

Striving For Eternity Doctrinal Statement

This is what we believe the Bible teaches about these things.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

The Bible is God's special self-revelation, which is limited in space and time and are directed to various designated individuals (2 Peter 1:21). The accepted writings that make up the Bible are the 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books without any of the additional writings commonly known as the Apocrypha. The Bible provides the only inerrant and absolutely authoritative propositional knowledge of God that exists.

The Bible is inspired by God. Inspiration is that supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in which He superintended (controlled and directed) the reception (to the writers) and communication (to the hearers and the readers) of the divine message to mankind such that the product (the original writing) is verbally (every word) and plenary (completely) both inerrant (without error) and authoritative (2 Timothy 3:16). God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16), thus, making the Scriptures completely and totally sufficient for life and godliness.

The only means of interpreting Scripture is a literal, grammatical, and historical interpretation which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17) and seeing a distinction between Israel and the church. The Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Whereas there may be many applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation according to God. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the illuminating of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

GOD

God the Father

God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His Fatherhood involves both His designations within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has an all-inclusive plan that He designed for His own glory in all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He

abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9). God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:2).

In the incarnation (God becoming man), Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-Man (Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9).

Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10; Colossians 2:9).

Jesus Christ is virgin-born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23,25; Luke 1:26-35); He is God incarnate (John 1:1,14); and the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 7:25-26; 1 Peter 1:18,19).

In the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross. His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

On the basis of the efficacy of the death of Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin, and he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

Our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is called His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23):

- a) Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- b) Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46)
- c) Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15)

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

The work of the Holy Spirit is to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. His activity is sovereign in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

The work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ; and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers believers for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Ephesians 1:13).

The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

The Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the holiest faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today. Speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth and were never

intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

ANGELS

Angels are created, not eternal, beings (Psalm 148:5); therefore, they are not to be worshiped. Each angel was individually and directly created by God as ministering spirits (Matthew 22:28-30; Hebrews 1:14). They were created before the foundation of the world (Job 38:6-7). Angels, like man, are not eternal but immortal meaning once created, they do not cease to exist. However, unlike man, angels were not created as a race, but a total number (innumerable to man) were created at one time.

Men cannot become angels, and angels cannot become men. Angels are distinct from both man and God and will be for all eternity (1 Corinthians 6:3; Hebrews 1:14; 2:6-8; 12:22-24). Angels are similar to man in having a personality but limited in power and abilities.

Angels were tested for obedience by a one-time confirmation of holiness or unholiness while man's confirmation occurs at death. Angels are organized and submissive to that organization (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:21; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7).

Holy Angels

Holy angels are those angels that are confirmed in holiness by a single act of obedience that occurred sometime between Genesis 1:31 and 3:1. Holy angels abode in heaven while still having access to the earth (Mark 13:32; Daniel 9:20-23). These holy angels minister to God and specifically to the incarnate Christ. They also minister to believers, unbelievers and nations.

In relation to God, there are angels that worship (Isaiah 6:2-3), praise (Job 38:7; Psalm 103:20), serve (Genesis 19:12-13; Revelation 19:10; 22:8-9), and punish His enemies (2 Kings 19:35; Acts 12:23). While Christ dwelled physically on earth, angels made announcements (Luke 1:26-33; 2:8-14; Matthew 28:6), strengthening Christ (Matthew 4:11) and were present throughout His ministry (Luke 22:43; Acts 1:10).

In relation to believers, they are actively watching over and ministering to individuals and congregations (Genesis 28:12; John 1:51; 1 Kings 19:5; Psalm 91:11; Daniel 6:22; Matthew 4:11; 18:10; Luke 16:22; 1 Corinthians 11:10; 1 Timothy 5:21; Hebrews 1:14). Nowhere does the Bible indicate that there is one angel for each believer. There may even be more than one ministering to anyone believer at a time (Matthew 18:10; Luke 16:22). Their ministry is in urging unto holiness (1 Corinthians 11:10), aiding (Hebrews 1:14), answering prayers (Daniel 9:21; Acts 12:7; Revelation 5:8), observing worship (1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Corinthians 4:9; 11:10; 1 Peter 1:12), rejoicing in salvation (Luke 15: 10), and giving revelation (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2).

