

Preparing for Baptism

Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith and Ethics

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Contents

Doctrine about the Bible.....	3
Doctrine about God.....	6
Doctrine about Jesus Christ.....	10
Doctrine about the Holy Spirit.....	4
Doctrine about the Holy Spirit (Continued).....	8
Doctrine about Mankind.....	14
Doctrine about Salvation.....	17
Prayer and Fasting.....	21
Doctrine about Church.....	25
Baptism and the Lord's Supper.....	30
Life after Death.....	33
Events of the End Times.....	35
Christian Marriage and Family.....	40
Money Management According to the Bible.....	42
Brotherhood of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists.....	45
Appendix 1. Pentecostals and Charismatics.....	47
Appendix 2. Calvinism and the Bible Teaching.....	52
Appendix 3. Seventh-day Adventists.....	54

Doctrine about the Bible

Statement of Faith

The Word of God. We believe that the Bible, the canonical books of the Old (39 books) and the New (27 books) Testaments, is the inspired Word of God. It was written by men of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2Pet. 1:21; 2Tim. 3:16). Inspiration is the writing down of God's revelation by men of God who were guided by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the only inerrant and infallible source of truth and doctrine for the Christian faith (John 20:31; Rom. 10:17; 2Tim. 3:16). It provides the only true guidance in matters of salvation, life, and ministry (Josh. 1:7-8; 2Pet. 1:19; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 4:12).

The Bible is the complete written revelation of God to men; its central theme is the Word of God Incarnate - Jesus Christ (John 5:39; 2Pet. 1:19; Heb. 1:1-2). Adding to, or subtracting from, the Word of God entails a strict punishment from God (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18-19).

Uniqueness of the Bible

What distinguishes the Bible from all other books on earth? Why is it so important for people? What is the reason that in many countries it is banned and destroyed?

What sets the Bible apart from all other books is its *divine inspiration*. This means that it is inspired by God Himself. Since God is the Creator and Supreme Judge of all people, His Word is of great importance to all of us. The Bible enlightens our hearts and changes people's lives. This is the only Book through which you can receive salvation and eternal life for your soul. Therefore, it is so important, and for this reason it is persecuted.

Inspiration by God

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Tim. 3:16).

Biblical inspiration was a unique process during which God, through the Holy Spirit, opened His truths to the authors of the Bible and kept them from inaccuracies and errors.

We can see that the Biblical Inspiration of God took two forms.

1. *Direct revelation from the Holy Spirit.* Usually the prophets wrote this way. They wrote what was openly revealed to them by the Lord. "The Lord said to me, "Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen..." (Isa 8:1).
2. *Motivation from the Holy Spirit.* The Lord inspired an author to write and helped him in this. The Holy Spirit guided the man in a special way by protecting him from mistakes and unnecessary words, and by sending thoughts that accurately convey the Truth. For example, the Evangelist Luke writes: "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:3-4).

How can biblical inspiration of God be proven?

The unity of the Bible books. The Bible consists of 66 books. They were written over a period of 1600 years in different countries and in different languages. At the same time, they are united by one idea, and they do not contradict, but complement each other. This unity lies in the one theme expressed in every book of the Bible: "People constantly turn away from God, but He continues to love them and wants to save them through Jesus Christ, who took upon Himself their sins."

Scientific accuracy. Thousands of years ago, the Bible proclaimed scientific facts that were recently discovered by scientists. For example, "He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing." (Job 26:7).

Prophetic accuracy. Almost 700 years before Christ's birth, the prophet, Micah, predicted the place of his birth - Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). The Old Testament contains more than 60 prophecies about Christ that were fulfilled during His life.

Biblical canon and Apocrypha

The Biblical canon is a compilation of the 66 books of the Bible, studied, and accepted by the Church, as the inspired Word of God.

What criteria were used for this determination? First, the authors of the books of the Bible were people who had direct contact with God, or who were in close contact with the apostles (Mark and Luke, the Evangelists). Second, the content had to fully correspond to, agree with, and complete the teachings of Jesus Christ, the apostles and Old Testament prophets.

Therefore, only the canonical books of the Bible can be the basis for our doctrines, can be used for edification in faith, can be quoted in sermons, and can serve as a norm for behavior.

What is the Apocrypha? In Greek, the word *apocryphos* means "hidden." This term is used for books of unknown or doubtful origin, because their inspiration is not confirmed by anything. Such fake messages began to appear in the time of the Apostle Paul: "We ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come." (2 Thess. 2:1-2).

Important to remember

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."
2Tim. 3:16

Biblical inspiration is when God through the Holy Spirit opened His truths to the authors of the Bible and kept them from inaccuracies and errors.

The Biblical canon is a compilation of the 66 books of the Bible, studied, and accepted by the Church, as the inspired Word of God.

Apocrypha is a term used for books of unknown or doubtful origin, because their inspiration is not confirmed.

3 steps of effective Bible Study:

1. Observation: what is written here?
2. Explanation: what is the meaning of this particular text?
3. Application: what does this mean for me personally?

How can you properly study the Bible?

Regular reading of, and meditation upon, the Bible 1) serves our spiritual growth, 2) strengthens our faith, 3) helps us to know the will of the Lord for our lives, and 4) keeps us clean before God.

Three steps of effective Bible Study:

1. *Observation*: what is written here?
2. *Explanation (interpretation)*: what is the meaning of this particular text?
3. *Application*: what does this mean for me personally?

At the APPLICATION step, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Are there any examples here that I need to follow?
2. Are there any warnings that need I need to consider?
3. Are there any commands from the Lord that I need to obey?
4. Are there any sins indicated here that I need to put off?
5. Are there any new truths that I need to apply to my own life?

Important rules for studying the Bible

1. When you read the Scriptures, apply the passage primarily to your life.
2. Realize, you must obey the Word of God yourself, and only then you can teach it to others.
3. God speaks to us through His Word. Therefore, pray before reading the Bible.
4. If there are some verses that you do not understand, do not hesitate to ask for explanation from more experienced Christians or church ministers.
5. Always study the context of any passage of Scripture. The study of a separate verse, detached from the context, often leads to a misinterpretation.

How will you find time?

- Please understand! Deep and serious Bible study is not a choice: to do or not to do? It's a vital duty for a healthy Christian life.
- We have time to eat, sleep, bathe and work, meet with friends and play games ... However, we cannot find time to study the Bible because "we are so busy..." We should realize, it's not about time, it's about choosing our priorities.
- Make a decision: give up some things and schedule time for daily reading of the Bible and prayer. *"Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them..." (1Tim. 4:16).*

Key verse:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2Tim. 3:16).

Questions

1. What is the definition of Biblical Inspiration?
2. What evidence can you give that the Bible is inspired by God?
3. What is the Biblical canon?
4. How do you properly study the Bible?

Doctrine about God

Statement of Faith

God. We believe that there is only one living, true and eternal God (Isa. 45:22; Jer. 10:10; John 17:3) who created, in six literal days, the heavens and earth and all that fills them. (Gen. 1:1-2; Ex. 31:17; Ps.24:1; Isa. 45:12; Acts 17:24-29).

God is Spirit, perfect in all His qualities (Matt. 5:48; John 4:24). He reveals himself as the infinite, incomprehensible, self-sufficient, and unchanging Lord (Ex. 3:14; Tit. 1:2). He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent (Gen. 17:1, 28:16; Ps. 22:3, 94:11; 1Pet. 1:16).

God is love. He is holy, righteous and just, and he desires salvation for all people (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 119:137; Isa. 6:3; 1Pet. 1:15-16; 2Pet. 3:9; 1John 4:16; 1Tim. 2:4).

The Triune God. We believe that God is one in His nature and yet exists in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity possesses all the divine attributes in equal measure (Isa. 48:16; Matt. 28:19; 2Cor. 13:13).

God the Father. We believe that God the Father is the Eternal God, the Creator and the Ruler over all that exists, including all humanity (Eph. 4:6).

God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to provide salvation for us (John 3:16). He is the caring and loving Father of all believers who are called to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 1:13, 4:23; 1Cor. 8:6).

How do we know about God?

Nature. Looking at the magnificent beauty of nature informs us about God's existence and power. "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20).

Bible. The Holy Scripture is without error and teaches us about God, His qualities, His deeds and His plans for humanity and the universe. "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).

Who is God?

The Bible says that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24). What is spirit? Christ said, "A spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:39). Spirit is an invisible, immaterial person. God is not limited by time or location. He is the unseen Person present in all places at the same time, all-knowing and all-powerful. He is perfect in everything.

God's Characteristics and Virtues

1. Our God is the Almighty Creator

God created the earth, the sky and the whole universe with His word. He also created the entire animal world, nature and man (Gen. 1-2).

2. God is Omnipresent, Immense and Infinite

Omnipresent means that God is present always and everywhere in all His fullness. God fills everything at the same time. "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:7-10).

3. Our God is Everlasting God

He has always existed and will continue to exist for all eternity. Eternity does not have time. God lives outside of time, and the Eternal nature of God means that everything is, for him, in the present tense.

4. Our God is omniscient (He knows everything)

God knows the past, the present and the future, much like we see several pictures shown together on a computer screen. God knows everything! God knows people's hearts, thoughts and intentions. "You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off" (Ps. 139:2).

Moral Attributes of God

1. God is holy

Holy God possesses absolute moral purity and infallibility. He is in no way tainted by sin or any uncleanness. "And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy" (Lev. 20:26).

2. God is love

God, in expressing his love, cares for his children regardless of their merit. He loves the whole world. (John 3:16). Calvary's cross is the highest expression and manifestation of God's love for sinful people.

3. God is righteous and just

The righteousness of God is shown in the just punishment of sin. No sinner will be able say on the Day of Judgment that he is undeservedly punished. The righteous judgement of God means that He does not show partiality towards anyone.

Important to remember

Who is God? God is Spirit. He is an invisible Person present in all places at the same time, all-knowing and all-powerful. He is perfect in everything.

Natural Attributes of God

1. The Almighty Creator
2. Omnipresent
3. Eternal
4. Omniscient

Moral Attributes of God

1. God is holy
2. God is love
3. He is righteous and just

The Trinity of God

Christians do not confess pagan polytheism; they do, however, believe in one triune God. Though the word, "Trinity" is not in the Bible, the Bible establishes the triune nature of the Godhead. Throughout scripture, God manifests himself in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Biblical Evidence

1. The Holy Scriptures recognize each of these three Persons as God (1Pet. 1:2, Rom. 9:5, Acts 5:3-4).
2. The Holy Scriptures make a clear and definite distinction between the three Persons.
 - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are described as individuals. "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 things that I said to you." (John 14:26).
3. The trinity is not three Gods. The Trinity is one God.
 - "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:11).
 - "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1John 5:7).
4. All three Persons of the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - are equal.
 - Conclusions based on the Holy Scripture references:
 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).
 - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2Cor. 13:14).
 - "For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1John 5:7).
 - The Son is equal to the Father. "... who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" (Phil. 2:6; see also John 5:18).
 - The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have the same divine attributes: eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience.

What should be our relationship with, and attitude towards, God?

"And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?" (Deut. 10:12-13).

To Love God

God loves us, and He desires our love in return. He wants to have a personal and deep relationship with each of us that transforms our feelings, our will, and our state of mind. Jesus Christ said that the love of God is the first and greatest commandment for us: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).

Worship and Praise

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

Worship is a necessary part of a Christian's life. It should not be superficial, or a religious ritual. It should be genuine, and offered with the right attitude. Our worship should also be "in truth," that is, conforming to Scripture, and it should focus on the Word of God.

Service to God

"... not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). Christians should not be just nominal attendees of church services. We must serve God out of love for Him and the Church, and out of gratitude for our salvation.

Holiness and fear of God

"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1Pet. 1:15). Our life should reflect the holy character of the One Who saved us. God is holy in every way. To become like Him, we must be holy in everything we do, think and say. The fear of God is respect for Him and a fear of offending Him by our sin. "Let the fear of the Lord be upon you" (2 Chron. 19:7).

Be Doers of His Word

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jas. 1:22). A true Christian has a deep desire to hear from God and regularly reads and follows the Bible. Reading and studying the Bible should be a part of our life.

Key Verse:

"And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy" (Lev. 20:26).

Questions:

1. What are the natural attributes of God?
2. What are the moral attributes of God?
3. Name the three Persons of the Trinity.
4. Write one verse from the Bible about the holiness of God.

Important to remember

The Trinity of God

We believe in one triune God who reveals Himself in three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. All three Persons - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - are equal.

What should be our relationship and attitude to God?

We are ought to:

1. Love Him
2. Serve Him
3. Worship Him
4. To have the holiness and fear of God
5. Be doers of His Word

Key Verse:

"And you shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy" (Lev. 20:26)

Doctrine about Jesus Christ

Statement of Faith

We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God Eternal (1John 5:20; Tit. 2:13), who has no beginning or end (Heb. 7:3). He is also the Creator of the Universe (Col. 1:16).

We believe God the Son existed with the Father from eternity past (Ps. 2:7; John 1:18). Before the creation of the world, God foreordained the Son to be a sacrifice for the propitiation of sin, and the redemption and salvation of the entire human race (1Pet. 1:18-20, 2:24, 3:18; 1John 2:2; Gal. 4:4).

God the Son became a man (1Tim. 2:5; 1Tim. 3:16), yet retained the fullness of His deity, being both fully God and fully man (Luke 1:35). He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18). He was without sin (1Pet. 2:22; 1John 3:5).

Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world, promised to us by God (Gen. 3:15; Luke 4:18-19; John 4:42; Acts 2:36, 4:12; Eph. 5:2). Christ redeemed us with His blood and became the only mediator between God and man (Col. 1:20; 1Tim. 2:5-6; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 7:24-25). By His death and resurrection, Christ defeated the devil and death (1Cor. 15:54-57; Rev. 3:21, 5:5). He frees believers from eternal punishment (Rom. 6:9; 2Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14). Having arisen from the dead and ascended into heaven, Jesus Christ is Head of the Church. (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23, 5:23; Col. 1:18). Now in glory, He gives eternal life to those who believe in Him, and He intercedes for His children before the Father (John 6:47; 1John 2:1; 1Tim. 3:16). He will be the Judge of the Universe and its King forever and ever (John 5:22; Acts 17:31; Rev. 11:15).

Importance of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ

The doctrine about the person and work of Jesus Christ is the foundation of all Christian beliefs. To be a Christian is to follow Christ. The salvation of a person's soul is dependent upon what he or she thinks about Christ. Christianity, as a religious teaching, revolves around the Person of Christ. Therefore, let's consider the most important aspects of the doctrine of Christ: His incarnation, His divine and human nature, and His death and resurrection.

