

Report of the Study Committee to Examine Articles of Faith 24-27

This Committee was created by the 141st BFC Conference in 2024 by a proposal of the Executive Board. That year, Conference approved the following:

Resolved, that the Moderator appoint a committee of seven ordained pastors who will study Articles of Faith 24-27 with a view to possibly revising, moving, or removing our statements on the millennium, and who will bring recommendations to the next BFC Conference.” (2024 Yearbook, page 15).

Because of the significant changes to our longstanding doctrine, the committee did not bring legislation to the next Conference. Instead, we brought a substantial paper making the case that significant strains of 21st century amillennialism are not so far off from our premillennialism, and therefore BFC Conference should make changes to the Articles of Faith that would allow both views to be held within our churches. The 2025 BFC Conference then assigned us to work on proposing changes to the Articles of Faith that would flow from the findings of our paper.

Last year, Conference passed the following two resolutions:

Resolved, that Conference instructs the Study Committee on the Millennium to continue its work. And be it further

Resolved, that Conference encourages the committee to bring to the 2026 BFC Conference proposed changes to the Articles of Faith consistent with the sentiments of the committee’s 2025 report.” (2025 Yearbook, page 25).

The Committee met five times between 2025 and 2026 BFC Conference. During the course of the year, we continued with our assignment. Based on the study paper presented last year, we worked on a proposal for recommended changes to the Articles of Faith.

On November 1, 2025, we held “Making Room for the Millennium,” a series of presentations that included the following:

- (1) “Definition of Terms and Statement of Intent,” by Timothy J. Schmoyer.
- (2) “The Redemptive-Historical Approach to Interpreting Scripture,” by Timothy J. Bertolet.
- (3) “A Present-Day Amillennial Interpretation of Eschatology,” by Aaron J. Susek.
- (4) “Two Views on Revelation 20,” by Aaron J. Susek and Timothy J. Bertolet.
- (5) “Theological Triage,” by Daniel J. Hoffstetter.

We concluded the session with a time of questions and answers. If you were not able to attend and you still have questions about the work of the committee and related issues, we encourage you to go to www.BFC.org/millennium to view the presentations and to download the notes. We wish to thank Trinity Bible Fellowship Church, Blandon, PA for hosting the event.

After the “Making Room for the Millennium” presentation, we distributed our proposed changes to the Articles of Faith via email to the pastors and delegates. We urged you to give us feedback, and based on the feedback we received, the committee felt that our proposed changes to the Articles gave the appearance that we were moving to a position that was exclusively amillennial, which was never our intention. Therefore, we have amended the first draft of our proposed changes to make it clear that the denomination is still premillennial while granting exception for certain amillennial views.

Thank you for assigning us this task. The hours spent in research and conversation were a privilege you afforded us.

Study Committee to Examine Articles of Faith 24-27: Andrew T. Crossgrove, Chairman; Timothy J. Bertolet, Secretary; Daniel J. Hoffstetter, S. Wayne Rissmiller, Timothy J. Schmoyer, Aaron J. Susek.

Whereas, the Bible Fellowship Church has historically maintained a premillennial interpretation based on the authority of Scripture and the importance of good hermeneutics, and

Whereas, modern day amillennial interpretations admit that in the past, their hermeneutics have not always been precise and they have sought to rectify these previous weaknesses through faithful practice of grammatical-historical exegesis, and they have rejected spiritualizing or allegorizing the text, and

Whereas, the issue of the millennium has been debated down through church history, with faithful godly believers falling on both sides of the issues, and

Whereas, the nature of prophecy, inaugurated eschatological fulfillment, figures of speech, and apocalyptic literature leave room for reasonable debate and variance between positions that do not impinge upon the doctrines of the clarity, sufficiency, and authority of the Word of God, and

Whereas, the Bible Fellowship Church has already granted exception on the issue to men who were previously ordained, and their change in belief on the millennium has not been considered to be a breach in doctrine, character, or conduct that disqualifies them from ministry in the BFC, therefore be it

Resolved, that we amend the Articles to allow for the premillennial and amillennial views as proposed below.

Article 7

Current

7-1 Satan is a created angelic being who fell from his first estate.¹ He is the god of this age, ruling by the permissive will of God.² He exercises authority over the unsaved, tempts the believer to sin, and continually accuses the brethren before the throne of God.³

7-2 He has been defeated by the finished work of Christ on Calvary. During the millennium he will be confined to the abyss,⁴ to be released at the end of that period to lead the armies of evil against God. He will be finally judged and doomed to the lake of fire.⁵

Change

7-1 Satan is a created angelic being who fell from his first estate.¹ He is the god of this age, ruling by the permissive will of God.² He exercises authority over the unsaved, tempts the believer to sin, roams around like a roaring lion, and continually attacks the brethren. ~~and continually accuses the brethren before the throne of God.~~³

7-2 He has been defeated by the finished work of Christ on Calvary. During the millennium he will be confined to the abyss,⁴ to be released at the end of that period to lead the armies of evil against God. He will be finally judged and doomed to the lake of fire.⁵

Footnotes 1-2 and 4-5 remain the same. One addition for

footnote 3.

