

Doctrinal Statement of Copperfield Bible Church

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible constitute the Word of God, His only written special revelation to man, which He has faithfully preserved throughout time. The Scriptures are divinely inspired and God-breathed in origin which means that they must be inerrant in their original writings and infallible. Such inspiration must also be verbal (every word inspired) and plenary (all parts equally inspired) because God is its Source (Psalm 119:151,160; Matthew 5:18, 24:35; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16). An infallible God cannot write a fallible Book (John 10:35).

God gave the Bible to mankind through human authors led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved these men who wrote through their own personalities and styles. Thus we speak of the dual authorship of Scripture which maintains God as its Source, blended with the unique traits of the human writers (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Scriptures were written primarily to common people in the common language of the day and thus are to be interpreted literally, allowing for the use of obvious figures of speech, illustrations, etc., especially where so noted (e.g. Galatians 4:21-31). Literal interpretation also incorporates the historical setting in which each book was written and the language in which each book was written, otherwise known as the historical-grammatical method. The Bible can only be truly understood as men are enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 16:17; John 7:17, 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16).

The Bible constitutes the only authoritative, absolute, infallible guideline to faith and practice and is fully sufficient to bring men to salvation and maturity in Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:3).

GOD

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

God the Father

We believe that God the Father is the first Person of the Trinity who created all things and causes all things to work together according to His sovereign plan, a plan designed to bring Him ultimate glory. As the supreme Ruler of the universe, His sovereignty extends over all things including creation and redemption (Genesis 1:1-31; Psalm 103:19; Matthew 20:15; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 15:24,28; Ephesians 1:11, 3:9,11; Revelation 4:11). However, such sovereignty does not make Him the author of sin, nor does it excuse the accountability of moral and volitional creatures when they fall into sin (Habakkuk 1:13; Matthew 16:27; John 5:29, 8:24; Romans 2:6, 3:23, 6:23; James 1:13-15; 2 Peter 2:4-6).

The Father is co-equal in essence with both the Son and the Holy Spirit, however, as the first Person of the Trinity, He maintains authority over the Son and the Holy Spirit as They do His will (1 Corinthians

11:3, John 5:19-37, 10:18, 29). He is the spiritual Father of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and all believers, whom He adopts as sons when they come to genuine, saving faith in Christ (John 1:12, 5:17-18, 10:30, 20:17; Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 3:26, 4:5; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 12:5-8; 1 Peter 1:3).

God the Son

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

God the Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, possesses all the attributes of deity and is co-equal, co-existent, co-eternal with, and of the same nature as the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17). The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:19), and truth (John 16:13).

The work of the Holy Spirit is to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. This includes His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation of the Son (Matthew 1:18,20; Luke 1:35), the written revelation of God (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-8). In this present age, the Holy Spirit was sent forth from the Father and the Son to initiate and complete the building of the church, to speak of and glorify the Son, and to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 14:16,26, 15:26, 16:7-11, 13-14; Acts 1:5, 2:4; Ephesians 2:19-22).

The Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration who enables every believer to see their need for salvation, without which salvation would be impossible, and then draws them to Jesus Christ (John 6:44,63; 2 Corinthians 3:6). The Holy Spirit baptizes all believers into the Body of Christ at the moment of salvation, at which time He also indwells them with all fullness (John 3:34; 14:17; Romans 8:9,11; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

Subsequent to salvation, it is the duty of all those born of the Holy Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit which is evidenced by the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 7:16-20; Galatians 5:16,22-23,25; Ephesians 5:18). Concerning His further ministry to the believer, the Holy Spirit also sanctifies them, instructs them, empowers them for service, seals them unto the day of redemption, and transforms them into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:6,18; Ephesians 1:13, 4:7-13,30; 1 John 2:20,27).

The Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher who guided the prophets and apostles into all truth as they committed to writing God's special revelation, the Bible (John 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:1; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:19-21). He administers spiritual gifts to the church but neither glorifies Himself or His gifts by ostentatious displays. Instead, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

In this respect, God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing and exercising of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints. However, the special and extraordinary gifts such as speaking in tongues and sign miracles in the beginning years of the church were meant to point to and authenticate the apostles as revealers of divine truth and not to be normal characteristics of believers today (Romans 15:18-19; Ephesians 2:20-22, 4:7,11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrews 2:1-4).