Reasons for Christ's Incarnation

1. *To confirm God's promises.* Throughout the Old Testament, God at all times promised to send his Son into the world. More than 60 prophecies about Christ were fulfilled during His life on Earth.
2. *To remove sin.* Sin separates us from God and we are helpless to save ourselves. We cannot free ourselves from the power and punishment of sin with our own personal efforts, But, Jesus Christ became the God-man, and lived a sinless life. For this reason, He was able to offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins, so that God could forgive us and accept us.
3. *To destroy the deeds of the devil.* The incarnation of Christ, His death and His resurrection led to a complete victory over death and the devil. Christ conquered death (John 14:19). He defeated Satan's power over those who are saved. "...That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

4. *To show us an example of a holy life.* Christ was blameless in His words, actions and character. He is an example of how God wants us to live. "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (1John 2:6).

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Many people readily acknowledge Jesus Christ was an outstanding person, but they doubt His divinity. Yet, denying the divinity of Christ means depriving humankind of the Savior. Jesus Christ is God, and He shares all the attributes of God. Recognizing Jesus Christ as God means submitting to His authority and his Word. The Bible directly calls Christ, God:

- "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1John 5:20).
1. He is given divine names:
 - First and Last (Rev. 1:17; Rev. 22:13)
 - Lord (Luke 2:11)
 - Mighty God, Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6)
 2. He has Divine attributes:
 - Eternity (John 17:5, Phil. 2:6, Col.1:16-17)
 - Omniscience (John 2: 24-25, John 6:64)
 - Omnipotence (Heb. 1:3)
 3. He did things only God has the right to do, such as receiving worship and forgiving sin:
 - Jesus declared, "your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5)
 - He spoke of the future judgment over the world (Matt. 25:31-46)
 - Jesus declared that He has the power to give life (John 5:21).

The Humanity of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was also a man and shared all the traits of humanity. His humanity was necessary so that He could offer Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of people in order to satisfy the justice of God. The humanity of Jesus Christ is confirmed by the following characteristics:

- He had a human birth (Luke 2:7, Gal 4:4).
- He grew up (Luke 2:40).
- He became educated (Luke 2:46).
- He was successful in wisdom (Luke 2:52).
- He had a normal appearance (John 4:9).
- He felt hungry (Matt. 4:2)
- He was thirsty (John 19:28)
- He was tired (John 4:6)
- He slept (Matt. 8:24)
- He loved (Mark 10:42)
- He showed mercy (Matt. 9:36)
- He experienced emotions (Mark 3:5)
- He wept (John 11:35)

The Infallibility of Christ

As all humans do, Jesus Christ lived within the limitations of God's created order. Unlike the rest of humanity, however, he lived a fully sinless life.

- "He did no sin ..." (1 Pet 2:22).
- "...but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

The Importance of the Death of Christ

It is the main condition for our salvation (John 3:14-16). We are reconciled to God through the death of Christ (Romans 5:10). God's righteousness required that sin be punished. Christ took upon himself the punishment of all sinners when he suffered and died (Romans 3:25).

The extent of Christ's death. Christ died for all sin (John 1:29). Although Jesus died for the sins of all people in the world, only those who accept Him with faith, and come to Him with repentance, will receive salvation.

Christ's Resurrection

His resurrection testifies to His deity. Apostle Paul tells us that Christ's resurrection was a sign or proof of His divinity: "and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

His resurrection assures our resurrection. Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of our bodily resurrection as well (1Cor. 15:20-23; 1Thes. 4:14).

The Resurrection of Christ assures our justification. "...Who was delivered up because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:25). If Christ had remained in the tomb, there would be no justification for us. However, His resurrection proves that the work was done, the price was paid, and God is forever satisfied with Christ's atonement for sins.

What does the term "justification" mean? Justification is the action of God, through which He declares the believer innocent for the crimes that he committed.

How to become like Jesus?

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1Pet. 2:21).

1. *Study and read* about Jesus Christ as much as possible.
 - "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).
2. *Love Him and love his children.*
 - "Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).
 - "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another" (John 13:34).
3. *Obey His commandments.* Love your neighbor as yourself, and live the Golden Rule.
 - "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (John 15:14).
 - "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).
4. *Be humble.*
 - "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil 2:8).
5. *Forgive others;* do not hold onto grudges or bitterness.
 - "Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do" (Col. 3:13).
6. *Devote yourself to serving Christ.*

- "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12:26).
7. Be ready to be persecuted as a follower of Christ.
 - "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

Key verse:

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8)

Questions:

1. What are the four main reasons for Christ's incarnation?
2. What are the evidences of the humanity of Christ?
3. What are the evidences of the deity of Christ?
4. What is the importance of Christ's death?
5. What is the importance of the resurrection of Christ?
6. How do we become like Jesus?
7. Learn by heart and write down the key verse of Romans 5:8.

Doctrine about the Holy Spirit

Statement of Faith

God the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit is God and possesses all the divine attributes (Ps. 139:7; Rom. 15:19; 1Cor. 2:10). The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead and has mind, will and emotions (Acts 5:3-4, 15:28; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 10:29). The Scripture warns us about sins against the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10; Mark 3:29; Acts 5:3, 9; 7:51; Eph. 4:30; 1Thes. 5:19).

The Holy Spirit inspired men, who were chosen by God, to write the Bible. He gives us the illumination to understand the Bible (John 14:26; 2Pet. 1:21).

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was sent to testify about Christ, to glorify Him and to establish the Church (John 15:26, 16:7,14; Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment, and He urges people to repent (John 16:8; Heb. 3:7-8).

At the moment of conversion, the Holy Spirit indwells, regenerates and seals a person (John 3:3-6; Acts 5:32; 1Cor. 6:19). In the same moment, Jesus Christ baptizes (immerses) the regenerate Christian into the Body of Christ, which is the Church (John 1:33; 1Cor. 12:13).

The Holy Spirit lives in regenerated people (Rom. 8:9; 1Cor. 3:16), equipping them with power from above (Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; Eph. 5:18), teaching, encouraging and counseling them (John 14:26, 16:13; 1Cor. 2:12-13), convicting them (John 16:8-9), and producing fruit in their lives (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9).

Regeneration, (birth from above, or spiritual (new) birth) is a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit in the life of all who exercise faith. Through regeneration, God quickens a man's spirit and gives him a new nature (John 1:12-13, 3:3-6; Jas. 1:18; 1Pet. 1:23; 2Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:4-6; Tit. 3:5).

People become children of God through spiritual birth, and their bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit (John 1:12; 2Pet. 1:4; 1Cor. 6:19; Heb. 2:14).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit immerses the regenerated person into the Body of Christ, the Church, and unites them with Christ. Christ, by the Holy Spirit, baptizes each believer at the moment of regeneration (Luke 3:16; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27-28). Every born-again believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12:13).

Introduction

The study of the Holy Spirit is very important, because a believer establishes a personal connection with God only through Him. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to understand the Scriptures, to grow in faith and the knowledge of the Lord, to overcome sin, and to live a fruitful Christian life.

Unfortunately, there are many false teachings that misconstrue the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, a truthful understanding of what the Bible says on this topic is very important for us if we want to "stick to the pattern of sound words" (2Tim. 1:13).

Personality of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a person

- He thinks, has knowledge, and searches the things of God (Rom. 8:27; 1Cor. 2:10-11).
- He has a will and acts according to God's ordained plan (1Cor. 12:11; Acts 16:7).

- He has feelings, such as love (Rom 15:30), grievance (Eph. 4:30).
- He speaks to people (Hebrews 3:7, Rev 2:7, Acts 8:29).

The Holy Spirit is not "he," but "He". The Holy Spirit is not "what", but "Who".

Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, uses the masculine gender: “. . . When He, the Spirit of truth, has come. . . ” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is not just a Person; He is God.

We know His divinity from the following:

- *He is Named as God* in the Holy Scripture (Acts 5:3,4).
- *He bears names of God:* the Spirit of God (2 Chron. 15:1); The Spirit of the Lord (Isa.11:2); The Spirit of the Lord God (Isa. 61:1); The Spirit of the Father (Matt. 10:20); The Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9).
- *He possesses the qualities of God:* eternity (Heb. 9:14), omniscience (1Cor 2:10), omnipresence (Ps. 138:1), omnipotence (Isa. 39:19, Rom 15:13,19)
- *He does the deeds of God:* the work (Job 33:4, Ps. 103:30); the gift of life (Gen. 2:7, John 6:63); prophecy (2Sam. 23:2, 3; 2Pet. 1:21); regeneration (John 3:3-8, Tit. 3:5); the resurrection (Rom. 8:11).

The Holy Spirit is God, equal to the Father and the Son; He is one of the persons of the Holy Trinity. The New Testament assigns equal merit to God, the Holy Spirit, God the Father, and to Christ in such cases as the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20); the apostolic blessing (2Cor. 13:13); the management of the church (1Cor. 12:4-6).

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers

The role of the Holy Spirit in the life of an unbeliever is to convict him of sin (John 16:8-11).

When a person sincerely repents and turns to Christ, at that moment the Holy Spirit makes alive the spiritually dead nature of unrepentant humanity. This new life changes the man's position, both in the spiritual world, and before God.

At the moment of repentance, a person receives the Holy Spirit, is born from above, is sealed and adopted by the Spirit, and is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Throughout life, a believer is sanctified by the Spirit, brings forth the fruit of the Spirit, is filled with the Holy Spirit, and serves others with gifts of the Holy Spirit. The will of man plays an important role in the progress of each of these processes.

Regeneration (John 3:3)

A person can be born again only through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. "Unless one is born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5).

Regeneration results in spiritual birth and the creation of the new, true spiritual life in a person. The Holy Spirit enables the human spirit to have fellowship and relationship with God. This relationship is established at the moment of repentance and conversion through faith in God.

Why is regeneration necessary? Adam and Eve sinned; consequently, all people since then have been born in sin – spiritually dead and incapable of communicating with God (Rom. 5:18, 1Cor. 15:22). No human can resurrect his or her dead spirit; death cannot bring about life. Only God can resurrect the spirit dead in sin. God grants eternal life through birth from above.

Signs that a person is born-again:

1. *They battle sin and experience victory* over it. "Whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself" (1John 5:18).
2. *They love others*. "He who does not love does not know God" and "everyone who loves is born of God" (1John 4:7-8).
3. *They have a hunger for the Word and prayer*. "He is now praying", this was one of the first fruits of the regeneration of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:11). The born-again Christian with pleasure reads and studies the Scripture.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the believer (2Cor. 6:16)

"You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:17). If a person does not have the Spirit, he does not belong to Christ.

- "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom. 8:9).
- "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Cor. 3:16).

God seals believers with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30)

The sealing of the Spirit indicates that we are the property of God, are heirs of his promise and Kingdom, are His children, and are under His protection.

- "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth..., you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

Adoption (Rom. 8:15-16)

When a person is born again, he or she is accepted into God's family. As members of God's family, we turn to Him as our own Father. The Holy Spirit - "the Spirit of Adoption" - bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children (Romans 8:16).

Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Christ baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

- "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (Mark 1:8).
- "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body... and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1Cor. 12:13).

Baptism with The Holy Spirit is the process of immersing people into the Body of Christ – the Church of Christ.

Who baptizes? – Jesus.

With Whom? – Holy Spirit.

Result? –We are baptized into the body, the Church of Christ.

Therefore, Christ, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, immerses God's children into the Church, filling them with Himself and thus connecting them with all the other members of His Body. "...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1Cor. 12:13).

When does the baptism of the Spirit occur?

It occurs at the time of repentance, when a person accepts Jesus Christ as his/her Lord and Savior. The Universal Church is the host of born-again believers who were redeemed by Christ and connected to His Body through the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, as soon as a person becomes born-again, he or she immediately joins the multitude of such renewed believers in the Body of Jesus Christ.

The following passages in Scripture support this statement:

- "...Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom. 8:9).
- "...No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." (1Cor. 12:3).

Key Verse:

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Cor. 3:16).

Questions:

1. What attributes indicate that the Holy Spirit is a person?
2. What attributes indicate that the Holy Spirit is God?
3. What actions does the Holy Spirit perform in a person's life at the time of repentance?
4. What actions of the Holy Spirit are performed throughout a person's life?

Doctrine about the Holy Spirit (Continued)

Statement of Faith

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers. Gifts are special abilities which are given by God to men for service in, and the building up of, the church (1Pet. 4:10; 1Cor. 12:7-11,28).

The gifts of wonders, signs, prophecy, healings, other tongues and the interpretation of tongues were actively used in the apostolic period for the founding of the church. God gives His gifts in accordance with His will, but the Scriptures warn us that in the last times the Devil will try counterfeit the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to deceive believers (Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22-23; 2Pet. 1:19; 1Cor. 13:9-10; 2Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20; Heb. 2:2-4; Rev. 16:14).

The gift of speaking in tongues should be understood as a supernatural ability to speak a foreign language (Acts 2:5-11). Any other manifestation of speaking "in tongues" is a forgery of this divine gift, as it does not correspond to the nature of human speech and the conditions set in the Holy Scripture (1Cor. 14:6-9, 21-23, 27-28).

We accept that supernatural gifts and signs do not serve for the affirmation of faith, but rather the Word of God and following of God's will (Lk.16:27-31, Jn.12:37; 1Pet.2:1,2; 2Pet.1:5-11; Rom.10:17; Col. 3:16, 17; Eph. 5:9-11).

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

"...But be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).

The filling of the Spirit is a special ministry of the Holy Spirit, by which the believer receives the power to honor and serve Christ.

Having the Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit, are not the same thing. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit from the day of repentance. However, not all believers are filled by the Spirit, though that option is open to them.

True and effective ministry depends upon the filling of the Holy Spirit. God wills that his children be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times.

Being filled with the Spirit is the same as being filled with Christ, because the purpose of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ (John 16:14).

How can a believer be filled with the Spirit?

From various passages of the Scriptures we learn how to be filled with the Spirit:

1. Confess and forsake all known sin (1John 1:5-9). Holiness is part of the name of the Holy Spirit; thus, He will not work freely in those who tolerate or indulge in sin.
2. Completely submit to His guidance (Rom. 12:1-2). This means that our will, mind, body, time, talents, and finances should be devoted to Christ. All this must be under His control.
3. Let the Word of God dwell in us (Col. 3:16). This includes reading, learning, and obeying it.
4. Put off the old man with its pride (Gal. 2:20; Eph 4:22-24). In order to be filled with the new, we must first put off the old.

Nowhere in the New Testament (after Pentecost) is there an example or pattern of praying to be filled with the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit means to allow the Spirit to control my life. I give my will to the Holy Spirit, and He acts in me.

