

What We Believe

The Holy Scriptures

We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible constitute the Word of God, His only written special revelation to man, which He has faithfully preserved throughout time. The Scriptures are divinely inspired and God-breathed in origin which means that they must be inerrant in their original writings and infallible. Such inspiration must also be verbal (every word inspired) and plenary (all parts equally inspired) because God is its Source (Psalm 119:151,160; Mat. 5:18, 24:35; John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16). An infallible God cannot write a fallible Book (John 10:35). God gave the Bible to mankind through human authors led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved these men who wrote through their own personalities and styles. Thus we speak of the dual authorship of Scripture which maintains God as its Source, blended with the unique traits of the human writers (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Scriptures were written primarily to common people in the common language of the day and thus are to be interpreted literally, allowing for the use of obvious figures of speech, illustrations, etc., especially where so noted (e.g. Gal. 4:21-31).

Literal interpretation also incorporates the historical setting in which each book was written and the language in which each book was written, otherwise known as the historical-grammatical method. The Bible can only be truly understood as men are enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Mat. 16:17; John 7:17, 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:10-16). The Bible constitutes the only authoritative, absolute, infallible guideline to faith and practice and is fully sufficient to bring men to salvation and maturity in Jesus Christ (Col. 1:28; 1 Thes.2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:3).

God

We believe that there is only one true and living God who is infinite, eternal, perfect in all His attributes and ways, and is eternally manifest in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These Members form the triune Godhead, or Trinity, and are one in essential nature, yet possess distinct personalities. Each Member equally possesses all the attributes of deity and is equally worthy of worship and obedience (Deu. 6:4; Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 44:6-7, 45:5-7; Mat. 28:19; Mark 12:29; John 10:30; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Tim. 2:5). We believe that the triune Godhead created the universe in six literal, 24-hour periods. We reject

evolution, the Gap Theory, the Day-Age Theory, and Theistic Evolution as unscriptural theories of origin (Gen. 1-2; Exo.20:11).

God the Father

We believe that God the Father is the first Person of the Trinity who created all things and causes all things to work together according to His sovereign plan, a plan designed to bring Him ultimate glory. As the supreme Ruler of the universe, His sovereignty extends over all things including creation and redemption (Gen.1:1-31; Psalm 103:19; Mat. 20:15; Rom.11:36; 1 Cor. 8:6; 15:24,28; Eph. 1:11, 3:9,11; Rev. 4:11). However, such sovereignty does not make Him the author of sin, nor does it excuse the accountability of moral and volitional creatures when they fall into sin (Hab. 1:13; Mat. 16:27; John 5:29, 8:24; Rom. 2:6, 3:23, 6:23; James 1:13-15; 2 Peter 2:4-6). The Father is co-equal in essence with both the Son and the Holy Spirit, however, as the first Person of the Trinity, He maintains authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit as They do His will (1 Cor. 11:3, John 5:19-37, 10:18, 29). He is the spiritual Father of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all believers, whom He adopts as sons when they come to genuine, saving faith in Christ (John 1:12, 5:17-18, 10:30, 20:17; Rom. 8:15; 2 Cor. 1:3; Galatians 3:26, 4:5; Eph. 1:3; Heb. 12:5-8; 1 Peter 1:3).

God the Son

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God and second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the attributes of deity and is co-equal, co-existent, co-eternal with, and of the same nature as the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 5:17-18, 8:58, 10:30, 14:9-10; Col. 1:19, 2:9). Although sharing equality with the Father, the Son is submissive to Him in the execution of the Father's will. The Father created all things through the Son, by whom all things continue in existence and operation (John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3).

In His incarnation, when He assumed a human nature, Jesus Christ yielded only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind, and only during His first coming. He became fully human, except that He was completely without sin, and so became the God-Man (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). As God incarnate, Jesus Christ represents full humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 1:1,14, 14:9; Col. 2:9).

