

Fundamental Beliefs
of the
CHURCH *of* GOD
A WORLDWIDE ASSOCIATION

The background of the title card is a photograph of a church service. The top half shows a close-up of a person's hands holding an open Bible, with a watch visible on their left wrist. The bottom half shows a wide-angle view of a church sanctuary from the back of the pews. A pastor in a suit stands at a wooden pulpit on the left, addressing the congregation. The sanctuary is filled with people seated in rows of red upholstered chairs. The floor is made of light-colored wood, and the walls are a warm, reddish-brown color.

Fundamental Beliefs of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association



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This booklet provides a summary of the basic beliefs and teachings of the Church of God, a Worldwide Association. While the Bible contains many more teachings, these 20 form the basis of the Church's understanding of God's truth, His plan of salvation for mankind in Jesus Christ and the message of the Church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Each chapter opens with the Church's summary statement of a belief, then follows with more detailed explanation. Many scriptures are provided to support the teaching. We firmly contend that belief must come from and stand on Scripture, not speculation or man-made theories. However, space does not allow quoting every supporting scripture, so we urge you to carefully read and to personally study further to prove these things for yourself from the pages of your Bible.



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Fundamental Belief

The Godhead

God the Father is an eternally existing Spirit, a perfect, personal Being of supreme love, intelligence, knowledge, justice, power and authority. It was through the Word (who became Jesus Christ) that He created all things that exist. The Father is the Source of life, the Sustainer of the universe through His power. There is one Lord, Jesus Christ, who has eternally existed. He came to earth to do the will of the Father. He is the Messiah, the Christ and the divine Son of the living God, who was born of human flesh to the virgin Mary. God is an eternal family currently consisting of the Father and the Son. Both the Father and Son are involved in the creative work of expanding this family by bringing many children (sons and daughters) to glory. The Holy Spirit is the power of God and the Spirit of life eternal, not a separate entity or being.

Scriptural support: Ephesians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 8:6; John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:15; 2 Timothy 1:7; Hebrews 2:10; 2 Corinthians 6:18.

Human history is full of opinions about God's nature or even His existence. He created us, unlike any other created being, in His own image (Genesis

1:26-27), but ever since Adam and Eve separated themselves from God by sinning, most of humanity has lost the knowledge of God and His purpose. Our ignorance has ever worsened through Satan the devil's deceptions (Revelation 12:9) to the point that man has created in his own mind many false concepts of God (1 Corinthians 8:4-6).

So, we must turn to the only authoritative source for understanding this foundational subject—the Bible, God's book of self-revelation.

The Bible opens with the creation account, telling us that the physical universe came into existence by God through the Word, who became Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3, 14; Hebrews 1:3; 11:3; Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:6, 9; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 4:11). God also made the angels, who are spirit beings (see Fundamental Belief 2).

The family of God

In the first verse of the Bible God is revealed to be more than one individual: "In the beginning, God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth." The Hebrew noun *Elohim* is the plural form of the word *eloah* ("god"). Then God said, "Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to

Our likeness" (Genesis 1:26, emphasis added throughout). Later in the Bible, in John 1:1, we read that the One who became flesh, Jesus, was the spokesman: "In the beginning was the Word [*logos*], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word was with God (that is, with the other member of the Godhead, the Father). The Word became flesh as Jesus,

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The Bible teaches that God the Father and Christ have a common power, a Spirit, by which They are able to accomplish Their will.”

the Christ (verse 14). One of the reasons Jesus came was to declare and reveal the Father (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18).

In John 10:30 Jesus revealed that the Father and He are "*one*" (Greek word *heis*). Likewise, His children can be considered one. He prayed that the believers in His Church would become so united in purpose and mind that they, too, "may be one [*heis*] just as We are" (John 17:22)—unified in purpose, belief and love.

Paul uses the same word *heis* to describe the intimate union of a man and woman in “one body” (1 Corinthians 6:16). Later, explaining the symbol of the bread used in the New Testament Passover, Paul used the same word again to describe the multiple individuals in the Church united as one body: “For we, though many, are *one* bread and *one* body; for we all partake of that *one* bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17).

These, and other scriptures, illustrate how two, or many, can be considered one.

Characteristics of the God family

Both members of the God family are uncreated and eternal (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15). Both are omniscient (Psalm 147:5; 1 John 3:20) and omnipotent (Revelation 19:6; Jeremiah 32:27; Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 2:10). As spirit beings (John 4:24), They are not bound or limited by time and space or the features and laws of the physical world They created.

Jesus had lived forever in the past as the Word with the Father in this glorious state (John 17:5). They alone are worthy of the worship of the angels and man. This is true of the Father (Revelation 7:11; John 4:23; Philippians 3:3) and the Son (Revelation 5:8; Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:52; Philippians 2:10-11).

Both have love as the essence of Their character (1 John 4:8). The Father loves the Son (John 3:35; 17:24), and the Son loves the Father (John 14:31). Both have the same perfect *holy* character, expressed in its essence of love, truth (Deuteronomy 32:4; Titus 1:2) and merciful kindness (Exodus 34:6-7; Joel 2:13).

The holiness of God

God’s holiness is a central theme of the Bible. God is clean and pure, with no defilement. God’s holy character is consistent and never changes (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17).

A study of God’s holiness tells us:

- He is superior to any other and worthy of special reverence (Exodus 3:5; Isaiah 17:7; 40:25-26).
- He is the Creator (Isaiah 43:15), transcendent over all He created. This is because He is eternal, self-existent, unchanging and all-powerful (1 Samuel 2:2).
- He chooses, calls and sets apart a people to Himself (Leviticus 20:26), and He expects them to become holy like Him (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16).

- He is perfect in character. His perfect character includes love, righteousness, wisdom, truth, justice and mercy (Isaiah 5:16; 10:20; 49:7; Zechariah 8:3; Luke 1:49; Acts 3:14; 1 John 1:5; James 1:17).

God the Father is supreme

Though They are both eternal and of the same character and power, Jesus stated that the Father is “greater” than the Son (John 14:28). The Father, supreme in authority even over the Son, has “appointed” and “granted” to the Son various rights and responsibilities and honors (Psalms 2:8; 110:1; Daniel 7:14; Matthew 11:27; John 3:35; 5:22; Ephesians 1:22; Philippians 2:9-11).

The Father has conferred upon the Son responsibilities, such as:

- To sustain all created things (Colossians 1:15-17).
- To be the personal covenant God of the people of God in Old Testament times (Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; 1 Corinthians 10:4).
- To be the Lamb of God, a willing sacrifice slain from the foundation of the world, whose blood would be shed to atone for the sins of mankind (Isaiah 53:3-10; John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 13:8).
- To be the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18).
- To be our High Priest, interceding and advocating on our behalf before the Father (Hebrews 7:25-26).
- To be the coming King and Lord over all the earth (Revelation 11:15; 19:16).

Philippians 2:9-10 shows that ultimately the Father will exalt the Son such “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,” although that time has not yet come. “Every knee,” of course, does not include the Father, to whom Christ will be subject (1 Corinthians 15:27-28). At that time, God the Father will be all in all and will dwell with man (Revelation 21:3).

The Holy Spirit

Many of the New Testament epistles include introductions of worshipful praise and benedictions regarding these two who comprise the God family—the Father and the Son (1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:2; 2 John 1:3). But what about the Holy Spirit?

The Bible teaches that God the Father and Christ have a common power, a Spirit, by which They are able to accomplish Their will.

It is by this one common “Spirit” power (Ephesians 4:4) that They created and sustain the universe, extend Their will throughout it, and influence, inspire, strengthen, encourage and enlighten the mind of man (Genesis 1:2; Psalm 139:7; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:38; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:5, 16).

The Holy Spirit is nowhere identified in the Bible as a personage or being in the Godhead, but rather as the power of God—the operational force God uses to project His will into the created order. Neither is there any instance in the Bible where the Holy Spirit is worshipped.

The Church of God, a Worldwide Association, believes the Bible does not teach the Trinity. We believe in the divinity of the Father and Jesus Christ—but believe the Holy Spirit is God’s divine power, not a third personality of a triune God. We believe and teach that God is best described as a divine family.

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*Getting to Know the God of the Bible*](#).



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Fundamental Belief

The Angelic Realm and Satan

The angelic realm, consisting of various types of spirit beings, was created by God. A former “covering cherub,” Lucifer, rebelled against God’s authority and became Satan the devil. As Lucifer, he influenced one-third of the angels to follow him. Those who followed him are now evil spirits known as demons. Satan the devil is the adversary of both God and mankind. He and his demons influence mankind to reject God and His law. These evil spirits have been allowed temporary dominion over the earth and have deceived the majority of human beings. The angels who remained faithful to God serve as ministering spirits to those responding to God’s calling.

Scriptural support: Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 8:12; 2 Timothy 2:26; John 12:31; 16:11; Revelation 12:4, 9; 20:1-3, 7, 10; Leviticus 16:21-22; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:14; Ephesians 2:2; Hebrews 1:14.

Angels are created spirit (nonmaterial) beings. They were created by God (Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2; Psalm 91:11). Angels are not eternal (meaning without beginning or end) as God is because they had a beginning. There is no indication that they will die, but rather will continue to live forever (Luke 20:36). Jesus also revealed that they do not marry or reproduce (Mark 12:25).

They were created to be God's servants—to praise and worship Him (Psalm 148:2; Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:11-13)—and to help Him in the working out of His plan. A central purpose for the angels is to serve as “ministering spirits” to God's people, strengthening, delivering and protecting them according to God's will (Psalm 91:11; Daniel 6:22; Matthew 4:11; 18:10; Luke 22:43; Acts 5:19; Hebrews 1:14). God has also used angels to reveal special messages to people (Luke 1:11-13) and to assist in carrying out His judgments (Revelation 15:1).

Angels accountable to God

Angels were created, like humans, with the power of choice—the ultimate choice being that of serving God or rebelling against Him. Most have

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never accept worship
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chosen to be faithful and obedient to God. They are the holy angels (Mark 8:38) and number in the tens of millions (Revelation 5:11).

Others, led by Satan (called “Lucifer” in some English Bible translations), rebelled in pride and self-will against God (Isaiah 14:12; Luke 10:18; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6; 1 John 3:8). The name *Satan* means “adversary.” In the

New Testament he is also referred to as the devil, which means accuser or slanderer (Matthew 4:5; Revelation 12:9-10). Jesus described Satan as “a murderer from the beginning, [who] does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44).

Revelation 12:3-4 indicates that one-third of the angels rebelled against God and followed Satan. In doing so, they have become enemies of God and His people (Isaiah 14:12-14; 1 Chronicles 21:1).

Numbering in the multiple millions, these rebellious angels are called demons (Luke 4:33) and are described as “foul” and “unclean” spiritually (Mark 1:23; Revelation 18:2).

Satan and the demons work to oppose God. They deceive, tempt and accuse people, within the bounds that God allows (Genesis 3:1-5; Job 2:4-7;

Zechariah 3:1-2; Matthew 4:1; Luke 13:16; 22:31; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; Revelation 12:10).

The angels are currently more powerful than mankind, but that will not always be the case. Human beings who enter the family of God will be greater than the angels (Psalm 8:5; Hebrews 2:5-8). Indeed, the Bible reveals that at some point in the future, glorified members of the God family will “judge angels” (1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Peter 2:4).

Types of angels

There are different types of angels, with different powers, ranks, authority and appearance. There are archangels, cherubim, seraphim and perhaps ordinary angels (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 1:9; Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2; 37:16). Thus, some sort of hierarchy exists in the angelic realm, both among the holy and the unclean angels (Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 12:45; Daniel 10:13).

Angels, being spirit, are not visible to human eyes, except on the rare occasions when it serves God’s purpose for them to physically appear. The Bible records some instances when God has permitted people—either when awake or in a dream or vision—to see manifestations of angels. Typically, it is righteous angels who have been seen by people, and they usually appeared as men. Sometimes they appeared as ordinary, normal men, that is, not in a glorified state (Genesis 18:2; 19:1; Hebrews 13:2). Other times, they appeared as men, but in a powerful and glorified state (Daniel 8:17-18; 10:10-21; Matthew 28:2-4). Some angelic beings do not look like men, but instead appear, in at least some parts of their bodies, as animals (Isaiah 6:2; Ezekiel 1:5-11; Revelation 4:6-8).

Demons oppose God

The existence of both righteous angels and evil demons inevitably introduces conflict within their angelic realm. The Bible reveals that struggles do take place between righteous angels and demons, though they are typically invisible to human eyes (Daniel 10:13).

