

WHAT WE TEACH

Doctrinal Statement of Liberty Baptist Church

Truth matters. Biblical truth matters supremely. LBC is committed to reading, teaching, preaching, understanding, and applying Scripture for the glory of God.

The Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, thus the 66 books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-14; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture, which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal 24-hour days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12-13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Word of God is entirely sufficient to teach us all that we need to know about how to be rightly related to God and our fellow man (2 Peter 1:3).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20-21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16).

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammatical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the proper context and true intent or meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

God the Father

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5-7; John 17:3; 1 Corinthians 8:4; 1 Timothy 2:5), an infinite, all-knowing, self-existent Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8-9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the creator of all things (Genesis 1:1-31). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17).

We teach that God the Father has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6). We teach that God the Father is sovereign in salvation, and we teach that all people are responsible to repent and believe the Gospel for salvation. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation are both clearly taught in Scripture. God becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

God the Son

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

We teach that in the incarnation the eternal Son, without altering His divine nature or surrendering any of the divine attributes, made Himself of no reputation by taking on a full human nature like our own, yet without sin (Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26). We teach that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:35) and thus born of a woman (Galatians 1:4-5), so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the divine and the human, were joined together in one person, without confusion, change, division, or separation. He is therefore fully God and fully man, the God-man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). We teach that in His incarnation, Christ fully possessed His divine nature, attributes, and prerogatives (Colossians 2:9). However, in the state of His humiliation, He did not always express the glories of His majesty, concealing them behind the veil of His genuine humanity (Matthew 17:2; Mark 13:32). According to His human nature, He acts in submission to the Father (John 4:34; 5:19, 30; 6:38) by the power of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:1, 14), while, according to His divine nature, He acts by His authority and power as the eternal Son (John 1:14; 10:37-38; 14:10-11).

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

sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom. 3:25; 5:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:14:15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1). We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that He has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Christ's bodily resurrection is also a guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Rom. 6:5-10; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20). We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22-23). Christ will judge believers (1 Cor. 3:10—15; 2 Cor. 5:10), living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31-46), and the unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isa. 9:6; Lk. 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Mt. 22:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 28:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17). We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation of Christ (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7; Titus 3:4-7).

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

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

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

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. Every believer receives at least one spiritual gift for the building up of the body (1 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10). The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the building up of the saints, and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 13:8-10; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:7-12; Hebrews 2:1-4). Every believer is baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit at the moment he believes (1 Corinthians 12:13) and he is to be filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit as he obeys the Word of God (Ephesians 5:18).

Man and Sin

We teach 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 (will), self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9). We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that he should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that God created human beings with a specific and permanent gender: Adam (male) and Eve (female). As such, God established the pattern of marriage to be the union of one man and one woman. From this covenantal bond of marriage, God intended intimacy as the means for procreation of the family (Genesis 1:27-28).

We teach that God has ordained and limited sexual activity only within marriage between a husband and a wife (Hebrews 13:4). We teach that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matthew 15:18-20; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

We teach that 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 entirely an act 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).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only 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

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of individuals to repent and trust Christ as Lord and Savior (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Romans 9:22-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative on 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 (John 1:12-13; Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2). We teach that God's election is not based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign, but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, wisdom, justice, holiness, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration (new birth) is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24; James 1:18), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation in Christ (John 6:44, 65; Acts 13:48; 16:14). Genuine regeneration is evident as one performs deeds appropriate to repentance demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct (Acts 26:20; Luke 3:8; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Good works are the proper evidence and fruit of regeneration (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10) and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience gradually transforms the believer to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5; Philippians 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). 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 teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is thus identified as a "saint." This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive or practical sanctification. Positional sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that 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 positional standing the believer has 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; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

We teach that 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. 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).

We teach that personal holiness and separation from sin is called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). We teach that all the saved should live in deep gratitude for the undeserved grace granted to us by God. Because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should demonstrate our adoring love to God so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and from worldly and sinful practices is commanded 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).

We teach that 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 demonstrated as we strive to follow the lifestyle advocated by Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:2-12). There must also be 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).

Glorification and Eternal Security

We teach that one day believers will be conformed completely to the image of Christ. Our bodies will be redeemed and we will be like Him. This is our future hope (Romans 8:17, 23, 24, 29, 30; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:21).

We teach 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 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24-25).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word. However, God clearly forbids 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; 1 John 5:10-13).

The Church

Identity, Formation, and Leadership

We teach 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).