In His incarnation, Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Mat. 1:23,25; Luke 1:26-35). The purpose of His incarnation was to glorify God by revealing Him to man, redeeming lost men, and ruling over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; 110:1-7; Isa. 9:6-7; Mat. 11:27; John 1:18,29, 14:9; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3, 7:25; 1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ accomplished this redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross. His death was voluntary, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (Isa. 53:1-12; John 10:15, 17-18; Rom. 3:24-25, 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 2:2).

Three days after His death, Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead to fulfill prophecy, to divinely confirm His Messiahship and His deity, and to provide proof of the Father's acceptance of His atoning work on the cross, thus making the believer's justification sure (Psalm 16:10; Mat. 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:6; John 2:19-21, 20:9; Acts 2:32; Rom. 1:4, 4:25; 6:5-10). Jesus' resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:25-29, 11:23-26; 1 Cor. 15:20,23).

Based on the efficacy of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, penalty, power, and one day the complete presence of sin; is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom. 3:24-25, 5:8-9,19, 8:15; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18).

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father where He now sits in glory and mediates as the believer's Advocate and High Priest (Acts 1:3,9; Rom. 8:34, 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:3, 7:25, 9:24; 1 John 2:1). He presently reigns as the Head of His Body, the church, and will return to receive her unto Himself at the Rapture. At the end of the Great Tribulation, He will return with His church in glory to establish His millennial kingdom on the earth and reign on the throne of David (Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:9-11; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:23; Col. 1:18; 1 Thes. 4:17; Rev. 19:7-16, 20:4-6).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind, both believers for their faithfulness of service and unbelievers for their rejection of Him as Lord and Savior (Mat. 25:14-46; John 5:22-23; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:9-10; Rev. 20:11-15).

God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, possesses all the attributes of deity and is co-equal, co-existent, co-eternal with,

and of the same nature as the Father and the Son (Mat. 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; and Jer. 31:31-34 with Heb. 10:15-17). The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Cor. 2:10-13), eternity (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isa. 40:13-14), omnipotence (Rom. 15:19), and truth (John 16:13). The work of the Holy Spirit is to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. This includes His sovereign activity in creation (Gen. 1:2), the incarnation of the Son (Mat. 1:18,20; Luke 1:35), the written revelation of God (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-8).

In this present age, the Holy Spirit was sent forth from the Father and the Son to initiate and complete the building of the church, to speak of and glorify the Son, and to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 13-14; Acts 1:5, 2:4; Eph. 2:19-22). The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration who enables every believer to see their need for salvation, without which salvation would be impossible, and then draws them to Jesus Christ (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6). The Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ at the moment of salvation, at which time He also indwells them with all fullness (John 3:34; 14:17; Romans 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 12:13). Subsequent to salvation, it is the duty of all those born of the Holy Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit which is evidenced by the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Mat. 7:16-20; Gal. 5:16,22-23,25; Eph. 5:18).

Concerning His further ministry to the believer, the Holy Spirit also sanctifies them, instructs them, empowers them for service, seals them unto the day of redemption, and transforms them into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:6,18; Eph. 1:13, 4:7-13,30; 1 John 2:20,27). The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher who guided the prophets and apostles into all truth as they committed to writing God's special revelation, the Bible (John 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21). He administers spiritual gifts to the church but neither glorifies Himself or His gifts by ostentatious displays. Instead, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Cor. 3:18).

In this respect, God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing and

exercising of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints. However, the special and extraordinary gifts such as speaking in tongues and sign miracles in the beginning years of the church were meant to point to and authenticate the apostles as revealers of divine truth and not to be normal characteristics of believers today (Rom. 15:18-19; Eph. 2:20-22, 4:7,11-13; 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:1-4).

Man

We believe that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Gen. 2:7,15-25; James 3:9). God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify Him, enjoy His fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isa. 43:7; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

In Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost.

Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:16-17, 3:1-19; John 3:36; Rom. 3:23, 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8). Because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the sole exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9-18,23; 5:10-12).

Salvation

We believe that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works whatsoever (John 1:12; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 1:7, 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit

by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:4). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God, when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation (John 5:24, 6:37,44).

Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct (Mat. 3:8; Luke 3:8, Acts 26:20). Divinely-energized and ordained good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-26), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Gal. 5:16,22-25; Eph. 5:17-21; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This divinely-empowered obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29, 2 Cor. 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 15:42-54; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2-3).

While regeneration brings to life a new inner man alive to God, the believer still struggles with indwelling sin. The result of this is that the flesh and the Spirit are engaged in an ongoing battle which will never cease until the believer is with the Lord (Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:17; 1 John 1:8). Believers are not exempt from reaping what they sow simply because they are saved and likewise are subject to divine chastening when they sin, even to the point of death (1 Cor. 11:30-32; Gal. 6:7-8; Heb. 12:4-13). This painful and difficult struggle may at times result in the believer falling into grievous sins, even for a period of time (Luke 15:11-32; 1 Cor. 5:1,9-11).

Fellow believers are to be diligent to restore such a brother to spiritual health in a spirit of love, humility and gentleness, considering their own innate depravity and vulnerability to sin (1 Cor. 10:12-13; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1-2). However, continued unrepentant sin calls into question the reality of one's profession of faith (Mat. 7:15-20, 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:11, 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5-6) and requires the church to deal with such a person according to the guidelines of church discipline, both for his own welfare and the protection of the Body of Christ (Mat. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13).

Election

We believe that election is the sovereign act of God by which, before the foundation of the world and without regard to the future choices of man, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Rom. 8:28-30, 9:10-24; Eph. 1:4-11; 2 Thes. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). God's sovereign election does not negate man's responsibility to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Eze. 18:23,32, 33:11; John 3:18-19,36, 5:40; Rom. 9:22-23; 2 Thes. 2:10-12; Rev. 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, God's election will result in what He determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40,44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

However, the sovereignty of God does not excuse the believer to develop a fatalistic mentality or to become indifferent to the salvation of the lost. Instead it should deepen his love for God, realizing that God has chosen him from eternity past, and therefore motivate even more his desire to obey and serve (Eph. 1:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:14). The unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Rom. 9:9-18; Eph. 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet. 1:2).

Election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes including His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, mercy, and love (Rom. 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mat. 11:25-30; Luke 10:21-22; 2 Tim. 1:9-10).

Sovereign election does not deny God's love for all mankind or His desire that all be saved (John 3:16-17; 1 Tim. 2:4). While this may appear contrary to the doctrine of election, both are equal and reconcilable truths in the eyes of God and reflect the majestic and immeasurable greatness of His mind and ways (Isa. 40:13-14, 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33-36; 1 Cor. 2:16). Neither does election mean that God acts callously, cruelly or unfairly towards the lost; on the contrary, He takes no pleasure as He executes judgment against them (Eze. 18:23,32, 33:11; Luke 19:41-44), a judgment that is both righteous and deserved (Eze. 18:20,30; Mat. 16:27, 25:41-46; John 3:18-20; Rom. 2:6, 6:23;

Rev. 20:12-13).

Justification

We believe that justification before God is an act of God (Rom. 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith alone in Christ, repent of sin and place their trust in Him as their Savior, confessing Him as sovereign Lord (Isa. 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 11:18, 16:31; Rom. 2:4, 3:24-25, 10:9-10; 1 Cor. 12:3, 2 Cor. 4:5, 7:10; Phil. 2:11).

This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Rom. 3:20, 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Col. 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:30, 2 Cor. 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Sanctification

We believe that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2,30, 6:11; Phil. 1:1; 2 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 2:11, 3:1, 10:10,14, 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

There is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing he positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Rom. 6:1-22, 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18).

In this respect, every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural (1 John 1:8). Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Gal. 5:16-25; Eph. 4:22-24; Phil. 3:12; Col. 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24, 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Rom. 5:9-10, 8:1,31-39; 1 Cor. 1:4-8; Eph. 1:13, 4:30; Heb. 7:25, 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24). It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids both the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Rom. 6:1-2,15-22, 13:13-14; Gal. 5:13,25-26; Titus 2:11-14; Jude 4) as well as any attitude that downplays or ignores the believer's responsibility to persevere and grow in Christ-likeness as enabled by the Holy Spirit (Mat. 10:22, 24:13; Phil. 2:12-13; 1 John 5:4).

