

BIBLE

We teach that the sixty-six canonical books of the Bible, as originally given, are inerrant in all that they affirm and are the final authority for the church in all matters of faith and practice.

Throughout history, God inspired His prophets to write His message for humanity. In some cases, God dictated what was written; in other cases, He guided the authors and editors so the result was exactly what God wanted. Paul said, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2Tim. 3:16-17 ESV).

Over the centuries, God’s people carefully tested and accepted only sixty-six books as genuinely inspired Scripture; they also rejected many other books because they were not written by God’s prophets or they contained errors (i.e., the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha).

God gave 39 books to the Jewish people, which include:

Genesis	1 Kings	Ecclesiastes	Obadiah
Exodus	2 Kings	Song of Solomon	Jonah
Leviticus	1 Chronicles	Isaiah	Micah
Numbers	2 Chronicles	Jeremiah	Nahum
Deuteronomy	Ezra	Lamentations	Habakkuk
Joshua	Nehemiah	Ezekiel	Zephaniah
Judges	Esther	Daniel	Haggai
Ruth	Job	Hosea	Zechariah
1 Samuel	Psalms	Joel	Malachi
2 Samuel	Proverbs	Amos	

He gave an additional 27 books to the Christian church:

Matthew	Ephesians	Hebrews
Mark	Philippians	James
Luke	Colossians	1 Peter
John	1 Thessalonians	2 Peter
Acts of the Apostles	2 Thessalonians	1 John
Romans	1 Timothy	2 John
1 Corinthians	2 Timothy	3 John
2 Corinthians	Titus	Jude
Galatians	Philemon	Revelation

The Holy Bible is God’s Word, and since God is all-knowing and can’t lie, the Bible is inerrant in everything that it teaches. In John 10:35, Jesus said, “Scripture cannot be broken” (ESV). In other words, no one can prove that the Bible is wrong. People may misinterpret Scripture or reject what it says, but they can’t prove that the Bible isn’t true.

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However, only the original parchment or papyrus scrolls that God's prophets wrote were free from error, not the later copies or translations. The original books of the Bible decayed and turned to dust long ago, but God made sure that a succession of devout scribes faithfully copied and re-copied these books over the centuries.

Modern scholars have thousands of ancient Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that they can study; although these manuscripts do have variations and copying errors, they are rare and usually easy to correct. Most involve minor variations in spelling or word order, which do not affect the meaning of a passage. In some cases, scholars have two readings that are equally possible, but this is not a serious problem because we know that one of them must be the original reading, and no doctrine of the Bible is ever based on a single passage of Scripture.

So, we can be confident that our modern Bible is God's message for humanity; it is God's textbook for how we should live and what we should believe. In Matthew 4:4, Jesus affirmed the central role of the Bible for God's people when He said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (ESV). Human reason, personal experience, science and philosophy may provide useful information about many different issues, but the Bible alone is the final authority for the church in all matters of faith and practice.

GOD

We teach that there is only one God, the Creator and Ruler of all things. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, ever-present, and perfect in character. God eternally and simultaneously exists as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Bible repeatedly affirms that there always has been, and always will be, one and only one true God, and that is Yahweh, the God of Israel. For example, in Deuteronomy 4:35, Moses wrote, "To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him." Throughout the Old Testament, the term LORD, in capital letters, always refers to Yahweh, the sacred, personal name of the God of Israel.

Paul also affirmed that there is only one God; in 1 Corinthians 8:4, he wrote, "Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that 'there is no God but one.'"

The Bible also teaches that God is eternal; He always has and always will exist, and by His divine power and superior intellect, He designed and created the earth. In Isaiah 40:28, we read, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable."

God is present everywhere throughout the universe; He sees everything and knows everything - past, present and future. In Jeremiah 23:24, God asks, "Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD."

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God is morally perfect. He never sins or does anything evil, and He always keeps His promises. In Deuteronomy 32:4, Moses wrote, “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (NIV).

The Bible also affirms the deity and essential unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At the Last Supper, Jesus began to reveal this deep truth to His disciples. In John 14:26, He said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” Peter also wrote, “God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ” (1Pet. 1:2 NLT).

Thus, the one true God is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and triune. His character and actions are always holy, just and good.

JESUS

We teach that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, died for the sins of humanity, and was bodily resurrected after three days. He is the Head of the church and the High Priest of all believers.

Before His human birth, He manifested Himself to humanity as the God of the Old Testament (John 1:18, 6:46, 8:56-58). He created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, spoke to Abraham in the Promised Land, and gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Then, about 2000 years ago, God the Father sent Him to be the Savior of the world. Through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, He took on flesh and became a man. Matthew 1:18 says, “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus did not cease to be God; He incorporated a fully human nature into His divine nature. Paul confirmed the full divinity and humanity of Jesus in Colossians 2:9, saying, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (NIV).