Satan and the demons oppose God’s people. Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God for deliverance from the evil one (Matthew 6:13). Perhaps one reason God currently permits the evil angels to have influence in the world, and to hinder humans in serving God, is to test His human servants. Such tests strengthen our faith in Him, help us prevail in the fight against evil and enable us to develop godly character. God intends

His people to develop a trust in Him, not self, to fight these spiritual battles (Ephesians 6:10-13).

God has allowed Satan to have influence and power in the world. Indeed, he is called the “ruler of this world” (John 14:30) and the “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4). He and his demons are “the rulers of the darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12). It was within Satan’s power to offer Christ the glory and power of this world’s government (Matthew 4:8-9).

None of this should cast doubt on God’s control of these matters. Satan and the demons can only do what God permits, and definite limits restrain the evil they are permitted to do (Job 1:12; 2:6). God allows his influence now, but the time is coming when Satan and the demons will be banished, no longer able to disrupt God’s working among His people (Revelation 20:10).

Worship of angels

The righteous angels never accept worship from men. Instead, they urge men to worship only the true Creator God (Exodus 20:3-5; 34:14; Revelation 19:10; 22:9). Satan and the demons, on the other hand, in their jealous pride and rebellion against God, desire worship from human beings (Deuteronomy 32:17; Matthew 4:9; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21; Revelation 9:20).

Judgment of the angels

God tells us that an everlasting fire will be prepared for Satan and the demons (Matthew 25:41). In God’s judgment, this lake of fire is the fate of these evil spirits (Revelation 20:10). For now, God limits or controls the influence they are allowed as they await their final judgment from God (2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 8:28-29).

Look to God

People who serve God can be grateful to God for the help that He provides through the work of the righteous angels. It is also important to be aware of the work and motives of Satan and the demons, but not to have an unhealthy interest in them or a morbid fear of them. Instead, we can and should trust God to give us power to resist them and their influence (2 Corinthians 2:11; James 4:7).

To learn more about this topic, read our article [“Angels.”](#)

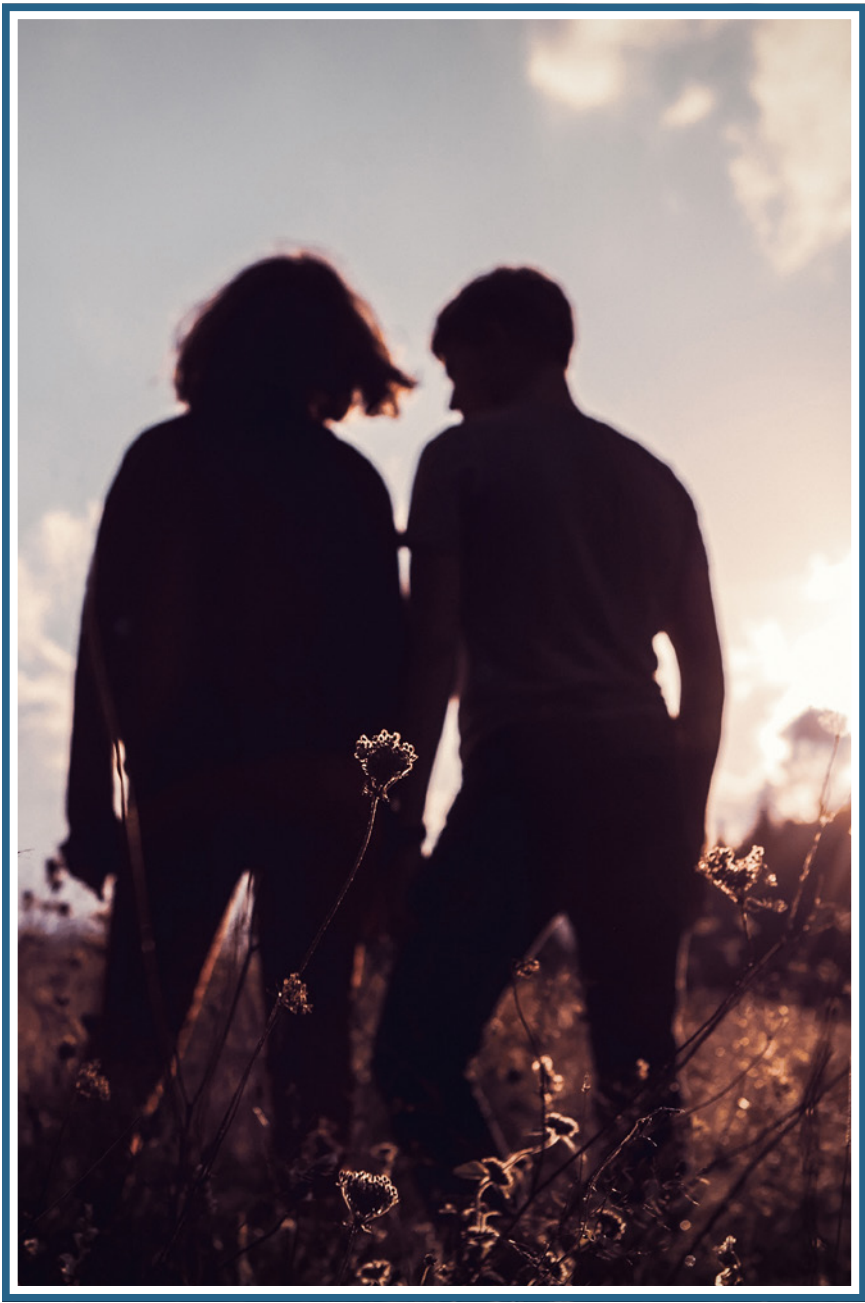


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Fundamental Belief

Humanity

Human beings, both male and female, were created in the image of God with the potential to partake of God's divine nature as children in His eternal family. Humans are mortal beings relying on the breath of life, and are subject to corruption and decay. They do not have an immortal soul nor do they possess eternal life at this time. Eternal life is a gift of God, given only to those who accept His calling and the terms and conditions expressed in the Scriptures. God gave Adam and Eve the choice of eternal life through obedience to Him or death through sin. Adam and Eve succumbed to sin by disobeying God. As a result, death entered the world. All humans have sinned and are therefore subject to death. In God's plan it is appointed for man to "die once."

Scriptural support: Genesis 1:26; 2 Peter 1:4; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23; 5:12; 6:23; 8:16-17.

Contrary to the popular theory of evolution, human beings are not the end product of countless mutations over billions of years. Human beings are the pinnacle of God's physical creation because we were created in His image (Genesis 2:7; Psalm 100:3; Romans 9:20) and have the potential to develop His very character.

We were made with the glorious potential and destiny of being brought to a state of glory—eternal spirit life as children born into the God family.

When that occurs, God will change us from our present state of corruption to incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:53-54). In that eternal future, there will be no more death, sin, sorrow, weakness, pain or suffering of any kind for mankind, but only joy, pleasures, righteousness and strength forever (Revelation 21:4; 12:10; Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:21). Man will then have inherited the Kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34; Acts 14:22).

This is a far cry from our present state, which is marked by ignorance of and alienation toward our Creator. We can only receive our God-ordained destiny through repentance and faith in the sacrifice, resurrection and intercession of Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Romans 1:5; 8:34; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 2:10; 7:25).

A new creation

The plan was revealed in outline from the beginning, when God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). But it involves another process of creation—a new creation—of humans being created in the full spiritual image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:13; 1 John 3:2).

When God made the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, He taught them how to live in harmony with His purpose. He warned them that the consequence of rebelling against Him was death (Genesis 2:16-17).

For a period of time, Adam and Eve followed God’s instructions and had no sin. But it didn’t take them long to listen to the lying voice of the serpent (Satan) and to rebel against their Creator.

So the first man, Adam, sinned, along with his deceived wife, Eve (Romans 5:14, 17; 1 Timothy 2:14). Death, God’s just punishment for sin, entered the world (Romans 5:12-15), just as God had warned (Genesis 2:17).

Mankind and death

As part of their punishment, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden and cut off from God and the tree of life. Eating the fruit of the tree of life represented choosing total reliance on God to show what is good or evil (the only way to eternal life), but our ancestors chose the forbidden tree and thus the way of disobedience, sin and death. Eventually, they died as a consequence of their sin (Genesis 5:5). Ever since, all of their descendants (with the exception of Jesus Christ)

have also sinned. By man came sin and death, and “in Adam” all die (1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 5:18-19; 8:7).

All human descendants of Adam and Eve have been born spiritually incomplete. In our natural state, all humans are slaves to a carnal (of the flesh) nature that naturally resists the will of God (John 8:34; Romans 6:6, 20; 7:14; 8:7-8; Titus 3:3). All are subject to sin and death. We have a human “spirit” that makes us greater than animals, but we lack a mind guided and led by God’s Holy Spirit.

None of Adam and Eve’s descendants have eaten exclusively of the tree of life—that is, none have chosen to rely on and fully obey God. All have chosen their own way rather than God’s and thus have “eaten” of the other tree—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Although some people are relatively more “good” or less “evil” than others, none are inherently or completely righteous and holy and yielded to the will of their Creator (Psalm 14:2-3; Romans 3:10-12, 23).

Human life is temporary. We do not possess an immortal soul. Rather, man *is* a “soul” (Genesis 2:7, King James Version). The phrase *living soul* is from the Hebrew word *nephesh* and is translated “a living being” in the New King James Version. We are sustained in life for a time by blood (Leviticus 17:11) and the breath of life (Genesis 7:22). In this way our form of life is like that of animals (also *nephesh*—Genesis 1:21, 24).

That’s why, when Adam and Eve and their children were cut off from the Garden of Eden and the tree of life, which represented the only way to eternal life, they inevitably experienced death (Genesis 3:22-24). Like Adam and Eve, “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

Eternal life

But God promises a future in which all humanity will be given an opportunity to access the tree of life. Those who choose it (God’s way) will live forever (Revelation 2:7; 22:2). Eternal life will come from God as a gift through Jesus Christ (Matthew 19:29; John 3:16; 6:27; 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 5:11-12).

Only humans were made in God’s image, and only humans can be transformed into the full image of Christ (Hebrews 1:5, 13; 2:5). God’s plan of salvation makes it possible for physical humans to change from our current sinful, guilty, corruptible, mortal state and to someday inherit eternal life in a glorified state.

To learn more about this topic, download our booklet [*God’s Purpose for You: Discovering Why You Were Born.*](#)



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Fundamental Belief

The Purpose of Human Life

God's purpose for human beings is to add them as children to His eternal family. While it is clear that eternal life is a gift from God, He expects His children to respond to His calling, develop righteous character by overcoming sin, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. When Christ returns to this earth, these faithful humans will be born as spirit beings into the family of God and will reign on earth as kings and priests with Christ.

Scriptural support: John 1:12; Romans 6:15-16; 8:14-17, 30; Acts 2:39; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 1:6; 3:5; 5:10.

God created humans with a transcendent purpose, and only He can reveal that purpose to us. No purpose that man dreams up himself can fully reassure the human mind or give it glorious hope.

Every human born lives for a relatively short time. King Solomon's summary comments in the book of Ecclesiastes capture the human perspective of life quite well:

"For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 3:19).

“For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

That view of human life, absent the revelation of a higher purpose, is empty. From the book of Ecclesiastes, it appears that until Solomon considered his existence from a more godly perspective, human life seemed so futile that at one point he exclaimed, “I hated life.”

Death is such a dispiriting and unbeatable enemy, and since all life ends in death, it is indeed bleak unless there is a purpose revealed by God.

Purpose from the Creator

But there *is* meaning to our existence, a great purpose revealed in the Bible. God created man for His glory, and that glory involves elevating man to God’s level of existence. First, in this life we are to develop the mind of Christ (Isaiah 43:7; John 15:8; Philippians 1:11; 2:5; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:13) and the qualities of God’s character, then, through the miracle of resurrection, we will live eternally, reigning over all things forever with God (1 Thessalonians 4:17; Revelation 22:3-5)!

For those who are converted now, that marvelous spiritual creation will be completed at the time of their resurrection to eternal life when Christ returns (1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 15:48-49). God will later open, in His order of events, the opportunity for this same destiny to all of mankind (1 Corinthians 15:23; Revelation 20:5).

In fulfilling this glorious purpose for humanity, God is reproducing beings after His own kind to take their place in His family. From the outset of creation, He said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). He wants to share a joyous and productive eternity with His human children changed to a glorified state—members of the God family.

Thus, man’s purpose is to become a new creation, made in the spiritual image of God and living forever in that perfection. God wants us to “all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

You were born to become fully like Jesus Christ.

