

## **The Bible**

We believe that the Bible is God's written revelation to man. The thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament exclusively compose the God-breathed writings. The sixty-six books of the Bible were given to us by the verbal plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16) and are absolutely inerrant, infallible, authoritative, and complete in their original transcription, i.e. *autographa*.

The Scriptures were authored through the supernatural prompting of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of chosen and consecrated men of God (2 Peter 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit directed the reception and communication of divine revelation to man through a process which incorporated the personality and characteristic style of the human author (1 Corinthians 2:7-14).

We believe that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13) utterly dependable in all matters to which it speaks, including: science, history, morality, and prophecy (2 Samuel 7:28; John 10:35; Titus 1:2). Any apparent error or contradiction may be attributed to faulty transcription by a copyist or limited understanding on the part of the reader (Romans 3:4).

We believe that the inscripturation of God's revelation to mankind ended with the ministry of the apostles (1 Corinthians 13: 8-10; Revelation 22:18-19). God has promised to keep his Word (1 Peter 1:23; Matthew 5:18), and in so doing, has miraculously preserved his message in copies and translations to the extent that they accurately reflect the original documents. We believe that the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men, never should men stand in judgment of it.

Although there are many applications of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. We believe that the Bible can be accurately understood through the illumination of the Holy Spirit as believers approach God's Word historically, grammatically, normally, literally, contextually, and theologically (Luke 24:44-45; John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). A dispensational framework for Biblical interpretation recognizes that God has governed mankind in various ways throughout history based upon the progressive revelation of himself, and the associated responses of man (Exodus 6:3; Ephesians 1:10; 3:9; Hebrews 1:1-2; 7:12).

We believe that the Word of God is the only totally trustworthy and divine standard for faith and practice (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17) and therefore should be studied, memorized, meditated upon, preached, taught, and obeyed (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2; 119:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:2).

## **God**

We believe in the one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4). He is an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all his attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14) – each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God has revealed himself by means of general and special revelation. His existence is an elemental truth which Scripture does not seek to prove, but rather assumes (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1; Hebrews 11:6). In light of his self-disclosure, God is knowable (John 17:3) and yet he ever remains incomprehensible (Job 11:7)

We believe in God's *eternity* – his existence extends endlessly backward and forward without any interruption or limitation caused by the succession of events. God transcends the boundaries of time (Psalm 90:2; Genesis 21:33). Because of God's eternity, we are assured of his sustaining and providential control of all things and events past, present, and future.

We believe in God's *freedom* – he is independent of his creatures and his creation (Isaiah 40:13-14). God is not obligated to man in any way unless he chooses to initiate the obligation, consequently we cannot put God in our debt.

We believe in God's *holiness* – he is separate from all that is unclean and evil; he is positively pure and thus distinct from all others (Lev. 11:44; Josh 24:19; Psalm 99:3,5,9; Isaiah 40:25; Habakkuk 1:12-13; John 17:11; 1 Peter 1:15). God's holiness is a purity of being and nature, as well as of will and act.

We believe in God's *immutability* – he is unchangeable and thus unchanging (Malachi 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:13; James 1:17). This does not insinuate inactivity or immobility. It rather describes the fact that God is never inconsistent, growing, nor developing. Immutability assures us that none of God's attributes change.

We believe in God's *infinity* – the immensity of God has no bounds or limits (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24-28). He is transcendent, limited by neither time nor space.

We believe in God's *love* – by his very nature, he seeks the greatest good for mankind, and demonstrates it through affection and correction (1 Chronicles 16:34; 1 John 4:8). Related to this root attribute of love, are *goodness* – God's benevolent concern for his creatures (Acts 14:17), *Mercy* – the characteristic of God's pity and compassion (Ephesians 2:4; James 5:11), *Long-suffering* – self-restraint in the face of provocation (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:15), and *Grace* – the unmerited favor of God primarily shown to man in the person and work of Christ. We reject universalism's unbalanced emphasis of God's love over his holiness and justness.