Separation

We believe that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). Out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to Him and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11). However, such separation is not to be confused with complete withdrawal from unbelievers. While the Christian is not of the world, he remains in the world as a testimony of the light and life offered by Jesus Christ (Mat. 5:13-16, 11:19; Luke 7:34; John 17:14-18; 1 Cor. 5:9-10). Believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 1:11-12; Heb. 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness reflecting the Beatitudes (Mat. 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

The Church

We believe that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ become children of God (Gal. 3:28; John 1:12). And all those who believe in Christ are

then required to become a part of a local church. The church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of born-again believers in this present age (Eph. 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor. 10:32), and is a mystery not revealed until this age (Eph. 3:1-6, 5:32). The establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament (Acts 14:23,27, 20:17,28; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Cor. 11:18-20; Heb. 10:24-25). The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures (Mat. 28:18). The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are the elders (also called bishops/overseers and pastors—Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11). The elders must meet the biblical qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4). Deacons minister as servants in the church. They also must meet the biblical qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13; Rom. 16:1). The elders lead and rule as servants of Christ (1 Tim. 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. However, such authority never allows any leader to exploit the flock nor govern in an authoritative, lording manner (1 Peter 5:3; 2 Peter 2:3; Jude 16). The congregation is to submit to their loving, servant leadership as they teach and lead in accordance with the Word of God (Heb. 13:7,17). The local church is to be the center of discipleship, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth (Mat. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Mat. 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of those engaged in unrepentant sin in accord with the standards of Scripture (Mat. 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thes. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16, 3:10-11).

The New Testament teaches the autonomy of the local church, being free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). It is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith (Acts 15; Rom. 15:26-24; Phil. 1:5, 4:15-16; Col. 4:16). Each local church, through its elders and interpretation and application of Scripture, is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. However, it is equally unbiblical for true churches to

unite with apostate churches—those denying any essential doctrine of the Christian faith—in any form of joint endeavor, being unequally yoked. Such ecclesiastical separation is required by Scripture in spite of other common beliefs and/or values they may share (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Gal. 2:5; Eph. 5:11; 1 John 2:19; Rev. 18:4). The elders determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, government, etc., and are called to discern the will of God for the unique issues concerning each local assembly (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Cor. 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph. 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Eph. 4:11-16), by instruction of the Word (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15; 3:16-17, 4:2), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Mat. 28:19; Acts 1:8, 2:42).

The church is called to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:5-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11). All saints are equally called to the work of service (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:12; Rev. 22:12), not just those in leadership or who serve in a vocational sense, and all saints will be required to give an account for their service (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Concerning spiritual gifts, there were two kinds given the early church: miraculous sign gifts, including divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4); and ministering, non-revelatory gifts, given to equip believers to edify one another, and which remain in operation today (Rom. 12:6-8). With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (John 14:26, 16:13, 17:17; Gal. 1:8-9; 2 Tim. 2:15, 4:2-4). False miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (Mat. 24:24; Rev. 13:13-14). The gift of healing is not normative for today but God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick,

suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

Our Lord Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Mat. 28:19; Acts 2:38-42; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). Believer's baptism is a singular act, by immersion (Acts 8:36-39), and beautifully testifies of believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life (Rom. 6:1-11). It is also a testimony to the world of our union with the Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42). Because it is a testimony of the believer's choice to follow Jesus Christ, it is only for those who have made such a volitional decision and therefore is not intended for infants or small children presently incapable of such decisions. The Lord's Supper is a regular observance of the rich commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes and should always be preceded with solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:23-32). The elements of the Communion table are only representative of the body and blood of Christ and are not changed in any way to that effect.