God the Father and Jesus Christ created mankind to “inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7) and to enjoy eternal life in worshipful, righteous and loving communion with our Creator and in love and peace with one

another. God offers an eternal inheritance, no longer threatened by that terrible enemy—death (Matthew 5:5; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

Freedom for mankind

What God has purposed for man is what man longs for—perfect liberty. Human beings have almost universally expressed a desire for what brings happiness—freedom from sorrow, from death, from suffering and pain,

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God’s purpose is
to teach us right
rulership and then
give us authority—
over everything
(Revelation 3:21; 21:7).
When God’s plan of
perfecting mankind
is achieved, man
will be given the
opportunity to rule
in righteousness.”

from fruitless labor, from poverty and hunger, from moral failings and sin (and thus alienation from God), and from being ruled unjustly, harshly and unwisely.

God will give lasting liberty from all that would detract from an everlasting life of joy. “Because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:21). God’s Word reveals much about this freedom and liberty (Luke 4:18; John 8:32, 36; Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:1; 1 Peter 2:16).

True freedom is not license to do evil or to act independently from God’s sovereignty. Real freedom is based on living by the truth of God’s revealed will.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Ultimately, the truth of the plan of God involves:

- *Freedom from sorrow:* “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more . . . sorrow” (Revelation 21:4).
- *Freedom from death:* “There shall be no more death” (verse 4; see also Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:26, 54; 2 Timothy 1:10).

- *Freedom from suffering and pain:* “There shall be no more pain” (Revelation 21:4; see also Psalms 16:11; 36:8).
- *Freedom from unfulfilling and tedious toil:* “And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain” (Isaiah 65:22-23; see also Psalm 92:13-14).
- *Freedom from poverty and hunger:* “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance” (Isaiah 55:1-2; see also 25:6; Psalms 36:7-8; 63:5; Zechariah 9:16-17).
- *Freedom from sin and alienation from God:* “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:18-19; see also 1 John 3:9; Isaiah 1:18; 44:22; 59:2).
- *Freedom from conflict and hatred:* “He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:3-4; see also 54:13; 60:18; Jeremiah 33:6; Micah 4:3).
- *Freedom from being ruled unjustly, harshly and unwisely:* “Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been

manifested” (Revelation 15:3-4; see also Deuteronomy 32:4; Hosea 14:9; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 98:9).

God’s purpose is to teach us right rulership and then give us authority—over everything (Revelation 3:21; 21:7). When God’s plan of perfecting mankind is achieved, man will be given the opportunity to rule in righteousness. Indeed, “We shall also reign with Him” (2 Timothy 2:12).

To learn more about this topic, download our booklet *God’s Purpose for You: Discovering Why You Were Born*.



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Fundamental Belief

The Word of God

Scripture, both the Old and the New Testaments of the Holy Bible, is the Word of God and contains God's complete revelation of His will and plan for humanity. Directly inspired by God in thought and word, it is perfect and infallible as originally written. Scripture is the supreme and final authority for faith and life. It is the source for doctrine and the foundation for all truth.

Scriptural support: 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 10:35; 17:17.

One of the strongest assertions the Bible makes about itself is that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16). In other words, it is God's written revelation of His will and purpose, making it the world's only perfect book, with no errors and only truth (John 17:17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The English words *inspiration of God* are a translation of the Greek word *theopneustos*, which means "God-breathed." God "breathed out" His truth and words into the minds of the human authors of the Bible's 66 books.

Although written by approximately 40 authors, over a period of about 1,500 years, it is not a book of man, but of God. He inspired those human authors to write in their own vocabulary, style and syntax. But He guided the process in such a way that every word the authors wrote was true and according to His will. Indeed, “Every word of God is pure” (Proverbs 30:5). No part of it contradicts any other part, and none of it is disproven by any

contrary assertion, opinion or fact. As Jesus summarized it, “The Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

“
Only with God’s
help can one
comprehend the
spiritual truths of
His Word and not
be deceived by
false twisting of
its meanings.”

It is all true

Whatever is asserted by God in the Bible—whether dealing with matters of origin, history, morality, science or the future—is solid and sure.

For example, the Bible states that God didn’t create the world from things that are visible (Hebrews 11:3).

It states that God has raised

the dead back to life and will do so again. It claims that a virgin gave birth to a Son, and that a man walked on water. It claims that water was changed instantly to wine and that a nation walked on dry ground through a suddenly dry seabed, with walls of water on either side. And it claims that God is the judge of all mankind.

All of these statements are true, whether humans believe them or not. God’s Word is truth (John 17:17). Indeed, “Let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4).

None of it was lost

“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isaiah 40:8). Thus, none of what God wanted to preserve has been lost. God has seen to it that His Word has been preserved and is complete and available to us today. Certainly, ensuring that the Bible would be preserved is not too hard for Him (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17, 27; Matthew 19:26).

God did use human instruments to record, preserve and copy His words. The original writing of each inspired book of the Bible is called the *autograph*. Since each autograph was recorded on some sort of substance that decays over time (such as vellum, parchment or papyrus), copies were made when the autographs needed to be replaced and further circulated.

God used the Jewish people to copy and preserve the 39 books of the Old Testament (Romans 3:1-2) and individuals of the Greek-speaking world to preserve the 27 books of the New Testament. Some small amount of editing was allowed to accommodate the need for clarity as languages, spelling, etc. changed. But God saw to it that this did not change the truth of His original revelation.

The work of compiling the exact writings God chose to include in the Bible was done chiefly by His prophets, apostles and those closely associated with them. Extensive scholarly research on the preservation and transmission of all 66 books of the Bible provides abundant evidence of the care and success achieved by the human instruments God chose for the task of preserving the Bible. Though some manuscripts do have scribal errors that have been reflected in some modern Bible translations, those errors are relatively easy to identify.

A book of life

The Bible contains words of life—spiritual life—the truths necessary for those who know and serve the true God (John 6:63, 68; Psalm 119:50). Jesus reiterated the truth that Moses wrote: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3).

The Bible is a living book, relevant to the issues of life for all people, at all times, in all circumstances and locations. “For the word of God is living and powerful” (Hebrews 4:12). It has the power to change a person’s life and help him or her develop the character of God (Ephesians 5:26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; James 1:18; John 6:63).

God said, “But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word . . . Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word” (Isaiah 66:2, 5). The way to receive the most benefit from God’s Word is to take it seriously and obey it.

When a person humbly approaches God’s Word with a heart willing to believe and obey, God looks favorably on him or her. As one continues to approach the Bible in this way, his or her faith will grow (Romans 10:17).

With God's help and blessing, the truths of the Bible will transform people's lives as they grow in understanding and conform their lives to what they learn. It will be a spiritual light to them (Psalm 119:105), guiding and teaching them (Isaiah 2:3), and correcting them when they depart from what pleases God (Psalm 119:9).

It will give them the ability to see through Satan's deceptions and will even give them insights about themselves (Hebrews 4:12). This correction and reproof from the Word of God leads them to repent of their sins, receive God's forgiveness and serve God with all their heart (2 Timothy 3:15; Acts 10:43; John 5:39-40).

How to understand it

God had the Bible written in such a way that much of its revelation and depth cannot fully be comprehended by man's human intellect alone. Many of God's truths are spiritually discerned and require the help of God's Holy Spirit to be understood.

God gives that spiritual help to those who ask for it, and at a time of His choosing. Only with God's help can one comprehend the spiritual truths of His Word and not be deceived by false twisting of its meanings (Luke 24:32, 45; 2 Peter 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:11-14; 2 Corinthians 3:14-16; Psalm 119:18).

The Bible's words don't benefit everyone at this time, because most people do not approach Scripture with respect and humility. But eventually God will allow all people to come to know and understand enough of God's Word to be held accountable for their reactions to it.

To learn more about this topic, download our booklet *Is the Bible True?*



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Fundamental Belief

Sin and God's Law

Sin is the transgression of the law of God, which is spiritual, perfect, holy, just and good. God's law is based upon the two great principles of love toward God and love toward neighbor. The 10 Commandments expound these foundational principles of God's law of love. Breaking any part of God's law brings upon a person the penalty of death. Those who love God and seek eternal life will strive to keep God's commandments. Obedience to God's law produces happiness and peace of mind. Disobedience to God's law produces misery and strife and ultimately eternal death.

Scriptural support: 1 John 3:4; 5:3; Matthew 5:17-19; 19:17-19; 22:37-40; James 2:10-11; Romans 2:5-9; 6:23; 7:12-14; 13:8-10.

God's laws are the written expressions of God's perfect and holy mind and of how He wants us to live. They define how to treat God and our fellow man with love and concern, rather than selfishness and hurtfulness.

The first purpose of God's laws, therefore, is to highlight His righteousness. They describe the actions, motivations and thoughts that are in accordance with His own perfect character of love and holiness. Man's obedience to them will produce harmony and peace between God and man

and between man and man. But because we have all broken God's laws, they also serve to convince us of our need for a Savior—for God's mercy.

Servants of God have always appreciated and loved His laws and commandments because they make clear how to live God's way of love—the best way to live and act and think. Consider:

- “Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’ Jesus said to him, ‘“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:35-40).
- “My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness” (Psalm 119:172).
- “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14).
- “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).
- “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).
- “If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you do well” (James 2:8).
- “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psalm 19:7-8).
- “Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law” (Romans 13:10).
- “Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deuteronomy 4:5-6).
- “You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me” (Psalm 119:98).

These and many other similar passages contain praise and thankfulness for God's righteous laws because they illustrate the mind and character of

God. They describe the way to love, peace and joy—a way of life that brings glory to God and peace among people.

God's laws are a guide to good living. If everyone fully obeyed them, even in just the letter, but especially in their deeper spiritual intent, what a utopia our world would be! We would have a world of truthfulness only, without lying or deception. We would have only care and concern for one another, not fighting and murder; only stable families, not the heartbreak of unfaithfulness and selfishness. We would have only security, not theft or violation of property rights. There would be only rejoicing at others' blessings, not resentful jealousy. We would have only true religion and true worship, not idolatry or false beliefs in gods "which are not gods" at all (Jeremiah 2:11; 16:20).

Those throughout history who have served the true Creator God have developed a genuine desire to obey His laws. "Open my eyes," David wrote, "that I may see wondrous things from Your law" (Psalm 119:18). They have echoed the prayer of Solomon: "May the LORD our God be with us . . . that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments" (1 Kings 8:57-58).

The second purpose of the law

But there is a second function of God's law. It convicts man of his sinfulness. It shows that we do not by nature think or act like God, but instead have contrary and rebellious tendencies. "The carnal [natural] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be" (Romans 8:7).

Sin is the violation of God's law, and all humans are guilty. All have broken the laws and commandments of God and have thus fallen short of God's holiness and righteousness (Romans 3:23).

God's justice requires that violations of His laws (sin) must not go unpunished. The ultimate consequence of sin is death. When Adam and Eve sinned, the death penalty came into effect.

All humans since have been tainted by sin and death because of violating God's laws and commandments. The laws that are so beautiful in the righteousness they describe also demand justice for disobedience.

When people break God's commandments and laws (as all do), the law imposes the death penalty. God inspired the prophets, psalmists and apostles of Jesus Christ to make the picture crystal clear:

- "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). The King James Version says, "For sin is the transgression of the law."

- “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).
- “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).
- “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12).
- “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).
- “We have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one’ . . . Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:9-12, 19).
- “My iniquities [sins] have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart fails me” (Psalm 40:12).
- “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law” (Galatians 3:10).

The answer to the dilemma

This creates a huge dilemma—an apparent spiritual dead-end for all mankind. The same law that is a righteous light is also an executioner!

One solution some people have argued for is that the laws of God have been done away with. Perhaps, this theory goes, they served a temporary function, but then God later decided to ignore His own laws, or at least no longer judge people by them, so that people are no longer considered sinners and no longer need to die for their sins.

Maybe, the story goes, the law was somehow only for ancient Israel. Since Jesus came, we no longer need to be concerned about violating God’s laws. We are now “free” from the law. The law’s judgment function is no more.

But this is not what the Bible teaches! The law did not begin at Mount Sinai, nor did it end at Golgotha. Long before Moses, “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (Genesis 26:5).

Neither did Christ's life, death and resurrection do away with His laws or the need for humanity to obey them today. Jesus Himself clearly stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

The commandments of God are still in force, and God expects people to obey them. "Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments'" (Matthew 19:16-17).

Long after Christ's death and resurrection, His apostles confirmed this.