We believe in God's *omnipotence* – he is all-powerful and able to do anything consistent with his own nature. He is known in Scripture as the "Almighty One" (Genesis 17:1; Exodus 6:3; 2 Corinthians 6:18; Revelation 1:8; 19:6). We believe that God's omnipotence has natural limitations in the sense that God cannot do certain things that are contrary to who he is, i.e. he cannot lie (Titus 1:2), he cannot be internally tempted to sin (James 1:13), he cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). We also believe that God's omnipotence has self-imposed limitations including those things that he has not chosen to include in his plan, but could have without violating his nature. He did not choose to spare his own Son; he did not choose all nations in the Old Testament times; he did not choose to make all people go to heaven, etc.

We believe in God's *omnipresence* – he is everywhere present with his whole being at all times (Psalm 139:7-11). He is not diffuse in his all-presence - his whole

being is in every place. The immediacy of his presence however does vary, note the differences (2 Chronicles 7:2; Galatians 2:20; Revelation 4:2; 14:10). God's omnipresence differs from pantheism. God is not mind, soul, or creation. Such a view denies the separation of the Creator from his creation.

We believe in God's *omniscience* – he knows everything, things actual and possible (Matthew 11:21), completely, effortlessly and equally well. God knows all his works (Acts 15:18). God knows everything about our lives even before we were born (Psalm 139:16). God exhaustively knows all the past, present, and future (Micah 5:2; Daniel 9:25-27; Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:30-31). Consequently, We reject the theological proposal/heresy of the “openness of God” made by Neotheists. God knows all; hence, he is neither learning nor surprised regarding the choices of man. God's omniscience is not expendable in exchange for an over-valuation of man's freedom.

We believe in God's *righteousness* – he is just and moral; there is no law, either within his own being or of his own making, that is violated by anything in his nature or activity. (Psalm 11:7; 19:9; Daniel 9:7; Acts 17:31).

We believe in God's *simplicity* – he is not a composite or compound being. God as a triune being is not divisible or composed of parts or multiple substances (John 4:24).

We believe in God's *sovereignty* – positionally, he is the chief, principal, and supreme being of the universe (Isaiah 46:9-11). Regarding his power, he is completely and ultimately in control of all things (Psalm 135:6), though he may choose to let certain events happen according to natural laws which he has ordained. Ultimately, God's sovereignty is worked out for the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:6).

We believe in God's *truth* – he is all that he should be, faithful and consistent (John 17:3; Romans 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:13; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18). He has revealed himself as he really is and his revelation is completely reliable.

We believe in God's *unity* – he is one in number and uniqueness. God is indivisible (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; 1 Timothy 2:5)

We believe that all things in existence, spiritual or material were created by God (John 1:3). The universe was created by God out of nothing in six twenty-four hour days (Genesis 1-2; Hebrews 11:3). God is continuing presently to sustain his creation (Colossians 1:16-17).

## **Christ**

We believe that Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, possessing all the divine excellencies of the Godhead (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1-2). He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9-11; Hebrews 13:8). Jesus is the visible manifestation of the Godhead, accomplished in the past through Old Testament Christophanies (Exodus 3:2-6) and the New Testament incarnation (Luke 1:35; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 1:3). One day the visible presence of God will be seen on earth when Christ returns to snatch his church away at the rapture, and when he establishes his Millennial Kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20).

Prior to Christ's incarnation, he worked as the Creator (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2) and the Angel of Yahweh (Genesis 24:7; 31:11-13; 2 Samuel 24:16; Zechariah 1:12-13).

The prophets spoke of a coming Messiah, and after the fulfillment of Daniels sixty-nine weeks, Jesus was born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23,25; Luke 1:26-35) from the line of David, in the city of Bethlehem. Through his birth, life, and death Christ fulfilled the law and the prophecies of old (Matthew 5:17). He was the awaited Messiah.

We believe that Jesus Christ, through the incarnation, surrendered only some of the *prerogatives* of deity but nothing of the divine *essence* or *nature*. Christ never divested himself of his divine attributes. He took humanity upon himself sacrificing none of his deity, and became the perfect God-man (Romans 9:5; Philippians 2:5-8; Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9-10). Jesus lived a perfect life (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22) which provided a perfect example and sacrifice for mankind.

