

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

We believe that men were moved by God to write the very words of Scripture in the original manuscripts. Because of this divine guidance, the original writings were inerrant and infallible. We believe that the only proper way to understand the Bible is to interpret it according to the intent of the original authors. We also believe that the Bible was given for our practical instruction and obedience. (Jn. 8:31-32; 1Cor. 2:13-14; Gal. 5:16-17; Col. 3:16-17; 2Tim. 3:16; 2Pet. 1:20-21.)

The Doctrine of the Godhead

We believe that God eternally exists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We believe that these three persons constitute One God, One divine Being, not three. Each divine subsistence possesses the same essence and attributes of deity. Though the persons are distinct, they are One God. God the Son was incarnated as the man Jesus of Nazareth; we refer to Him as the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus Christ, and simply Jesus. (Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19; Jn. 10:30; 1Cor. 8:4-6; 1Tim. 2:5; 1Pet. 1:1-2.)

The Doctrine of Angels

We believe that God created a multitude of spiritual beings, known as angels, who were originally holy and without sin. We believe that one of these angels sinned through pride and led away one-third of the rest into rebellion against God. This leader of the morally fallen angels is called Satan, the serpent of old, the Dragon, and the Devil. Most of the fallen angels, called demons and called unclean, evil, or wicked spirits, are free to engage in spiritual warfare against God and His followers. Already a few of these fallen angels have been bound in a place called Tartarus, where they await their final judgment. (Eph. 6:10-12; Col. 1:16; 2Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:9-12.)

We believe that Satan led Adam and Eve, the parents of the human race, into sin. Although Satan was condemned at the death of Jesus, his execution has been postponed, allowing him to rule now as the "god of this world." At the Second Coming of Jesus, Satan will be removed from the earth and will be unable to tempt mankind for a thousand years. Then he will be loosed to entice and deceive the world, leading the rebellious into a final battle against Jesus. Satan and his armies will be defeated. He and his demons then will be punished for eternity. (Gen. 3:1-6; Col. 2:13-15; 1Jn. 5:19; Rev. 12:9, 20:1-3.)

We believe that a multitude of angels, two-thirds of those originally created by God, kept their holy estate and continue to serve God. We believe that some of these are guardian angels over the young and ministering angels over those who are to inherit eternal salvation. (Matt. 18:10; Lk. 15:10; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 12:3-4.)

The Doctrine of Man

We believe that mankind was originally created in the image and likeness of God. In Adam we all sinned against God, and our original relationship with God was lost. From Adam we inherited a depraved nature, so that of our own strength, we can no longer do anything that is acceptable to God. We are guilty of sin, and we are in a state of condemnation because the penalty of our sin rests upon us. Unless our guilt is removed by a sufficient payment for sin, we will suffer eternal condemnation, separated from God and His blessings. Jesus Christ's death is that payment for sin. His resurrection assures us of our right standing before God. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:16-17; 3:6; 5:1; 6:5; Jn. 3:17-18; Rom. 3:10-12, 3:19-26; 4:25; 1Cor. 15:12-20; Eph 2:1-3.)

The Doctrine of Salvation

We believe that salvation from eternal condemnation is a gift from God offered by His grace. We believe that this gift may be received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on a Roman cross as payment for sin. We believe that in His death, Jesus paid all that the Father required for sin. When anyone believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, that person is saved eternally, completely and assuredly. Jesus' death and subsequent resurrection are the means by which He saves. Eternal life is not conditional upon the believer's subsequent obedience. Assurance of salvation is based upon Jesus' promise to the believer and not upon how the believer conducts his life. (Rom. 3:24-26; Jn. 1:29, 3:16, 5:29; Rom. 4:4-5, 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; 1Jn. 5:11-13.)

The Doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit of

God and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal the nature of God the Father and in order that He might free man from the eternal separation from God that is the consequence of sin. We believe that Jesus died in place of all people. We believe that Jesus' death fully satisfies God's justice. Salvation from the consequences of sin is granted by believing God's promise to save; our assurance of salvation is granted in the same way. Apart from Jesus' death, there is no payment for sin that the Father will accept. We believe that Jesus Christ is now in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God the Father, where, as our High Priest, He is our intercessor and advocate before God the Father. (Jn. 1:1-2, 1:14; 1:41, 1:45, 3:16, 5:24, 5:30, 5:37, 10:30, 19:30; Rom. 3:24-26, 4:25, 8:34; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 1:3, 2:18, 3:1, 4:15, 7:23-25, 9:24, 12:1-2; 1Tim. 2:5; 1Jn. 2:1-2.)

The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a person who possesses all the attributes of God. He is the third person of the triune Godhead. We believe that the Holy Spirit makes us aware of our sin and draws the unbeliever to Jesus. We believe that the Spirit accomplishes Jesus' spiritual baptism of believers and places them into the Church. Furthermore, the Spirit seals the believer as a possession of God, making it impossible for the believer to lose his salvation. The Spirit illumines the application of Scripture to the life of the believer and empowers the believer to live a life pleasing to God by making available the life and resources of Jesus. The Spirit bestows any number of twelve spiritual gifts on the believer for his ministry within the Church. (Matt. 28:19; Jn. 6:44, 6:65, 14:26, 16:7-11; Rom. 6:4-5, 12:6-8; 1Cor. 12:9-10, 12:28, 13:8-12; Gal. 5:16-17; Eph. 3:14-17, 4:30, 5:15-21; Tit. 3:5; 1Pet. 4:10-11.)

The Doctrine of the Church

We believe that there is only one universal Church of Jesus Christ. Everyone who has placed his faith in Jesus has been placed into the Church, which is known as the Body of Christ. We believe that local congregations are God's ordained ministry for the present age and that every Christian ought to be a member of a local congregation, involved in personal ministry by the exercise of his spiritual gifts. We believe that there are only two offices in a local congregation, the office of elder and the office of deacon. These officials are elected by the congregation and serve to equip the congregants for ministry. We believe that authority resides in the congregation that elects the elders and deacons.

We believe that all Christians who live immoral, disobedient lives should experience church discipline in order to correct their erring and restore them in repentance.

We believe that the Lord left two ordinances for the Church to perpetuate faithfully: water baptism of believers and the observance of the Lord's Supper. We believe that the Scriptures preclude infants from being baptized by the fact that infants cannot believe in Jesus at the time of their baptism. Believers' baptism is required of the believer as an act of obedience in the Great Commission and by the example of the early Church. Baptism has absolutely no bearing upon a person's eternal salvation. The Lord's Supper is a memorial to the death of Jesus and communicates no grace whatsoever to anyone who partakes of it. Saving, sustaining, and securing grace already has been received by the believer's faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross. Scriptures leave the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper to the Church's discretion. Anyone who has placed his faith in Jesus Christ can participate in the Lord's Supper. We are warned, however, that to partake of this ordinance while unrepentant of sin may result in physical judgment, that is, death. (Matt. 16:18, 18:15-20, 28:19-20; Acts 2:38, 8:13, 8:36-38, 14:23; Rom. 12:4-8; 1Cor. 1:16-17, 5:1-15, 11:23-24, 12:12-13, 28:19; Gal. 6:1-10; Eph. 4:7-16; 1Tim. 3:1-13; Heb. 12:7-12; 1Pet. 3:18-22.)

The Doctrine of Last Things

We believe that the Church will be raptured, taken instantly into the heavens, when the Jesus comes in the clouds to receive it to Himself. The rapture is an imminent event that has no sign that precedes it. The Tribulation, a time of great suffering on earth, will begin shortly after the rapture and last for seven years. At the end of the Tribulation, Jesus will return to earth. He will destroy all of Israel's enemies, He will judge unbelievers and cast them into hell, and He will judge believers and invite them to participate in His thousand-year kingdom, known as the Millennial Kingdom. After these thousand years, Satan, who will have been bound at the beginning of Jesus' millennial reign, will be loosed and allowed to organize one last opposition against Jesus. This opposition will be destroyed. Jesus then will deliver the Kingdom to the God the Father for eternity. (1Cor. 15:23-24; 1Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 6-19.)