- "He who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).
- "With the mind I myself serve the law of God" (Romans 7:25).
- "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him . . . And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight . . . For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 2:3-4; 3:22; 5:3).
- Paul summarized it so well: "Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12).

Since God's law is still in effect and we all sin, we're all condemned to death. Fundamental Belief 7 resolves the dilemma.

To learn more about this topic, download our booklet *[God's 10 Commandments: Still Relevant Today](#)*.



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Fundamental Belief

The Sacrifice of Jesus Christ

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so humans may have eternal life. In God's perfect righteousness, the penalty for our sins must be paid in full. After living a human life without sin, even though tempted in all points as we are, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died as the perfect sacrifice for all the sins of humanity. As God in the flesh and the Creator of all humanity, His death makes it possible for each person and humanity as a whole to be forgiven of their sins, released from the death penalty that comes upon all because of sin and reconciled to God the Father. This plan of salvation for mankind existed from the foundation of the world.

Scriptural support: John 1:18; 3:16; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 1:16-17, 22; Hebrews 4:15; 9:15; 10:12; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Revelation 5:9; 13:8.

Humanity, made to be in the image of God, is tainted with evil, unrighteousness and unholiness—by sin. All have sinned—disobeying God's righteous commandments—beginning with the rebellion of Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12). “They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3). Human beings don't become tainted by inheriting original sin from Adam, but by their own personal sins.

In that condition, corrupted by sin and cut off from God, they cannot share eternity with God. They are not only cut off from God, but facing the righteous judgment of God for sin: “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

But in Christ, there is forgiveness, hope and life

Yet, while all mankind deserves death, “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23). God the Father and Christ are not only supremely holy and just, but also merciful. In Their love, They have provided a way for man to be cleansed of sin and to share life in eternity with God.

In God’s plan to bring “many sons to glory,” it was foreordained that the “Word” would become flesh and offer His perfect, sinless life as a sacrifice to serve as a “ransom for many” (John 1:14; Matthew 20:28; Hebrews 2:10)—in fact, for all sinners who accept His sacrifice and believe in Him. The guilt and corruption of mankind’s sins can be justly removed through the suffering and shed blood of Jesus Christ. In order for that forgiveness to occur, a person must accept the following truths:

“

The resurrection of Christ was proof that He was indeed the Son of God—the only one capable of redeeming us from our own sins by His death.”

- That Jesus is the Son of God, who lived forever as God, with the Father.
- That His shed blood and death paid in full the penalty of my sins—justifying me, cleansing me of my sins, making me guiltless in the Father’s sight (John 3:18; 5:24; Romans 8:1; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 1:5).
- That the shedding of His blood is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:10-12).
- That the shedding of His blood satisfied the penalty for my past sins, but that does not mean I am now free in God’s sight to carelessly or willfully transgress God’s laws in the future (Romans 6:4, 11-13, 22; James 2:24).

- That even future sins I may commit out of weakness and ignorance will be forgiven if I confess them to God, repent of them and strive to overcome them (1 John 1:8-9).

Without the sacrifice of Christ, each sinner's violation of God's laws would have resulted in his or her own death, and staying dead forever.

What was forfeited

In Christ's perfect and willing sacrifice for our sins, God's justice and mercy are both in effect. In justice, the demand that sin brings death was satisfied. In mercy, the death of Christ on behalf of sinners was accepted by the Father.

When we consider the awesome wonder and mercy of God in this sacrifice, it is important to realize something. It was more, far more, than just an innocent man dying in the place of a guilty man.

The truth is, when we consider mankind's relationship to our Creator and God's divine justice, there *is* no "innocent man." *All* other men have sinned. There was *no* sinless man to die for you or me, to satisfy God's righteous judgment against your sin or mine. And even if there were *one* such man, his death could *at best* redeem only *one* other sinner from the consequences of sin.

Only one life could redeem *all* of mankind, buying us back from death, and that was the life of *God Himself*—in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ! The life of God the Creator was willingly, lovingly and mercifully offered up. This was the ultimate way that God could demonstrate His love for His human creation—to make that sacrifice of Himself (John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8).

When God made man, and gave him the gift of free choice, He knew that man had the potential to fail to live perfectly. God didn't create man with perfect and holy character. That aspect of creation would take time, and with time would come failures. Therefore, the need for Christ's sacrifice was known and planned by God in advance.

"You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:18-20).

God's commitment to His human creation

God, in His love, would not leave His human creation to inevitably fail and lose the opportunity to live forever. How awe-inspiring it is to consider

that in His sacrifice, Christ came to represent to the Father all human sins and thus take on Himself our curse, God's judgment against sin.

“Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’)” (Galatians 3:13). Paul explained, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

A holy life—the life of Jesus—was ended in pain and humiliation as He took upon Himself the Father's righteous wrath against all human sin through His death and being temporarily forsaken (Matthew 27:46; Hebrews 2:9).

Thus, God did not compromise with His holiness. The righteous judgment of God against sin (all human sins) was fully paid by the only One who was sinless and the only One whose life was worth more than all human lives combined.

But He did not remain dead. He was resurrected by the Father to be the living, intercessory Savior that forgiven sinners still need as they grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord (Hebrews 7:25). The resurrection of Christ was proof that He was indeed the Son of God—the only one capable of redeeming us from our own sins by His death (Romans 1:3-4).

The Father's acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ

“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Corinthians 15:14). But He *was* resurrected, the Father did accept Christ's sacrifice for human sins, and thus His death does justify and spiritually cleanse all believers (Acts 13:37-39; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 1:9).

In this sacrifice of the Son of God, God showed how much He loves mankind. Truly, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

To learn more about this topic, read our article on [**“The Greatest Sacrifice Ever.”**](#)



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Fundamental Belief

Three Days and Three Nights

Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the Father after His body lay for three days and three nights in the grave. The length of time that He was in the grave was the only sign He gave to prove He was the Messiah. The resurrection of Jesus Christ made immortality possible for mortal human beings. After His resurrection, Christ ascended into heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest, elder Brother and Advocate with the Father.

Scriptural support: 1 Peter 1:17-21; 3:22; Matthew 12:39-40; 1 Corinthians 15:53; 2 Timothy 1:10; John 20:17; Hebrews 2:10-15; 8:1; 12:2; 1 John 2:1.

Jesus asserted that He was the Son of God—and the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament. Some of the passages making those crucial claims are:

- “The woman said to Him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When He comes, He will tell us all things.’ Jesus said to her, ‘I who speak to you am He’” (John 4:25-26).
- “But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’ Jesus said, ‘I am’” (Mark 14:61-62).

- “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39).
- “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me” (verse 46).
- “‘Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM’” (John 8:56-58).
- “Jesus . . . said to him, ‘Do you believe in the Son of God?’ He answered and said, ‘Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you’” (John 9:35-37).
- “Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me’” (Luke 24:44).
- “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven’” (Matthew 16:16-17).

John summarized His life this way: “And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

The proof

Here was a man claiming to be God, the Messiah prophesied by Moses and the prophets. Naturally, people asked Him for proof. “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, ‘Teacher, we want to see a sign from You’” (Matthew 12:38).

He had performed many miracles, but they had rejected those signs as inadequate to validate His claims. They wanted something more. Some seemed to have decided to reject Him in any case.

To their demand, Jesus gave a remarkable answer: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (verses 39-40).

The proof would be His resurrection from the dead after three days and three nights in His tomb.

Amazing! The validation of His Messiahship, and being the Son of God, rested on the amount of time He would be buried in His tomb! And that time would be three days and three nights, just as Jonah had spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish (Jonah 1:17).

Jesus’ statements are clear and obvious—He would be in His tomb for 72 hours, three 12-hour day periods and three 12-hour night periods. He would be resurrected, therefore, at the same time of day as He was put into the tomb.

From other biblical passages, we learn the following regarding the timing of these crucial events:

- As the Passover Lamb of God, Jesus died on the Passover day—the “preparation” day before an annual “high” holy day (John 1:29; 19:31; Revelation 5:6; Leviticus 23:5-6).
- An annual “high” holy day can also be referred to as “Sabbath” (verse 24).
- He died in late afternoon, just after 3 p.m. (Matthew 27:46-50).
- He was put into the tomb shortly before sunset that same day (verses 57-60; Luke 23:53-54).
- There were two “Sabbath” days the week of Jesus’ death. One was the annual holy day “Sabbath”—the first day of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-7)—and the other was the weekly Sabbath day.
- Biblical days start at sunset. The Passover day (the day before the first holy day of Unleavened Bread) that year began Tuesday evening, when the 14th day of Abib began (Leviticus 23:5-6; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24). Jesus observed the Passover dinner with His disciples and instituted the New Testament Passover ordinance of foot washing and the

symbols of unleavened bread and wine picturing His sacrifice.

- Here is what we know from Scripture about the events on Wednesday, the next day:
 - ◉ Jesus' crucifixion began around 9 a.m. (Mark 15:25). He died around 3 p.m., at the end of the darkness that began at noon (verses 33-34). Joseph of Arimathea came to Pilate seeking Christ's body (John 19:38), and with Pilate's approval, he rushed the body to a tomb nearby just before sunset, or around 6 p.m.
 - ◉ That Wednesday evening was the beginning of a Sabbath, but it wasn't a weekly Sabbath. It was a high day, the first day of Unleavened Bread (verse 31). These events happened so quickly that the women had no time to properly prepare the body before they stopped to rest on the holy day (an annual Sabbath).
 - ◉ On Friday, the day after the holy day, the women purchased and prepared the burial spices, but there was not enough time left to go to the tomb to anoint His body before the second Sabbath (the weekly Sabbath) began another day of rest on Friday evening at sunset (Luke 23:55-56).
 - ◉ So, after the second Sabbath and early on the first day of the week (before sunrise), they went to the tomb with the spices. But when they arrived, His body was gone (Luke 24:1-3). Jesus had been resurrected late Saturday afternoon (right before sunset) exactly as He said, 72 hours—three days and three nights—after He had been put into the tomb. The three “days” were the daylight portions of Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The three “nights” were the nighttime portions of Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

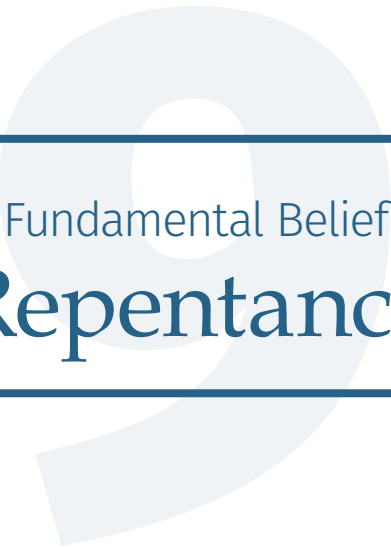
The commonly accepted teaching of a Friday crucifixion and Sunday resurrection actually defies what Jesus said—it is impossible to fit three days and three nights within that time frame! A Wednesday crucifixion and

Saturday evening resurrection are the only logical and credible explanation that fulfills the only sign He gave that He was the Messiah!

To learn more about this topic, read our article “[How Do You Count Three Days and Three Nights?](#)”



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Fundamental Belief

Repentance

Repentance is a gift from God—a gift that is necessary for salvation and a proper relationship with God. All who wish to be pardoned from the death penalty that comes through sin must genuinely repent of their sins, fully surrender their lives to God and obey His commandments. They must by faith accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, their Lord and Master, their High Priest and their soon coming King. These individuals are justified, forgiven of their sins as an act of divine grace, being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands. At baptism they become part of the spiritual Body of Christ, the true Church of God.

Scriptural support: Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:29-32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7-10; Romans 3:21-26; 5:5; 6:6; 8:4, 9-10, 14; 13:10; Jeremiah 33:8; John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Philippians 2:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:25.

The New Testament records the beginning of three significant public ministries—those of John the Baptist, Jesus and Peter. At the core of God's message in each case was the call to *repentance*.

- “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of *repentance* for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).
- “Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. *Repent*, and believe in the gospel’” (verses 14-15).
- “Then Peter said to them, ‘*Repent*, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

And when Jesus commissioned His disciples to take His gospel to the world, repentance of sin was a significant component. “And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that *repentance* and remission of *sins* should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem’” (Luke 24:45-47).

The first step

When people hear and understand God’s truth, they then must respond. They can ignore or reject it. Or they can repent.

God’s desire is clear. “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Repentance is the crucial first step in establishing a right relationship with God. It is absolutely necessary because all humans are guilty of sin—breaking God’s holy laws—and are thus estranged from God (Isaiah 59:2). But God is merciful, willing to forgive sins, remove guilt and be reconciled to anyone who repents. In short, to repent is to acknowledge and confess one’s guilt to God, seek His forgiveness and commit to obeying and serving Him for the remainder of one’s life.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Jesus taught that the man who repented, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” was forgiven. He “went down to his house justified”—free of guilt and spiritually clean before God (Luke 18:13-14).