³ For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain (1Thess 3:5). For the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down (Rev 12:10b). Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.(1 Pet 5:8)

Rationale for the changes in Article 7.1:

- All the views affirm that Satan currently attacks believers and roams around seeking those he might devour.
- There is debate on the interpretation of Revelation 12. Many premillennial and amillennial interpretations would see that Satan is not in heaven right now to accuse, as he was in Job 1-2, but that the cross accomplishes some sort of defeat that casts Satan out of heaven.
- There is debate over the timing of Revelation 12 and exactly how symbolic it is. A premillennialist might wish to hold that the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Christ cast Satan out of heaven during this age.
- We have sought to balance the biblical truths that Satan is still active and attacks believers with the truth that the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ is a major eschatological victory that seals his yet-to-be-prosecuted final fate.

Article 24

Current	Change
<p>24-1 The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of man.¹ At the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead</p>	<p><i>Preface: The Bible Fellowship Church has historically been, and still is, premillennial in its eschatology. Our Articles 24-28 fit into that framework. We do, however, recognize that the specificity of prophecy is open to legitimate discussion among God’s people. We can accept as ministers and elders those who have a reservation concerning our position and instead prefer an amillennial position, provided they recognize the premillennial position is within orthodoxy, do not denigrate it, interpret the Scriptures according to their grammatical-historical meaning, and affirm future aspects of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants to be fulfilled on earth after Christ’s return. We reject any form of eschatology in which the believer does not live waiting in active anticipation of Christ’s return or in which the church experiences an age of earthly peace and prosperity before the Lord returns.</i></p> <p>24-1 The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of <u>His people</u> of</p>

<p>will be raised, and the living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.² Believers will, at the resurrection, receive spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ’s own glorious body.³</p> <p>24-2 The event of the resurrection is divided into two stages, separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues.⁴ The first resurrection includes only the righteous dead.⁵ The second resurrection is universal and occurs at the close of the millennium when all the unregenerate dead are raised to be brought before the great White Throne for judgment.⁶</p>	<p>man.¹ At the return of the Lord the bodies of the righteous dead will be raised, and the living believers will be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air.² Believers will, at the resurrection, receive spiritual and immortal bodies like Christ’s own glorious body.³</p> <p>24-2 The event of the resurrection is divided into two stages.⁴ separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues.⁴ The first resurrection includes only the righteous dead.⁵ The second resurrection is universal and occurs at the close of the millennium when all the unregenerate dead are raised to be brought before the great White Throne for judgment.⁶</p>
<p>No changes to the footnotes.</p>	

Rationale for the changes in Article 24:

- The doctrinal statement would continue to affirm the importance of premillennialism for the denomination.
- In keeping with our paper presented at the 2025 BFC Conference, the doctrinal statement would affirm that amillennialists and premillennials can work together at the elder and pastoral level. Pastors who are amillennial could be welcomed into the denomination as an exception.
- The preface would safeguard and limit the types of eschatological views allowed. Postmillennialism would not be granted an exception.
- Only amillennialists who affirm we must interpret the Scriptures according to their grammatical-historical meaning, and that there are future aspects of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants to be fulfilled on earth after Christ’s return, would be permitted.
- Those who take vows of ordination or subscribe to the statement as elders would affirm that we will act lovingly and graciously and serve without contention with others who disagree.
- “The bodily resurrection of Christ is the basis for the resurrection of His people” –the original Scripture proof of John 11:25 speaks more to the concept of eternal life with Christ, not the general resurrection. Christ’s resurrection is shared as the firstfruits of those who are in Christ. Christ’s resurrection is a resurrection *unto life*, and only his people share in that.
- We deleted the phrase “separated by a period of a thousand years and differing in respect to both their subjects and their issues” because it is redundant to what already appears in Article 27-3.