We believe that Jesus Christ laid down his life on the cross to accomplish our redemption through the shedding of his blood and sacrificial death on the cross. I believe that his death was voluntary (Luke 23:46; John 10:17-18), sacrificial (Hebrews 9:26; 10:10-14), substitutionary (Isaiah 53:5-6; John 10:11; Romans 5:6), propitiatory (Romans 3:25-26; 1 John 2:2), sufficient for all (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2), and efficacious for every believer (John 3:16; 3:36; Romans 10:13).

We believe that on the basis of Christ's efficacious, bloody death upon the cross, a repentant, believing sinner can be freed from the power, penalty, and one day, the presence of sin. The demands of God's holiness, having been violated by man's sin, are satisfied in Christ's shed blood alone. It is by means of Christ, that a sinner can be declared righteous, given eternal life, and be adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

We believe that our crucified Christ was buried and that he literally, physically resurrected from the dead (Mark 16:6; Luke 24:36-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-5). This resurrection serves as a guarantee of the believer's future resurrection life (John 5:26-29; 14:19; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). We believe that after his resurrection, Christ instructed his disciples for forty days and then ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11; 7:55-56). I believe that Christ now mediates on the believers behalf as High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15; 7:23-25), Intercessor (Romans 8:34), and Advocate (1 John 2:1).

We anticipate the immanent coming of Christ when he will snatch away his bride, the church, in what is known as the rapture (Matthew 24:44; John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; Titus 2:12-13). He will then return and physically establish his Kingdom on earth where he will sit on the throne of David and rule for one thousand years (Isaiah 9:6-7; Ezekiel 37:24-28; Luke 1:31-33; Revelation 20:1-7).

Finally, we believe that Christ will serve as the one through whom God judges all mankind (John 5:22-23; Acts 17:30-31) - believers (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), those who are alive on earth at the time of his glorious kingdom return (Matthew

25:31-46), and all the unbelieving dead (Revelation 20:11-15), will stand in judgment under Christ.

### **Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person of the Godhead, eternal, and underived. He possesses all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), volition (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternality (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), holiness (Matthew 12:32), love (Galatians 5:22), and truthfulness (John 14:17; 16:13). He is associated with the Father and Son on an equal footing connoting ontological equivalence (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). Functionally however, the Holy Spirit seeks to glorify Jesus Christ (John 16:13-15). He is a *person*, not a *force*, and this is confirmed by the fact that he can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), blasphemed (Mark 3:29-30), resisted (Acts 7:51), lied to (Acts 5:3), and obeyed (Acts 10). He is also often referred to using masculine personal pronouns (John 15:26; 16:13-14).

We recognize the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and salvation (Titus 3:5).

The Spirit's present work in the world at large includes, convicting of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11), and restraining the development of evil (2 Thessalonians 2:7). At the time of salvation, the Spirit's activities include, sealing (Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30), permanent indwelling (John 14:16-17; 1 Corinthians 6:19), regenerating (Ezekiel 36:25-27; Titus 3:5), and immersing the believer into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Following salvation, the Spirit interacts in the believer's life through teaching (John 14:26), testifying (John 15:26), guiding (John 16:13), comforting (John 14:16; 16:7), filling (Ephesians 5:18), illuminating (1 Corinthians 2:12-14), assuring (Romans 8:16), interceding (Romans 8:26), strengthening (Ephesians 3:16), sanctifying (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2), and commanding (Acts 13:2, 4; Acts 16:6).

We believe that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts both to believers and to the church, not to glorify himself nor his gifts, but rather to exalt Christ and edify the body (John 16:14; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-12; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11). We believe that each believer is gifted (1 Peter 4:10), and as they live in obedience to the Spirit and his Word, they will employ their gift(s).

We do not believe that the sign gifts of healing and speaking in tongues are part of the Spirit's ministry today. Their function, during the formation of the early church, was to point to out the *messenger* of God and to authenticate the *message* of God (Mark 16:20; 1 Corinthians 1:22; 13:8-10; 14:21-22; Hebrews 2:1-4). Preachers of the Gospel were accredited (Acts 5:12-16), and people of different languages were reached (Acts 2:4-11) through temporary gifts. They were used to lay the foundation of the church (Ephesians 2:20), and edify the believers through instruction and exhortation (1

Corinthians 14:26-31). They were not intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers. We believe that the completion of the New Testament rendered all revelatory gifts unnecessary.