He lived a normal human life and experienced all the trials and temptations that we do. Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

After He completed His work of preaching the gospel to Israel and training His disciples to carry His message to the world, He suffered and died for the sins of His people. He was buried but rose bodily from the grave on the third day. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Paul said, “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

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He appeared to His disciples as a physical human being, not as a ghost or apparition. In Luke 24:39, Jesus said to them, “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Later, He ascended to heaven, where He guides and directs the work of His people, the church. Paul wrote, “And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Col. 1:18).

Thus, Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel, our Lord and Savior, the lamb of God and the lion of the tribe of Judah, our High Priest and soon coming King.

HOLY SPIRIT

We teach that the Holy Spirit is God; He is distinct from the Father and the Son and yet is the Spirit of both. He is the effective agent in our regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. He is responsible for the inspiration of Scripture, the illumination of believers, and the giving of spiritual gifts for the edification of the church.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is a divine person within the Godhead. In Acts 5:3-4, Luke wrote, “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.’” In this passage, Peter equates lying to the Holy Spirit with lying to God, and you can only lie to a person, not an inanimate force or object.

The Bible also describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father and the Son, so He is the Spirit of both. For example, Paul wrote, “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom. 8:9).

The Holy Spirit is responsible for spiritual regeneration. In Titus 3:5, Paul said that “he [God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” Sadly, many people today think that they are saved, but they have had a false conversion experience and are still spiritually dead because the Holy Spirit doesn’t dwell in them.

The Holy Spirit transforms and sanctifies the life of a true Christian by changing the heart and mind of that person. Paul described the work of the Spirit, saying, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The Holy Spirit is also responsible for revealing the truth to God’s people. Jesus told His disciples, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not

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speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16:13).

So, the Holy Spirit is also responsible for prophecy and the inspiration of Scripture. Peter said, “For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2Pet 1:21).

However, prophecy is just one of many different gifts that the Spirit bestows on the Church. As Paul explained, “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.... All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills” (1Cor 12:7, 11). Everyone in the church receives at least one spiritual gift, but the Spirit bestows these gifts for the mutual edification of each Christian within the body of Christ.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the resurrection and glorification of the saints. In Romans 8:11, Paul wrote, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” So, the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit will resurrect Christians with immortal, spiritual bodies when Christ returns.

So, the Bible reveals that God the Holy Spirit is central to the salvation of Christians and the life of the church. He is our Comforter, Councilor and Advocate; through the work of the Spirit, sinners are regenerated, people are transformed and the dead are raised to eternal life.

HUMANITY

We teach that God created humans in His image and offered them eternal life, but because of Adam’s sin, humanity became cut off from God, spiritually corrupt, and subject to death. Apart from Jesus Christ, every human being shares this fate and needs God’s grace and salvation.

Humanity isn’t the product of billions of years of evolution; God designed and created humanity for a purpose. In Genesis 1:26, Moses wrote, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” Unlike animals, humans are self-aware; we have superior intellect, free will, the ability to form complex relationships and a sense of morality.

God created Adam and Eve and offered them the gift of eternal life, but they chose the path of rebellion and sin. As a result, humanity experienced three distinct curses.

First, sin separated humans from their Creator. God is holy and doesn’t tolerate sin. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear” (Isa. 59:1-2). So, God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and cut them off from His presence.

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Second, human nature became thoroughly corrupt. People no longer had access to the power of God's Holy Spirit to change their hearts and minds. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

The third curse is death. In Romans 5:12, Paul explained, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." The doctrine of the immortal soul is an unbiblical, pagan myth; the Bible teaches that the soul is mortal (Ezek. 18:4). Death is the cessation of life, and the second death in the lake of fire means that people will cease to exist for eternity.

Except for Jesus Christ, who lived a completely sinless life, every human being suffers these three curses, but we can escape these plagues. Paul said, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23 NIV). Although we don't deserve any mercy, God's grace and salvation are available to those who repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

SATAN

We teach that Satan is a fallen angel, who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. He works with his servants, the demons, to deceive, tempt, accuse, and destroy all of humanity. Ultimately, they will be imprisoned, cast into the lake of fire and suffer eternal torment.

The Bible reveals that God created the angels before He made the physical universe, however, before God created Adam and Eve, a powerful cherub led a great angelic rebellion against his Creator. Peter wrote, "For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment" (2Pet. 2:4 NASB).

The Bible refers to the leader of this rebellion as the devil and Satan. The term "Satan" is a transliteration of the Hebrew "Ha Satan," which means the Adversary. The Bible indicates that a third of the angels followed Satan and became demons (Rev. 12:3-4).

From the time of Adam and Eve until the present, Satan and his demons have been deceiving, tempting and manipulating humans. In Ephesians 2:1-2, Paul said, "Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God" (NLT). In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter also warned Christians about Satan, saying, "Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."

Satan has deceived the whole world. He controls the governments, the religions, the schools, the businesses and the financial markets, but his reign will come to an end.

