – This refers to the doctrine that the Holy Spirit indwells believers.
- ❖ **INERRANCY** – "The idea that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."
- ❖ **INFALLIBLE** – "The idea that Scripture is not able to lead us astray in matters of faith and practice."
- ❖ **INSPIRATION** – "A term referring to the fact that the words of Scripture are spoken by God."
- ❖ **INTERCESSION** – "Jesus' ongoing act of standing in God's presence and making petitions before him on our behalf as our great high priest."
- ❖ **INTERMEDIATE STATE** – This refers to what people experience who die prior to Christ coming again. Believers dwell with God in heaven, while they await their resurrection. Unbelievers begin to suffer punishment, while they await sentencing at the final judgment.
- ❖ **IRRESISTIBLE GRACE** – "A term that refers to the fact that God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, both of which guarantee that we will respond in saving faith."
- ❖ **ISRAEL** – God's chosen people in the Old Testament, to whom he made covenants and gave promises that anticipated our salvation in Christ. Early on the twelve tribes of Israel were divided into the southern kingdom (aka, Judah) and the northern kingdom (Israel).
- ❖ **JUSTIFICATION** – "An instantaneous legal act of God in which he (1) thinks of our sins as forgiven and Christ's righteousness as belonging to us, and (2) declares us to be righteous in his sight."
- ❖ **KINGDOM OF GOD** – God's rule over his saved people. Believers are now a part of this kingdom over which Christ reigns.
- ❖ **LAW** – God's standard of what he demands from humanity. Often times when the Bible speaks of God's law, it is specifically referring to the law he gave to Israel in the Mosaic Covenant.
- ❖ **LEGALISM** – Attempting to earn God's favor by obedience to the law.
- ❖ **LORD'S SUPPER / COMMUNION** – The bread and the wine of Communion are signs of Jesus' death for us (his body and blood). The Lord's Supper reminds and assures us of our salvation.
- ❖ **MEDIATOR** – "The role that Jesus plays in coming between God and us, enabling us to come into the presence of God."
- ❖ **MEDITATION** – Reflecting deeply and concentrating on the truths of scripture.
- ❖ **MERCY** – "God's goodness toward those in misery and distress."
- ❖ **MILLENNIAL KINGDOM / MILLENNIUM** – "A term that refers to the period of 1,000 years mentioned in Revelation 20:4–5 as the time of the reign of Christ and believers over the earth." There are three main views on the millennium: (1) amillennialism – that these 1,000 years are figurative of Christ's reign now; (2) postmillennialism – that these 1,000 years will occur prior to Christ's return and refer to "an age of peace and righteousness on the earth, brought about by the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church"; (3) premillennialism – that these 1,000 years refer to a literal period of 1,000 years in which Christ will rule after he returns but before he brings about the new creation in Revelation 21-22.
- ❖ **MINISTRY** – Serving others for the sake building them up in the faith.
- ❖ **MISSION** – God has commissioned the church with spreading the gospel all around the world.
- ❖ **MISSIONARY** – Someone uniquely appointed to go to a different culture to share the gospel.
- ❖ **MOSAIC COVENANT** – The covenant God gave to his people at Mt. Sinai through Moses (hence "Mosaic"). In this covenant God promised blessings for obedience, and curses for disobedience.

This covenant sometimes is also referred to as the “Old Covenant.”

- ❖ **NEW COVENANT** – “A covenant in which Christ’s atoning death covers all of the believer’s sins and the Holy Spirit empowers the believer to fulfill the righteous demands of the law.” Sometimes called the “eternal covenant.”
- ❖ **NEW CREATION** – “A description of the entirely renewed creation in which believers will dwell after the final judgment.”
- ❖ **NOAHIC COVENANT** – God’s covenant with creation through Noah (hence “Noahic”) in which God promised his commitment not to destroy creation again with a flood.
- ❖ **OLD SELF / NEW SELF** – These are terms Paul uses to describe who we were prior to salvation (old self) and after salvation (new self). If we trust in Christ, the Bible says our old self is dead and we are now a new person in Jesus.
- ❖ **OMNIPOTENT** – Refers to the fact that God is all-powerful.
- ❖ **OMNIPRESENT** – Refers to the fact that God is present everywhere. He is not bound to one location. “God does not have size or spatial dimensions and is present at every point of space with his whole being.”
- ❖ **OMNISCIENT** – Refers to the fact that God knows everything.
- ❖ **ORIGINAL SIN** – “The guilt and the tendency to sin which all people inherit because of Adam’s sin.”
- ❖ **PENAL SUBSTITUTION** – “The view that Christ in his death bore the just penalty of God for our sins as a substitute for us.” Sometimes this is also referred to as “vicarious atonement,” meaning that Christ’s death was in our place (vicarious).
- ❖ **PENTECOST** – “A Jewish feast during which, following the ascension of Jesus, the Holy Spirit was poured out in new covenant fullness and power on the disciples. This day marked the point of transition between the old covenant work and ministry of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.”
- ❖ **PERSEVERANCE** – “The doctrine that all those who are truly ‘born again’ will be kept by God’s power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives, and that only those who persevere until the end have been truly ‘born again.’”
- ❖ **PRAYER** – “Personal communication with God.”
- ❖ **PREACHING** – Proclaiming God’s Word.
- ❖ **PREDESTINATION** – In eternity past, God predetermined and foreordained the salvation of his chosen people (the elect).
- ❖ **PRIEST** – “A person appointed by God in the Old Testament to offer sacrifices, prayers, and praises to God on behalf of the people. This office was fulfilled by Christ, who has become the great high priest for all believers.”
- ❖ **PROMISED LAND** – God’s special land he promised to give to Israel.
- ❖ **PROPHET** – Someone appointed by God who received God’s message and delivered it to the people. “Prophecy” then refers to this God-given message.
- ❖ **PROPITIATION** – “A sacrifice that bears God’s wrath to the end and in so doing changes God’s wrath toward us into favor.”
- ❖ **PROVIDENCE** – “The doctrine that God is continually involved with all created things” in such a way that he sustains creation and directs all things according to his purposes.
- ❖ **RAPTURE** – Refers to the fact that when Christ returns believers will be “caught up” to meet him in the air.