**Angels**

We believe that God created a host of spirit beings (Hebrews 1:13-14) called angels (Psalm 148:2, 5; Colossians 1:16) who possessed personality (Luke 1:19-20; Revelation 22:8-9), moral purity (Genesis 1:31), moral freedom (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), and immortality (Luke 20:36). Angels were created to serve God and to worship him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6, 7; Revelation 5:11-14).

We believe that angels can take on human form (Hebrews 13:2). They do not marry nor procreate (Matthew 22:30; Luke 20:35-36). They demonstrate intellect (1 Peter 1:12), emotion (Luke 15:10), and will (Luke 8:32). There are different categories of angels, including a hierarchical ranking - Archangel (Jude 9), Chief princes (Daniel 10:13), Cherubim (Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 28:14), Seraphim (Isaiah 6:2), and other powers (Ephesians 310; 6:12).

We believe that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin (John 8:44). He exercised his will against God in pride, and fell from his state of holiness (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-19). Satan is the leader of a demonic minion (Matthew 12:24; 25:41). He defied his Creator, and influenced one-third of the heavenly hosts to follow in his rebellion (Revelation 12:1-14). We believe that these fallen angels were confirmed in unrighteousness without hope for redemption (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). Scripture indicates that some sinful angels are presently bound (2 Peter 2:4), awaiting judgment. Others are at work striving to increase ungodliness in the world (1 Timothy 4:1), blind the minds of unbelievers so that they might not receive the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4), tempt believers to sin (1 Thessalonians 3:5), and oppose the church (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan has been permitted by God to have authority in this world (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19). He is committed to disrupting the plan of God by any means. He is the adversary, who like a lion seeks to devour all who oppose him (Ephesians 6:13-16; 1 Peter 5:8). We believe that the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is sufficient to resist the Devil and his demons (Ephesians 6:13; 1 John 4:4). Satan and all the fallen angels have been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20), and will ultimately be unsuccessful in thwarting God's plan. They will be cast into the lake of fire for eternal torment (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Finally, We believe that those angels who did not sin were confirmed in holiness (Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 5:21) and presently perform God's will in worship (Isaiah 6:2-3), ministry to the saints (Hebrews 1:14), and warfare against God's opponents (Revelation 12:7).

<p>All Angels <b>Man</b></p>	<p>Satan &amp; Demons Fallen/Defect Angels (Matthew 25:41)</p>	<p>Loose &amp; Active Demons Ephemeral Demons (Ephesians 6:11-12) (Luke 8:31)</p>	<p>Temporarily Confined Permanently Confined (Revelation 9:1-15) (and Hellness, Jude 6)</p>
<p>We believe that man was created by God in his image and likeness. Man was free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-awareness, and moral</p>			

responsibility to God (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; James 3:9). Man was uniquely created as a living soul (Genesis 2:7). We believe this means that man was created as a soul dwelling within fleshly body (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). No other part of creation can claim such composition. I believe that Adam both represented and constituted the entire human race at his creation (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22). He possessed untested holiness and the power of moral choice (Genesis 2:16-17).

We believe that God's intention in the creation of man was that he should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, and live his life in the will of God (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

Because of his unique position as the masterpiece of God's creative work (Ephesians 2:10), man was given authority and dominion over the rest of creation. He was given the responsibility of stewardship thereof (Genesis 1:26-30).

Scripture teaches that upon 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 depraved without natural desire or ability to please God (Genesis 3:16-19; Psalm 51:5; 58:3; John 3:36; Romans 3:10-18; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-2; Revelation 20:15). With no recuperative power or ability to enable man to recover himself to a state of holiness and acceptability before God, he is hopelessly lost (Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1). His salvation therefore, is wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Sin

We believe that Satan is the author of sin (John 8:44). He exercised his will against God in pride, and fell from his state of holiness (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-19). Man was created with genuine freedom, but the exercise of that freedom in rebellion against God, under the temptation of the Devil, introduced sin into the human race. Scripture teaches that sin is a lack of conformity to the law of God (1 John 3:4).