Comparison of Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Filling with the Holy Spirit

Confusion in these concepts may lead to dangerous doctrinal errors.

Baptism with the Holy Spirit	Filing with the Holy Spirit
Refers to the Body of Christ.	Refers to the person.
We join the Body of Christ, the Church.	We gain power for ministry.
A one-time occurrence at conversion.	Occurs many times throughout a believer's life.
Every believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit at the time of repentance.	Not every believer seeks to be filled with the Holy Spirit as commanded.
No conditions, except faith in Christ.	The condition is an obedient life according to the Word of God.

Anointing with the Holy Spirit

To “anoint” means to set someone apart, to authorize and to equip him for a task of spiritual importance. The Holy Spirit sets Christians apart for their ministry in Christ’s name. The New Testament indicates that there is an anointing for *individuals* who are put into special ministry, and there is anointing for *all* born-again Christians leading to the knowledge of truth and to affirmation and assurance in the faith.

1. Anointing *individual* people for ministry.
 - The ministers of the Church must be called by the Holy Spirit. To do work in the name of God, they must have the power of the Holy Spirit and enabling from Him (Eph 4:11-12).
 - "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the **Holy Spirit has made you** overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).
2. Anointing *all* Christians leading to the knowledge of the truth.
 - The anointing for all Christians is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. His anointing (presence) helps us:
 - *Distinguish what is from the Lord, what is true and what is false.* Only the Spirit of God can reveal the deep things of God to us and preserve the believer from false teaching (1Cor. 2:10; Rom 16:17). "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things... But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you... the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1John 2:20,27).
 - *Anointing enables Christians to stand firm* (2Cor. 1:21-22).

Fruit of the Holy Spirit

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

The fruit of the Spirit is the result of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. It is the fruit of the Spirit that shows the degree of spiritual growth and maturity in a Christian’s life.

- The virtues of the fruit of the Spirit are divided into three groups:
 1. In relation to God and people - love, joy, peace;
 2. In relation to people - longsuffering, kindness, goodness;
 3. In relation to personal Christian life – faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Important to remember

Baptism of The Holy Spirit is the process of joining people to the Body of Christ – the Church of Christ.

The filling of the Spirit is a special ministry of the Holy Spirit, by which the believer receives the power to honor and serve Christ.

Anointing with the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit sets Christians apart for their ministry in Christ’s name.

The Fruit of the Spirit is the result of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in the lives of spiritually mature believers.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit are spiritual abilities given to believers for the purpose of building up the Church, serving each other, and honoring God

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1Pet. 4:10).

Gifts of the Holy Spirit are spiritual abilities given to believers for the purpose of building up the Church, serving each other, and serving God (1Cor. 12:11).

How are the gifts of the Spirit distributed?

1. The body of Christ (the Church) is granted various gifts. These gifts are given for the edification of the whole Body, and not for the pleasure or personal enrichment of the individual. (1 Cor 12:7; 14:5,12).
2. Every believer has a gift (1Pet. 4:10, 1Cor. 12:6-7,27).
3. No one possesses all spiritual gifts (1Cor. 12:14-21), yet all gifts are necessary for the church to function (1Cor. 12:28-30). Therefore, church members need each other.
4. Although some gifts may appear more significant than others, all the gifts are vital (1Cor. 12:22-26).
5. The Holy Spirit distributes gifts to believers “as He wills” (1Cor. 12:11).

Rom. 12:6-8	1Cor. 12:4-11	Eph. 4:11-12	1Pet. 4:11
Prophecy	Wisdom	Apostles	Speaking
Ministry	Knowledge	Prophets	Ministry
Teaching	Faith	Evangelists	
Exhortation	Healings	Pastors	
Administration	Miracles	Teachers	
Giving	Prophecy		
Mercy	Discerning of spirits		
	Tongues		
	Tongues interpretation		

How can I identify my spiritual gift?

The Spirit of God bestows spiritual gifts to equip every believer for ministry. A few questions may help you to discover your gift(s):

1. **Am I ready to serve the Lord?** Are there any sins or other obstacles in my life that prevent the Lord from using me? The Holy Spirit uses those who are ready to serve, and who are committed to living a holy life.
 - "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2Tim. 2:21).
2. **What kind of work do I have an interest in and desire for?** What have I already started to do?
 - "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

- "To will and to do" is an important factor. We must align our will with God's will.
3. **What am I already able to do well?** What am I doing that blesses others?
 - Example: A person has a desire to sing, but he does not have a voice or a musical ear... Another one wants to be a graphics designer; he knows how to use the appropriate computer software, but he has no artistic taste...
 - "But our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant" (2Cor. 3:5-6).
 4. **Who evaluates my desire to use a gift and my success in doing so? – The church!** The purpose of all spiritual gifts is to build-up the church; hence, your gift should be positively recognized by the church. If I rely on self-evaluation, I can be deceived...

Important to Remember

Quenching the Holy Spirit means to suppress, limit or hinder His action in your life.

Grieving the Holy Spirit - anything that violates the commandments of Jesus Christ grieves the Holy Spirit.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit - denying the action of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus Christ, or attributing his works to demonic influence.

Sins against the Holy Spirit

Quenching the Holy Spirit (1Thes. 5:19)

To quench the Spirit means to suppress, to limit or to hinder His work in your life. A Christian also quenches the Holy Spirit when he or she resists, or ignores, a call to ministry in some field.

Grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30)

We grieve the Holy Spirit whenever we deliberately sin. Anything that violates the commandments of Jesus Christ grieves the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously" (Jas. 4:5). We restore our relationship with Christ through confession.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:22-23)

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is defined as denying the action of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus Christ, or attributing his works to demonic influence.

This is the most terrible sin, for which there is no forgiveness. The essence of this sin lies in conscious insult and opposition to Him (Heb. 6:4-8). The Holy Spirit withdraws from such sinners; thus, they have no more motivation for repentance.

The devil tries to make Christians worry that they have blasphemed the Holy Spirit when, in fact, they sincerely love the Lord.

Key verse: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Questions:

1. What is the Filling of the Holy Spirit?
2. What is the difference between the Baptism of the Spirit and Filling of the Spirit?
3. What is the Fruit of the Spirit?
4. What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

Doctrine about Mankind

Statement of Faith

We believe that man is the crowning glory of all earthly creatures, created in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; Isa. 45:12). God created man for His glory, without sin, and with the right of moral choice (Gen. 2:16-17; Josh. 24:15; Isa. 43:7; Jer. 21:8). God blessed man (Gen. 1:28) and put him in charge of creation (Ps. 8:6).

God created man as an eternal, perfect being and endowed him with a mind, emotions, free will and moral responsibility (Gen. 2:16-17; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 24:15; Eccles. 11:9; Rom. 2:14-15). Man is comprised of spirit, soul and body (1Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).

The gift of human life can only be given and taken away by the Lord Himself, from the moment of conception to the moment of the natural death of an individual (Ps. 139:14-16; Jer. 1:5).

God created male and female, and he has not given anyone the right to alter this natural, God-ordained order (Gen. 1:27, 2:22). Every human being, no matter their race, fully possesses dignity and deserves respect and Christian love (Acts 17:26-27).

Creation of man

The Bible teaches that man did not come from random chance or an act of natural processes. The first people were created by the caring and mindful design of the Triune God.

1. The first man, Adam, was created from the dust of the earth on the 6th day of creation.
 - “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7).
 - The union of the higher divine principle (the breath of God) with the material creation (dust from the earth) has resulted in man as a "living soul" - a conscious person, gifted with reason and free will.
2. Man is created in the image and likeness of God. This means that, like God, man is a person who has a mind and a will, and the ability to think.
 - “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:27).
3. Eve was created for Adam, to be his wife. Thus, God established the first marriage and defined its purposes – to multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:22).

The Nature of Man

Man is a unique and perfect creation, possessing spirit, soul and body.

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole *spirit, soul,* and *body* be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Thes. 5:23).

The words "spirit" and "soul" in the Scriptures are often interchangeable and are used to indicate the spiritual part of the human identity (Job 7:11, 1Cor. 5:5, Heb. 10:39).

However, the difference between "spirit" and "soul" is shown clearly in these passages: 1Thes. 5:23, Heb. 4:12.

1. **SPIRIT.** We perceive God and have fellowship with Him through our spirit, made alive in Christ.
 - Through our spirit, we can have a connection with God. God, in turn, speaks through His Spirit to our spirit. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16).
2. **SOUL.** The center of self-cognition (mind, feelings, will).
 - The soul has a great influence on our self-awareness, our character, and our emotional life.
3. **BODY.** We perceive the world with it. The body is the material part of our identity.
 - Through the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste), we are able to perceive and cognize the world around us.

The Fall of Man (Gen. 3)

- The first people, Adam and Eve, were free from sin. They had no struggle between spirit and flesh, because there was no sin or lust of flesh.
- Adam and Eve were, initially, free from the curse of death. Death had no claim on them until they sinned. Sin brought death.
- Adam and Eve sinned, causing the fall. God gave them a single restriction: not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve deliberately violated this prohibition, and spiritual death was the result.
- Sin, as well as spiritual and physical death, are inherited by all people.
- "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12)

What is sin?

- Sin is any thought, word or deed that contradicts the will of God and His standards of holiness. Unwillingness to obey His will is a sin (1John 3:4, 1John 5:17).
- Sin is not only doing what is wrong, but the failure to do what one knows to be right (Jas. 4:17).

Important to Remember

The "image of God" in humanity

Like God, man is a person who has a mind and a will, and the ability to think.

Humane Spirit, Soul, and Body

Spirit. We perceive God and have fellowship with Him through our spirit.

Soul is the center of self-cognition (mind, feelings, will).

Body is the material part of our identity. We perceive the world through our body's senses.

What is sin?

- Sin is any thought, word or deed that contradicts the will of God and His standards of holiness.
- Sin is not only doing what is wrong, but the failure to do what one knows to be right.

“The thought of foolishness is sin...” (Prov. 24:9). Sin begins as a desire in the mind. When encouraged and entertained, the desire brings forth an act, and the act leads to death (Jas. 1:15). Sin is often attractive when first contemplated, but hideous in retrospect.

How does sin affect people?

- It darkens the mind (Eph. 4:18, 1 Cor 2:14);
- It deceives the heart (Jer. 17:9-10);
- It defiles the thoughts (Gen. 6:5, Titus 1:15);
- It smites the flesh and will with guilt (Rom. 7:18).

The state of man before and after the fall

Before the fall	After the Fall
1. Spirit (Dominator)	1. Flesh (Dominator)
2. Soul (Servant)	2. Soul (Servant)
3. Flesh (An instrument of service)	3. Spirit (Prisoner – spiritually dead)

This table shows what happened to the person after the fall. The spirit was to rule in man, but everything was perverted: the flesh took the dominant position. The spirit is in a depressed state, in captivity. The Holy Scriptures say that the spirit is dead (Eph. 2:1-5). Through rebirth, God restores the original order.

Key verse:

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

Questions:

1. How did God create man?
2. Explain in your own words, how do the spirit, soul, and body of a person function?
3. What passages of Scripture speak about the fall of man?
4. Explain in your own words, what is sin?

Doctrine about Salvation

Statement of Faith

We believe that God, in love, offers mankind salvation through repentance and faith in the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This salvation frees man from the bondage of sin and death, restores the relationship between God and man, and results in eternal life for all who believe (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Col. 1:13-14; Tit. 3:4-7). God desires the salvation of all people, but each person is responsible either to accept or reject God's grace (Isa. 43:11; 2Cor. 7:1; Eph. 2:8-9; 1Tim. 2:4; Tit. 2:11).

God foreknew those who would respond to His call to salvation. He chose those individuals in Christ Jesus and predestined them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4-5).

Redemption, liberation from the bondage and penalty of sin, is offered through the blood of Jesus Christ, which was shed on the cross to satisfy the demands of God's justice (Matt. 20:28; 1Pet. 1:18; Rom. 3:24-25). Jesus Christ died for all, and now salvation by grace is available to all people through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 28:28; 2Pet. 3:9; Rom. 3:24; Tit. 2:11; Heb. 2:9).

Justification is the act of God by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the believer. Man is freed from the punishment of sin and its guilt and is reconciled to God (Rom. 3:24). Justification is a gift given by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and is not dependent on human works and merits (Rom. 3:28, 4:5, 5:1, 5:18; Gal. 2:16).

Faith, which is necessary for salvation, comes from hearing the Word of God (Acts 4:4; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). The faith which saves a man is a faith which responds to God's offer of salvation by unconditionally accepting the message of the Gospel and trusting Christ as the only Savior and Lord (Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:1).

The confession of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is a confirmation of true faith (Matt. 10:32-33; Luke 12:8-9; John 20:28; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10; 2Cor. 4:13). Works of faith also bear testimony to true faith (Jas. 2:26; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 11).

Believers are called to grow in faith, and the knowledge of the Lord, through listening to, and studying, the Word of God, praying and living godly lives (Eph. 4:13; 2Thess. 1:3).

Repentance occurs when people realize their fallen condition, experience sorrow over their sin and agree with God through confession. Repentance is the result of God's grace acting within the individual by means of God's Word, which leads him or her to conversion (Ezra 10:10-11; Prov. 28:13; Luke 15:17-21; Acts 2:37-38, 26:20; 2Cor. 7:10; Tit. 2:11-12). 1

Conversion is evidenced when one turns away from a sinful way of life and turns toward a life of obedience to God.

The result of accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the subsequent conversion, is forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:42-43; 1John 1:9; Col. 1:13-14) and a new birth from God's Word and Holy Spirit (John 1:12-13, 3:5-6; Jas. 1:18).

Sanctification occurs as God acts and man responds. During the process of sanctification, one becomes more like Jesus Christ, separates increasingly from sin and consecrates more to the new and holy life and to service to God (1Pet. 1:2,14-16; Rom. 6:22; 1Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:4).

Imputed, or initial sanctification separates the believer from the sinful world and changes his position before God. Accomplished by God at the moment of conversion, initial sanctification liberates the

believer from the bondage of sin and identifies him with Christ and the saints (1Cor. 1:30; Eph. 2:19; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 10:10).

Progressive sanctification liberates a born-again individual from the power of sin and transforms him into the image of Christ. This transformation, leading to spiritual growth, is done by God the Father with the help of the Holy Spirit, God's Word, and the individual's participation, throughout his entire earthly life (John 17:17-19; 2Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 1:9-11; 1Thess. 4:3-8; Rev. 22:11).

Final sanctification fully liberates the regenerated individual from the presence of sin, and results in Christ-likeness in eternity (1John 3:2). Final sanctification occurs at the rapture of the church and our meeting with the Lord (1Thess. 4:16-17, 5:23; Rom. 8:22-23).