Article 25

Current	Change
<p>25-1 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the personal, visible, bodily return of our Lord to this earth¹ to conform believers to His image and to establish the millennial kingdom. In connection with Christ’s return there will be the resurrection of the righteous dead,² the rapture of the saints,³ the salvation of Israel,⁴ the great tribulation,⁵ and the inauguration of the millennial reign.⁶ Following the millennium will be the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous. The righteous will be eternally glorified with Him; the unrighteous will be eternally punished.</p>	<p>25-1 The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is the personal, visible, bodily return of our Lord to this earth¹ to conform believers to His image² and <u>visibly manifest the</u> to establish the millennial kingdom.³ In connection with Christ’s return there will be the resurrection of the righteous dead,^{2,4} the rapture of the saints,^{3,5} the salvation of Israel,^{4,6} the great tribulation,^{5,7} and the inauguration of the millennial reign.⁶ Following the millennium will be the resurrection and judgment of the unrighteous.⁸ The righteous will be eternally glorified with Him; the unrighteous will be eternally punished.²</p>
<p>25-2 The Second Coming is the believer’s source of encouragement and comfort inspiring him to active service for Christ, and is a motive for purification and holy living.⁷</p>	<p>25-2 The Second Coming is the believer’s source of encouragement and comfort inspiring him to active service for Christ, and is a motive for purification and holy living.^{7,10}</p>
<p>¹ In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (John 14:2,3). “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).</p> <p>² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1Jo. 3:2). Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed (1Cor. 15:51,52).</p> <p>³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thes. 4:13-18).</p> <p>⁴ A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness</p>	<p>Footnote 1 remains the same.</p> <p>Footnotes 2-3 are new additions.</p> <p>The current Footnote 2 becomes new 4 and adds 1 Thes 4:16.</p> <p>The current Footnote 3 becomes new 5 and adds Matt 24:31.</p> <p>The current Footnote 4 becomes new 6 with no changes.</p> <p>The current Footnote 5 becomes new 7 with no changes.</p> <p>The current Footnote 6 is dropped.</p> <p>A new Footnote 8 is added with 2 Thess 1:7-9.</p> <p>A new Footnote 9 is added with Matt 25:46.</p> <p>The current Footnote 7 becomes new 10 and adds Col 3:4-10.</p> <p>¹ In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also (John 14:2,3). “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).</p> <p>² <u>But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3:21).</u></p>

of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:25b, 26a).

⁵ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Mat. 24:21).

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

⁷ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1Jo. 3:3).

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn 3:2).

³ When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. (Matt 25:31). And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one. (Zech 14:9). (see also Isa 2:4,11:4).

²⁴ Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2). Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed (1Cor 15:51-52). For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess 4:16).

³⁵ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words (1Thess 4:13-18). And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Matt 24:31).

⁴⁶ A partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And in this way all Israel will be saved (Rom 11:25b, 26a).

⁵⁷ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be (Matt 24:21).

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years (Rev. 20:6).

⁸ ...and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might (2 Thess 1:7-9).

⁹ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Mat. 25:46).

⁷¹⁰ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure (1 John 3:3). When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity,

passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. (Col 3:4-10).

Rationale for the changes in Article 25

- We didn't want to convey that the premillennial position is a new kingdom different than the reign that Christ has now. Rather, right now He reigns in heaven and at His return, He brings that reign to earth and visibly reigns in the midst of His enemies. It is a visible manifestation and a new phase but not a different kingdom.
- We deleted the words “millennium” here because we believe they are strongest in 27-3. A person taking an exception as an amillennialist only has to take a minimal number of exceptions. It allows the amillennialist to find some other areas of greater agreement.
- It does not change our clear premillennial stance.

***Please note that we are proposing no changes to Articles 26 and 27—particular 27-3, which is our strongest statement on the millennium and the nature of it.**

Article 28

Current	Change
<p>28-1 There are two final, eternal destinies for man: heaven for the righteous and penitent, and hell for the unrighteous and impenitent.¹ At the great white throne judgment, all of the enemies of God will be consigned to the place of eternal conscious punishment, from which there is no escape.² The new heavens and the new earth shall be created³ as the final state in which the righteous shall dwell forever in the presence of God.⁴</p>	<p>28-1 There are two final, eternal destinies for man.¹: heaven for the righteous and penitent, and hell for the unrighteous and impenitent. At the great white throne judgment, all of <u>the unrighteous and impenitent</u>, the enemies of God, will be consigned to the <u>lake of fire</u>, a place of eternal conscious punishment, from which there is no escape.² The new heavens and the new earth shall be created³ as the final state in which the <u>penitent</u> righteous shall dwell forever in the presence of God.⁴</p>
<p>No changes to the footnotes.</p>	

Rationale for the changes in Article 28

- We clarified terms and ideas here.
- Changing the reference from “hell” to “lake of fire” brings it into consistency with Article 26-3. It uses the biblical language directly and avoids confusion of difference phases of hell (condemnation in hell at death of unregenerate vs. condemnation in hell after the judgment).
- We avoided inclusion of the phrase “heaven for the righteous” so that we could emphasize the new heavens and the new earth. Many Christians think the final destiny of “heaven” is that believers are disembodied. The final destiny *is* heaven in the sense that heaven comes down to earth and creation is recreated in eschatological glory. This makes our doctrinal expression more clear and robust so that we might teach our people better as to their destiny and the final state of the righteous. This also reminds us that amillennialists are very passionate about the New Heavens and the New Earth, which is the full fulfillment of the promises of God in the Old Testament.

Future Changes to the Principles of Order

If these proposed changes are approved at First Reading, the Committee will propose further changes to bring the following Articles in line at the 2027 BFC Conference:

511-4.2 (4.1) Ministerial Credentials Committee

511-3.3 (5) Ministerial Candidate Committee

401-1.9 Local Church Bylaws Regarding Elders

501-4.1(3) Form for Ordination of Ministers

401-1.8(2) Local Bylaws Regarding Installation of Elders

512-4.3(3) Duties of the Board of Church Health (to examine church minutes and records)