At the time of Christ's return, Satan and the demons will be cast out of heaven. In Revelation 12:9-10, John wrote, "And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his

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angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.’”

Satan will be imprisoned during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 20:1-3, John also wrote, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”

After the Millennium, Satan will deceive the nations one last time, but this rebellion will fail; God will then punish Satan and the demons for their evil. Revelation 20:10 says, “And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (NIV). In Matthew 25:41, Jesus describes this lake of burning sulfur as “the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.”

After the second, general resurrection, God will create new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells; there is no mention of Satan ever again.

CHURCH

We teach that the church is composed of all true believers who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. The church exists to proclaim the gospel, nurture disciples, and glorify God in all things. The elders of the church are responsible for doctrine, administration, and discipline.

In the New Testament, the English term “church” is used to translate the Greek word *ekklésia*, which means a congregation or assembly. It refers to the collective body of believers in Jesus Christ who have received God’s Holy Spirit. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul wrote, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” (NASB).

After His resurrection, Jesus gathered His disciples and gave them the Great Commission. In Matthew 28:19-20, He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

In addition to preaching the Gospel and nurturing disciples, Christians should also strive to bring glory and honor to God. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told His disciples, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

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Jesus also established an organizational structure and system of governance for the church. In Acts 20:28, Paul exhorted the elders from Ephesus, saying, “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

The apostles routinely selected certain men in each congregation as elders and deacons to carry out the functions of the church. For example, in 1 Timothy 5:17, Paul said, “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” And, in Titus 2:15, Paul also wrote, “Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

Therefore, the elders of the church are responsible for doctrine, administration, and discipline within the body of Christ.

SALVATION

We teach that Christians are saved by grace, justified by faith and judged according to their works. Salvation can't be earned but can be lost through deliberate sin because our works are the evidence of faith or unbelief. Thus, faith and repentance are necessary for salvation.

Every human has sinned and deserves the death penalty in the lake of fire. We can't escape this punishment through our good deeds or penance or future obedience, but Jesus Christ gave His life to pay the penalty for our sins.

Christians are saved by grace. Grace is unmerited favor or kindness; it is an act of love and mercy that isn't deserved and can't be earned. In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul said, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Christians are justified by faith. When a person repents of his sins and accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior, God wipes away that person's sins and declares that person not guilty. That person is justified, in other words, declared to be innocent.

Christians are judged according to their works. Faith is invisible; it exists inside the mind and heart, but people demonstrate their faith through what they do. Repentance, obedience and good works are the tangible evidence of inner faith. As James 2:17 says, “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

Genuine faith always brings forth the good fruit of obedience and good works while unbelief brings forth the bad fruit of sin and selfishness. Jesus came to save us from our sins, not in our sins, so God expects His people to grow in faith and overcome sinful behavior.

As a result, Christians can lose salvation through deliberate, repeated sin and a lack of repentance. Hebrews 10:26-27 says, “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the

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knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.”

So, grace is not a license to sin. Faith and repentance are necessary for salvation, but obedience and good works are the evidence of genuine faith, not the means of forgiveness and justification.

As part of the New Covenant, Christians receive forgiveness of sins and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Through these two blessings, God promises to save His people from the second death in the lake of fire and give them the gift of eternal life in sinless perfection, so we can dwell with Him for all eternity.

BAPTISM

We teach that baptism is a mandatory covenant ratification ceremony. An adult convert must express repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. A minister must baptize converts by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, then lay his hands on them and pray for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

After His resurrection, Jesus ordered the church to preach the Gospel, make disciples and baptize them (Matt. 28:18-20). So, baptism is a command, not a suggestion. There is no such thing as an unbaptized Christian anywhere in the Bible.

Baptism is a covenant ratification ceremony. It marks the end of an old, sinful way of life and the start of a new, righteous life washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ and led by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. A sinner renounces his citizenship in the kingdom of Satan and becomes a naturalized citizen of the kingdom of God (Php. 3:20, Col. 1:13-14).

The general pattern throughout the New Testament is that a minister baptizes an adult convert upon profession of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He baptizes by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins.

When Peter preached the Gospel to a large crowd in Jerusalem during the feast of Pentecost, they were convicted and asked Peter what they should do. In Acts 2:38, Peter said, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

The first thing that people need to do is repent. God will not forgive or save a person who refuses to obey Him and willfully continues to sin. This also means that a person must be mature enough to know what sin is and be able to make a lifelong commitment to follow God; baptism is for adults, not children.

The English term “baptism” comes from the Greek verb *baptidzo*, which means to immerse or submerge. It does not refer to sprinkling or pouring water on someone. Baptism symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of a convert; sprinkling a little dirt on a corpse isn’t a burial, and pouring a little water on someone isn’t a baptism.