Assurance of Salvation. We believe that the believer, kept by God, has the assurance of salvation and God's election on the basis of continuation in the faith (John 10:27-29; 1John 5:13; Rom. 8:38-39; Heb. 10:38-39; Rev. 3:5). Assurance of salvation is based on God's promises and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the inner man (1John 5:11-12; Rom. 8:16).

We believe that a born-again individual, exercising his free will, can fall away from salvation by abiding in willful sin, denying Christ or falling into heresy. In this case, a believer can be deprived of God's grace and will perish (Ezra 18:24-32; 2Pet. 3:17; Rom. 11:20-22; Gal. 5:4; 1Tim. 1:19; 2Tim. 2:12; Heb. 2:1, 12:15).

Repentance and Conversion

Repentance occurs when a person realizes his fallen condition, experiences sorrow over his sin, and agrees with God through confession.

Conversion is an internal decision to turn away from sin, and is expressed in a change in direction, away from the sinful way of life and towards obedience to God.

As a result of repentance and conversion, a person experiences a change of his views on sin, a change in feelings, and a change in will.

1. *Change of views* in relation to sin, God and self.
 - Sin is perceived as personal guilt,
 - God is correctly perceived as the One who rightly demands righteousness,
 - Self is perceived as defiled and helpless.
2. *Change of feelings.* We sincerely regret being sinners, and truly crave forgiveness.
 - David's prayer reveals strong feelings of remorse: "Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your loving kindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions" (Ps. 51:1-2).
3. *Change of will* and purpose of life. A person willfully makes the decision that, henceforth, his life belongs only to Christ.

Fruits of Repentance:

- Confession of sin (Ps. 32:5; 51:3ff; Luke 15:21; 18:13; 1John 1:9).
- Compensation for harm caused to other people (Luke 19:8).

Faith

True repentance never happens apart from true faith. This means that we are not capable of turning away from sin without turning to God at the same time. In addition, we can say with certainty that true faith does not exist without repentance. Repentance and faith are inseparably tied together.

What is faith?

The word "faith" has two meanings: "to trust or believe someone" and "to consider something true."

- Saving faith means trusting Christ as Savior and embracing the certainty that He can remove the guilt of sin, and grant eternal life.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).

Sources of Faith:

1. God's part: Clearly, faith is a gift of God:
 - "... as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith" (Rom. 12:3).
 - Paul says that salvation and faith are God's gifts: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).
2. Man's part: To constantly partake from the sources of faith:
 - Faith is a matter of man's will: Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him as righteousness" (Gal. 3:6).
 - The Word of God is a source of faith. "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).
 - Prayer increases our faith also (Mark 9:24; Luke 22:32). The disciples once addressed the Lord: "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5).

Results of faith:

1. **Salvation.** Our salvation depends on faith. From the beginning and to the end, we are saved through faith, which will turn out to be our justification (Rom. 5:1) adoption (Gal. 3:5,14; 4:5 and so forth) and sanctification (Acts 26:18). Peter tells us that we are saved "by the power of God through faith" (1Pet. 1:5).
2. **Confidence.** We grow in our confidence in Christ through the inner witness of the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 8:16). God directs our soul to the promises in Scripture. We become more certain of our salvation as we appropriate the promises of the Word, by faith. Faith and peace are tightly woven together (Is. 26:3; Rom. 5:1 Heb. 4:3) with joy (1Pet. 1:8).
3. **Good works.** Faith results in good works. We are not saved by our works (Rom. 3:20; Eph. 2:9), but for good works (Eph. 2:10). Jesus said: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16).

Sanctification (Holiness)

Bible verses about sanctification:

- "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14).
- "Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 20:7).

- "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor. 7:1).

We are sanctified as we dedicate ourselves to God and separate ourselves from the world. Sanctification includes purification, and rejecting everything sinful and defiling.

- We cannot truly separate ourselves from the world and dedicate ourselves fully to God without a complete, decisive, and definitive rejection of sin.
- The believer needs to separate himself:
 - from all wickedness (2Cor. 6:17),
 - from false teachings (2John 1:9),
 - from works of flesh (Rom. 6:11-14).

There are three phases of sanctification in the life of a believer:

1. *Imputed, or initial sanctification.* The moment a person accepts Jesus Christ, he is sanctified in the sense that he separates and dissociates himself from sin, and is consecrated to God. Therefore, in the New Testament, believers are often called "saints" (1Cor. 1:2, Rom. 1:7).
 - "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1Cor. 6:11).
2. *Progressive sanctification* liberates a born-again individual from the power of sin and transforms him into the image of Christ. This transformation, leading to spiritual growth, is a life-long process.
 - "For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1Thes. 4:3).
 - "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1:9).
 - "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word" (Ps. 119:9)
3. *Final sanctification* liberates the regenerated individual from the presence of sin and results in Christ-likeness in eternity (1John 3:2). Final sanctification occurs at the rapture of the church and our meeting with the Lord
 - "Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thes. 5:23).

Key verses:

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1).
 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Questions:

1. What is repentance and conversion?
2. Name and explain three elements of repentance.
3. What is faith?
4. What are the sources of faith?
5. What is sanctification of the believer?
6. What are the three phases of sanctification in the life of a believer?

Prayer and Fasting

Statement of Faith

To grow in Christ, and to stay on the path of salvation, each born-again Christian needs to live a life of prayer. (Mark 14:38, Luke 18:1, 1Thes. 5:17).

Prayer

Prayer has a vital place in the life of a believer. It is impossible to sustain the Christian life without prayer. Prayer is the breath of the believer's life!

Importance of Prayer

- Neglecting prayer is a sin.
 - Samuel said to the people of Israel: "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you..." (1Sam. 12:23).
- The Lord commands us to pray.
 - "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).
 - "Continuing steadfastly in prayer" (Rom. 12:12).
 - "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).
- Prayer is the key that unlocks blessings.
 - "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ... How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:7-8,11).
 - "...Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (Jas. 4:2).
- Biblical authorities testified to the importance and power of prayer:
 - Ezra believed that prayer is much more effective for security than a detachment of soldiers and riders (Ezra 8:21-23).
 - Christ believed that it was more necessary than food and sleep (Mark 1:35).
 - The apostles placed the importance of the ministry of prayer along with preaching (Acts 6:4).

What is prayer?

Prayer is our conversation with God. Through prayer, we communicate with the Lord, expressing to Him our thoughts, desires and feelings.

1. To whom are we praying? The Scripture teaches that we should pray to the Father and the Son.
 - "Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give you" (John 16:23)

- Stephen, when he was dying, prayed to Christ: "Lord Jesus! Receive my spirit "(Acts 7:59).
 - The Holy Spirit and prayer. There are no instructions in the Bible to pray to the Holy Spirit.
 - It is important to note that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. His primary role is to encourage us to pray, but not to receive our prayers (Rom. 8:15, Jude 1:20, Eph. 6:18). We should pray *in the Spirit*, and not *to the Spirit*.
 - Praying in the Spirit means praying under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - Therefore, the normal way of praying is as follows: we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, and in the Holy Spirit.
2. Position of the body during prayer.
- Scripture describes different positions assumed by people during prayer: standing (Mark 11:25); kneeling (Luke 22:41); prostrating on the ground (Matt 26:39); lying in bed during illness (Isa. 38:1-3).
 - In any case, the position of our body during prayer should show respect and humility before God, as it is appropriate in the local culture.
3. The time of prayer.
- Scripture teaches us that prayer should be on-going (1Thes. 5:16-18). We should pray whenever it is necessary, when we are in need, when we need spiritual help, or when we simply wish to fellowship with the Lord (Luke 18:1).
 - We also need to pray before the meals (Matt. 14:19; Acts 27:35; 1Tim. 4:4-5).
4. Types of prayer.
- *Private, individual prayer* (Matt. 6:6). Each spiritually alive Christian should have a regular personal prayer life. Life without prayer disconnects a believer from his or her source of life, which is his personal communication with God.
 - When praying alone, you can pray either in silent thoughts or spoken words.
 - *Corporate prayer* (Matt. 18:19-20). Prayer with other believers produces harmony and agreement. It is especially pleasing to God. Joint prayer inspires us and strengthens the body of Christ.
 - Every Christian should strive to attend prayer services in his or her church.
5. What to pray about.
- Worship and glorify God (Matt. 6:9-10).
 - Confess sin – known and unknown (Ps 19:12; 1John 1:9)
 - Communicate our personal, spiritual and material requests (Phil. 4:6; Mk. 14:38; Jas. 1:5).
 - Lift up our brothers and sisters in Christ (Jas. 5:16; Eph. 6:18).
 - Pray for servants of God (Eph. 6:19-20, Col. 4:3, 2Thes. 3:1).
 - Pray for the government and all people (1Tim. 2:1-4).
 - Pray for insight and understanding of the scriptures, the Word of God (Ps. 119:18).

6. Obstacles to prayer

- Sin in the life of the believer
 - "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear" (Isa. 59:2).
- Selfishness and wrong motives
 - "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures" (Jas. 4:3).
- Unforgiveness
 - "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11:25)
- Unbelief
 - We must believe that God hears our prayer, and *is able* to answer according to his power and purpose: "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting... For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord" (Jas. 1:6-7).

7. Requirements for successful prayer:

- A pure heart:
 - Sincerity (Jer. 29:12-13).
 - Brokenness (Ps. 33:19).
 - Diligence (Luke 22:44, Acts 12:5).
 - Constancy (Col. 4:2).
 - Love (1Pet. 4:8).
- A biblically consistent lifestyle
 - "If you continue in me and my words abide in you, then whatever you wish, ask, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7)

8. Reserve specific time for prayer in your schedule.

- Make an appointment to talk to God in the same way as you schedule everything else. Do all you can to keep that appointment.
- Begin each day with prayer - it starts your day!

Fasting

Fasting is a time when we willingly abstain from food and entertainment, to focus all our attention on God. During a time of fasting, we humble ourselves before the Lord. We desire to listen to Him as we bring our specific concerns. Sincere fasting will strengthen us spiritually and draw us nearer to God.

The inner state of the heart is significant. For God, it is important that we have the desire to be with Him as we present our personal interests and specific needs.

Biblical reasons for fasting

- There are many examples of people, who, seeing sin and disobedience, fasted and lamented before the Lord, asking Him to forgive them (2 Kings 21:27, Dan. 9:3, Joel.1:14, 2:12,15; Ion.3:5).
- Fasting was often used for spiritual purification (1Sam. 7:6; Neh. 9:1; Zach. 8:19),

- Ministers fasted and prayed, preparing for the ordination (Acts 13:3).
- Jesus Christ (Matt. 4) and many other men of God used fasting and prayer as a weapon in the fight against temptations.

The condition of our heart when fasting

We must come to God with a true desire to be with Him, and a desire to see Him glorified in the issues we bring to Him. The Book of Isaiah, chapter 58 tells us a lot about fasting.

1. What is fasting that is ACCEPTABLE to the Lord?

- Fasting that seeks God's face continually (Ps. 104:4) and focuses attention on Him.
- Fasting that seeks to know God's thoughts and priorities (Col. 3:1-2).
- Fasting done with humility and confession
- Fasting that prioritizes seeking God above human desires and needs (1Cor. 7:5).

2. What is fasting that is NOT ACCEPTABLE to the Lord?

- Fasting done in disunity (Isa. 58:4)
- Fasting of a person who is unmerciful, does not see the need of others (Isa. 58:6)
- Fasting for show – to seek to impress others (Matt. 6:16).
- Fasting to gain something for selfish ends (Isa. 58:3)

Fasting planning

1. How often and when to fast?

- The Bible assumes believers will fast (Matt. 6:16-17). The Apostle Paul modeled this ("often in fasting..." (2Cor. 11:27).

2. Duration of the fasting.

- Do not start with long fasting. Any fast requires prayer preparation and attitude. It is best to start with one-day fasts. Later, you can increase the length of the fast.

3. Time for fasting

- The best thing is to choose non-working days for fasting (1Pet. 4:7; Col. 4:2).

4. The Bible and prayer during fasting

- The Bible and prayer are the vital companions of fasting. We speak to God in prayer, and He speaks to us through His Word and the Holy Spirit. Fasting is not a monologue, but a dialogue. God wants to not only listen, but also to speak.

Key verse:

"Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Col. 4:2).

Questions:

1. What is prayer?
2. Who do we turn to during prayer?
3. What is the main condition for prayer to be answered?
4. What is fasting?
5. Which fast is good, and which is not pleasing to God?

Doctrine about Church

Statement of Faith

We believe that the Church is the gathering of born-again believers who were redeemed by Christ and connected to His Body through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These believers are found both on earth and in heaven (Matt. 16:18; Heb. 12:23). The Creator, and Head of the Church, is Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; 1Cor. 12:27; Col. 1:24).

The Universal Church is composed of born-again people from all nations and generations. From the Day of Pentecost, to the moment of the Rapture of the Church, all who have believed, and will believe, are united by one Lord, one faith and one baptism (Acts 2; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 2:11-13; 4:4-6; 1Thess. 4:13-18).

The local church is the assembly of believers who live in one location and are connected by the same confession of faith, are united for service to God and each other, and gather for the preaching of the Gospel (Matt. 18:17; Acts 2:42-47, 14:23; Eph. 4:11-16; Phil. 2:1-2). The local church is an integral part of the Universal Church; therefore, each Christian must be a member of the local church, attend services regularly and participate in its ministry (Acts 2:41-42; 1John 1:7; Eph. 10:25). The church's most authoritative body is the membership meeting.

Church Ministers. We believe that the church should have order and government in accordance with the Scriptures (1Cor. 14:33, 34). For this purpose, the Lord calls and installs ministers through the election and calling of the church (Acts 6:2-7, 15:22; Eph. 4:11-12).

When a minister is installed for the office to be a presbyter (same as pastor or bishop) or deacon, ordination is performed by laying on of hands. Only men who fulfill the qualifications in the Scriptures can occupy these offices (Acts 6:1-6, 14:23; 1Tim. 3:2-12; Titus 1:5-9).

The church, and the pastors who lay hands on the candidate, recognize that he is worthy to receive the office of a minister of the New Testament church and is endowed with rights, responsibilities and authority thereof (Rom. 15:15-16; 2Tim. 1:6).

Pastor's responsibilities include teaching God's Word, performing ordinances, shepherding the flock (soul care), and leading the church (Acts 20:28, 35; 1Pet. 5:1-4; 2Tim. 2:15; Titus 1:9).