We believe that Adam's sin resulted in *physical death* (separation of soul and body – Genesis 5:5), *spiritual death* (cessation of fellowship with God – Genesis 3:8), *total depravity* (corruption that extends to every facet of man's nature and faculties even if it is not exhibited to its fullest potential, corruption that extends to all mankind, and corruption in the sense that there is nothing in anyone that can commend them to a righteous and holy God – Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:9-18), and *condemnation* to eternal punishment.

We believe that sin is imputed (ascribed, attributed or reckoned) to all members of humanity through Adam (Romans 5:12-21). In Adam, all sinned. He was the federal head of humanity (Hosea 6:7) and he also contained the germinal/seminal posterity of mankind (Hebrews 7:9-10). The consequence of imputed sin is physical death (Romans 5:14). The remedy for imputed sin is the imputed righteousness of Christ to believers (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We also believe that sin is inherited from Adam to all his descendents. Some refer to inherited sin as a "sin nature" (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:3). The consequence of

inherited sin is spiritual death or separation from the life of God. This spiritual death includes our present earthly time (Ephesians 2:1-3), and if this condition continues unchanged, then eternal death or the second death follows (Revelation 20:11-15). The remedy for inherited sin is the redemption of Christ (Romans 6:18; 8:1; Galatians 5:24), and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Christ’s death frees the believer from the *dominion* of sin, and the Holy Spirit frees the believer from the *domination* of sin.

We believe that man makes willful choices to commit personal sin (Romans 3:23; James 3:2). Personal sin includes transgressions of commission and omission in thoughts, words, and deeds (Matthew 5:27-28; 2 Corinthians 10:5; James 4:17). The consequence of personal sin is a loss of fellowship. The remedy for personal sin is the forgiveness of Christ – judicial or familial (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:9). For the unbeliever judicial forgiveness covers the guilt of his sins and brings him into the family of God and initiates fellowship. For the believer, familial forgiveness restores the temporarily broken fellowship within the family.

We believe that although God was the master designer of all things, he was in no way involved in the commission of evil either on the part of Satan originally, or of Adam subsequently. Even though God hates sin, for reasons not revealed in Scripture, it is present by his permission (otherwise he would not be sovereign) in a way in which he is not the author of it (otherwise he would not be holy).

Imputed Sin	Romans 5:12	Transmitted directly from Adam to me	Consequence is physical death	Remedy is imputed righteousness of Christ
Inherited Sin	Ephesians 2:3	Transmitted generation to generation	Consequence is spiritual death	Remedy is redemption and Holy Spirit
Personal Sin	Romans 3:23	No Transmission	Consequence is a loss of Fellowship	Remedy is forgiveness through Christ

**Salvation**

We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. It is an expression of God’s matchless love (Romans 5:8) and provides an eternal representation of his grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). I believe that through salvation, God intended to develop a people that could reflect his nature to the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

We believe that salvation is provided through Christ's blood (Hebrews 9:12-14, 22; 1 Peter 1:18-19) as a free gift (Romans 6:23) and eternal possession (John 3:16; 10:27-28; Romans 8:30-39), to any repentant believer (Acts 20:21; Romans 10:9-10) apart from personal merit (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

We believe that man's sinful depravity is a corruption which extends to every facet of his nature and faculties even if it is not exhibited to its fullest potential. This state extends to all mankind, and there is nothing in any man that can commend him to a righteous and holy God. For that reason, We believe that salvation is fully and exclusively an act of God (John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5). God designed and conducted the program of salvation by which he could deliver, emancipate, and change the heart of man and therein be glorified.

We believe that it is God who draws the sinner to himself through the convicting ministry of the Spirit in combination with the revealed Word of God (John 6:44; 16:8; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 1:13).

We believe that before the foundations of the world in eternity past, God, by virtue of his foreknowledge, sovereign will, and grace, elected to save all those who would place believing faith in Him (Ephesians 1:4-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:28-30; 9:14-33; 10:9-13). We do not believe that election (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; Romans 9:11-24;) contradicts or negates the responsibility of man to repent and believe in Christ as Savior and Lord (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:39-40).