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The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were very familiar with the concept of baptism. They regularly practiced ritual immersion in freshwater pools as required by the Torah. There are many ritual pools near the temple mount where Peter preached his famous sermon on the feast of Pentecost.

So, when the Ethiopian eunuch accepted the Gospel, Philip immersed him. In Acts 8:38, Luke wrote, “And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.”

The Bible shows that baptism is followed by the laying on of hands with prayer for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14-17 says, “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit” (NIV).

This is what Paul did when he baptized his disciples. In Acts 19:5-6, Luke says, “On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.”

On one special occasion, God gave the Holy Spirit to the first Gentile converts before baptism, to overcome Jewish prejudice, but Peter still required them to be baptized. In Acts 10:44, Luke says, “While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word...” Verse 48 adds, “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.”

So, the New Testament shows that baptism is a mandatory covenant ratification ceremony for every adult convert who expresses repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. A minister baptizes by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; this is followed by the laying on of hands with prayer for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

MOSAIC LAW

We teach that the Mosaic Law is an important revelation of moral and spiritual truth that was incorporated into the Old and New Covenants. While many stipulations apply only to Israelites living in the Promised Land, others are binding on all humanity. Therefore, the Mosaic Law has abiding significance as a guide to proper living for God’s people.

Six hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, God told the Israelites that He was going to make a new covenant with them. Jeremiah 31:33 says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law [Torah] within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

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God promised to write the Torah, the Law of Moses, on their hearts just as He had written them on tablets of stone at Mount Horeb. He never intended to abolish the Mosaic Law; instead, He was going to transform their hearts so they could keep His commandments.

This is also what Jesus said when He explained the New Covenant to His disciples. In Matthew 5:17-20, Jesus said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus came to save people from their sins, not in their sins. He came to change the hearts of His people by the power of the Holy Spirit so they can obey God perfectly. True Christians love God’s laws and keep His commandments.

This is the same message that Paul taught Jewish and Gentile Christians. In Romans 3:31, Paul said, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law” (NIV). The context of this passage is clear; Paul is speaking of the Law of Moses. Far from abolishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed the authority and importance of the Torah for all Christians.

The Law of Moses is the constitution of the nation of Israel and the kingdom of God. It is the basic legal and moral framework for the Old and New Covenants. It defines good and evil, right and wrong, for all people for all time. Therefore, the Mosaic Law has abiding significance as a guide to proper living for God’s people.

SABBATH

We teach that God alone has the authority to make time holy. He established the seventh day Sabbath at Creation for all humanity and has never abolished that command. He also expects His people to observe His annual Sabbaths and biblical festivals.

God is the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, so He determines how and when we should worship Him. People can voluntarily set aside a day for fasting or giving thanks, but they can’t make that time holy. God alone decides what is holy.

He established the Sabbath at Creation for Adam and Eve and all their children. In Genesis 2:3, Moses wrote, “So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” The seventh day of the week is holy because God said it is holy, and He has never changed or abolished that commandment.

The weekly Sabbath is a blessing from God to all humanity. In addition to providing rest from physical labor, the Sabbath reminds us that Yahweh is the Creator and Ruler of the universe; it is also a sign that He is our God and we are His people (Ex. 31:12-17).

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God also expects His people to observe His annual Sabbaths and biblical festivals. In Leviticus 23:2, He said to Moses, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts...’” God wants to have a relationship with us, so He commands us to assemble on His Sabbaths to worship Him so we never forget Him or take Him for granted.

The feasts of the Lord include the weekly Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day Assembly (Lev. 23). God called these days “My appointed feasts.” They are the feasts of the Lord, not just the holy days of the Jews.

Jesus taught that God made the Sabbath for all humanity. In Mark 2:27, He said, “The Sabbath was made for man...” Mark used the Greek term *ton anthropon*, where the generic definite article with the singular noun refers to all humanity in general. So, Jesus confirmed what Moses taught in Genesis 2:3; God made the Sabbath at Creation for everyone, not just the Jews.

Later, Paul taught Jewish and Gentile Christians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. In 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, he wrote, “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (NASB).

Paul used the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a metaphor to teach Christians to remove sin from their lives just as they had removed leaven from their homes. If the church wasn’t keeping this feast, his illustration would have been meaningless to them. The only way this metaphor would make sense is if they were, in fact, unleavened just as he had said.

Finally, Bible prophecy shows that Israelites and Gentiles will keep the Feast of Tabernacles during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Zechariah 14:16-17 says “And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain” (NKJV).

So, the Bible teaches that God established the seventh day Sabbath at Creation for all humanity, and He expects His people to observe His annual Sabbaths and biblical festivals as well. They are a blessing for all humanity, they remind us about our Creator and they teach us valuable lessons about God’s plan of salvation for all people.