Deacons are called to help pastors in their ministry; their main responsibilities involve the financial and material aspects of church activity and acts of benevolence (Acts 6:1-4). Deacons (by pastor's assignment) have the right to perform any ordinances, except ordaining ministers and praying over the sick with anointing oil (Jas. 5:14; Titus 1:5).

Church ministers may be supported financially by the church (Matt. 10:10; 1Cor. 9:14; Gal. 6:6; 1Tim. 5:17-18).

Church Discipline. Church members should walk in obedience and faithfulness to the Lord by keeping themselves from sin (1 Kings 15:22-23; Rev. 2:10), living in peace and mutual love with each other (2Thess. 1:3), and keeping the unity of the church according to the teaching of Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:5-6; Phil. 1:27; 2:2).

To preserve purity and order in the church (1Cor. 5:6-7; 2 Thess. 3:6) the following measures of church discipline exist: admonition (1Tim. 1:5; Tit. 2:15), reproof (Matt. 18:15-18), rebuke (2Thes. 3:14) and excommunication (1Cor. 5:12-13).

Excommunication from the local church can be applied in the following cases: one falls away from faith in God (1Cor. 16:22), strays into heresy (Titus 3:10) or commits and abides in sin (Matt. 18:15-18; 1Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6). The church receives back excommunicated members after they repent, leave their sin and show fruits of repentance (2Cor. 2:6-8).

What is the Church?

The church is a gathering of believers who have been born-again and redeemed by Christ. They belong to the Body of Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Who founded the Church?

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ: "I will build my church..." (Matt. 16:16-18).

When was the Church founded?

Historically this occurred on the day of Pentecost after the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1-2).

The Universal and Local Churches

The Universal Church

It consists of all who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ through all time, and from every nation.

The Universal Church consists of all local churches; it consists of all deceased and all living believers born-from-above (Gal. 3:28, Eph. 2:11-13, 4:4-6, 1Thes. 4:13-18).

Local Churches

- A true child of God will necessarily be a member of the local church.
- A true member of the Church will attend church services.
 - "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some" (Heb. 10:25).
 - One of the most important parts of the Christian life is vital fellowship with other Christians, which cannot be completely replaced by listening to, or viewing, the video recordings of church services.
- One who loves the Lord and who fears Him, will try not to be late for church services, and will behave appropriately during the service.

To what is the Church likened in the Holy Scriptures?

Church as the Body of Christ. Christ is the head. He governs. He gives gifts/talents for service/worship. He established rules and laws (1Cor. 12:20-27).

Church as the Flock. Christ is the good Shepard (John 10:7-30). "He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23:2). "I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick" (Ezk 34:15-16).

Church as the Temple of God. Christ is the corner stone of this structure (1Pet. 2:4-6). This Temple is built of living stones, or in other words believers.

Church as the Bride of Christ. Christ is the Groom of the Church (Matt 25:10). Christ is preparing the Church to meet Him, He is purifying and sanctifying her. He walks amongst the Church and watches... The Bride must be obedient to her Groom – Christ. Obedience is better than sacrifice (1Sam. 15:22).

Functions of the Church

The New Testament Church has five main functions which are dictated by the Great Commission: evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, service to others, and worship of God. These functions are drawn from Acts 2:42-47. As believers, we must fulfill these five functions, both in our personal lives and in the church's activities, in order to fulfill the calling of Christ.

1. **Evangelism.** The Bible urges obedience to Christ in the work of spreading the Gospel.
2. **Discipleship** is a process that begins at salvation and lasts a lifetime. Fellowship with other believers contributes to the process of discipleship as believers spur one another to growth and maturity.
3. **Communion of believers.** God wants His children to work together in unity and sincere love of the brethren. Sincere communication destroys disunity in order to build unity.
4. **Service.** Believers discover and use their spiritual gifts and abilities in order to serve others in the name of Jesus Christ. Service is the natural outflow of discipleship in the process of Christian growth and maturity.
5. **Worship.** Worshipping God is the result of knowing God and loving Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23).

Necessary steps for becoming a member of the Church

1. **Repentance.** "Repent therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).
2. **Belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.** "Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk. 1:15).
3. **New birth.** "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3).
4. **Water baptism.** "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).
5. **Faithfulness to the teaching** of the Word of God. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

The conduct and life of Church members

Show love to others. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Relate respectfully with church members. "Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Rom. 12:10).

Do not lie. "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another" (Eph. 4:25).

In anger, do not sin. "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:26-27).

Do not steal. "Let him who stole steal no longer..." (Eph. 4:28).

Cease unwholesome speech; speak only the good. "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

Put off everything that hurts or harms others, forgive, and be kind to one another. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you." (Eph. 4:31-32).

Dress modestly.

- "In everything, show in yourself a pattern of good deeds" (Titus 2:7).
- "In order also that the wives, in a decent garment, with modesty and chastity, adorn themselves not with weaving hair, not with gold, or with pearls, with many valuable garments" (1Tim. 2:9).

Put off sin, stumbling blocks, and worldly habits.

- "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes" (Ps. 101:3).
- "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1Cor. 6:12).
- "All things are lawful for me, but not all things edify" (1Cor. 10:23).
- Church members should avoid everything that can "bring us under the power," "not helpful," and "does not edify."
- Alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and pornography: all of these cause addiction and lead to sin. Church members should refrain completely from these things.
- Non-Christian movies, music and electronic games carry worldly values, offend God and the Holy Spirit, waste our time, distract from reading the Word of God, and may also lead to dependence.

Church discipline

God is a God of structure and order (1Cor. 14:33). He has set up rules, regulations and statutes in the Church. Members of the Church are obliged to follow these rules and statutes. Those who do not follow will be held accountable and even disciplined by the Church. The Scriptures outline disciplinary procedures for the Church to follow.

- **Admonition.** Persuade, urge, counsel, advise, convince (Titus 2:15).
- **Confrontation.** Face-to-face meeting to expose the issue. "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone..." (Matt. 18:15-18).
- **Rebuke, reprimand** – express sharp disapproval or criticism of someone's behavior or actions. "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear" (1Tim. 5:20).
 - These people cannot participate in communion and at members' meetings.
- **Excommunication** (from the Church). This is a last resort in the case of an individual who fails to repent or correct his/her ways after all attempts to exhort, rebuke and restore. Excommunication is only for a spiritually dead person. Let that person "be as a Gentile"; in other words - an unbeliever (Matt. 18:18).

Ministers of the Church

The Lord appointed ministers – pastors and deacons. They are elected by the congregation and ordained to serve the church.

Pastor, presbyter (bishop). He is an appointed leader of a local church and must keep good order and discipline in the body, guard against heresies and preach the sound teaching of the Word of God (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17).

Deacons. They have financial, material, and organizational responsibilities. Deacons help pastors to conduct the Communion service and assist with water baptism. They also visit church members and perform other tasks in the church.

Attitude towards the ministers.

Scripture teaches that every church member should

- *Obey the ministers.* “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive...” (Heb. 13:17). “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders” (1Pet. 5:5).
- *Respect them.* “Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” (1Tim. 5:17).
- *Pray for them.* “Brethren, pray for us...” (2 Thess. 3:1).
- *Maintain the unity of the church.* “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them.” (Rom. 16:17).

Key Verse:

“I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

Questions:

1. What is the Church?
2. Who founded the Church and who is the Head of the Church?
3. When was the Church founded?
4. What are the main functions of the church?
5. To what is the Church likened according to the Holy Scriptures?
6. What is the process of church discipline?

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Statement of Faith

Christ instituted and commanded **water baptism** for all believers. It was established so converted believers may publically testify that they have entered into a covenant with the Lord. Baptism expresses obedience to the Lord, the pledge of a good conscience before God and a testimony of faith to others. Baptism is a sign of a believer's death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ (1Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:27).

Those who have received instruction in the faith, and have reached the age of accountability, may be baptized. Baptism is a one-time, full immersion into water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

Baptism, a step of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, testifies to the truthfulness of a person's conversion. Baptism makes one a member of the local church (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42, 8:36-38; Jas. 2:14,20).

Lord's Supper (Communion) - In order to maintain one's spiritual life and fellowship with Christ and the church, believers must participate in the Lord's Supper (1Cor. 10:16-17). Jesus Christ enacted communion as a proclamation and commemoration of his suffering and death on the cross and as a testimony to His promise to return for the church (Matt. 26:26-28; 1Cor. 11:23-26). The Lord's Supper, taken with living faith, signifies our participation with Christ's death (1Cor. 10:16-17). The bread and the wine represent the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, but do not become them literally (1Cor. 11:23-26).

Only born-again, baptized believers can take part in communion. They should be at peace with the Lord, the church and their neighbors, and should have a high regard for the body of Christ (1Cor. 11:27-29).

Water Baptism

Why should this be done?

Jesus Christ prioritized the ordinance of baptism.

- "Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19).
- "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38).

What does water baptism mean?

Water baptism is the pledge of a clear conscience toward God and the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.

1. **Baptism is the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.**

- "Baptism ... now saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the pledge of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1Pet. 3:21, *Holman Christian Standard Bible*).

2. It is a symbol that we died to sin, and were raised to new life in Christ.

- "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

3. Baptism also symbolizes the joining of a believer to a local church.

- "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

What are the criteria for baptism?

1. *Repentance.* "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ..." (Acts 2:38)
2. *Birth from above.* "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit?" (Acts 10:47).
3. *Instruction in the Word of God.* "...Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).
4. *Faith.* "... And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?" Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36-37).

Is there salvation through baptism?

No, only faith in Jesus Christ saves us. However, baptism is the logical result of our faith.

Method of Baptism

The word "baptize" means immersion. Therefore, we are baptized through a full immersion in water.

The Lord's Supper (Communion)

Other designations: "Meal of Remembrance", "Lord's Table", "Breaking of Bread", "Eucharist".

The Lord's Supper, instituted by Christ, serves as a reminder of his death for us as we break bread and drink from the cup.

Meaning of the Communion

1. We remember Christ's sacrifice.
 - Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me" (1Cor. 11:24).
 - We remember the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary because thanks to it, we received the atonement for our sins.
2. We proclaim Christ's death.
 - "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1Cor. 11:26).

- When believers come together to remember Christ, they actively proclaim the death of Christ to the world.
3. We commune with Christ and members of His Church.
- The Apostle Paul writes that "the cup is the communion of the blood of Christ," and bread is "the communion of the body of Christ" (1Cor. 10:16).
 - These elements are symbols of His body and blood. Accepting bread and wine does not mean that we physically eat the body and blood of Christ. This is an inner spiritual communion with Christ.
 - The Lord's Supper, as established by Christ, is not a solitary affair, but is shared with other believers.
 - Unity cannot occur if we are not at peace with each other as we share the Lord's Table together.

Conditions for participation in the Communion

- Spiritual regeneration.
 - In order to have "the communion of the body of Christ," a person must first become a member of this Body by being born again.
- Membership in the Church through water baptism at a conscious age.
 - It is necessary to be a Church member, because the Supper was established only to members of the Church of Christ.
 - To participate in the Communion, it is important that a person be baptized at a mindful age. If he or she is baptized as a child, or as an unstable adolescent, he or she cannot yet give the "answer of good conscience" with all responsibility. In this case, his membership in the Church will not be genuine, but formal.
- Confession of all known sin – living in obedience to Christ.
 - "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (1Cor. 11:27).

Key verse:

"Baptism is not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet 3:21).

Questions:

1. What is baptism? What does it symbolize?
2. What are the criteria for baptism?
3. What is the Lord's Supper (Communion)?
4. What are the conditions for participating in the Communion?

Life after Death

Statement of Faith

Man receives punishment for sin in the form of spiritual and physical death (Gen. 2:16-17; 5:5; Rom. 6:23; 1Cor. 15:21-22), and ultimately, eternal death (2 Thess. 1:8-9).

What is physical death?

- Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body. It is the termination of physical life. It is described in several ways in Scripture: the separation of body and soul (Eccl. 12:7; Acts 7:59; Jas. 2:26), the loss of the soul or life (Matt. 2:20; Mark 3:4; John 13:37), and departure (Luke 9:31; 2 Pet 1:15).
- When one dies, the body decays in the grave and returns to dust (Gen. 3:19), and the soul continues on.

The origin of death

- **Physical death is a consequence of sin.** Adam was not subject to physical death until after the fall. Physical death is a result of man's spiritual death (Rom. 5:21; 6:23; 1Cor. 15:56).
- **Physical death is a judgment** (Rom. 1:32; 5:16) and a curse.

Attitude of Christians toward death

- **The believer has been freed from the power of death.** Scripture records that Christ partook of flesh and blood "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).
- **The believers do not have fear of death.** Though death is a common enemy, through Christ the believer needs no longer to fear it. Death for the believer is entrance into the presence of Christ. He is absent from the body and present with the Lord (2Cor. 5:8). Death for the believer is "to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). The sting of death has been removed (1Cor. 15:55-57) and the Christian falls asleep in Jesus (1Thess. 4:14).
- **Death of unbelievers.** In stark contrast to the believer, the unbeliever has no such comforting hope. He faces condemnation and eternal judgment away from the presence of the Lord (John 3:36; 2Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10).

Man is immortal as his soul never dies

- **The soul is immortal.** Physical death relates to the physical body; the soul is immortal, and as such, does not die. While Scripture declares that God alone has immortality (1Tim. 6:16; cf. 1:17), man is immortal in the sense that his soul never dies.

- **Immortality of the soul is confirmed by Scripture.** In answer to the Sadducees' question concerning the resurrection, Jesus responded by quoting what God had said to Moses in Exod. 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Matt. 22:32). He further commented, "God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (v. 32), the point being that if God was the God of Abraham in Moses' day, then Abraham was yet alive. The story of Lazarus and the rich man also indicates the immortality of the soul (Luke 16:19-31), as does the mention of souls under the altar (Rev. 6:9, and further).

What happens to the soul after death, but before the resurrection?

- **In the first place, the believer is with Christ.** Paul said that he would "prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord" (2Cor. 5:8). Further, Paul had the "desire to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). This was the encouragement which Jesus gave to the penitent man on the cross next to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). That paradise was heaven is clear from 2Cor. 12:3 and further.
- **Not only is the believer with the Lord and in heaven, but he is in fellowship with other believers.** Hebrews speaks of the "general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven" (12:23).
- **Believers are alive, conscious, and happy** (Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:13). This state between death and the resurrection is a condition to be preferred above the present state. Paul calls it "very much better" (Phil. 1:23).
- **The fate of unbelievers after death.** In the story of Lazarus and the rich man, Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, comforted; the rich man was in agony (Luke 16:19-31). From this we gather that the unsaved individual is also in a temporary state undergoing conscious torment, while awaiting the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

Conclusions

- **In regards to believers.** We conclude that at death the believer enters into the presence of Christ. He remains with the Lord in a state of conscious blessedness until the time of the resurrection, at which time he will receive his body of glory.
- **In regards to unbelievers.** The unbeliever enters into a state of conscious torment until the resurrection, at which time he will be cast into the lake of fire.