We teach that the formation of the Church, the Body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the Church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The Church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32). We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that 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. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are pastors (also called elders, bishops, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. These leaders are to lead by example (1 Peter. 5:1-5) and the congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Purpose and Spiritual Gifts

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14; Hebrews 3:13) as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation 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).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Local churches, however, through their pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judges of the measure and method of its cooperation. The pastors and deacons should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8). We teach the calling of all saints to the work of ministry within the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12). We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. 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 spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Corinthians 14:31; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

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We teach that two kinds of gifts were given to the New Testament church: miraculous gifts and ministering gifts. The miraculous gifts of divine revelation, tongues (languages), and healing, were given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Hebrews 2:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:12). Since the New Testament revelation is complete, Scripture alone is the sole test for authenticating the message (2 Peter 1:19). The Holy Spirit sovereignly gives ministering gifts for the common good for building up the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; 1 Peter 4:10). Every message is to be tested by Scripture carefully and correctly interpreted (Acts 17:11). The miraculous gifts have been counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive even believers (1 Corinthians 14:1-12). God can and does heal miraculously. God does continue to use known languages to communicate the gospel. God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His perfect will for the sick and suffering (Luke 18:1-6; John 5:7-9; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; James 5:13-16; 1 John 5:14-15). All the spiritual gifts must be regulated by the teachings of Scripture as found in 1 Corinthians 12-14).

Ordinances

We teach that God has given two ordinances to the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his identification and union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42). Baptism is, however, not to be regarded as a means of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:17; Ephesians 2:8-9). Baptism by immersion is the first act of obedience and is foundational for church membership (Acts 2:41-42; 16:14-15; 18:8).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of Christ's death until He returns. It should be celebrated with thanksgiving and joyful expectation, but should always be preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in fellowship with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Angels and Satan

We teach that holy angels and fallen angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than human beings, they are created to serve God and worship Him (Luke 2:9-14; Hebrews 1:6-7, 14; 2:6-7; Revelation 5:11-14; 19:10; 22:9).

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19), by leading numerous angels with him in his rebellion (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by 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; Revelation 12:9-10); that he is the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he will be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

Last Things

Death and Resurrection

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Revelation 6:9-11); that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8); that there is a separation of soul and body (Philippians 1:21-24; and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17; John 14:2-3). The rapture initiates the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited and glorified forever with our Lord (Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44, 50-54). Until that time, the redeemed souls of all who have died in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with Him (2 Corinthians 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Romans 8:10-11, 19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2; John 5:29; Revelation 20:13-15). We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the second resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Revelation 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28-29). They will then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Revelation 20:11-15) and will be cast into hell, the lake of fire and cut off from the life of God forever (Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:41-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Rapture of the Church and Tribulation Period

We teach the personal, bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ before the seven-year tribulation (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Titus 2:13) to translate His church from this earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-5:11) and, between this event and His glorious return with His saints, to reward believers according to their works (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

We teach that following the rapture of the church from the earth, the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon and 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 (Matthew 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12). This period includes the 70th week of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

Second Coming of Christ and Millennial Reign

We teach that after the tribulation period, Christ will come to occupy the throne of David (Matthew 25:31; Luke 13:31-33; Acts 1:10-11; 2:29-30) and establish His Messianic kingdom for a literal thousand years on the earth (Revelation 20:1-7). This period of time is called the Millennium or Millennial Reign of Christ. During this time the resurrected saints will reign with Christ on the earth (Ezekiel 37:21-28; Daniel 7:17-22; Revelation 19:11-16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the False Prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Daniel 7:17-27; Revelation 20:1-7).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (ethnic Jews) (Isaiah 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Zechariah 8:1-17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience. The result of their disobedience was their temporary setting-aside by God (Matthew 21:43; Romans 11:1-26), but they will again be spiritually awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; Romans 11:25-29).

Judgment and Eternal Punishment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand-year reign of Christ (Revelation 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, Jerusalem. Following this, Satan will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). Christ, the Judge of all men (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge all of the lost, both great and small, at the Great White Throne Judgment. We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved to judgment will be a physical resurrection, whereupon they will be committed an eternal, conscious punishment of body and soul in the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15).

Eternal Blessedness of the Saved

We teach that after the closing of the millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers, the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth will be dissolved (2 Peter 3:10) and replaced with a new earth, wherein only righteousness dwells (Ephesians 5:5; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 20:15; 21:1-27). After this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Revelation 21:2) and will be the eternal dwelling place of the saints where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and with 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, that in all spheres the triune God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may reign forever and ever (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).