While believers are commanded to participate in baptism and the Lord's Supper out of love and obedience (Mat. 26:26-27; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:38, 10:47-48; 1 Cor. 11:23-25), they do not do so for any merit of salvation (1 Cor. 1:17). Because salvation is the free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ (John 4:10; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9), there is no sacramental imparting of saving grace by participation in these ordinances.

Angels

We believe that angels are created spirit beings who appear to be the first issue of God's creation (Gen. 1:1 with Job 38:6-7; Neh. 9:6). They are a higher order of creation (Psalm 8:5 with Heb. 2:7-9) and greater in power than man (2 Peter 2:11) and fall into two categories: elect, holy angels (Mark 8:38; 1 Tim. 5:21), and fallen angels (Mat. 25:41).

Holy Angels

We believe that the holy angels serve God and worship Him (Psalm 103:20-21; Luke 2:9-14; Heb. 1:6-7; Rev. 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9). They presently are engaged in spiritual warfare with the demonic host and serve as ministering agents for believers (Daniel 10:12-13; Heb. 1:14;

Jude 9; Rev. 12:7-8).

Fallen Angels

We believe that the fallen angels were initially created perfect and enjoyed fellowship with God but rebelled against Him and were cast out of heaven (Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:13-15; Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:7-9). Salvation is not extended to them as they are destined for a certain, eternal judgment (Mat. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

At the head of the demonic host is the devil, or Satan. As a created being, he possesses none of the attributes of deity and should not be treated as though he does. He is the author of sin and incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:11-19), taking an apparent one-third of the angels with him in his fall (Rev. 12:4), and introducing sin into the human race with his temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1-15). Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isa. 14:13-14; Mat. 4:1-11; John 10:10; Rev. 12:9-10). He is also the prince, or god, of this present evil world system which opposes the true God (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2) and holds the entirety of unbelieving humanity under his control (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; 2 Tim. 2:26; 1 John 5:19). He violently opposes believers and their service to the Lord (Job 1-2; Luke 22:31; John 17:15; Eph. 6:12; 1 Thes. 2:18; 1 Peter 5:8; Rev. 12:10). However, he is powerless against God and has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 14:30, 16:11; Rom. 16:20; Col. 2:15), and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:11-19; Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Last Things (Eschatology)

We believe that the study of eschatology should give hope and comfort to believers and challenge them to live for the glory of God as they look forward to the consummation of His eternal plan and spending eternity with Him (Luke 21:28; 1 Thes. 5:4-11; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 3:10-14; 1 John 2:28-3:3; Rev. 1:3). Eschatology can be divided into two categories: (1) individual, which relates to the destiny of each man both saved and lost and; (2) cosmic, which relates to the completion of history and God's eternal plan.

Individual Eschatology

We believe that physical death results in a separation of soul/spirit and

body but involves no loss of immaterial consciousness (Mat. 22:32; Luke 16:19-31, 20:37-38; Rev. 6:9-11). All men will be bodily raised from the dead, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Rom. 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Cor. 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13-15). The soul/spirit of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ at death (Luke 23:43; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8). The separation of soul/spirit and body will continue until the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thes. 4:13-17), when the soul/spirit and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:35-44, 50-54). Until then, the soul/spirit of the redeemed remains in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8). The soul/spirit of the lost passes immediately into punishment at death (Luke 16:19-26). The separation of soul/spirit and body will continue until the second resurrection at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20:13-15), when the soul/spirit and body will be reunited (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire, cut off from the life and presence of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Mat. 25:41-46; 2 Thes. 1:7-9).

Cosmic Eschatology

We believe that cosmic eschatology concerns the completion of history and God's eternal plan and can be divided into five main categories: (1) the Rapture of the Church; (2) the Tribulation Period; (3) the Second Coming and the Millennial Reign; (4) the Judgment of the Lost and; (5) the Eternal State.

The Rapture of the Church

Our Lord Jesus Christ will return bodily before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thes. 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth and into His presence (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thes. 4:15-5:11). Between this event and His glorious return with His saints, He will reward individual believers according to their works at the Bema Judgment (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10) and will be united with His bride, the church, in the Marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-10).