Repentance is change

Repentance means change—profound change—from the heart. It is a change of our thoughts, beliefs and behavior. Before repentance, our sinful thoughts and actions led to death (Romans 6:23), but we turn away from all of that through “repentance from dead works” (Hebrews 6:1).

The Greek word usually translated as *repent* in English Bibles is *metanoeō*. It means to change the mind, the heart, the way of thinking, the way of doing. It means to change from sin to righteousness.

God’s prophets always pled earnestly with people to sincerely repent of their sins and their prideful self-will. They urged them to turn from their former sinful ways and go another direction, the way of service and obedience to God.

Christ’s apostles consistently preached repentance, making clear to all that they should “turn from these useless things to the living God” (Acts 14:15). Paul said, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

More than being sorry

Godly repentance involves more than simply confessing and being sorry for certain acts of sin. Repentance of what one *does* is certainly part of it. But there is more.

At a deeper level, it involves repentance of what one *is*—a person who is inclined by nature (the “carnal mind”) to resist God’s will. “Because the carnal [fleshly] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7-8).

When we were born, we were neither good nor evil, but through the years, the influence of Satan’s society amplified our natural concern for self and led us to become an enemy of God (1 John 2:15-16).

Job displayed such deep repentance once he came to understand more about God and himself. At that point he said to God, “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore *I abhor myself*, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6).

Such true repentance acknowledges how spiritually unlike God we are in our unconverted state. It creates a deep desire to change, to become a “new creation”—made in the spiritual image of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:5).

It involves not only saying these things, but backing it up by action. John the Baptist preached to the people that they should “bear fruits worthy of

repentance” (Luke 3:8). He gave them examples of changes in behavior that were evidence of repentance (verses 10-14). Paul preached the same—that all should “repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20).

The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is a list of nine core character traits that must be reflected in the life of a truly repentant person.

God’s response to repentance

God responds mercifully to a repentant individual. He forgives the person’s sins, removes his or her guilt and gives His Holy Spirit. At that point, there is no condemnation from God (Romans 8:1; Psalm 103:12; Jeremiah 31:34).

Repentance should be followed by baptism in water and the laying on of hands, and then one receives God’s Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:18, 19:6; Hebrews 6:2). This starts the spiritual creation of the “new man” in the person’s life and character (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Not just once

Repentance, though, is not a one-time event. In the flesh, all people are still weak and subject to sin. Christians must still repent and seek God’s forgiveness when they sin (2 Corinthians 7:9; Revelation 2:5).

“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:7-10).

In teaching the disciples how to pray on a daily basis, Jesus told them to ask God for forgiveness—to repent. He taught that God is merciful and faithful to forgive and cleanse any sin that is repented of. But He added that to receive such forgiveness from God, we must humble ourselves and forgive others when they sin against us (Matthew 6:12, 14; 18:21-22).

Help in repenting

Finally, it is important to understand that humans need help from God even in repenting. Repentance is not merely a self-generated impulse, but a gift from God given through His calling (John 6:44). He grants us the necessary help to turn to His way of thinking (Jeremiah 31:33; 2 Timothy 2:25). Paul explained that “the goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4). God the Father has exalted Christ as Savior “to

give repentance to Israel” (Acts 5:31), and God has “granted to the Gentiles repentance” (Acts 11:18).

Indeed, we are all subject to strong forces in the natural mind toward pride, hostility against God, self-satisfaction and a lack of desire to repent. We need God’s spiritual help to overcome that tendency.

Yes, part of the gospel of our salvation is that as God works in people’s lives, He will call them to repentance (Luke 5:32), and as they respond to Him, He will help them repent and grow into the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet *[Change Your Life](#)*.



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Fundamental Belief

Water Baptism

Water baptism by immersion after repentance pictures the forgiveness of sin, the burial of the old man and the beginning of a new life in Christ. Through prayer and the laying on of hands following baptism, repentant believers receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and become part of the spiritual Body of Jesus Christ. By yielding to and being led by the Holy Spirit, those who have repented and been baptized experience a true change in life, attitude and way of thinking.

Scriptural support: John 3:23; Acts 2:38; 8:14-17; 19:5-6; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Corinthians 12:13.

A few weeks following Jesus' death and resurrection, the Feast of Pentecost was indeed a momentous day. After God performed astonishing miracles in the sight of thousands gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4), the apostle Peter preached a powerful sermon to the awestruck assembly.

He proclaimed that Jesus had been resurrected and the reasons for His sacrificial death. Many of those listening were deeply convicted of their sinfulness and, thus, their responsibility for crucifying the Son of God. "Cut to the heart," they asked what they should do to get right with God.

Peter answered, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (verse 38). Three thousand people that day obeyed this command and were baptized (verse 41). Thus began the New Testament Church of God.

The rich symbolism of baptism

As explained in Fundamental Belief 9, repentance is a foundational step for a person who is being called by God. But after a mature adult hears, understands and believes the gospel, and then repents of his or her sins, the next step is baptism.

Throughout the book of Acts, we see individuals responding to God’s calling and being baptized by immersion in water (Acts 8:12, 36-38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:31-34; 19:5; 22:16).

The Greek word *baptizo* (translated in English Bibles as “baptize,” “baptized” or “baptism”) means to be fully immersed, wholly covered, with water.

The act of baptism is a physical act, but it has rich spiritual symbolism. Paul explains:

“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more” (Romans 6:3-9).

Baptism is a mature, personal profession of our commitment to a complete change in our lives:

- “*Baptized into Jesus Christ*”: At baptism, a person acknowledges belief in Christ as his or her personal Savior, as “the way” to reconciliation with God the Father and eventual salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 2 Timothy 1:10).
- “*Into His death*”: At baptism, a person asserts belief that Christ, the eternal Word, actually died for his or her sins (Romans 5:6; 1 Corinthians 15:3).

- “*We were buried with Him . . . into death*”: Through baptism a person is symbolically buried under the water, representing the death and burial of sins and the previous way of living.
- “*Our old man was crucified with Him*”: The individual sees his or her past way of life as “the old man” and considers it dead and buried. He or she is fully committed to leaving sin behind, no longer permitting it to be the driving force of his or her life (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:8-9).
- “*Just as Christ was raised from the dead*”: By being baptized, the individual demonstrates his or her belief that the Father accepted Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrected Him as Savior of the world (Romans 1:4; Ephesian 1:19-20).
- “*We also should walk in newness of life*”: The person is committed to live a new and different way than before—to serve and obey God, empowered by His Spirit, emulating Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10; 1 John 2:6).
- “*We also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection*”: Baptism is an expression of one’s belief in being resurrected at Christ’s return, being given a new, glorious body like Christ’s, and living forever (1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 49-52; Colossians 3:4; 1 John 3:2).

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*Change Your Life*](#).



Photo: David Hicks

Fundamental Belief

The Seventh-Day Sabbath

The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God, and on this day humans are commanded to rest from their labors and worship Him. Established and blessed by God at creation, the seventh day of the week begins at sunset on Friday and continues until sunset on Saturday. The Sabbath is an identifying sign and a perpetual covenant between God and His people. True Christians follow the example of Jesus Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church in observing the seventh-day Sabbath.

Scriptural support: Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 58:13; Hebrews 4:4-10; Mark 1:21; 2:27-28; 6:2; Acts 13:42-44; 17:2; 18:4; Luke 4:31; 1 John 2:4-6.

On the seventh day of creation, God rested (Genesis 2:2). He “rested” not because He was tired and needed to, but as a creative act to establish the Sabbath and set us an example of resting from our work on the seventh day.

The Hebrew word for rest is *sabat* or *shabath*, from which we get the word *Sabbath*. The word *Sabbath* simply means “to rest.” He also “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (verse 3). Since God set it apart from the rest of the week, the Sabbath is holy time.

The Sabbath is a memorial of creation and establishes a pattern for mankind to follow. Later, God included the Sabbath as the fourth of the 10

Commandments: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God” (Exodus 20:8-10; see also Deuteronomy 5:13-15).

The word *remember* points us back to the time when God rested on the seventh day in Genesis 2. It also establishes the Sabbath as the focal point of every week. We observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week, but we always *remember* the Sabbath as we honor God as our Creator and prepare for and anticipate that observance every week.

The Sabbath is a blessing

Jesus later said that “the Sabbath was made for man”—made to be a blessing for all humanity, not just the Jews—and, furthermore, that “the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27-28). In other words, it is truly the Lord’s day. People who obediently keep the Sabbath command are reminded of their Creator and of His work in their lives, blessing and sanctifying them.

The Sabbath is a sign, or an identifying mark, between God and His people (Exodus 31:13-15). To “keep” the Sabbath means to set it apart as sacred or holy, and as we do so, it will keep us in a right relationship with Him.

Jesus observed the Sabbath and taught from God’s Word on it during His time as a human being (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31).

Contrary to God’s will, the Jews added traditions to God’s commandments that made the Sabbath onerous and burdensome (Deuteronomy 12:32; Matthew 15:3, 9; Mark 3:3-5; Luke 11:46; Matthew 12:1-8). They frequently accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath command, but in every case, the issue was these man-made laws, not the Sabbath command itself. Jesus unapologetically broke many of their unreasonable Sabbath regulations, but never once broke the Sabbath command as found in the 10 Commandments.

The weekly Sabbath offers us rest from our labors and pictures God’s plan for His human creation, which will eventually give humanity total freedom from the slavery of sinful works (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Since God “sanctified” and made “holy” the weekly Sabbath, we are commanded not to defile or disrespect it by engaging in regular work or self-centered activities during its hours. God intends that the Sabbath be a “delight” (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Sunset to sunset

Proper Sabbath observance is based on understanding that God measures a day from sunset to sunset.

Thus, the weekly Sabbath lasts from sunset on the sixth day (Friday) to sunset on the seventh day (Saturday)—that is, from evening to evening. This was the pattern of days established by God at creation and continued thereafter (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; Mark 1:32).

Christ, His disciples and the Church

Since Christ is Lord of the Sabbath, no man has the authority to change the Sabbath to any other day. Christ never changed it; rather, He obeyed the Sabbath command (Luke 4:15-16).

In doing so, He set the example for His followers. “He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:4-6).

Paul likewise followed Jesus’ example and instructed the Church, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). One way he imitated Christ was by observing the Sabbath day. “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2).

The Sabbath also provides us time every week to assemble to hear God’s Word preached, to draw closer and fellowship with other believers, and to rest physically and mentally (Leviticus 23:3; Hebrews 10:25)—all of which are spiritually edifying and strengthening. Assembling with believers, hearing the Scriptures read and expounded, singing hymns of praise and building close relationships in fellowship are wonderful blessings the Sabbath provides (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The Sabbath remains

The book of Hebrews makes it clear that certain “ordinances,” such as animal sacrifices and other temple-based religious services, are no longer required of Christians under the terms of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:1-15). However, the author specifically states that “there *remains* therefore a rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9). The Greek word translated “a rest” in this verse is *sabbatismos*, which literally means “a keeping of the Sabbath.” Some translations make this clear. For instance, the English Standard Version translates the verse: “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*The Sabbath: A Neglected Gift From God*](#).



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Fundamental Belief

The Passover

The Passover is to be observed in the evening, at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (Abib) in accordance with the Hebrew calendar as preserved by the Jews. The New Covenant Passover symbols instituted by Jesus Christ on the night before He died—foot-washing, unleavened bread and wine—are part of this service. Christians follow Jesus Christ’s instruction and example by observing the Passover annually as a memorial of His death.

Scriptural support: Exodus 12; Matthew 26:18-30; John 13:1-15; Luke 22:1-20; John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7.

The central theme of both the Old and New Covenant Passover is God’s gracious act of saving people from slavery and death.

The Old Covenant Passover was instituted in Exodus 12, when God delivered the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. God freed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage by sending a plague of death on all the firstborn of the land of Egypt (verse 29). To save their firstborn, God instructed the Israelites to “kill the Passover lamb” (verse 21) and smear its shed blood on the doorposts of their home (verse 22). The “destroyer” would “pass over” their marked homes, and they would all live (verse 23).

Passover and Christ

The events of the Old Covenant Passover pointed to what God would do later for His people (and, in time, all of mankind) through Jesus Christ.