LORD’S SUPPER

We teach that the Lord’s Supper is an annual observance on the 14th of Aviv, which includes foot washing as an ordinance of humility and partaking of unleavened bread and wine as

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symbols of our Lord's body and blood; it is distinct from the Passover and is only for baptized Christians.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples in the city of Jerusalem the evening before the Feast of Unleavened Bread began. This was the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar called Aviv or Nisan.

That night, Jesus taught His disciples to observe three distinct ceremonies as a memorial of His death and the establishment of the New Covenant. Years later, Paul referred to this special observance as the Lord's Supper.

The first ceremony involves washing one another's feet. Jesus laid aside His outer garments, took a towel and washed His disciples' feet. Afterward, He said to them, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

This ceremony is not just for pastors but for everyone. Jesus wanted all Christians to be humble enough to wash one another's feet during the Lord's Supper. This would force Christians to love and forgive one another continually. Anyone who would refuse to wash the feet of someone within the congregation needed to repent of something before they could participate in this sacred ceremony.

The next ceremony involves eating unleavened bread as a symbol of Christ's broken body. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-24, Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'"

The last ceremony involves drinking a small portion of wine as a symbol of Christ's shed blood. In 1 Corinthians 11:25-26, Paul wrote, "In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Paul specifically said that Jesus instituted this ceremony on the night that He was betrayed; that was on the 14th day of Aviv, the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. He also said that Christians should eat this bread and drink this cup repeatedly in order to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Thus, the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, our Passover lamb, who was slain for our redemption (1Cor. 5:7-8).

According to church history, the apostle John and Phillip the evangelist taught the Christians of Asia Minor to observe this ceremony every year on this same date. People called these Christians Quartodeciman, those who observe the Lord's Supper on the 14th day of Aviv. They continued to follow this apostolic practice in the second, third and fourth centuries despite opposition from apostates who no longer kept God's Sabbaths and biblical festivals.

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Paul also said that this cup is the new covenant in Jesus' blood, therefore, it is self-evident that only baptized Christians should participate in this ceremony. Christians partake of the bread and the cup to reaffirm their new covenant relationship with Christ, so it would be sacrilege for children or unbelievers to partake of these sacred elements.

This rule is also confirmed by church history. Didache 9:5 says, "But let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord, for the Lord has also spoken concerning this: 'Do not give what is holy to dogs.'"

The Lord's Supper is separate and distinct from the Passover. Jesus and His disciples ate the Last Supper the night before the Passover lambs were slain and eaten; Jewish rabbis at the time of Jesus were known to gather with their disciples the night before Passover to rehearse the Passover seder. Jesus used this occasion to establish the Lord's Supper, which Jewish and Gentile believers would observe in the years to come.

The Lord's Supper is fundamentally different from the Passover in many ways. First, only Christians can observe the Lord's Supper, while only circumcised Israelites and their families can eat the Passover. Second, Christians would gather as a congregation to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but Israelite families would gather in individual homes for the Passover. Also, Christians can celebrate the Lord's Supper anywhere that a congregation exists, but Israelites can only celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, where God has placed His name and His sanctuary. Finally, Paul explicitly commanded the Christians at Corinth not to eat a meal when they assembled for the Lord's Supper, while the Passover seder requires the eating of a meal, which includes the Passover lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

In conclusion, the Lord's Supper is an annual observance that takes place on the 14th day of the first Hebrew month called Aviv; this ceremony includes foot washing as an ordinance of humility and partaking of unleavened bread and wine as symbols of our Lord's body and blood. It is distinct from the Passover and is only for baptized Christians.

TITHING

We teach that tithing is an act of faith and worship to our Creator who gives us life and provides for our every need. Throughout the Bible, God directed His people to give contributions to His ministers so they could carry out His work, therefore, Christians should give tithes and offerings to the Church to accomplish the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ.

We are indebted to our Creator for every second that we exist in His universe. God created every molecule of air that we breathe, every drop of water we drink, and every atom in the food that we eat. Every heartbeat that we enjoy is a gift from God.

So, all of us should be deeply grateful to God for everything that He has done for us. Moses told the children of Israel, "You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day" (Deut. 8:18).

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The Bible teaches that we should express our gratitude by giving God a portion of our material blessings. Proverbs 3:9-10 says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

From the beginning, God’s people have given tithes and offerings to God as an expression of faith and worship. Tithing involves setting aside a tenth of one’s income to financially support God’s work.

The practice of tithing existed during the time of the Patriarchs, long before Moses and the Old Covenant. In Genesis 14:18-20, Moses wrote, “And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: ‘Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you.’ Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered” (NLT).

Tithing is God’s method for financing His work in this world; it is His way of providing for His servants as they serve the spiritual needs of His people. In Numbers 18:21, God said, “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting” (NIV).

So, tithing represents a quid pro quo. God’s ministers serve God’s people in spiritual matters, and in return, God’s people give contributions to God’s work to meet the material needs of His ministers.

This principle began during the time of the Patriarchs and continued throughout the Bible down to the New Covenant. In 1 Corinthians 9:13-14, Paul wrote, “Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.”