We do not comprehend the way in which man's free will and responsibility are reconciled with God's sovereignty. These may present a problem paradox for humans, but is nonetheless a workable fact with God – an antinomy. We believe that sovereignty must not obliterate free will, and free will must never dilute sovereignty. It seems that attempts to harmonize these two apparent contradictions leads to overemphasizing of one truth to the neglect or denial of the other.

We believe that Christ's death was sufficient for all (1 Timothy 2:6; 1 John 2:2), and efficacious for every believer (John 3:16; 3:36; Romans 10:13). We believe that it is God's will that all would be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3-4), and therefore he calls all men to come to Christ (Acts 17:30).

We believe that mankind has the responsibility to respond to God's gracious gift of salvation. Those who refuse to trust in Jesus Christ, voluntarily continue in their sin, and are accountable to God for that choice (John 3:18-19, 36).

We believe that faith has always been the means of salvation in both the Old and New Testaments (Genesis 15:6; Ephesians 2:8). We believe that the object of saving faith has always been God through the progressive revelation of himself. Today, it is only through faith in the redemptive work of Christ's death, his burial, and resurrection, that a man can be saved (John 14:6; Romans 10:9).

We believe that regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit by which new life is implanted into the believer at the moment of salvation (Titus 3:5). We believe that regeneration involves the supernatural work by which divine nature and divine life are

given (John 3:3-8; 2 Peter 1:3-4). This is instantaneously accomplished by the power of the Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), resulting in a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We believe that when a sinner comes to God in repentance and faith, his sins of the past, present and future are forgiven (Hebrews 10:12), he becomes a child of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2), he is redeemed by the Christ's blood (Ephesians 1:7), he is judicially justified by which he is declared righteous (Romans 7:10), he is set at peace with God through the propitiatory work of Christ (1 John 2:2), he is given eternal life (1 John 5:11), and he is indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22). This work is eternally secured in God himself (John 6:37-40; 10:27-30).

We believe that God's gift of salvation must be received prior to physical death (Hebrews 9:27), and consequently, we reject the idea of second chance or post-mortem salvation.

### **Sanctification**

A believer is initially sanctified by justification and regeneration at the time of salvation. He is set apart to God, from sin. This step is positional and instantaneous (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; Hebrews 2:11). The believer is also progressively sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit as he obeys the Word of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18). Obedience to the Spirit and his Word transforms the believer to greater Christ-likeness. This maturation process involves commitment, effort, energy, sobriety, purpose, yieldedness, faith, knowledge, and discipline (Romans 6:1-22; Philippians 3:12; 1 Timothy 4:7-10; Hebrews 12:1-4). A life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God is not a default, but rather an intentional process of Spirit filled living. The final phase of sanctification is often referred to as glorification when the face to face presence of Christ, at death or the rapture, will eradicate the presence of sin from our lives (1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-57; 1 John 3:2).

### **The Church**

We believe that God has established the local church for this age to fulfill his plan on earth (Matthew 16:18). We believe that the church began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost following the Lord's ascension into heaven (Acts 2). The New testament Church is a local body of baptized believers, assembled for worship, service, fellowship, submission, spiritual edification, and the spread of the Gospel into all of the world (Acts 1:8; 2:41-47; Matthew 18:17; 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-12). We believe in the concept of the universal church (Colossians 1:18), but disavow an unscriptural emphasis on it.

We believe that the church is commanded to keep two ordinances: baptism and communion/Lord's supper. We believe that one-time-immersion pictures Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, and is the only form of water baptism revealed and commanded in the Scriptures. We believe that it has no power to wash away sin, no saving power whatsoever, no means of offering a special measure of grace, but is only for those who are already saved. We believe the new birth, which comes through repentance and faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the Scriptural prerequisite to water baptism; therefore, only those who are old enough to believe for themselves should be baptized (Matthew 3:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; Romans 6:2-7). We believe that the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ; it has no saving power, or special means of endowing grace. It is not a sacrament. Only those who have been saved through faith in His atoning blood and are walking in obedient fellowship with Him ought to partake of it (1Corinthians 11:23-32).