Key Verse:

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth... they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

Questions:

1. What is the origin of death?
2. What is the attitude of Christians towards death?
3. Please list examples from Scripture confirming the immortality of the soul.
4. What happens to the soul after death, but before the resurrection?

Events of the End Times

Statement of Faith

We believe in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:11), and these consequential events of the last days:

The Rapture of the Church, at which time the church will meet the Lord in the clouds (1John 3:2; Phil. 2:16, 3:20-21, 1Thess. 5:23). At the rapture, those who are dead in Christ will be raised up, and those who are alive will be changed (1Cor. 15:52-57; 1Thess. 4:16-17).

After the Rapture, those who are saved will stand before the **judgement seat of Christ** to receive their rewards (1Pet. 5:4; 1Cor. 3:14, 9:24-25; 2Cor. 5:10; 2Tim. 4:7-8).

The Great Tribulation, will be a period of the Antichrist's rule and a time when God's judgements will be poured out on unrepentant humanity (Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 21:25-29; Rev. 12:12, 13:4-8).

The Coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory to the earth will be a visible, open coming of the Lord. (Matt. 24:27; 25:31; 26:64; 1Thess. 1:10; Rev. 1:7). It will occur before the Millennium, which will be preceded by the rule of the Antichrist (Rev. 20:1-6).

The Millennium is a time when Christ reigns visibly on earth for one thousand years, according to the promises given to Israel (Isa. 11:6-9, 65:17-25; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; Rev. 20:1-6)

Great White Throne Judgment is the final righteous judgment of God over all people whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:11-15).

After that, **eternity** will come. The righteous will enter into eternal bliss, while the unrighteous will be thrown into the lake of fire where they will be eternally tormented (Matt. 25:46; John 5:29; Rev. 20:11-15, 21:7-8).

The Scriptures call all believers to be ready for the Second Coming of Christ by looking forward to it with desire and anticipation (Luke 21:34-36; 2Pet. 3:12-14; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 22:20-21).

Advent of Christ: coming into the air to receive His Own (Church)

Paul writes: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1Thes. 4:16-17). In 2Thessalonians 2:1, it is written of our gathering to Him. This very idea is expressed in John 14:3, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also". In this coming, Christ will not appear on earth at all, but He will gather His own in the air. The dead in Christ will be resurrected, and the living will be changed (1Cor. 15:51-54).

The Great Tribulation

The Bible speaks about the Great Tribulation - a period of unimaginable suffering, confusion and disarray: foretold under this name in many places in scripture, from Psalm 2:5 to Revelation 7:14, and also described in Revelation 13. Spread throughout the world in one form or another

(Rev. 3:10), the Great Tribulation will be an especially “disastrous time for Jacob” (Jer. 30:7), and the most violent display will be in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The Great Tribulation will be suffered by God’s people (Israel), having returned to Palestine in the state of disbelief. This will continue three and a half years, or the second part of the seven years of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27; Rev. 11:2-3).

Manifestations during the Great Tribulation:

1. *Cruel authority/rule of Antichrist*, “a beast rising up out of the sea” (Rev. 13:1), who, in the beginning of the three and a half years, will break his agreement with the Jews, which will reestablish sacrificial worship in the temple - Daniel 9:27). The “beast” will appear in the temple, and demand to be worshiped as God (Matt. 24:15; 2Thes. 2:4).
2. *The open interference of Satan* who will operate “with great wrath” (Rev. 12:12), and who will appoint the beast to “operate with authority” (Rev. 13:4-5).
3. *Unprecedented demonic activity* (Rev. 9:2, 11).
4. *The outpouring of horrific judgments* from the “seven cups of wrath” (Rev. 16).

In this period, the chosen from Israel will be sealed for God (Rev. 7:4-8), along with a great multitude from the nations of pagans (non-Jews) (Rev. 7:9). This multitude will be like “those which came out of great Tribulation” (Rev. 7:14). They are not of the priesthood, nor do they belong to the church; their relationship is somewhat like the relationship of the Levites to the priests in the time of Moses.

The end of the Great Tribulation and the return of Christ to earth with the Church

Immediately following the great Tribulation, Christ will return in full glory, in the midst of all the events associated with His appearing.

Zechariah 14:4 says: “And His feet will stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east.” When He returns to this earth, He will return with His own (Joel 3:11; 1Thes. 3:13; Jude 14).

When the years of the great Tribulation draw to an end, the demons proceeding from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet will rush about the earth gathering the kings of the earth for battle (Rev. 16:12-16). Their intent will be to subdue Jerusalem and the Jews in Palestine (Zech. 12:1-9; 13:8-14:2). But precisely in that moment, when they are confident in their victory, Christ will come down from the heavens, together with His army (Rev. 19:11-16). Then these masses will turn to battle the Son of God, but the battle will be short, with an obvious outcome. The leaders of the demons will be cast into the lake of fire (2Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:19), and the armies of the earth will be slain by the sword which proceeds out of Christ’s mouth (2Thes. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:21).

Millennial Kingdom

Christ’s Role

1. Christ will be present on earth; He will sit on the Throne of His father David. He will rule over all the earth and nations (Ps. 72:6-11; Isa. 2:2-4; Isa. 11:1-5; Jer. 23:5ff; Zech 14:9).
2. Two details characterize His Kingdom:
 - a) Universal peace (Ps. 72:7; Isa. 2:4) and
 - b) Universal truth (Isa. 11:9; Jer. 23:5).

Position of the Church

The Church will reign together with Christ (Luke 19:16-19; 1Cor. 6:2; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 2:27; 5:9; 20:4-6).

State of Israel

- All Jews will gather to their land (Isa. 11:10-13; Jer. 16:14).
- Israel will repent and know God (Isa. 66:8; Jer. 31:31-37).
- The Temple along with its Divine worship will be restored (Ez. 37:26-28; Zech. 14:16).
- Israel will evangelize the heathens (Isa 66:19; Zech. 8:13).

State of the Nations

The surrounding nations will make their way to Jerusalem for worship, especially for the annual feast of Tabernacles (Isa. 2:2-4; Zech. 14:16-19). Those countries that will not go and worship will not have rain.

State of Satan

In the very beginning of this period, Satan will be bound and thrown into the underworld for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). Undoubtedly, the evil spirits will be in confinement along with him. In this period, Satan will not tempt the nations, as he did before.

State of Nature

- The nature of predatory animals will change also (Isa. 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25; Ez. 34:25). The fertility of the land will be restored and renewed (Isa. 35:2; Ez. 34:6; Joel 2:22-26).
- Human life span will increase considerably and yet during this period people will still die (Isa. 65:30).
- With the decrease of sin, decreases in sicknesses will be prevalent; and yet sickness will not be entirely eliminated.

Overall Characteristics of the Millennium

- This will be a time of great happiness and joy.
- Many will receive physical healing (Isa. 35:5);
- This will be a time of great materialistic and economic prosperity and security (Micah 4:3-5).
- There will be friendly relations not only between individuals, but also nations, and people will no longer fight (Isa. 24).

Near the end of this Period

The Last Battle

At the end of the Millennial Kingdom, Satan will be released for a short time (Rev. 20:3 and 7-10). During this small interval Satan will gather the nations once more, Gog and Magog, a number equal to the number of grains of sand. This army under his rule will surround the holy camp and the beloved city. This city, undoubtedly, is Jerusalem. In any case, this contest will turn out to be short-lived and the outcome decisive. Fire will fall from the heavens and destroy these armies (Ez. 38:39).

In this moment, Satan will be condemned and sent to his final place of punishment – into the lake of fire.

Final Judgment

All the unsaved will be resurrected to face God at the Great White Throne Judgment. Only the unsaved will face this judgment (Rev. 20:11-13; 21:8). All those whose names are not written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. Death and hell will be thrown into this place also.

New Creation

Biblical prophecies conclude by describing the conditions in which we will dwell for eternity. The last two chapters of Revelation are devoted to describing this (Rev. 21:22).

New heaven and new earth

The Apostle Peter tells us that our present-day heaven and earth will be destroyed and replaced by new ones (2Pet. 3:10-13). We can read John's prophecies about this also in Revelation 21:1. The new heavens and earth will be distinguished by complete harmony and beauty, and will lack the disunity, sadness and catastrophes that we see today.

New Jerusalem

Christ's Church will inhabit the New Jerusalem which will be created by God Himself.

1. *City Description.* This will be a real city, having a foundation, gates, walls and streets – all this will be built out of gold and priceless stones. "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." (Rev. 21:23). Indeed this city will be absolutely beautiful and secure.
2. *City's Inhabitants.* This city will be the home of the redeemed, the bride of the Lamb - the church (Rev. 21:9). Christ Himself will fill this city: "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev. 21:22).

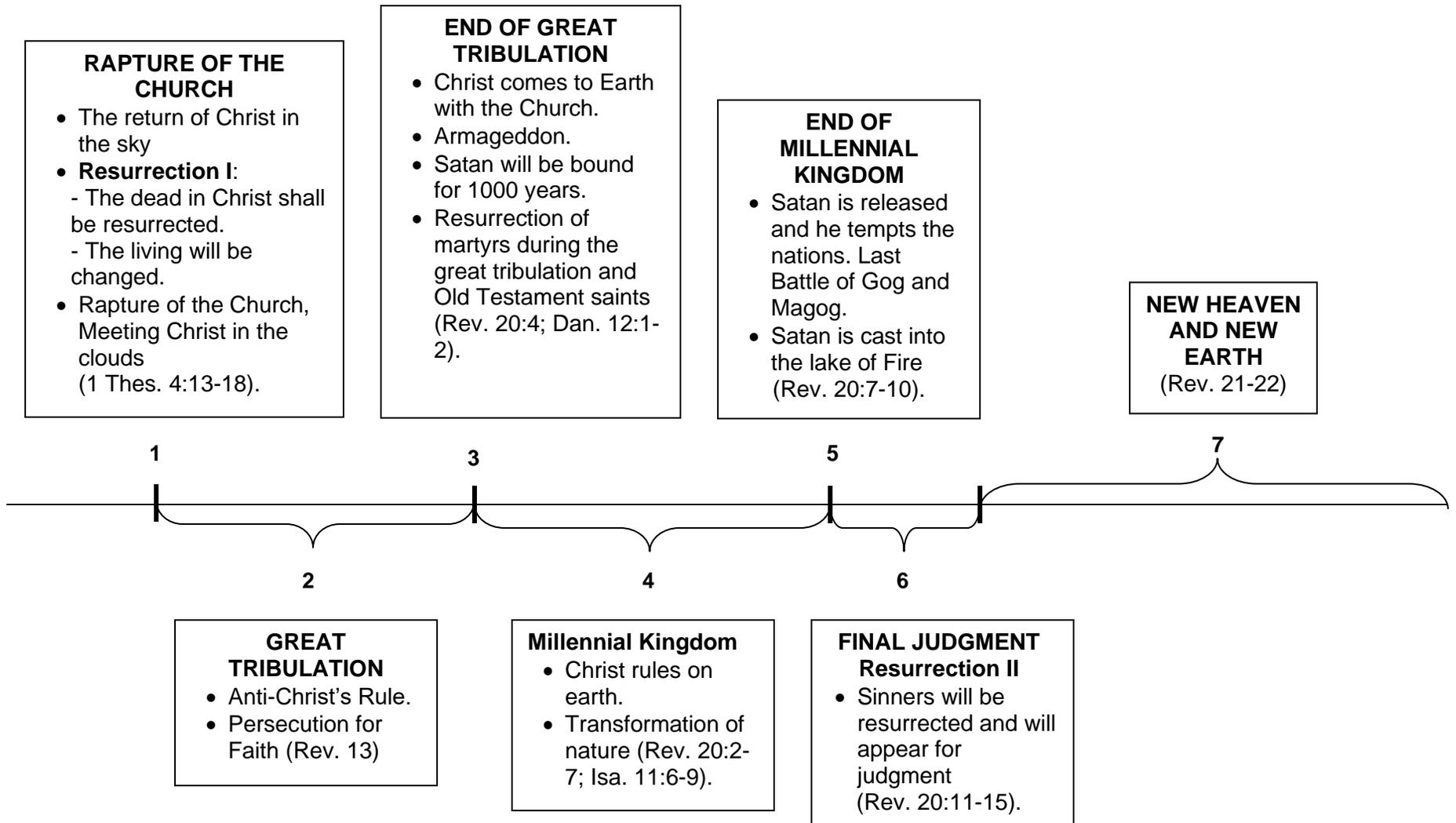
Key Verse:

"Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such, the second death has no power..." (Rev. 20:6).

Questions:

1. What will Christ's coming for the church be like?
2. Who will rule during the Great Tribulation?
3. How many resurrections will there be?

EVENTS OF THE END TIMES



Christian Marriage and Family

Declaration of Faith

We believe that marriage was instituted by God (Gen. 2:18-24). It is a union between one man and one woman, and was established for fellowship, mutual help and support, and for the perpetuation of the human race (Gen. 1:28; 1Cor. 7:1-5). A believer should only marry another believer, a member of the church, and one with whom he or she is spiritually united (1Cor. 7:39; 2Cor. 6:14-17). God commanded those who marry not to divorce (Matt. 19:6-9), and to be faithful to each other till death (Rom. 7:2).

God established the family to be the first, and most foundational, institution of society. Families consist of people who are connected with each other by marriage, by blood or by adoption. The husband and wife have equal dignity before God, since both were created in His image and likeness, but their roles and functions are different (Gen. 1:27; 1Cor. 11:11).

The husband is the head of the family, and the wife is his helper; this reflects the relationship of Christ and the church (Gen. 2:18; 1Cor. 11:3,8-9; Eph. 5:22-33).

Children are a gift and inheritance from the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5, 128:3-6). They are to honor their parents and be obedient to them (Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20).

Christian marriage is a blessing

God created all humans with the desire for intimacy, the desire to love and be loved and the desire to have a family and children. For this reason, the Lord created a man and a woman and established marriage – a legal union, in which the family develops.

A Christian marriage and family is a blessing from God. Therefore, young men and ladies should start praying about it in advance.

Today, we see a tendency to dispel the importance of marriage and family in society. It is becoming more and more popular never to get married, or not to have children. This is not biblical.

The Bible teaches that any sexual relationship outside of marriage is a sin. God created sexual intimacy for marriage only. The marriage union, blessed by God Himself and is a lifetime commitment.

When to marry?