In relation to unbelievers, these angels will be involved in the future judgment and act as the reapers at the end of the age (Matthew 13:39, 49-50; 25:31-33; Revelation 8-10).

In relation to nations, these angels have a special relationship to Israel and will be active in gathering elect Israel in the Millennium (Daniel 10:21; 12:1; Matthew 24:31).

Fallen Angels

Unholy angels are those angels that are confirmed in unholiness by a single act of disobedience that occurred between Genesis 1:31 and 3:1. The fall of the unholy angels occurs between God's declaration that all creation was "very good" (Genesis 1:31) and the temptation of Eve by Satan (Genesis 3). These angels apparently fell at the same time that Satan fell and were at that time confirmed in a condition of fallenness. Unholy angels abode on earth or imprisonment but those on earth have access to heaven (Isaiah 14:12; Job 1:6; Jude 6). Unholy angels will be judged by redeemed people (1 Corinthians 6:3). Hell was prepared for suffering and containment for these angels and will be cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:13-14).

Due to the organization of angels, these angels are agents of Satan (Matthew 12:26-27; Ephesians 6:11-12). While attempting to thwart the plan of God, they actually execute it (Daniel 10:10-14; Revelation 16:13-16). They may possess unsaved men (Matthew 4:24) but not believers.

Satan

Satan was the highest created being that fell in an act of disobedience to God (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-17). Satan is a real spiritual person and has intellect, will, and emotions (Isaiah 14:12-13; Matthew 4:6; Luke 22:31; 2 Corinthians 2:11; Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:26; Revelation 12:12). Satan is, as all angels are, limited by God (Job 1:12; 2:6; 1 John 5:18). Satan does not know what a person thinks, nor is he everywhere affecting everything. Satan can only be in one place at one time.

Satan is called an evil deceiver seeking to tempt, oppose, and accuse God and His children (Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:3, 10; John 17:15; Acts 5:3; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 5:18-19; Revelation 12:9; 20:2, 10). He is the god and ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air, and the ruler of the demons (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2). As a serpent, he is crafty and guile and called "the red dragon" in Revelation (Genesis 3:1; 2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:3, 7, 9). Satan is God's adversary and is called "Belial," meaning "worthless" or "wicked" (Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:10; 2 Corinthians 6:15; Revelation 12:9; 20:2).

Satan is not only a person but he is also active in relation to Christ, God, nations, unbelievers, believers, and the world system.

In relation to Christ, Satan was directly involved in the tempting of Christ in the wilderness, the influencing of Peter, and the possessing of Judas to betray Jesus (Matthew 4:3-10; 16:21-23; Luke 4:2; John 13:27).

In relation to God, Satan seeks to corrupt all that is God's through a false, empty religious system, counterfeiting everything that God is (Job 1:11; 2:4-5; 2 Corinthians 11:15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:5; Revelation 2:24). Satan is involved in the directing of demons to influence and deceive nations and will be unusually active in the tribulation period (Daniel 10:13, 20; Revelation 13:2-4; 20:3, 7-10).

In relation to the unbeliever, he is attempting to blind the minds and keep the truth from them in two ways (Luke 8:12; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:13; 1 John 2:15-17). First, Satan creates a false religious system devoid of the truth about salvation. Second, he seeks to enslave a person in sin by enticing his satisfaction away from the truth with the lusts of the flesh.

To the believer, Satan is accusing both in heaven and on earth, attempting to oppose the believer by nullifying his witness (Matthew 13:38-39; Mark 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 2:10; 12:10). Further, he is trying to pressure the believer to conform to the world system using the

pressures of life and those of the world (1 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:14-15). He is active in discouraging believers and seeking to influence them to yield to sinful tendencies (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 2:11).

Lastly, in relation to the world system, he is the ruler who will be judged accordingly (Daniel 2:34-35, 44; Matthew 4:8-9; John 12:31; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:15-16, 5:19; Revelation 17-19).