Paul taught that the same principle of giving tithes and offerings to support the Levitical priesthood applies specifically to the ministry of the church. According to Paul, this is what the Lord Himself commanded the church to do. In Galatians 6:6, Paul also said, “Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.” Therefore, Christians in each congregation have a responsibility to make sure that the full-time ministry receives a decent salary that is comparable to what they are earning.

So, the Bible teaches that tithing is an act of faith and worship to our Creator. Tithing is also God’s method for financing His work; therefore, Christians should give tithes and offerings to the Church to provide for the material needs of the ministry as they proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

FOOD LAWS

We teach that God has determined which items are acceptable as food for His people. Animals were classified as clean or unclean before the Flood, and these designations continued after Christ's death and resurrection.

Before the Flood, God had already revealed which animals were ritually clean and suitable for use as sacrifices. In Genesis 7:2, God told Noah, "Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate." After the Flood, Noah offered some of the clean animals as sacrifices.

Later, when God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, He taught them what they could and could not eat. Leviticus 11:1-2 says, "And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, 'Speak to the people of Israel, saying, "These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth.'" He allowed them to eat any of the clean animals but not the unclean creatures.

God called Israel to be a holy nation and a royal priesthood; they were set apart for a special ministry. He wanted His people to set an example to unbelievers, and they enjoyed clear health benefits as a result.

Many people wrongly believe that Jesus abolished the Torah, but throughout the New Testament, the apostles assumed that the Mosaic Law was still in existence and still relevant for defining right and wrong.

The early Christian church taught Jewish and Gentile believers to avoid physical uncleanness. In 2 Corinthians 6:17, Paul wrote, "Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you." This is not talking about defilement in the heart or mind; Paul specifically commanded Christians not to touch anything unclean, and the only place in the Bible that defines what is clean or unclean is in the Torah, the Law of Moses.

In the late first century, Jesus gave John detailed prophecies about the future of the world and His second coming. John saw the destruction of the satanic Babylonian kingdom that has oppressed God's people since the foundation of this age. In Revelation 18:2, an angelic messenger called out with a mighty voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast."

This vision occurred almost 70 years after the resurrection of Jesus, yet God still considered animals to be clean or unclean as defined by His laws. Jesus doesn't believe that the Torah has been abolished and neither should we.

ANOINTING

We teach that God promises to heal His people according to His Word. Christians who are seriously ill should call on the elders of the church to anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord as an act of faith and intercessory prayer.

When God delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, He performed many miracles to demonstrate His limitless, supernatural power. He sent devastating plagues on Egypt, parted the Red Sea, and destroyed Pharaoh's army. Despite these miracles, Israel repeatedly lacked faith and grumbled about their circumstances, but God always met their needs.

At the waters of Marah, God also promised to heal Israel if they would carefully obey Him. In Exodus 15:26, He said to them, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer" (NASB).

There are always conditions associated with God's promises, and one of them is that God only answers the prayers of those who repent and obey Him. For example, the Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart, and he testified that God had faithfully answered his prayers. In Psalm 103:2-3, David wrote, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases."

Throughout Israel's history, God sent many prophets who performed powerful miracles. Elijah resurrected the son of the widow in Zarephath, while Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy and resurrected the son of the Shunammite woman.

They were able to accomplish great miracles through faith. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

So, faith is the second general condition for all of God's promises. Jesus often complained that the Israelites lacked faith, so He did no miracles for them. But several Gentiles displayed great faith, and He answered their prayers for healing.

God promises to heal Christians today as He did in ancient times. James 5:14-15 says, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

God expects the elders of the church to minister to the sick just as Jesus did. In ancient times, people used olive oil as an ointment to promote healing, but anointing someone with oil also symbolizes the anointing of the Holy Spirit with supernatural power. James implies that the person has a serious illness because the prayer of faith will save the individual; God will "raise him up" indicating that he is bedridden.

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The Bible also promises that God will forgive the sick person if he committed sins. God will sometimes use sickness as a punishment, but sickness is often merely the result of accidents, germs, or advancing age. The important point is that God will not forgive or heal those who stubbornly continue to sin, but if they humbly repent, God will answer their prayers.

God promises what He will do but does not specify how or when He will do it. God will heal according to His will and wisdom. He may heal quickly or slowly. He may heal by a miracle or by providential means. In some cases, God may not heal until the resurrection of the dead, but He will keep His promises.

So, throughout the Bible, God promises to heal His people according to the conditions given in His Word. Therefore, Christians who are seriously ill should call on the elders of the church to anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord as an act of faith and intercessory prayer.

MILITARY SERVICE

We teach that Christians should not try to establish the kingdom of God through armed conflict. To avoid ethical conflicts, Sabbath-keeping Christians should choose alternative, civilian service (instead of military enlistment) to serve God and their country with a clear conscience.