1. Overall maturity. Young men and women should be old enough to marry. They must also be responsible, spiritually and psychologically mature, and financially stable. This is especially true for potential husbands. Overall maturity is important for solving problems that inevitably arise in family life.

2. Spiritual condition. Both the young man and woman must be true Christians and members of a local church.

- Baptism should always precede marriage. This demonstrates spiritual maturity and responsibility.
- How can someone who resists covenant relationship with God (1Pet. 3:21) before marriage, make a promise of faithfulness to his spouse? What kind of spiritual unity can a family have if one spouse cannot participate in the Lord's Supper?

3. Financial situation. Spouses (especially husbands) should have some kind of stable source of income in order to support their family.

Choosing a future spouse

The choice of a life companion is one of life's most important decisions, since a Christian marriage is for life and ends only with the death of one spouse.

A Christian can marry only a sincere child of God.

Scripture forbids marrying an unbeliever. "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2Cor. 6:14).

When choosing a future spouse, one must trust God, wait for His answers and instructions, and resist acting based upon the desires of the flesh. "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps. 37:5).

Christian Marriage according to the Bible

1. Union between a man and a woman. The Bible tells us that marriage is a union, established by God, between one man and one woman. Any other form of marriage is forbidden. Therefore, polygamous, homosexual, free/open, and civil unions, and all other "marriage" alternatives actively pressed upon us by the modern world must be rejected as sinful (Heb. 13:4, 1Cor. 6:9-10, 1Tim. 1:8-10).

2. Goals of Marriage. From the beginning God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). God established the institution of family for the following reasons:

- Mutual aid and help of both companions throughout life (Gen. 2:18).
- Multiplication of mankind (Gen. 1:27-28).
- Mutual shaping and perfecting of both husband and wife's character as a method of preparing them for the Heavenly Kingdom (1Pet. 3:7).

3. The success of Marriage. The secret of a successful marriage lies primarily in deep dedication to God and in the mutual sacrificial love of one another.

Here are some important conditions for good marriage relationships:

- Common spiritual interests.
- Common beliefs in important everyday issues and situations.
- Purity of relationship before marriage between two young people.
- Bible reading and prayer together and with the family.
- Biblical order of authority: 1) Christ, 2) Husband, 3) Wife, 4) Children (1Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23).

Key Verse:

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" (2Cor. 6:14).

Questions:

1. What is a Christian Marriage?
2. Who can a Christian marry? Confirm this with a Bible verse.

Money Management According to the Bible

"Money is a good servant, but a bad master" (Francis Bacon)

The Role of Money in Our Life

1. Earn money by honest work.

- "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Eph. 4:28).

2. All that we have is not ours; it belongs to God.

- "The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein" (Ps. 24:1). All we have belongs to God. Consequently, we are not in the right to use our resources as we please. We are only the managers. We must use money, skills and every other resource wisely and preferably for God's work.

3. How should we, as Christians, spend our money?

- *Provide for our families.* "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1Tim. 5:8).
- *Donate to the work of God.* Your own church should be the highest priority in your giving. Your church is your family in Christ; you grow and are being fed spiritually there. Supporting the church enables the church to bless you.
 - "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap... And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:6-10).
- *Share with the needy.* "He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Prov. 14:21).

Question: How do I manage God's money entrusted to me? Is God pleased with me?

The Love of Money

1. The love of money leads to sin

- God's opinion of this matter, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1Tim. 6:10).
- Greed rises from the love of money. Those who love money are enslaved to it. This doesn't just apply to those who have a lot of money. Slavery to money is determined by one's attitude towards money, and not by the amount of money one possesses. A slave of money values money more than spiritual and moral values.
- "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'..." (Heb. 13:5).

2. The love of money breeds dissatisfaction.

- "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase...." (Eccl. 5:10).

3. Why does the love of money prevent one from believing in God?

- The priorities that arise out of a dependence upon, and love for, money are contrary to God's priorities and commandments. It is important to note that the Bible recognizes money, but condemns dependence on money (Matt. 6:24).
- Scripture warns us against the desire for quick and easy gain. "A faithful man will abound with blessings, but he who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished" (Prov. 28:20).

4. The correct attitude towards money removes dependence on it.

- Money should play a secondary role in our lives.
 - "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).
 - "Two things I request of You... Remove falsehood and lies far from me; Give me neither poverty nor riches—Feed me with the food allotted to me; Lest I be full and deny You, and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God" (Prov. 30:7-9).
- Our main task is to seek the Kingdom of God. Practical advice: seek, first, God and His kingdom. He will provide and help with the rest.
- We are to strive to be content with what we have (1Tim. 6:6-11). We should not set our hearts on obtaining things at any price. It is more important to learn to be pleased with, and grateful for, the blessings we have.
- It's important to save money for the future needs. "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer" (Prov. 30:25).

Tithing According to the Bible

What does the Old Testament say about the ministry of giving?

1. Tithe existed long before the Mosaic Law.
 - Abraham lived 700 years before Moses. When he met Melchizedek, Abraham gave him "a tenth of everything"
 - Jacob lived 500 years before the Mosaic Law. When he fled to Mesopotamia, he asked God for blessings on the way and promised a tenth.
2. Tithing is fixed by the Law of Moses.
 - "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord" (Lev. 27:30-32)
3. The Lord strictly punished those who did not observe the principle of tithing.
 - "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings... Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it?" (Mal. 3:8-10).

The Old Testament principle: 1/7th of our time and 1/10th of our income should belong to God.

The Doctrine of giving in the New Testament.

1. Jesus did not abolish tithing.
 - "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, **without leaving the others undone**" (Luke 11:42)
2. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).
 - While paying taxes to the state, we must not forget about the sacrifice to God.
3. Borrowing and lending money.
 - It is important to avoid borrowing. "Do not owe anything to anyone except mutual love" (Rom. 13:8).
 - It is good to lend money to others if it is possible. "And do good, and lend, without expecting anything in return ..." (Luke 6:35).
 - Do not be a co-signer in the debts of others (Prov. 6:1-5, 11:15).
 - Do not lend to other believers for interest (Deut. 23:19-20, Ps. 14:5, Ezek. 18:8).

Summary

1. Mandatory tithing is the commandment of the Old Testament Law. Christians are free from the execution of the Law of Moses, including forced tithing. If we voluntarily decide to pay tithing, then this is an act of grace.
2. How much should we give to the Lord? Apostle Paul taught, "Let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper" (1Cor. 16:2) and "as he purposes in his heart" (2Cor. 9:7). This is a question of our conscience before God.
3. Christ taught, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20), and the righteousness of the Pharisees in the matter of tithing was impeccable (Matt. 23:23).
4. Christ approved the practice of tithing, but commanded His disciples to exceed it.
5. Someone said: "Abraham began tithing, Jacob continued, Moses commanded, Malachi ordered, and Jesus approved it."

Practical Advice on Giving from the Apostle Paul

Please read: 2 Corinthians 8:11-12 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." (1Cor. 16:2).

According to this verse, our giving must be . . .

- SYSTEMATIC - "lay something aside, storing up "
- COMMON - "each one of you"
- CONSTANT - "on the first day of the week"

Key Verse: "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" (2Cor. 9:7).

Questions:

1. What should we, as Christians, spend our money on?
2. What are the main ideas regarding the right attitude towards money?
3. What does the New Testament teach about tithing and material giving?

Brotherhood of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists

Origins

Historically, Baptists originate from English Puritans. Baptist origins are tied to John Smith (1570-1612). In the year 1606, he became a pastor of one of the communities in Gainsborough, Lincolnshire England. Sometime around the year 1608, persecution forced members of his community to relocate to Amsterdam. In this city, Smith participated in theological debates with Mennonites, after which he started to examine the New Testament. He concluded that **baptism by faith after repentance is a practice approved by the apostles for Christians.**

In the beginning of the year 1609, Smith was baptized in faith, and later baptized other members of his community. And so, the first Baptist church was established. 1609 is considered the year the modern Baptist denomination began. From this group, the Baptist movement started spreading, first in Britain and later in the North-American British colonies. The spread of the Baptist denomination in continental Europe started in Germany in the middle of the XIX century.

Seven Baptist Principals

1. The books of in the canon of scripture – the Bible - are, alone, the infallible authority in matters of faith and practical life.

We evaluate and order our life, Christian traditions, and doctrines according to the Bible. This enables us to experience inward renewal and transformation, to avoid errors and false teachings, and to serve God in the pattern of the first apostolic Church of the New Testament.

2. Churches consist of spiritually reborn people.

People find new life in the Holy Spirit when the Spirit comes to indwell the heart: when a person sincerely asks, not only for the forgiveness of sins, but also for the continuous indwelling of, and fellowship with, the Creator, they become a member of the church.

3. Only those who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior receive Baptism and Communion. Since baptism is a union with Christ, and entry into a new life in the church, those who receive it should love and know Him with whom they are uniting, and realize what they are promising at the time of baptism. Therefore, Baptists do not christen infants, nor adults who have not experienced a spiritual rebirth. Only those baptized in faith can participate in Christ's Holy Communion.

4. Independence of local churches in spiritual and practical matters.

Local churches determine their own procedures for appointing officers, administering elections, admitting new members, excommunicating unworthy members, directing the use of finances, and tending to "household" matters. No institution can cancel the decision of the whole Church.

5. Universal priesthood of Christians, not differentiating between clergy and laymen.

Christ granted his disciples and followers the high calling of a royal priesthood, and if there are any distinctions, they are in responsibilities and service: "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,... for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

6. Freedom of choice in belief and conscience is an inalienable right for every person.

Every person is responsible for his or her beliefs and convictions before God. "God is freedom and gives freedom" – wrote N. Berdyaev, - "He does not force us to acknowledge Him". This is why Baptists never persecuted anyone for their convictions; they prefer to be the anvil rather than the hammer.

7. Separation of Church from Government.

Church and government belong to different worlds: Church – to heavenly, eternal; Government – to earthly, temporary. Rulers habitually strive to convert the Church to their ideologies, to the detriment of both the Church and the Government. There is only one way to maintain the well-being of both: separation of Church from State (Government).

Appendix 1. Pentecostals and Charismatics

A Biblical Look at the Doctrine of Holy Spirit

By Pavel Starikov and Vitaliy Boyko

This table is a modest attempt to show in a *simplified form* the main doctrinal differences about the Holy Spirit between Baptists, and Pentecostals and Charismatics. Pentecostals and Charismatics also have certain differences in doctrines among themselves. Therefore, we list only the major doctrines here, and for the most part, they refer to charismatics.

Doctrines	Pentecost/Charismatic View	We Believe
Prayer to the Holy Spirit	Praying to the Holy Spirit and speaking with Him is a normal practice.	In the Scripture, there is not a single example of prayer to the Holy Spirit or instructions to do so. All texts speak simply of prayer to God, or God the Father, in the name of the Son. "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).
Acceptance of the Holy Spirit	1. A person can be a Christian but without having the Holy Spirit until he experiences the Baptism in the Spirit. 2. In order to receive the Holy Spirit, one must zealously desire and ask for this (baptism with the Holy Spirit). "...How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13).	A person cannot be born again and become a Christian without receiving the Holy Spirit. "Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. ...The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:9,16). Luke 11:13. When Jesus said these words, the Holy Spirit was not yet given (John 7:39). We should not pray for the Holy Spirit to be <i>given</i> to us, because He comes to indwell us at the time of our conversion (Rom. 8:9, Eph. 1:13-14). Samaritans (Acts 8:6-17) and the Gentile Ephesians (Acts 19:1-7) were in the <i>transitional period between the Covenants</i> , and they were not yet Christians in the New Testament's full meaning, until the apostles prayed for them.

Doctrines	Pentecost/Charismatic View	We Believe
Baptism of the Holy Spirit	<p>1. This is an action of the Holy Spirit separate from regeneration. Being baptized with the Holy Spirit means being filled with the Spirit.</p> <p>2. You can be reborn and still NOT be baptized with the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>3. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is very closely associated with speaking in tongues.</p> <p>4. The manifestation of various gifts is the result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.</p>	<p>Baptism with the Holy Spirit should not be confused, or mixed, with these other doctrines: the regeneration, filling, and gifts of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>Baptism with the Holy Spirit occurs at salvation when one is baptized into the Body of Christ – the Church of Christ.</p> <p>Who baptizes? - Christ (Matt. 3:11)</p> <p>With Whom? - with the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12:13)</p> <p>Result? – Membership in the Body, Church of Jesus Christ (1Cor. 12:13)</p> <p>The Spirit does not baptize into Himself, but Christ baptizes us into the Body, the Church.</p> <p>The Holy Spirit cannot be received halfway or only a little, because He is a person, not just a force.</p> <p>Either the fullness of the Holy Spirit lives in me, or not at all!</p> <p>How the fullness of the Spirit is expressed in our lives depends upon our walk with the Lord (Eph. 4).</p>
The Signs of the Holy Spirit Baptism	<p>Speaking in tongues is a sign of the Spirit Baptism.</p>	<p>In the same way that no signs are needed to confirm our regeneration or justification in Christ, no signs are necessary to confirm the Baptism of the Spirit – our spiritual joining to the Church. We rely on God's promise in the Scripture and the resulting fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).</p> <p>Speaking in tongues is a gift for ministry, and only some believers have it (1Cor. 12:10,11,30).</p> <p>The purpose of the tongues gift is a sign for non-believers: "Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but <i>to unbelievers</i>" (1Cor. 14:22).</p>
Speaking in Tongues	<p>The gift of tongues is a special prayer language given for personal prayer life.</p>	<p>The gift of tongues is a supernatural ability to speak foreign languages. Scripture always refers to an existing world language, which may be incomprehensible to the speaker (1 Cor 14:2), but it will be understood by those foreigners for whom it is originally intended (Acts 2, 1Cor. 12 and 14).</p>
Tongues as an intercession of the Holy Spirit	<p>Prayer in tongues is the intercession of the Holy Spirit in us, done according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27).</p>	<p>Rom. 8:26-27. The Holy Spirit intercedes not in us, or through us, but <i>for us</i>. His intercession for us is with groaning, not tongues, and his intercessory prayers cannot be uttered. Just as we do not hear the intercession of Christ for us (Rom. 8:34), we do not hear (are unable to hear) the intercession of the Holy Spirit for us.</p>