The Tribulation Period

Immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John

14:1-3; 1 Thes. 4:13-18), the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jer. 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thes. 2:7-12; Rev. 16). These judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Zec. 14:2-4; Mat. 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thes. 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel 12:2-3; Mat. 25:31-46; Rev. 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

After the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Mat. 25:31; Luke 1:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His Messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the earth (Rev. 20:1-7). During this time the saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Eze. 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Rev. 20:4-6). This reign will be preceded by the banishment of Satan into the abyss, the overthrow of his evil world system, and the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet (Daniel 7:17-27; Rev. 20:1-7).

The kingdom itself will be the literal fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isa. 65:17-25; Eze. 37:21-28; Zech. 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deu. 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Mat. 21:43; Rom. 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance and belief in Jesus Christ as Messiah to enter into the land of blessing (Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:22-32; Rom. 11:25-29).

This time of our Lord's millennial reign will be a time of unparalleled blessing since the fall, extending throughout the whole world to all races, and will be characterized by righteousness, harmony, justice, peace, and long life (Isa. 11; 65:17-25; Eze. 36:33-38). It will be brought to an end with the temporary release of Satan, who will lead the millennial unbelievers in one final rebellion (Rev. 20:7-9).

The Judgment of the Lost

Following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ, he will deceive the nations and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time he and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Rev. 20:7-9). Satan will then be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10), whereupon all the lost will

resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne Judgment.

This resurrection of the unsaved dead will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment, they will be committed to an eternal, conscious, and unspeakable punishment in the lake of fire (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15).

The Eternal State

After the close of the Millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thes. 1:9; Rev. 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:15; 21-22).

Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Rev. 21-22).

Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Cor. 15:28).

Civil Government

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three institutions: 1) the home; 2) the church; and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are sovereign in the respective biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God (Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-24; Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

Human Sexuality

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance (Gen. 2:24, 19:5, 13, 26:8-9; Lev. 18:1-30; Rom. 1:26-29; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9; 1

Thes. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).

2. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman (Gen. 2:24; Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:10; Eph. 5:22-23).

Family relationships

1. We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in position before God, but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:18; 1 Tim. 2:8-15, 3:4-5,12).

2. We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife like Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are a heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction (Gen. 1:26-28; Exo. 20:12; Deu. 6:4-9; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Cor. 7:1-16; Eph. 5:21-33, 6:1-4; Col. 3:18-21; Heb. 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that God disapproves of and forbids divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. Divorce and remarriage is regarded as adultery except on the grounds of fornication (Mal. 2:14-17; Mat. 19:3-12; Rom. 7:1-3).

Abortion

We believe that human life starts at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control, or the physical or mental well being of the mother are acceptable (Job 3:16; Psalm 51:5, 139:14-16; Isa. 44:24, 49:1, 5; Jer. 1:5, 20:15-18; Luke 1:44).

Love

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the taking up of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God commands us to abhor sinful actions we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions (Lev. 19:18; Mat. 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10, 17-21, 13:8-10; Phil. 2:2-4; 2 Tim. 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18).

Lawsuits Between Believers

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bring civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolves personal disputes. We believe the church possesses all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander (1 Cor. 6:1-8; Eph. 4:31-32).

Missions

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

Giving

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to Him, is obligated to support his local church financially. We believe that we should all give as the Lord has prospered us. A Christian should always give sacrificially and cheerfully to the support of the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the gospel. We believe that the Christian relinquished all rights to direct the use of the funds once the gift has been made. The elders have the right to re-appropriate designated funds in a different area if deemed necessary

(Gen. 14:20; Prov 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17).

Changes to the Statement of Faith

The elders reserve the right to make changes to the Statement of Faith based upon a further understanding of the historical, grammatical interpretation of the Scriptures (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Authority of the Statement of Faith

The Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members. All literature used and teaching in the church shall be in complete agreement of the Statement of Faith.

Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of our Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as a local church in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances, and all others; to walk wisely in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful to our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, gossip, and excessive anger; to abstain from unbiblical amusements and activities.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy of

speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, and to secure reconciliation without delay.