The Bible reveals that Satan is in control of the whole world and will remain in control until God sets up His kingdom on earth. Jesus referred to Satan as “the ruler of this world,” and Paul called him “the god of this world” (John 12:31, 2Cor 4:4).

Jesus didn’t come to establish His kingdom on earth at this time. When the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus and handed Him over to the Romans for trial, Pilate asked Jesus if He claimed to be a king. In John 18:36, Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm” (NASB).

Only God can put an end to Satan’s kingdom, so Christians should not get ahead of God’s will and try to set up the kingdom through political revolution or armed military conflict. As Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (NIV).

Christians are like ambassadors of Jesus Christ living in a foreign country, but our first allegiance is to God and His kingdom. In Philippians 3:20, Paul said, “But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior” (NLT). We must live in the world, but we are not to be of the world.

The leaders of this world are constantly working to increase their power and tear down the power of their rivals through deception, manipulation, intimidation and violence. Therefore, Christians

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should not enlist in the military of any government. Doing so would certainly place a Christian in a position of disobeying God and violating one's conscience.

Paul warned Christians to maintain their liberty and not come under the authority of unbelievers. In 1 Corinthians 7:23, he said, "You were bought for a price; do not become slaves of people" (NASB). In 2 Corinthians 6:14, he also wrote, "Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Military service may not be literal slavery, but those who enlist are required by law to obey the orders of their superiors whether they agree with them or not. People can't simply quit the military if they feel like it. They have lost the right to make moral choices for themselves, and in that sense, they have become the slaves of other people.

Many countries allow their citizens to register as conscientious objectors to military service and fulfill their duty by working in a civilian occupation instead of military enlistment. This would allow Sabbath-keeping Christians to avoid potential ethical conflicts and serve God and their country with a clear conscience.

THE DEAD

We teach that the dead are unconscious until the resurrection of the body. They do not suffer pain or loneliness and are not aware of the passing of time.

Since ancient times, people have wondered about what happens after we die. Do we cease to exist? Is there a conscious afterlife? Will we see our departed loved ones or suffer unending torture at the hands of hellish creatures?

Science and philosophy are completely unable to answer these questions because they are limited to the study of the natural universe; they can't probe the supernatural realm, but God's Word provides the answers.

The Bible tells us that, in the beginning, God fashioned a body from the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into Adam, and he became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). At death, the spirit of life returns to God who gave it and our bodies return to the dust from which we came (Eccl. 12:7, Gen. 3:19).

We know from personal experience that while we are alive our minds are active; even when we are asleep, we experience dreams. If we drink alcohol or take certain drugs, our minds are no longer capable of thinking coherently. The mind needs a living brain to function, so it is logical to conclude that if the brain dies, all mental activity stops and consciousness ends.

Many people claim to have been conscious during a near-death experience, but these reports are completely unreliable. The human brain can remain alive for 20 minutes or more after the heart

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stops beating; when these people are revived through CPR or artificial respiration, they enter a semiconscious state where dreams or hallucinations can occur.

To date, there isn't one single person who has had an out-of-body experience who can provide irrefutable proof that what they claimed to see was real. There were no miracles or divine prophecies; no secret information was revealed that no other person could have known apart from a supernatural experience.

The Bible tells us that the dead are unconscious until the resurrection. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, "The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered" (NLT). Verse 10 also says, "Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom" (Eccl. 9:10 NLT).

The Bible plainly says that the dead are inactive. In Psalm 6:5, David wrote, "Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?" (NIV). Psalm 115:17 provides the answer: "The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence."

The Bible describes death as being like sleep, where the dead are not aware of the passing of time. In Psalm 13:3, David prayed, "Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death" (NIV).

Over and over again, the Bible teaches that the dead are unconscious in their graves. They do not suffer pain or loneliness and are not aware of the passing of time; they are in a state of suspended animation, like a dreamless sleep, until the resurrection of the dead.

SECOND COMING

We teach that the return of Jesus Christ will be personal, visible, and pre-millennial. He will rule the world, the earth will be at peace and everyone will learn about God.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives and ascended into the clouds. Luke says that a pair of men, dressed in white, appeared to the disciples and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

At the Second Coming, Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives. Zechariah 14:3-4 says, "Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward."

At the Second Coming, everyone will see Jesus return. This isn't going to be a secret or invisible event. In Revelation 1:7, John wrote, "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen." Everyone will wail because God is going to pour out His wrath on this sinful

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world. The Book of Revelation says that God is going to destroy the earth and kill billions of people through a series of disasters announced by seven angelic trumpets.

At the Second Coming, God will establish His kingdom over the earth. Revelation 11:15 says, “The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever’” (NIV). God is currently allowing the nations of the world to rule themselves, but when the seventh trumpet sounds, Jesus will become the ruler of the world.