MAN

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

In Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence, incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death, became subject to the wrath of God, and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17, 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23, 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

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

SALVATION

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

Regeneration

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

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

While regeneration brings to life a new inner man alive to God, the believer still struggles with indwelling sin. The result of this is that the flesh and the Spirit are engaged in an ongoing battle which will never cease until the believer is with the Lord (Romans 7:14-25; Galatians 5:17; 1 John 1:8). Believers are not exempt from reaping what they sow simply because they are saved and likewise are subject to divine

chastening when they sin, even to the point of death (1 Corinthians 11:30-32; Galatians 6:7-8; Hebrews 12:4-13).

This painful and difficult struggle may at times result in the believer falling into grievous sins, even for a period of time (Luke 15:11-32; 1 Corinthians 5:1,9-11). Fellow believers are to be diligent to restore such a brother to spiritual health in a spirit of love, humility and gentleness, considering their own innate depravity and vulnerability to sin (1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; Galatians 6:1-2). However, continued unrepentant sin calls into question the reality of one's profession of faith (Matthew 7:15-20, 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:5-6) and requires the church to deal with such a person according to the guidelines of church discipline, both for his own welfare and the protection of the Body of Christ (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

Election

We believe that election is the sovereign act of God by which, before the foundation of the world and without regard to the future choices of man, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30, 9:10-24; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). God's sovereign election does not negate man's responsibility to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23,32, 33:11; John 3:18-19,36, 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17).

Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, God's election will result in what He determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40,44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8). However, the sovereignty of God does not excuse the believer to develop a fatalistic mentality or to become indifferent to the salvation of the lost. Instead it should deepen his love for God, realizing that God has chosen him from eternity past, and therefore motivate even more his desire to obey and serve (Ephesians 1:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

The unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Romans 9:9-18; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

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

Sovereign election does not deny God's love for all mankind or His desire that all be saved (John 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:4). While this may appear contrary to the doctrine of election, both are equal and reconcilable truths in the eyes of God and reflect the majestic and immeasurable greatness of His mind and ways (Job 42:3; Isaiah 40:13-14, 55:8-9; Romans 11:33-36; 1 Corinthians 2:16). Neither does election mean that God acts callously, cruelly or unfairly towards the lost; on the contrary, He takes no pleasure as He executes judgment against them (Ezekiel 18:23,32, 33:11; Luke 19:41-44), a judgment that is both righteous and deserved (Ezekiel 18:20,30; Matthew 16:27, 25:41-46; John 3:18-20; Romans 2:6, 6:23; Revelation 20:12-13).

Justification

We believe that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith alone in Christ, repent of sin and place their trust in Him as their Savior, confessing Him as sovereign Lord (Isaiah 55:6-7; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38, 3:19, 11:18, 16:31; Romans 2:4, 3:24-25, 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3, 2 Corinthians 4:5, 7:10; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20, 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

Sanctification

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

There is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing he positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22, 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4, 5:23).

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

Security

We believe that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24, 6:37-40, 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10, 8:1,31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 1:13, 4:30; Hebrews 7:25, 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

It is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids both the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:1-2,15-22, 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13,25-26; Titus 2:11-14; Jude 4) as well as any attitude that downplays or ignores the believer's responsibility to persevere and grow in Christ-likeness as enabled by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 10:22, 24:13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 John 5:4).

Separation

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

Out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to Him and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11). However, such separation is not to be confused with complete withdrawal from unbelievers. While the Christian is not of the world, he remains in the world as a testimony of the light and life offered by Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:13-16, 11:19; Luke 7:34; John 17:14-18; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

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

THE CHURCH

We believe that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22, 4:15; Colossians 1:18). The formation of the church began on the Day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the Rapture (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

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

The establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament (Acts 14:23,27, 20:17,28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:24-25).

The one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures (Matthew 28:18). The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (also called bishops/overseers and pastors—Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5).