The eternal Word became flesh and allowed His blood to be shed as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He is the slain Passover sacrifice through whom God offers salvation to those who believe and obey (John 1:12; 8:24; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 John 5:13; Matthew 19:17; Romans 2:13; James 2:24).

Under the New Covenant, God graciously offers salvation from eternal death through the shed blood of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is the New Covenant Passover “Lamb of God” (John 3:16; 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 5:12).

When people enter into a New Covenant relationship with God through baptism, their sins are forgiven, and they are no longer to be “slaves of sin” (Romans 6:17, 20). Christ’s sacrifice makes it possible for faithful believers to be freed from the bondage of sin.

Passover a command of God

God commanded the Passover to be observed each year on the 14th day of Abib, the first month of the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:1-2, 4-5; Deuteronomy 16:1). Abib corresponds to portions of the months of March and April. The Passover begins at twilight at the beginning of the 14th of Abib (Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 23:5).

Jesus obeyed the command and kept the Passover during His earthly life (Luke 2:41-42; John 2:23; Luke 22:15). Jesus’ last Passover with His disciples (Matthew 26:17-20, 26-29) marked the transition from the Old Covenant Passover (centered on a meal pointing back to the Exodus) to the New Testament Passover (centered on Christ’s sacrifice and the symbols that would memorialize His death).

New Testament Passover symbols instituted

At that Passover meal the evening before His death, Jesus instituted the New Testament Passover symbols of foot washing, broken unleavened bread and wine (John 13:4-17; Matthew 26:26-28).

The foot-washing ceremony teaches humility and service to others (John 13:13-17; Luke 14:11; Ephesians 4:2; Philippians 2:5-11; James 4:10).

The unleavened bread symbolizes Jesus’ beaten body—He suffered on our behalf, making possible our physical and spiritual healing (Isaiah 53:5;

1 Peter 2:24). Jesus and the apostles taught about the rich symbolism to be found in the bread (John 6:32-58; Matthew 4:4; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

The wine symbolizes Jesus' shed blood and death as payment of the death penalty for our sins, making it possible for repentant sinners to have their sins forgiven and to be justified and reconciled to God (Acts 20:28; 2 Corinthians 5:18; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 4:9-10).

Jesus taught that it is necessary for a converted Christian to partake of the Passover symbols. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:53-55).

The Passover in the Church

Following Jesus' death and resurrection, the Church of God continued to observe the annual Passover, with the symbols and understanding Jesus had introduced. Paul taught the Church to keep the Passover each year after examining their relationship with God and the covenant they had entered into (1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 11:23-28).

God had instructed Moses that only full members of the covenant people of Israel could partake of the Passover (Exodus 12:48). The sign of that covenant was physical circumcision for all the males (Genesis 17:9-14; Exodus 12:43-44, 47-48; Romans 4:11).

Under the terms of the New Covenant, physical circumcision is not required for one to become a Christian. Circumcision is now of the heart (Romans 2:29). In its place is the ceremony of baptism, reflecting repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Peter 3:21). In the Church of God, only baptized individuals, the members of spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:7-9; 6:15-16), partake of the annual Passover ceremony.

The Passover is one of the seven annual festivals of God (see Fundamental Belief 13), and it points us to Jesus Christ's role in God's plan of salvation. Jesus taught His disciples to keep the Passover "in remembrance of" Him—of His sacrifice (Luke 22:19). Through it, our sins are passed over in God's judgment, saving us from eternal death.

Through the Passover sacrifice of Christ, God has given dramatic evidence of His love for mankind.

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*From Holidays to Holy Days: God's Plan for You*](#).



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Fundamental Belief

The Festivals of God

The seven annual festivals are special times of assembly. Given to ancient Israel by God through Moses and kept by Christ, the apostles and the New Testament Church, they are commanded to be observed today. These festivals reveal God's plan of salvation for mankind. They will continue to be observed during the Millennium.

Scriptural support: Colossians 2:16-17; 1 Peter 1:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:8; 15:22-26; 16:8; James 1:18; Exodus 23:14-17; Leviticus 23; Luke 2:41-42; 22:14-15; John 7:2, 8, 10, 14; Acts 2:1; 18:21; 20:16; Zechariah 14:16-19.

Besides the weekly Sabbath, God has set aside additional time throughout the year for His people to assemble, worship Him and learn about His master plan of salvation for mankind. These special times are called the “feasts of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:2), proclaimed to be “holy convocations”—commanded assemblies of God’s people, made holy by God’s blessing and presence.

The dates of these feasts of God are “proclaimed” in their “seasons” of the year, which are determined according to the calendar established by God and preserved by the Jewish people as part of the “oracles of God” (Romans 3:2).

These seasons are based on the regular movements of the earth and moon—as God established them at creation. “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and *seasons*, and for days and years’” (Genesis 1:14).

The Hebrew word *mo'ed*, translated “seasons” in Genesis 1:14, means “an appointment . . . specifically a festival . . . an assembly (as convened for a definite purpose)” (*Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary*). In Leviticus 23:2 this same word is translated as “feasts,” and in Lamentations 1:4 and 2:6 as “set feasts” or “appointed feasts.”

Still in force under the New Covenant

Jesus observed the feasts of God (Luke 22:15; John 2:13; 7:2, 10), and the apostles, by example and teaching to the Church (including both Jewish and gentile members), continued His practice (Acts 2:1; 20:16; 1 Corinthians 16:8; Acts 27:9). Prophecies of Christ’s rule on the earth following His second coming show that all peoples will then be taught and commanded to observe God’s feasts (Zechariah 14:9, 16).

In Old Testament times, God’s feasts were observed primarily at the Jerusalem temple and included physical sacrifices and offerings. In New

Covenant times, these sacrifices and offerings are no longer required (or possible) for the Church (Hebrews 9:8-12; Galatians 3:19), but the sacred nature of the holy days themselves has not changed.

Paul taught the Church to resist the influence of outsiders who would criticize them for continuing to keep these feasts of God. Instead, the members were to follow the teaching of the Church with regard to the observance of these holy times. “So let no one *judge* [from the Greek word *krino*, which can also be translated

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God will ensure through this resurrection that every human will have a fair opportunity to know Him and choose to prove himself or herself faithful and to enter His Kingdom.”

condemn] you in food or in drink, or regarding a *festival* or a new moon or sabbaths” (Colossians 2:16).

The church at Colossae was being troubled by ascetics who condemned all physical enjoyments (Colossians 2:21). Paul countered their influence, explaining that keeping God’s festivals includes the enjoyment of proper foods and beverages (“in food or in drink”). Also note that the timing of the feasts of God was associated with the occurrence of new moons. In fact, one of them occurs on a new moon, the first day of the month on the Hebrew calendar (Leviticus 23:24).

One of the most important phrases in this passage is Paul’s statement that the biblical feasts “are a shadow of things to come” (Colossians 2:17). Note Paul’s use of the present tense—they “are,” not “were,” as though the ancient festivals were now relics of the past. He was clearly talking about critics judging the Church for the way they were keeping the feasts God had ordained.

How the feasts of God are a teaching “shadow”

The feasts of God are indeed lesson-rich. The following summary illustrates that some are memorials of steps God has already accomplished in His master plan of salvation while others foreshadow steps that are yet to be fulfilled.

- *The Passover* memorializes the sacrificial death of Christ, the Lamb of God, to reconcile sinners to God (Matthew 20:28; John 1:29; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 5:12; 13:8). It should be noted that the Passover, though one of God’s annual festivals, is not a holy day.
- *The Days of Unleavened Bread* (a seven-day feast, the first and seventh days being holy days) picture living a righteous life with the help of God. Putting leavening out of our homes symbolizes striving to suppress and remove the prideful, puffed-up thoughts and actions of sin from our lives (John 13:15; Romans 6:4; 13:14; Galatians 5:16-18; Ephesians 5:2; Philippians 2:5; 3:12-16; 1 John 2:4-6). Eating unleavened bread represents putting God’s righteousness into our lives (1 Corinthians 5:8; 15:34; Ephesians 4:24).
- *The Day of Pentecost* commemorates this new way of life, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit

through repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:16; Colossians 3:1-3). It also marks the beginning of the Church that Jesus promised He would build (Matthew 16:18), consisting of those who are called by God, baptized and receive the Holy Spirit (John 6:44; James 1:18).

- *The Feast of Trumpets* foreshadows a series of events that will lead to Christ's return to earth, in power and glory, to establish the Kingdom of God. At His return, converted Christians will be resurrected, transformed to spirit, and will reign with Christ on the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Revelation 11:15).
- *The Day of Atonement* represents the time after Christ's return when Satan will be restrained for a thousand years, opening the way for humanity to be reconciled to God (Leviticus 16:21, 29; 23:27; John 12:31; 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9; 20:1-3).
- *The Feast of Tabernacles* is a seven-day feast that pictures the 1,000 years when the entire world will be ruled by Christ (assisted by the resurrected saints). At this time God's government will be restored (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:1-9; Daniel 2:44; Zechariah 14:9; Matthew 25:21; Luke 19:17; Acts 3:21; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:4).
- *The Eighth Day* or *Last Great Day* foreshadows a time when all who died without full knowledge of God will live again. They will, for the first time, have their minds opened to His Word and have access to the Holy Spirit. They will then be judged by how they live during this time of testing. God will ensure through this resurrection that every human will have a fair opportunity to know Him and choose to prove himself or herself faithful and to enter His Kingdom (Ezekiel 37:1-14; Matthew 12:41-42; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24; 1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 20:5). It includes the conclusion of God's plan for humanity, in which

those who have refused to be obedient to God and to receive the gift of salvation will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13-15).

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet *[From Holidays to Holy Days: God's Plan for You.](#)*



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Fundamental Belief

Biblical Food Laws

Meat identified as “unclean” in the Bible is not to be consumed by humans. Lists of “clean” and “unclean” meats are found in God’s instructions concerning what should and should not be eaten.

Scriptural support: Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14.

An important aspect of serving the true God is coming to know the difference between the holy and the profane—between the things that are clean and those that are unclean. This is to teach us an important lesson about being holy as God is holy (Leviticus 10:10).

After delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, God revealed to them that an important manifestation of this principle pertained to the meat they ate. “For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish

between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten” (Leviticus 11:45-47).

Not all animals are “clean” to eat

God created all creatures, each for its own purpose, but it was never God’s will that all creatures be consumed as food. Some animals He designated as “clean” and suitable for humans to eat, while others, He said, were “unclean” and not to be eaten.

Long before God gave this law to Moses, Noah was aware of the difference. God ordered him to preserve seven pairs of the clean land animals on the ark, but only one pair of the unclean (Genesis 7:2).

The differences between clean and unclean animals

God’s laws on clean and unclean meats are recorded in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Here is a brief synopsis of those laws.

- Four-footed land animals: clean animals have a divided hoof and chew the cud. Common examples of clean animals are cow, buffalo, sheep, goat, deer, antelope and elk; common examples of unclean animals are pig, rabbit, dog, cat, horse and squirrel.
- Fish: clean fish have both fins and scales. Common examples of clean fish are trout, salmon, cod, bass and tuna; common examples of unclean seafood include catfish, eel and all forms of shellfish (shrimp, clams, lobsters, etc.).
- Birds: clean and unclean are determined by extrapolating on the lists in the Bible. Common examples of clean birds are chicken, turkey, quail, pheasant, duck and pigeon; common unclean ones are hawk, buzzard, eagle, stork and penguin.
- Insects: very few insects are identified as clean, except grasshoppers and locusts. Nearly all other insects are unclean.
- Other: all reptiles and amphibians are unclean.

Science has discovered many reasons why it’s unhealthy for us to eat certain “unclean” animals. But even if we don’t know exactly why God declared other animals unfit to eat, those who fear God will respect and obey His food laws.

Peter's vision

Because he had lived according to the food laws given in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, the apostle Peter had never eaten any “unclean” meat and was unwilling to eat anything “unclean,” even though a heavenly vision seemed to direct him to do so (Acts 10:14).

God saw to it that Peter was later able to understand that the vision had nothing to do with animals or eating. It was about not treating any human being as “unclean.” God used the vision to show He was offering salvation to the gentiles as well as the Jews (verse 28). Soon after this vision, gentiles entered the Church of God, but the apostles never began teaching people it was okay to eat unclean meats.

Isaiah even prophesied that the distinction between clean and unclean will continue into the future (Isaiah 66:15-17).

To learn more about this topic, read [“Clean and Unclean Animals: Does God Care What Meats We Eat?”](#)



Fundamental Belief

Tithing

Tithing is commanded by God. Through tithing, one honors God with his material goods and assists in preaching the gospel, providing for the physical needs of the Church and caring for needy members. A special festival tithe makes it possible for one to attend the commanded festivals of God.