At the Second Coming, the earth will be at peace, and everyone will learn about God. Isaiah 11:9 says, “They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.” When Christ returns, wars will cease and all nations will hear the Gospel without any opposition from Satan. Everyone will know the truth and have an opportunity to receive salvation and eternal life.

So, as we have seen, the Bible teaches that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will be personal, visible, and pre-millennial. He will rule the world, the earth will be at peace and everyone will learn about God.

RESURRECTION

We teach that God will resurrect everyone who has ever lived according to a set plan. The saints will be resurrected to eternal life at Christ’s return and reign with Him for a thousand years. The rest of the dead will be raised to physical life after the Millennium.

The Bible reveals that God has the power to raise the dead. The first time this occurred, Elijah resurrected the son of a widow in Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17-24), and then his successor, Elisha, raised the son of the Shunammite woman back to life (2 Kings 4:18-37). Jesus raised several people from the dead during His ministry including Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha (John 11:38-44), and Peter resurrected Tabitha in the city of Joppa (Acts 9:36-41).

The Bible also reveals that God will eventually raise everyone from the dead. God gave Daniel detailed predictions about the end of this age and the coming of the kingdom of God. Daniel 12:2-3 says, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

Jesus also spoke of a future, general resurrection of all humanity. In John 5:28-29, He told the crowds, “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

According to Paul, God will resurrect everyone who has died, but He will do so in a particular order. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-23, Paul explained, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall

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all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.”

The first general resurrection will occur when Christ returns. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Paul wrote, “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.”

The first resurrection will only include those who belong to Christ. According to the Bible, this includes the Patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament as well as Christians who have received God’s Holy Spirit (Luke 13:28, Rom. 8:9, 11).

The first resurrection will be a resurrection to eternal life. In 1 Corinthians 15:50-52, Paul said, “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

The first general resurrection will occur at the start of the Millennium. In Revelation 20:4, John described what will happen shortly after the Second Coming, saying, “Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

The second general resurrection will occur after the Millennium. In Revelation 20:5, John wrote, “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended...” The first resurrection will only include the saints, those who belong to Christ; that is a very small fraction of humanity. The second resurrection will include everyone else, those who don’t yet belong to Christ; that will be most of humanity.

The second general resurrection will be a resurrection to physical life. In Ezekiel 37, God gave Ezekiel a vision of the second general resurrection. He saw a valley filled with human bones. God reassembled these bones, put flesh on them and brought them back to life. He told Ezekiel that these bones represented the whole house of Israel.

The second general resurrection will be an opportunity for salvation. In Ezekiel 37:13-14, God promised Israel, “And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.” During the second resurrection, people will live in their own country and will come to know the Lord.

Many people have wondered about the fate of those who died without hearing the gospel. They wonder about children who died and never reached the age of accountability. They wonder about

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people who were mentally ill and couldn't make an informed, rational choice about personal salvation. Would God cast all these people into hell?

The Bible indicates that God is going to give everyone a chance to hear the gospel and make a choice about salvation. In John 12:32, Jesus promised, "And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself" (NLT). He was talking about drawing everyone to Himself in the context of giving them a chance for salvation. Based on these and other passages, it appears that God will fulfill this promise during the second resurrection (cf. Matt. 12:41-42).

So, the Bible teaches that God will resurrect everyone according to a set plan. The saints will be resurrected to eternal life at Christ's return and reign with Him for a thousand years. The rest of the dead will be raised to physical life after the Millennium.

FINAL JUDGMENT

We teach that, after the second resurrection, Jesus Christ will gather everyone and judge them according to their works. He will destroy those not listed in the book of life by a second death in the lake of fire. Then, God will dwell with His people forever in a new heaven and a new earth.

Every human being has an appointment with Jesus Christ on Judgment Day (Matt. 25:31-46). In 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul wrote, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil."

Judgment Day will occur after the second general resurrection. Revelation 20:11-12 says, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done."

Those who follow Jesus have nothing to fear on Judgment Day, but those who reject Him are destined for fiery destruction. Malachi 4:1, says, "For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."

Ultimately, everyone will either live forever in the kingdom of God or be destroyed in the lake of fire. Revelation 20:13-15 says, "And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

God will not torment people for eternity in the lake of fire; the wicked will die and cease to exist. In Matthew 10:28, Jesus said, "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." People don't have immortal souls;

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death is the cessation of life, and the second death in the lake of fire will destroy the wicked forever.

The lake of fire will incinerate the physical universe, and God will create a new heaven and a new earth. 2 Peter 3:11-13 says, “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells” (NIV).

After Judgment Day, God will dwell with His people for eternity. In Revelation 21:1-3, John wrote, “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.’”

So, the Bible teaches that, after the second resurrection, Jesus Christ will gather everyone and judge them according to their works. He will destroy those not listed in the book of life by a second death in the lake of fire. Then, God will create a new heaven and a new earth and dwell with His people for eternity.

Scriptures are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.