MAN

Man was directly and immediately created by God on the sixth day of creation. He was created in God's image and likeness and with the appearance of age. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9). Men are distinct from angels in that they are a race while angels are not. Therefore, men cannot become angels, and angels cannot become men. Men are distinct from both angels and God and will be for all eternity (1 Corinthians 6:3; Hebrews 1:14; 2:6-8; 12:22-24). Men are similar to angels in having a personality but limited more so in power and abilities.

God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

The sin nature is that reality that has been imputed directly from Adam to every individual since Adam (except Jesus Christ) (Romans 5:12-19). The whole human race exists seminally through Adam as the head. Thus, there is a seminal universality of humanity. The nature that each person, with the exception of Christ, possesses is the sinful nature passed on from Adam to each generation. By this nature, all men are guilty with race guilt through Adam. The sin nature is inherited, and each person is guilty at the point of conception.

Every person has a sin nature and is totally depraved in that they lack the proper affection and love toward God and do evil. Total depravity also refers to the complete man having been corrupted by sin, including man's will. The inherited sin is the nature of man while the imputed sin is the reality of that nature imputed to each person from Adam. Adam and Eve are sinners because they sinned. Every person afterward sins because he possesses a sin nature. After the fall, Adam and Eve committed sin because they then had a sin nature.

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 (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

Because all men are in Adam, all men of all eras, Jesus Christ being the only exception, inherit a nature corrupted by Adam's sin. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

Abortion

Abortion is the act of murdering an unborn child. The modern debate on the issue of abortion finds its roots in the view of the creation of man. Due to evolutionary thinking, the unborn child is called a fetus and treated as a parasite. A full propagation view does not allow for abortion at any time or in any circumstances. This statement is based on the fact that at the point of conception, the unborn child is a full human being with a physical body (yet being formed but, nonetheless, existing) and a spirit.

SALVATION

Salvation is wholly of God by grace because of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not based on human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Regeneration

Regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which a new nature and eternal life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24) when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10) 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 (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Election

Election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

Sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God 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).

The unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is neither 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 (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 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, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 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 (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Justification

Justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He legally declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Hence, God is both "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

Every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is, therefore, declared to be holy and is, therefore, identified as a saint. Sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. Sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 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 the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and by the empowerment 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; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23). 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. This struggle nevertheless stays with the believer and is never completely ended throughout this earthly life. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Security

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; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 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 the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

Separation

Separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days, apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all believers should live in such a manner as to demonstrate their adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. Separation from all religious apostasy and worldly, sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

Believers should be separated unto the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

THE CHURCH

All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, called the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

The formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

The establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18), and church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor/teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). These leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

The Scriptures explain the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accordance with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

The local church is autonomous, 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 (Titus 1:5). It is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its elders and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The elders should

determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government, as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), 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 (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42). The local church is a God-centered, Bible-centered ministry that seeks eternal preparation by the exaltation of God, edification and equipping of believers, and evangelization of the world, starting with the local community.

The Bible teaches the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

The need of the church is 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 (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

There were two kinds of gifts given to the early church. Miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing were given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12). Ministering gifts were given to equip believers for edifying one another. 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 (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 13:13-14:12; Revelation 13:13-14). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory equipping gifts given for edification (Romans 12:6-8). No one possesses the gift of healing 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 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

The two ordinances that have been committed to the local church are baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death until He comes and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). Whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

LAST THINGS (Eschatology)

Death

Physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11). The soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8). There is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24), and for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), which initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

There will be a bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15).

The souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

There is a literal place known as hell or the lake of fire, where persons, both men and angels, will be consciously punished, both body and soul, for their sin in a real, everlasting, tormenting lake of fire.

The Rapture of the Church

The Lord Jesus Christ will return both personally and bodily before the seven year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Tribulation Period

Immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16), and these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 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; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

After the tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 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 (Revelation 20:1-7). During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

The kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside

(Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26) but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

This time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Isaiah 11; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 36:33-38) and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Revelation 20:7).

The Judgement of the Lost

Following the release of Satan after the thousand year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9). Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10) whereupon Christ, who is the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

This resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon receiving their judgment (Romans 14:10-13), they will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

The Eternal State

After the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 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 (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15, 21-22). The heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 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; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).