Scriptural support: Proverbs 3:9-10; Genesis 14:17-20; Numbers 18:21; Malachi 3:8; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Deuteronomy 14:22-29.

God created and owns everything, so there is nothing physical He needs from us, or that we can give that enriches Him or fills an unmet need.

“The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:8; see also Psalm 50:10-12; 1 Chronicles 29:10-12). Furthermore, even the earth—and every person upon it—belongs to God (Exodus 19:5; Ezekiel 18:4). He generously has given us everything we have and everything that sustains our lives—air, water, sunshine, food, the ability to work and even the “power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

And yet, God commands His people to give back only a portion of that physical wealth to Him as a form of esteeming and worshipping Him.

“Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase” (Proverbs 3:9).

History of tithing

This principle of worshipping and honoring God by giving to Him of our possessions is formalized in the law of tithing. The tithing law is a directive from God that a *specific share* of our “increase” is to be given back to God (to His chosen representatives on the earth at the time).

The Bible records that Abraham—the father of the faithful (Romans 4:11, 16)—gave “a tithe of all” to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20). This is consistent with the revelation that Abraham kept all of God’s laws (Genesis 26:5). Jacob, Abraham’s grandson, also gave a tithe to God (Genesis 28:22).

Key principles of the law of tithing

Genesis 14:17-20 reveals several essential points about tithing. These points underlie the principles of tithing revealed elsewhere in the Bible.

- A tithe is 10 percent. The Hebrew word here translated “tithe” is *ma-’aser*, meaning a “tenth part.” In Abraham’s case, he gave a tenth of the spoils of a rescue mission. Tithing is not limited to agricultural goods (see Deuteronomy 14:22-23). Today, we tithe on our “increase”—the income that is a result of our work and productive efforts.
- The one to whom Abraham gave his tithe was Melchizedek—the priest of God Most High. (A close study of the Bible reveals that Melchizedek was actually the preincarnate Jesus Christ. See our online article “[Who Was Melchizedek in the Bible?](#)”)
- After receiving the tithe, Melchizedek blessed Abram, the tithe payer. Tithing is not intended to cause financial harm, but brings blessings from God (compare Malachi 3:6-12).
- Through tithing, one acknowledges God as the ultimate owner of everything—the “Possessor of heaven and earth” (Genesis 14:19, 22). Remembering that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above” (James 1:17), a tithe payer keeps in a dependent and worshipful relationship with our Provider. While our “increase”

results from our work, our productive efforts, “you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Changes in the application of the tithing law over time

The essential principles of the law of tithing have not changed over time, but the administration of this law has been adjusted according to changing circumstances. For example, God has designated different individuals or groups to be the recipients of the tithe. Those who receive it are those He chooses to represent Him in carrying out His appointed activities on earth—His work.

In the earliest incident recorded, it was Melchizedek. Later, when God was working with the nation of Israel, He appointed the Levites to receive the tithe (Numbers 18:21-24). Now, in the Church age, God is working through His Church and an ordained ministry to carry out His work (Hebrews 7:11-12, 15; 9:11; 1 Corinthians 9:4-14; Mark 16:15; John 21:17).

The law of tithing also helps God’s people to finance their observance of His annual feasts (Deuteronomy 12:17-18; 14:22-26; 16:13-15) and to care for the needy among them (Mark 14:7; Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 15:1; Galatians 2:9-10; 1 Timothy 5:3).

To learn more about this topic, read “[Tithing: What Is It?](#)”



Fundamental Belief

Military Service and War

Because of Jesus' teaching that we are to love our enemies and the instruction of God to respect human life, Christians should not serve in the military. The biblical teaching is that if anyone even hates his brother, he is a murderer. Being in the military would create problems keeping the Sabbath and holy days. Because Christians are to obey God rather than men, they need to maintain jurisdiction over their lives. Christians must be careful not to let human issues and concerns distract them from their role as ambassadors in God's coming Kingdom. Christ declared that His Kingdom was not of this world; therefore His servants would not fight.

Scriptural support: Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:21-22; Luke 6:27-35; John 18:36; 1 Corinthians 7:21-23; Acts 5:29; 1 John 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:20.

God places special value on human life, and He commands us not to murder our fellow man (Exodus 20:13).

From the time of Adam and Eve, humanity has gone its own way apart from God, establishing its own governments, religions, justice systems and military forces. In the world in general, God has tacitly authorized

nations and communities to establish their own institutions (judicial and law enforcement, for example) that use avenging and restraining powers against aggression, crime and killing (Romans 13:1-4). This also includes military forces.

But what God allows for the world and what God intends for His people are two different things.

He told the ancient Israelites that they could and should rely on Him to fight their battles for them (Exodus 14:13-14; 23:27-28).

Unfortunately, they repeatedly disobeyed and refused to place their full trust in Him, so He permitted them to form armies and fight battles. Because of their hardened hearts and unbelief, God made allowances in dealing with the people of Israel, warfare being one of them (see Matthew 19:8). By choosing to fight their own battles, they suffered the consequences.

God's original intent

Today God directs His Church back to His original intent. Converted Christians are to engage in spiritual warfare, not physical (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:12-18). They are citizens and ambassadors of, and soldiers for, a different government—the Kingdom of God (John 18:36; 2 Timothy 2:3; 2 Corinthians 5:20; Philippians 3:20).

Indeed, how can people led by a righteous God take up arms to kill other humans in carnal warfare led by the whims and evil desires of human leaders? How can members of the same religion fight and kill each other because their nations are at war?

One of Jesus' highest ideals for His people was that they show love toward other people (Mark 12:28-34; John 13:34-35; 15:9-17). He taught that love was not to be reserved only for our friends and families, but was to be extended to people we don't know—and even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 10:25-37). The apostle Paul listed love as the greatest virtue of character a Christian can possess (1 Corinthians 13:13). Paul also wrote that a person who has godly love won't intentionally harm another person (Romans 13:10).

If one serves in the military, he or she will inevitably be compelled to compromise these high ideals. A Christian cannot live a life characterized by love while also being part of a military designed to use force to harm others—no matter how just the cause may seem by human reasoning.

Also, in the military, Christians might not be free to observe the Sabbath and God's holy days and obey other commandments of God.

Members of God's Church are to be separate from involvement and participation in the activities of this world's nations and their man-made, shifting, erratic systems of politics, justice and military power. Christians should be law-abiding citizens, cooperating with their national government so long as it does not conflict with obedience to God. They are to represent the coming Kingdom of God—to herald its coming, and to live a way of life that prepares them for entry into it. At that time they will rule on the earth, with Christ, bringing all the world true peace, justice and safety.

To learn more about this topic, read "[Jesus Christ Taught Peace and Nonviolence](#)."



Photo: Chantelle West



Fundamental Belief

The Church of God

The Church of God is a spiritual body composed of believers who have and are being led by the Holy Spirit. The Church is not a denomination, a human organization or a building but the people God is working with in any age. The biblical name of this church is the “Church of God.” Its mission is to preach the gospel of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations and to make disciples of all who respond to God’s calling, assisting them in their spiritual development and reconciliation to God.

Scriptural support: Acts 2:38-39, 47; 20:28; Romans 8:14; 14:19; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 12:27; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 5:18-20; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5; Mark 16:15; Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; John 6:44, 65; 17:11.

Jesus told His disciples, “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18). The word *church* is a translation from the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning an assembly of called-out ones.

The members of the Church are selected and called out of society and called together by God.

“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me . . . And He said, ‘Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father’” (John 6:44-45, 65).

During His earthly ministry, Jesus personally taught and guided His disciples. But after His death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, He established His Church.

The Church consists of individuals who have yielded to Christ as their Lord and Savior, have believed the gospel and repented of their sins, and have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit of God through the laying on of hands. Collectively, they constitute the Body of Christ, and He is the Head of the Body. In the Church, God has designated positions of leadership and appointed servants to help bring order and unity. They are His instruments in spiritually edifying and promoting Christlike growth among the members.

The Bible is very clear that despite being in heaven, Jesus Christ still actively leads and guides the Church.

Consider these passages about the Church of God:

- “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27).
- “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased” (1 Corinthians 12:18).
- “For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:29-30).
- “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (Colossians 1:18-19).
- “And He [the Father] put all things under His feet, and gave Him [Christ] to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

- “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).
- “But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

How to find the Church of God

Jesus promised the gates of the grave would never prevail against His Church, so it must still exist on the earth today. But how does one identify the Church that Jesus built from among all of today's different churches with conflicting and contradictory beliefs? What are the major identifying signs and fruits in the lives of its members that help to identify the Church?

We find the keys to identifying the true Church in the Scriptures. God's Church today:

- **Is known by the correct name.** The biblical name of the Church is, quite simply, “the Church of God.” The first time that name is used is Acts 20:28: “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd *the church of God* which He purchased with His own blood.” This name is used in 11 additional scriptures (1 Corinthians 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:9; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:5, 15).
- **Observes the correct holy days.** The true Church will follow the teachings and example of Jesus and the apostles by observing the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual festivals of God (see Fundamental Beliefs 11 and 13).
- **Strives to live by all of God's words.** The true Church of God will base its doctrines and practices on the Holy Scriptures. The Church seeks to live by “every word that

proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4) and uses the Holy Scriptures as the source of its teachings (2 Timothy 3:16). The foundation of its doctrines will be God’s laws and commandments (Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 7:12, 14, 25; 1 John 5:2-3; Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

- **Is relatively small.** Jesus described His Church as a “little flock” (Luke 12:32). He gave no indication that the Church of God would become great in numbers or influential in the affairs of this world. The Church consists of those whom God has called and given His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). Members of this small group come out of the world and live as representatives of God’s way of life (Matthew 7:13-14; John 6:44; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9).
- **Practices godly love.** Jesus said that His followers would love one another as He loves them. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34-35). He was talking about divine, moral love, which can be developed in the hearts of God’s people only by the power of God’s Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). It is the love that unifies the Church (Colossians 2:2, 19; Ephesians 4:16) and is described in detail in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.
- **Is the human vehicle for God’s work on earth.** The Church of God was formed to do a work. Its members undertake an organized effort to spread the true gospel message to the world, to hold forth the light of God’s truth through their example, and to provide spiritual care for those God calls (Matthew 5:14-16; 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; John 21:15-17; 1 Corinthians 9:16; 12:25; Philippians 2:15; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 3:15).
- **Is led by God’s Spirit.** “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14). The members of the Church have the Holy Spirit of God—the power by which God the Father and Jesus

Christ perform Their works and influence the minds of Their people (John 14:17, 26; Acts 2:38; 10:45; Ephesians 2:22; 4:4; Philippians 2:5). The indwelling presence of this Spirit unites them as members of the Body of Christ and allows them to do the work of God (Zechariah 4:6; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The fruit of the Spirit is manifested in love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*Where Is the Church Jesus Built?*](#)



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Fundamental Belief

Promises to Abraham

God's fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, a man called the father of the faithful, represents God's enduring faithfulness and provides important keys to understanding biblical prophecy. As promised, God multiplied Abraham's descendants so that Abraham literally became the father of many nations. God materially prospered his descendants: Isaac, Jacob (also called Israel) and Jacob's 12 sons who were the progenitors of the 12 tribes of ancient Israel. Descendants of these peoples continue as prominent nations today (particularly the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh) because they have inherited the physical blessings of Abraham. In addition to the physical blessings promised Abraham, another promise was made by God to this patriarch—a promise of salvation through his Seed (Jesus Christ), which all people, regardless of their physical lineage, may receive. All who respond to God's calling belong to Christ and are considered Abraham's seed. Understanding these promises made to Abraham provides a more accurate understanding of the world today and the messages of the prophets.

Scriptural support: Genesis 12:1-3; 32:28; Psalm 111:1-10; Romans 4:12, 16; 9:7-8; Galatians 3:16, 28-29.

One of the central themes of the Bible is that God keeps His promises. This can be clearly seen in God's faithfulness to the promises He made to Abraham and his descendants (Nehemiah 1:5; Genesis 17:17-19; 26:5). God will fulfill His purpose and keep His promises—promises that ultimately will benefit not only Abraham and his seed, but all of mankind.

Because of Abraham's faithfulness, God promised to bless his descendants both physically and spiritually. These blessings benefit all of mankind and include the greatest blessing of all—salvation and eternal

life through the Savior, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:51-55; Galatians 3:16). God's faithfulness to His promises confirms His mercy, greatness and sovereignty.