Doctrines	Pentecost/Charismatic View	We Believe
Tongues of Angels	Prayer in tongues can also be a prayer in angelic tongues.	<p>1Cor. 13:1-3. Speaking in "angelic tongues" is actually a hyperbole (an exaggeration, intended not for a literal understanding, but for emotional impact), used by the apostle Paul to show the superiority of love over all supernatural gifts.</p> <p>In all the cases mentioned in the Bible, the angels spoke in understandable human languages (Hebrew or Greek).</p> <p>Just as there is no one who knows ALL of the secrets, has ALL knowledge and actually moves mountains, there is no one who can speak the angelic languages.</p> <p>Angelic tongues (plural) don't exist. The different languages in the world were a consequence of God's judgment, and they separated humanity (Gen. 11:5-9). The angels of God, however, are obedient to God in everything and are completely unified.</p>
Simultaneous Public Prayer in Tongues	<p>The church must zealously "pray in the Spirit" (in tongues).</p> <p>"Praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 1:20).</p>	<p>1Cor.14:27. The apostle Paul encourages orderly prayer: praying out loud one at a time. Praying out loud together at the same time, even in true foreign languages, will confuse unbelievers (1Cor 14:23).</p> <p>"Praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 1:20) – means praying under the guidance of the Spirit and according to the will of God.</p>
Miracles in the life of believers	True believers are called by Christ Himself to perform "greater works" than He did on earth (John 14:12).	<p>The apostles of Christ did not raise Stephen or the Apostle James from the dead as Christ raised Lazarus. They did not multiply bread and did not walk on the water. Additionally, all but John were martyred.</p> <p>When speaking about greater works, Christ referred to what His Church (and not a single Christian) would do: preach the gospel throughout the world, leading to the repentance and rebirth of millions of people. "For without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).</p>

Doctrines	Pentecost/Charismatic View	We Believe
<p>Baptism of Fire</p>	<p>The Baptism of Fire purifies a person, gives him the constant supernatural desire of God, zeal in service, and the desire to live a holy and pure life.</p>	<p>John the Baptist was the first one who introduced this term, "Baptism of Fire" (Matt. 3:8-12). The content of his speech clearly shows that this is the baptism of judgment over those who did not bear the fruit of repentance. "Straw" is not cleaned, but is burned.</p> <p>As a doctrine, the "Baptism of Fire" corrupts the Biblical teachings about the Filling of the Holy Spirit and the Sanctification.</p> <p>The Filling of the Spirit is a special ministry of the Holy Spirit, when a believer is empowered to serve Christ. "... But be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18).</p> <p>The sanctification of the Holy Spirit is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to lead holy lives conformed to Christ's likeness, and dedicated to the service of God. Reading the Scriptures is a major part of our sanctification. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).</p>
<p>Demonic possession and oppression of regenerated Christians</p>	<p>Believers can have the Holy Spirit and be possessed or oppressed by demons at the same time.</p>	<p>The Scripture clearly says that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, and that we are sanctified "completely" (1Cor. 6:19-20, 1Thess. 5:23). The Holy Spirit will not tolerate the presence of an unclean spirit in the life of one whom he indwells.</p>
<p>Signs and Wonders (Mark 16:17-18)</p>	<p>1. These spiritual manifestations must remain in the churches until the coming of Christ.</p> <p>2. These signs are not special gifts for a few, but are given to all believers.</p>	<p>The bite of a deadly snake, which the Apostle Paul received, was unexpected, rather than brought about by Paul. (Acts 28:1-6). In the same way, the signs and wonders, mentioned by Christ, will occur in the life of Christians as Christ wills. They will occur in the time and place acceptable to Him, and not at all times, everywhere.</p>
<p>Generational Curse</p>	<p>The Christian needs a special prayer for deliverance from the generational curse brought about by the sins of his fathers.</p> <p>"...By no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exod. 34:7b)</p>	<p>God forgives and removes punishment from one who repents. Punishment remains only for those who knowingly continue to live in sin.</p> <p>"The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezek. 18:20).</p>

Doctrines	Pentecost/Charismatic View	We Believe
<p>Prosperity as the will of God for all Christians</p>	<p>Financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for Christians. Faith, positive speech, and financial offerings will increase one's material wealth. If humans have faith in God, He will deliver security and prosperity.</p>	<p><i>Jesus Christ warned</i> against striving for material wealth: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth” (Matt 6:19).</p> <p><i>Early Christians</i> were in deep poverty (Macedonian Church): “that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their <i>deep poverty</i> abounded in the riches of their liberality” (2Cor. 8:2).</p> <p><i>The apostles</i> themselves were often in need (1Cor. 4:11-14).</p>
<p>Physical healing from all diseases.</p>	<p>We are already healed of all diseases by His wounds. Now we just need to accept this fact by faith.</p> <p>“And by His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).</p>	<p>The question of healing depends on the cause of the illness: chastening for sin, testing of faith, glorifying God, perfecting Christian character, etc.</p> <p>Sometimes, it is God's will that the sickness remains (Jer. 45:3-5, 2Cor. 12:7-10, 2Tim. 4:20). We cannot demand healing from God, but may humbly ask for His grace and mercy.</p>
<p>“Slain in the Spirit” or “falling under the power”</p>	<p>A form of prostration in which an individual falls to the floor (usually onto their backs) while experiencing a “spiritual encounter with God”.</p>	<p>In the Bible, only sinful people fell backward from the power of the Son of God, not disciples of Christ (John 18:6). Scriptures show that believers always bow forward, and sometimes fall on their faces (Num. 20:6 Gen. 17:3).</p>
<p>“Holy Laughter”</p>	<p>Uncontrollable laughter during church and prayer meetings.</p> <p>"Holy laughter" is a symbol of victory over the devil and manifestation of God's liberation from stress and problems.</p>	<p>We are expected to have constant spiritual sobriety. Christians should always stay vigilant and not to "turn off" their minds.</p> <p>“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Ps. 2:11).</p> <p>“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion...” (1Pet. 5:8).</p> <p>“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1Cor.14:33-34).</p>

Appendix 2. Calvinism and the Bible Teaching

A Biblical Look at the Five Points of Calvinism

By Igor Matsplyuk and Vitaliy Boyko

The heart of Calvinistic theology is the view that claims that God predestined or elected some to be saved and others to be lost. Those elected to salvation are decreed by God to receive salvation and cannot "resist God's grace." However, those that God elected to be lost are born condemned eternally to the Lake of Fire, and He will not allow them be saved. The five points of Calvinism spring from this false understanding of election and predestination. This teaching is referred to as "Five Points of Calvinism." The five points are represented by using the acrostic "TULIP."

	Main Points	Calvinism	We believe
T	Total Depravity	Man is spiritually dead, so that the appearance of faith in him is not possible without the full intervention of God (moral impotence).	<p>a) We are spiritually dead, but at the same time we do not equate spiritual death with physical death, when the dead cannot hear, understand, or respond.</p> <p>b) Being spiritually dead, a person is still able to accept or reject the call of God (Acts 17:27-32).</p> <p>c) Being spiritually dead, a person has real free will (Acts 13:46).</p>
U	Unconditional Election	<p>Our election is decided by God according to His intention and sovereign will. Election does not depend on our desire or zeal, but entirely on the sovereign purpose of God.</p> <p>All the elect will surely come to faith. God chooses only some people for salvation.</p>	God really chose us, but only in Christ, through sanctification in spirit, and faith in truth (2Thess. 2:13). That means, anyone who accepts Christ by faith becomes elected. But there is a condition: the manifestation of desire and faith (Eph. 1:13).
L	Limited Atonement	Christ came into the world, died and rose again only for the elect, and by no means for the whole world (John 6:39, John 10:15, Matt. 1:21).	<p>Christ died and was raised from the dead for the sins of the whole world (John 3:16, John 1:29).</p> <p>Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Rom. 10:13; Acts 17:30).</p>
I	Irresistible Grace	Regeneration precedes faith. That means, God gives the spiritually dead person a desire to seek Him as He revives him. Based on this desire, a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).	<p>Man, on the basis of his complete free will, accepts Christ, which we call the manifestation of faith and being born again. These are inseparable doctrines.</p> <p>Eph 1:13 "Heard" → "believed" → "were sealed"</p> <p>Calvinists: "Were sealed" → "heard" → "believed".</p>
P	Perseverance of the Saints	Saved once – saved forever. If you have grace, you will never lose it. If you lost the salvation, it means you never had it (John 10:27-29).	A truly regenerated person who neglects grace (Heb. 12:15) and grieves the Holy Spirit with intentional sin (Eph. 4:30), will completely fall away from grace (Heb. 10:26, 1Tim. 5:15).

Biblical Teaching about Salvation

“*Work out* your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12)

1. A Christian should take care to preserve his salvation throughout his life:

Acts 11:23; Rom. 11:20; 1Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; Eph. 6:13; Phil 4:1; 1Tim. 6:12; 2Tim. 2:22; Titus 1:9; Heb. 4:14; 6:9; 10:23; Rev 2:13, 25; 3:11.

2. If the relationship with God is broken, the Christian may fall away from grace:

Luke 8:13; Acts 1:25; Jam. 5:19-20; 2Pet. 2:15; 3:17; Rom. 11:22; 2Cor. 11:3; Gal. 5:4; 1Tim. 1:6, 19; 4:1; 6:10; 2Tim. 2:18; Heb. 2:1; 3:12; 6:6; Rev 2:4-5).

If a Christian sins willingly, then this indicates a loss of faith and repentance by this person.

3. Thus, God guarantees his protection and provision (John 6:39; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:38; 11:29; 1Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6), **if the Christian remains faithful to the once accepted conditions of salvation** (2Pet. 2:20-22; Rom. 11:22; Heb. 10:26-29). **This applies to external protection against Satan, the world and the flesh** (John 10:28-29; 1Pet. 1:5; Rom. 8:38; 1Cor. 1:8-9).

Source: Gennady Gololob, "A brief refutation of the five points of Calvinism"

Appendix 3. Seventh-day Adventists

A Biblical Look at the Core Doctrines

By Igor Matsiplyuk and Vitaliy Boyko

Seventh-day Adventist movement began in the early 19th century. The preacher William Miller (1782-1849) stated that he was able to calculate the date of the Coming of Christ - 1843, then 1844. Since the prediction did not come true, many followers became disappointed in faith and fell away. Miller repented and left the movement later; however, the “prophetess” Ellen White stepped in and became their leader. She proclaimed that she had received a vision of the Sanctuary in Heaven, where the Sabbath commandment shone especially brightly. Since then, the recorded prophecies of Ellen White have been quoted alongside the Bible by the Adventist. In addition to observing the Sabbath, they do not eat pork, do not believe in the immortality of the soul, and deny the eternal torment of hell.

This table compares the main doctrinal differences between Adventists and Baptists.

Doctrines	Seventh-day Adventists	We Believe
The Ten Commandments Law	The Ten Commandments are the foundation of the ethics of the New Testament and are placed at the center of ministry and discipleship (Mrk 10:17; Rom. 3:31).	Although the Law is holy and righteous, it’s not what our faith is being affirmed on (Rom. 4:14). The end of the law is Christ (Rom. 10:4; Gal. 5:23). The apostles did not teach to keep the Law (Acts 15:24). Grace acts independently of the works of the Law (Rom. 3:21), through the Holy Spirit, by Whom we are being affirmed and saved (Gal. 5:18; Rom. 9:1, 2:14,15).
Partial repeal of the ceremonial part of the Law	The ceremonial part of the law is repealed, but not all. The Law of the Ten Commandments and some food restrictions have remained unchanged. They continue to be the foundation of the faith of a true Christian (Matt. 5:17,18).	We do not share the view of the partial repeal of the Moses Law (Heb 7:11,12), because the commandments and decrees are equally connected (Mal. 4:4). All the various rules and rites were established before the coming of Grace (Heb.9:10, Gal. 3:24-25) There is no need to fulfill the remaining parts of the Law, for the blood of Christ cleanses us in its entirety (Heb. 9:14; 10:1).
Sabbath Day (Fourth commandment)	The seventh day, Saturday, is given to people as a reminder of the God-Creator and for worshipping Him. The fulfillment of the Sabbath command indicates the truth of the Church (Isa. 58:13-14).	The apostles and the first Church held the Supper and church services on Sunday, the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1Cor. 16:2). In doing so, they set an example for all following generations of Christians. Nowhere did the apostles teach converted Gentiles to keep the Law and the Sabbath (Acts 15:24).
Commandments of food	They do not eat unclean food (pork), because the difference had been set before the Law of Moses. Pork, in their opinion, symbolizes spiritual uncleanness (Gen. 7:8, Isa. 66:17).	The New Testament allows you to take any food: “What God has cleansed you must not call common (unclean)” (Acts 10:15). There is no difference between “clean” and “unclean” foods. On the contrary, “every creature

Doctrines	Seventh-day Adventists	We Believe
		<p>of God is good, and nothing is to be refused" (1Tim. 4:4,5; Col. 2:16; Rom. 14:6).</p> <p>The New Testament's only prohibition of food: abstain from blood and things strangled (Acts 15:29).</p>
<p>Human soul</p>	<p>After death, both physical and spiritual life of a person becomes ceased.</p> <p>The righteous will gain immortality only after resurrection. They will live forever through the fruits of the tree of life (Rev. 22:2).</p> <p>Sinners after resurrection will be convicted and, then, completely destroyed (there will be no eternal torment).</p>	<p>Death is not a cessation of existence, but a "departure", a transition from one place to another (2Pet. 1:13-15).</p> <p>With the death of a person, only physical life in time and space ceases (2Cor. 5:1).</p> <p>However, a person's soul or personality itself is not affected (Matt. 10:28; Luk. 23:43).</p> <p>After death, a person retains the memory of a past life and does not fall into oblivion and sleep until the second coming of the Lord (Rev. 6:9; Luk. 16:22-26; Mrk. 9:4).</p>
<p>The second coming of the Lord and the prophecies associated with it</p>	<p>They believe the second coming of Christ has already occurred. However, it was not on earth, but in heaven. Christ entered the Holy of Holies in the Heavenly Temple in 1844.</p> <p>Ellen White is God's special messenger. Her teachings and visions are the authoritative source of truth.</p>	<p>"But of that day and hour no one knows" (Matt. 24:36). Therefore, we firmly reject and do not agree with any prophecies and visions regarding the coming of the Lord as contrary to the Scriptures.</p> <p>The Bible is the only authoritative source of truth in all spiritual matters (2Pet. 1:19, John 5:39). Any additional "prophecies" and "prophets" are heresies (Rev. 22:18-19).</p>

New Testament about Eternal Torment in Hell:

1. "Will cast them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:41-42).
2. "Wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:50).
3. "Everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41).
4. "Everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46).
5. "The fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44).
6. "Their worm does not die" (Mark 9:46).
7. "I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:24).
8. "Blackness of darkness forever" (2Pet. 2:17).
9. "They have no rest day or night" (Rev. 14:10-11).
10. "Smoke rises up forever and ever" (Rev. 19:3).