These officers lead and rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. However, such authority never allows any leader to exploit the flock nor govern in an authoritative, lording manner (1 Peter 5:3; 2 Peter 2:3; Jude 16). The congregation is to submit to their loving, servant leadership as they teach and lead in accordance with the Word of God (Hebrews 13:7,17).

The local church is to be the center of discipleship, emphasizing the importance of spiritual growth (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of those engaged in unrepentant sin in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16, 3:10-11).

The New Testament teaches the autonomy of the local church, being free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5). It is Scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith (Acts 15; Romans 15:26-24; Philippians 1:5, 4:15-16; Colossians 4:16). Each local church, through its elders and interpretation and application of Scripture, is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. However, it is equally unbiblical for true churches to unite with apostate churches—those denying any essential doctrine of the Christian faith—in any form of joint endeavor, being unequally yoked. Such ecclesiastical separation is required by Scripture in spite of other common beliefs and/or values they may share (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 2:5; Ephesians 5:11; 1 John 2:19; Revelation 18:4). The elders determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, government, etc., and are called to discern the will of God for the unique issues concerning each local assembly (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

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

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

Concerning spiritual gifts, there were two kinds given the early church: miraculous sign gifts, including divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (2 Corinthians 12:12; Hebrew 2:3-4); and ministering, nonrevelatory gifts, given to equip believers to edify one another, and which remain in operation today (Romans 12:6-8). With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a man's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a man or his message (John 14:26, 16:13, 17:17; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Timothy 2:15, 4:2-4).

False miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (Matthew 24:24; Revelation 13:13-14). The gift of healing is not normative for today but God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15).

Our Lord Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38-42; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Believer's baptism is a singular act, by immersion (Acts 8:36-39), and beautifully testifies of believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a testimony to the world of our union with the Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42). Because it is a testimony of the believer's choice to follow Jesus Christ, it is only for those who have made such a volitional decision and therefore is not intended for infants or small children presently incapable of such decisions.

The Lord's Supper is a regular observance of the rich commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes and should always be preceded with solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:23-32). The

elements of the Communion table are only representative of the body and blood of Christ and are not changed in any way to that effect.

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

ANGELS

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

Holy Angels

We believe that the holy angels serve God and worship Him (Psalm 103:20-21; Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9). They presently are engaged in spiritual warfare with the demonic host and serve as ministering agents for believers (Daniel 10:12-13; Hebrews 1:14; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7-8).

Fallen Angels

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

At the head of the demonic host is the devil, or Satan. As a created being, he possesses none of the attributes of deity and should not be treated as though he does. He is the author of sin and incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), taking an apparent one-third of the angels with him in his fall (Revelation 12:4), and introducing sin into the human race with his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15).

Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13-14; Matthew 4:1-11; John 10:10; Revelation 12:9-10). He is also the prince, or god, of this present evil world system which opposes the true God (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2) and holds the entirety of unbelieving humanity under his control (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:26; 1 John 5:19). He violently opposes believers and their service to the Lord (Job 1-2; Luke 22:31; John 17:15; Ephesians 6:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10). However, he is powerless against God and has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 14:30, 16:11; Romans 16:20; Colossians 2:15), and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

LAST THINGS (ESCHATOLOGY)

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

Individual Eschatology

We believe that physical death results in a separation of soul/spirit and body but involves no loss of immaterial consciousness (Matthew 22:32; Luke 16:19-31, 20:37-38; Revelation 6:9-11). All men will be bodily raised from the dead, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:13-15).

The soul/spirit of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ at death (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8). The separation of soul/spirit and body will continue until the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17), when the soul/spirit and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until then, the soul/spirit of the redeemed remains in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8).

The soul/spirit of the lost passes immediately into punishment at death (Luke 16:19-26). The separation of soul/spirit and body will continue until the second resurrection at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul/spirit and body will be reunited (John 5:28-29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire, cut off from the life and presence of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Cosmic Eschatology

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

The Rapture of the Church

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

The Tribulation Period

Immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 16). These judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Zechariah 14:2-4; Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). At that time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Daniel

12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

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

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

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

The Judgment of the Lost

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

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

The Eternal State

After the close of the Millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 20:7-15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 20:15; 21-22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Revelation 21-22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:28).