“
Jesus Christ has
made it possible
for all people
who believe—
no matter what
nation they are
from—to receive
eternal life. . . He
is the ‘Seed’ of
Abraham through
whom salvation
is offered.”

Both physical and spiritual promises and blessings

God appeared to Abraham and promised that many blessings and mercies would flow to and through his descendants. This was physically impossible, since Abraham and Sarah were aged and childless, so it required a miraculous fulfillment! This taught Abraham and Sarah an important lesson we still need

to learn today—to rely on God in faith to fulfill His promises in the way He sees fit.

This set a pattern. Abraham and Sarah (and their descendants) would need to wait on God in faith to do things that they were powerless to do themselves. Abraham is called “the father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11).

The promises were both physical (involving prosperity, security and national power) and spiritual (eternal salvation). Here is a summary of those promises:

Physical blessings. Abraham's descendants would receive God's great material benefits, specifically:

- To have large populations (Genesis 13:16; 15:5; 26:4; 28:14).
- To be multiple nations and have multiple dynasties (Genesis 17:6; 28:3; Romans 4:17-21).
- To be one great nation and a great company of nations (Genesis 12:2; 35:11).
- To have abundant prosperity (Leviticus 26:4-5; Deuteronomy 7:13-14; 28:8).
- To be a conduit of God's blessings to all other peoples on earth (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18).
- To have an unending royal line through David (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:3-4, 33, 37; Jeremiah 33:17; Luke 1:32-33).
- To possess the gates of their enemies—control of trade routes and strategic military passages (Genesis 22:17; 24:60).
- To have protection, success and intervention in military engagements with their enemies (Genesis 49:24; Exodus 14:14; 23:28; Deuteronomy 20:4; 28:7; Joshua 10:25; Micah 5:8-9).

Spiritual blessings. The greatest blessing of all would be a descendant of Abraham who would come as the Christ—the Messiah, or Anointed One. He would be:

- God in the flesh (Isaiah 7:13-14; John 1:14; 20:31).
- A descendant of Judah (Genesis 49:10).
- A descendant of the house of David (Psalm 89:35-37; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5, 10; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Revelation 22:16).
- The Savior of the world (Luke 2:10-11; John 4:42; Acts 2:34-36).
- Abraham's Seed and the One who makes it possible for people of all nations to become sons of Abraham spiritually (Romans 2:28-29; Galatians 3:7, 29).
- The One who will ultimately rule the world in righteousness and peace (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10, Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 19:16).

These promises were, and will be, fulfilled through Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

A nation and a company of nations

Many of the national and physical blessings recorded in the scriptures above can be summarized as follows. Beginning with a childless couple, God would fill the earth with uncounted numbers of the offspring of Abraham.

First, there was the miracle baby, Isaac, through whom the promises would carry forward. Then, twin boys were born to Isaac, but the promises of national greatness would flow through the second-born son (Jacob), instead of the first (Esau).

Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) fathered 12 sons. The chief portion of the blessings would be given to Joseph and then divided between his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Ephraim would become multiple nations—a “company of nations”—and Manasseh would become a great single nation. We believe these promises have been fulfilled through Britain and the Commonwealth (Ephraim) and the United States of America (Manasseh).

Joseph’s descendants have been the greatest beneficiaries of these physical blessings (Genesis 48:8-20; 49:22-26; 1 Chronicles 5:2). But these blessings were not given because of any kind of superiority of these people, but because of God’s faithfulness to the promises He made to Abraham. In fact, for much of their history, the descendants of Israel have misused their blessings and have had to be punished. Many prophecies show that the descendants of Israel in the end time will also face punishment for their sins and misuse of God’s blessings (Jeremiah 30:7).

“To Abraham and his Seed . . . who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16)

It was prophesied that the Savior would descend from Jacob’s son Judah: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (Genesis 49:10). This prophecy of “Shiloh” found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ—a physical descendant of Judah and David (Matthew 1:1; Hebrews 7:14).

Jesus Christ has made it possible for all people who believe—no matter what nation they are from—to receive eternal life (Revelation 5:9).

He is the “Seed” of Abraham through whom salvation is offered to the peoples of all nations (Galatians 3:16). Paul described it this way: “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were

baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet *[The United States, Britain and the Commonwealth in Prophecy](#)*.



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Fundamental Belief

The Return of Jesus Christ to Earth

At the end of this present evil age, Jesus Christ will visibly return to earth to establish the Kingdom of God and reign forever and ever, beginning with a 1,000-year period commonly called the Millennium. He will sit upon the throne of David, ruling all nations as King of Kings and serving as High Priest to all who recognize Him as their Lord and Master. As prophesied, He will at this time restore all things and establish the Kingdom of God forever.

Scriptural support: Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 18, 27; Matthew 24:30, 44; Revelation 1:7; 11:15; 19:16; 20:4-6; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-16; John 14:3; Isaiah 9:7; 40:10-11; Hebrews 7:24; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 1:11; 3:21; 15:16.

Around 2,000 years ago, Jesus, the Christ, was born in very humble circumstances. Most people were not aware that He was on earth. He lived a relatively short human life before being brutally crucified and killed.

But He was resurrected and returned to heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father. This was all planned long before and was brought to pass in fulfillment of God's purpose (Acts 2:23-24).

He came to the earth once and accomplished many things. But that's not all—He is coming again! At His ascension to heaven, angels assured His disciples that He *would* return (Acts 1:9-11).

In Hebrews 9:28 we read a summation of His first and second comings: “Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

His first coming made it possible for sin to be forgiven. But He is coming a second time to bring salvation.

Every eye shall see Him

This time, at His second coming, the whole world will be acutely aware of His presence. “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). He will come just in time to save humanity and keep us from destroying ourselves. “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

There will be accompanying signs and wonders in the sky. “For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be . . . Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:27, 30).

Jesus’ second coming will be an incredible physical spectacle that will grab the attention of all people throughout the earth.

King of Kings and Lord of Lords

When He returns, Jesus will not come as a suffering Servant, but as a ruling King over all the nations of the earth (Revelation 11:15). He will be “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16)—meaning He will come with supreme authority.

One of the first things He will do is resurrect the saints—those who have been converted—glorifying them as spirit-born sons and daughters in the family of God (John 5:25; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Those saints who are alive at His coming will also rise in the air and be glorified.

Together with Christ, the glorified children of God will rule over the earth as kings and priests (Revelation 5:10).

The fact that Jesus would return and reign over the earth was prophesied by many throughout the Bible, including:

- Jesus Himself: John 14:3; Matthew 25:31-34.
- The apostles: Acts 3:20-21; Revelation 1:7; 20:4, 6; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 9:28.
- The prophets: Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:3-4, 9; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:27; Micah 4:1-3.
- The righteous angels: Acts 1:11; Luke 1:32-33.

At Jesus' return, Satan and the demons will be restrained and will not be permitted to deceive mankind for a thousand years (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). This 1,000-year period is often called the Millennium.

Christ will establish His government over the earth, and the resurrected saints will assist Him in ruling in righteousness.

According to Peter, at this time Jesus will begin the "restoration of all things" (Acts 3:21). He will restore everything to the way God originally intended things to be before creation was marred by sin (Genesis 3:17-19; Revelation 22:3; Isaiah 11:4-9). He will make the Holy Spirit available to all mankind, allowing all to know and yield to Him (Joel 2:28; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27; Jeremiah 32:39-40).

Those who know and believe these biblical truths echo, in their thoughts and prayers, the nearly last words of the Bible. In light of Jesus' promise, "Surely I am coming quickly," they respond, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet [*The World to Come: What It Will Be Like*](#).



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Fundamental Belief

The Resurrections

Being resurrected from the grave is the only hope of eternal life for deceased human beings. The Scriptures reveal that there will be three distinct future resurrection periods for those who have died. At the return of Jesus Christ, a first resurrection to eternal life will take place for all of God's faithful servants who have died throughout the ages. These individuals will rise from their graves and, along with living humans who have the Holy Spirit residing within them, will be changed into immortal, spirit beings. After the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth, there will be a second resurrection to physical life for the majority of all people who have ever lived. These people will then have their first and only opportunity to hear, understand and respond to God's calling. If they become converted, they will receive eternal life. There will be a third resurrection for the incorrigible to a brief period of consciousness, in which they will receive the righteous judgment of God—their destruction in the lake of fire. This resurrection is reserved for those who have rejected God's offer of salvation, reaping eternal death, also called the second death, from which there is no further resurrection.

Scriptural support: 1 Corinthians 15:19, 45-53; Acts 23:6; John 5:21-29; Romans 6:23; 8:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Ezekiel 37:1-14; Revelation 20:4-5, 11-15; John 3:16; Matthew 25:46.

The Bible reveals that death is an enemy (1 Corinthians 15:26). All human beings will die at some point. “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Even the righteous throughout history have died (Hebrews 11:13). By all outward appearances, death seems to be the universal final reality for God’s human creation.

But Jesus said that God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living” (Luke 20:38). And the Bible is clear that death is not permanent. The dead will live again.

However, the hope for the dead is not found in their souls ascending to heaven after death (John 3:13), but in a future resurrection.

A resurrection for all

Between the time of death and the resurrection, the state of death is likened to sleep—total unconsciousness (Psalms 13:3; 146:4; Acts 13:36).

But because of what Christ has done, there will be a resurrection back to life—for all of the dead. “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:25). Every human being who has ever lived and died will live again.

However, this does not mean that everyone will be raised at the same time or for the same purpose. God’s plan includes resurrecting all the dead back to life, “each one in his own order” (1 Corinthians 15:23). This “order” actually involves three distinct resurrections.

Multiple resurrections—multiple purposes

God is righteous, “a just God and a Savior” (Isaiah 45:21). In His righteousness and justice, He desires to save His children, not condemn them (Ezekiel 33:11).

In fact, He desires that all human beings who have ever lived accept His offer of salvation—eternal life—through Jesus Christ. And, in His justice and fairness, all will have a chance to understand that offer and respond to it. Multiple scriptures underscore this truth:

- “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

- “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).
- “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19).
- “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2).
- “For there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11).

However, the Bible reveals two additional truths about all of this. One has to do with timing. The other has to do with responsibility and choice.

A first resurrection

The first resurrection will occur at Jesus Christ’s return to earth and will include all of God’s faithful saints through the ages (1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). This resurrection to glory and immortality for the firstfruits is called the “first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-6).

At the time of this resurrection, the saints will be transformed to spirit and born as children into the eternal family of God. It’s called the “better resurrection” because great power will be given to the saints and they will never again face the specter of death (Hebrews 11:35).

A second resurrection

The second resurrection occurs after the 1,000-year rule of Christ on earth. “But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5). This will be a resurrection back to physical life.

Those in this resurrection will be people who were deceived by Satan and didn’t have the chance to be converted during their physical lifetime (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 12:9). God has permitted most of humanity to be spiritually blinded to His truth (Romans 11:7; 2 Corinthians 3:14; John 12:40). For now, the summary statement of Scripture regarding this group is: “For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all” (Romans 11:32).

In His justice and fairness, God will resurrect these vast multitudes—the billions of people who have ever lived—back to human life and, for the first time, will open their minds to His truth. At this time, the books of the Bible and the Book of Life (picturing the opportunity for eternal life) will be opened to them (Revelation 20:12). Then they will be judged, depending

on how they respond. The prophet Ezekiel wrote about this physical resurrection for Israel in Ezekiel 37. Other passages show people of all nations will be raised at that time (Matthew 11:21-24; 12:41-42).

A third resurrection

The third resurrection is a resurrection of condemnation to those who have rejected God's calling and have consciously chosen the way of death (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-27, 32).

Revelation 20 describes this group as those “not found written in the Book of Life” (verse 15). They will be “cast into the lake of fire,” which is “the second death” (verses 14-15). There will be no opportunity for resurrection from this death.

This final death will be the ultimate wage for unrepentant sinners (Romans 6:23).

God will not—cannot—force salvation on anyone. All people must choose. The Bible reveals that some have already knowingly and intentionally hardened their hearts and rebelled against God and that others will do so in the future. God will resurrect them, pass final judgment on them, and then mercifully destroy them forever in a lake of fire (Revelation 20:14-15; Daniel 12:2; Malachi 4:1).

Though this can seem harsh, it will be a just and merciful punishment for those who willfully choose to reject God and His way of life. They will not suffer for eternity—as pictured by the traditional idea of hellfire—but will be quickly and mercifully destroyed and never live again.

To learn more about this topic, download our free booklet *[The Last Enemy: What Really Happens After Death](#)*.

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