- ❖ **RECONCILIATION** – “The removal of enmity and the restoration of fellowship between two parties.” In salvation, we are reconciled to God through Jesus’ death.
- ❖ **REDEMPTION / RANSOM** – “Christ’s saving work viewed as an act of ‘buying back’ sinners out of their bondage to sin.”
- ❖ **REDEMPITIVE HISTORY / HISTORY OF REDEMPTION** – “The series of events throughout history [and as recorded in the Bible] by which God acted to bring about the salvation of his people.”
- ❖ **REGENERATION** – “A secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us.” This is also sometimes referred to as being “born again,” a term which emphasizes the believer’s new spiritual life.
- ❖ **REPENTANCE** – “A heartfelt sorrow for sin, a renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.”
- ❖ **RESURRECTION** – “A rising from the dead into a new kind of life not subject to sickness, aging, deterioration, or death.”
- ❖ **REVEALED WILL** – “God’s declared will concerning what we should do or what God commands us to do.”
- ❖ **SACRAMENTS / ORDINANCES** – “A ceremony or rite that the church observes as a sign of God’s grace....” The two Biblical sacraments (or ordinances) are baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- ❖ **SACRIFICE** – Something that dies and is offered in the place of another. In the Old Testament, God gave the people of Israel animal sacrifices. The sacrifices anticipated Christ who is the final sacrifice for our sins.
- ❖ **SALVATION** – Rescue from sin and all of its consequences. This salvation is by grace, through faith, and based on the death and resurrection of Christ.
- ❖ **SANCTIFICATION** – “A progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and more like Christ in our actual lives.”
- ❖ **SATAN / THE DEVIL** – The head of the evil angels who oppose God and his people.
- ❖ **SECOND COMING** – “The sudden, personal, visible, bodily return of Christ from heaven to earth.”
- ❖ **SECRET WILL** – “God’s hidden decrees by which he governs the universe and determines everything that will happen.”
- ❖ **SIN** – “Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.”
- ❖ **SON OF GOD** – “A title often used of Jesus to designate him as the heavenly, eternal Son who is equal in nature to God himself.”
- ❖ **SOUL** – “The immaterial part of man; used interchangeably with ‘spirit.’”
- ❖ **SOVEREIGNTY** – God’s exercise of power and total control over all things.
- ❖ **SPECIAL GRACE** – “The grace of God that brings people to salvation; also known as ‘saving grace.’”
- ❖ **SPECIAL REVELATION** – “God’s words addressed to specific people, including the words of the Bible. This is to be distinguished from general revelation, which is given to all people generally.”
- ❖ **SPIRIT BAPTISM** – A phrase the New Testament authors use to refer to the act of receiving the Holy Spirit. Outside of the unique incidences surrounding Pentecost, this now happens to us at conversion, i.e., we receive the Spirit the moment we believe.
- ❖ **SPIRITUAL GIFTS** – “Abilities that are empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church.”
- ❖ **SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE** – “The idea that Scripture contained all the words of God he intended his people to have at each stage of redemptive history, and that it now contains all the words of God we need for salvation, for trusting him perfectly, and for obeying him perfectly.”

- ❖ **TABERNACLE** – This is the tent where God originally dwelled among his people, Israel.
- ❖ **TEMPLE** – The building (which replaced the tabernacle) where God dwelled among his people.
- ❖ **THEOLOGY** – “Any study that answers the question, ‘What does the whole Bible teach us today?’ about any given topic.”
- ❖ **TRANSCENDENT** – “The term used to describe God as being greater than the creation and independent of it.”
- ❖ **TRANSFIGURATION** – The event when Christ took Peter, James, and John atop a mountain and unveiled his majesty to them. God said of him, “This is my Son, with whom I’m well pleased.”
- ❖ **TRINITY** – “The doctrine that God eternally exists as three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and each person is fully God, and there is one God.”
- ❖ **UNION WITH CHRIST** – This reality is often referred to as being “in Christ,” a description referring to the believer’s connection to Christ “through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation.”
- ❖ **VIRGIN BIRTH** – “The biblical teaching that Jesus was conceived in the womb of his mother Mary by a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit and without a human father.”
- ❖ **WISDOM** – The characteristic of knowing how to live well in God’s world and in proper relation to him (i.e., “fear of God”).
- ❖ **WORSHIP** – The activity of glorifying God. Sometimes “worship” is used specifically to refer to the act of glorifying God when we gather together as a church to praise him.
- ❖ **WRATH** – “As an attribute of God, the doctrine that God intensely hates all sin.”