We believe that the Bible identifies two offices of servant-leadership in the church, and that both should be held by men only – pastor and deacon (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 2:12; 3:2, 12; Acts 15; Titus 1). The pastor is an under-shepherd below Christ the head. His ministry should include prayer and delivery of the Word (Acts 6:4; 1 Timothy 4:6). The deacon is primarily a servant given to the aid of the pastor in ministering to the needy within the church, and administrating its resources (Acts 6:1-6). Both of these positions are valued in God's eyes as offices of responsibility and privilege (1 Timothy 3:1, 13). Consequently, men filling either office must meet the Biblical requirements (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Acts 6:1-6; Titus 1:5-9)

We believe that the biblical term “elder” is used to mean a pastor, bishop, or overseer as described in the New Testament. Although there may be different aspects of the office focused upon, each term points to a single man (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The plurality of elders noted in some New Testament texts is best understood as a plurality of pastors in each church, with one prominent or senior pastor. Ephesus had Timothy, Jerusalem had James, Colosse had Epaphras, Philippi had Epaphroditus, and Crete had Titus as the senior pastor among a possible plurality of assistants (1 Timothy 1:2, 3; Acts 15:13; Colossians 4:12; Philemon 2:25; Philippians 2:25; Titus 1:4, 5).

We believe in a congregational form of church government (Acts 6:5; 15:22), where the authority of the church rests within each local body as an autonomous unit, with no person or organization above it except Christ the Head. Congregationalism is seen through the New Testament in examples of church discipline (1Corinthians 5:5; 2Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15), election of officers (Acts 6:3-5), commissioning and receiving messengers (Acts 11:22; 15:3-4; 2Corinthians 8:19; 1Corinthians 16:3), discernment and affirmation of truth – Jerusalem counsel (Acts 15:1, 22-23, 25) – the decision was received by the church in Antioch (Acts 15:30). There are ministers elected in recognition of their divine gifts to serve as leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). There are deacons elected to be supporters of the pastor, and servants to the congregation (Acts 6:1-6). In the ultimate sense, officers have no more ecclesiastical authority than any other member.

We believe that at times, God uses the church as an authoritative body, to mete out discipline in order to maintain the testimony and purity of the congregation. I believe that church discipline should have a final goal of restoration. God desires to see the straying believer return to fellowship with him and others (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 15).

We believe that the church is the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32). He desires it to be clean, and pure before him (Ephesians 5:27). He loves the church, and gave himself for it. Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18). We believe that the church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

### **End Times**

We believe that the return of Christ in the air to rapture his church is the next event in biblical prophecy (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:13). This snatching away will involve the glorification of the bodies of all believers of this age, both dead and living (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). The glorification of those dead in Christ will constitute the first resurrection. All the glorified believers will be in heaven (John 14:1-3) for seven years, during which time they will stand before Christ's Bema Seat (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), and then be gathered to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

With the church in heaven with Christ, God will turn his attention to Israel, beginning with the rise of the antichrist to power. The antichrist will present himself as the messiah, and will sign a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27) which will begin the prophesied seventieth week of Daniel. During this time of tribulation, which will last for seven years, God's wrath will be poured out in monumental proportions (Matthew 24:15-21; Revelation 6-19). Although God's wrath will be directed upon mankind, his saving grace will also be present, as many will come to Christ during this time (Revelation 7:4; 14:1-4).

We believe that at the conclusion of the tribulation, Christ will personally and visibly return to earth (Matthew 24:30; Luke 21:27) to defeat and judge the nations (Revelation 19:11-19). Old Testament and tribulation saints will be resurrected (Daniel 12:1-2; Revelation 20:4-5). All those who were controlled by the dragon (Satan) will be destroyed, and Christ will establish a literal earthly Kingdom for a thousand years (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 20:4). During this time, Satan will be bound and imprisoned (Revelation 20:1-3).

At the end of the millennium, Satan will be released for a brief period of time (Revelation 20:7-9). He will deceive and lead the nations against Christ. Satan and his hosts will be unsuccessful however and will end in final defeat. Satan, the beast, and the false prophet will be condemned to the lake of fire and brimstone for eternal torment (Revelation 20:9-10). All unregenerate sinners will be resurrected, judged at the great white throne, and condemned to an eternity of torment in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15). Believers will live eternally in the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1-22:5) in the presence of the Lord God.

### **Human Sexuality**

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a 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. (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23).