

Article IV - Statement of Faith³³

We believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration³⁴ of the text of the original manuscripts of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, which alone constitute the inerrant Word of God.³⁵ We believe the Bible supports using a grammatical, historical method of interpretation in light of the progress of revelation.³⁶ Thus, we believe that the Bible is the clear, sufficient, and only infallible authority for all belief, life, and ministry.³⁷

³⁴ The view that the inspiration of Scripture extends to the actual words (verbal) and to every part of the entire (plenary) Bible. In past usage verbal plenary inspiration was equated with *inerrancy*. Enns, P. P. (1989). *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (p. 638). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

³⁵ The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Ps. 19:7-11).

"Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar" (Prov. 30:5-6).

"For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18).

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17).

"in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began" (Titus 1:2).

³⁶ "Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:1-2).

³⁷ "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29).

"these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual" (1 Co. 2:10-13).

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;

the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward (Ps. 19:7-11).

“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18).

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence” (2 Peter 1:3).

“knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21).

“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

We believe in the trinity of the Godhead:³⁸ one³⁹ immutable⁴⁰ and omnipotent God,⁴¹ omniscient in all things past, present, and future,⁴² who eternally exists⁴³ in three equal Persons: Father,⁴⁴

³⁸Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

"And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us" (Is. 6:8).

"A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'... Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel?" (Is. 40:3-5, 13).

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn" (Is.61:1-2).

"And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Co. 13:14).

³⁹ "You are my witnesses,' declares the Lord, 'and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me'" (Is. 43:10).

"I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other" (Is. 45:5-6).

"Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (Mark 12:29; cf. Deut. 6:4).

⁴⁰ "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end" (Ps. 102:25-27).

"For I the Lord do not change..." (Mal. 3:6).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb.13:8).

⁴¹ "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (Ps. 115:3).

"For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses. He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast; who in your midst, O Egypt, sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants; who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel" (Ps. 135:5-12).

"Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:12).

"For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).

⁴²"Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel" (Is. 40:13; cf. Rom. 11:34)?

"And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and he said to me, "Say, Thus says the Lord: So you think, O house of Israel. For I know the things that come into your mind" (Ezek. 11:5).

"And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13)

⁴³ "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God" (Ps. 90:2; cf. 93:2).

"Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" (Is. 40:28).

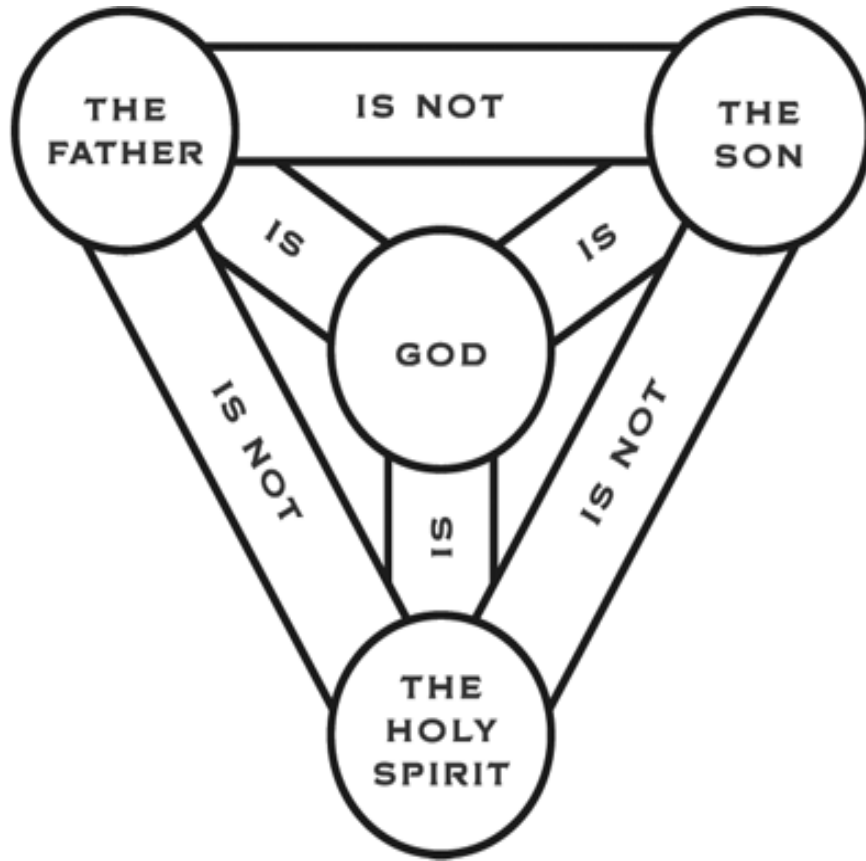
"Who has performed and done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he" (Is. 41:4; cf. Rev. 1:8).

"To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17).

⁴⁴ "and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:17).

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matt. 6:9).

Son,⁴⁵ and Holy Spirit.⁴⁶



⁴⁵ “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (John 20:28-29).

⁴⁶ “But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ‘While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God!’” (Acts 5:3-4).

We believe in the deity,⁴⁷ virgin birth,⁴⁸ perfect humanity,⁴⁹ sinless life,⁵⁰ substitutionary death,⁵¹ bodily resurrection,⁵² and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵³ He is the only means of

⁴⁷ “Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed’” (John 20:28-29).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:15-20).

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

⁴⁸ “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14)

“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:34-35).

⁴⁹ “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

⁵⁰ “And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God’” (Luke 1:35).

“But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong’” (Luke 23:40).

“Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him’.... When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, ‘Crucify him, crucify him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him’” (John 19:4, 6).

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

“but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Peter 1:20).

⁵¹ But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed” Is. 53:5).

“even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45).

“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Co. 5:21).

⁵² “...when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days...” (Is. 53:10).

“Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God’” (John 20:27-28).

“The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:30).

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me” (1 Co. 15:3-8).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

⁵³ “And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:50-51).

“And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11).

salvation from sin⁵⁴ and the sole mediator between God and man.⁵⁵

We believe in the personality and deity of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁶ through whose ministry believers today are regenerated,⁵⁷ baptized into Christ⁵⁸ and His body,⁵⁹ indwelt,⁶⁰ sealed,⁶¹ gifted⁶² and empowered for service.⁶³

⁵⁴ "...I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins" (John 8:24).

"...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:18; cf. 5:31; 13:38).

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7; cf. Col. 1:14).

⁵⁵ "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6).

"...And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

⁵⁶ "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2).

"...While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God" (Acts 5:4).

⁵⁷ "Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit'" (John 3:5-8).

"he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

⁵⁸ "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt. 3:11).

"And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, 'you heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now'" (Acts 1:4-5).

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Co. 12:13).

⁵⁹ "For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior" (Eph. 5:23).

"And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18).

⁶⁰ "even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:17).

"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own" (1 Co. 6:19).

⁶¹ "and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Co. 1:22).

"In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13).

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

⁶² "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Co. 12:7).

⁶³ "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7; 14:16, 26; 15:26).

"...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We believe that gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to build up the body of Christ.⁶⁴ We believe that the sign gifts of the Spirit (tongues, interpretation of tongues, healing, miracles, revelatory words of knowledge, revelatory prophecy and the gift of apostleship⁶⁵) were given only for the apostolic era as signs,⁶⁶ providing revelation and authenticating the ministry of the apostles.⁶⁷

We believe that God created the universe (including mankind) in six literal, consecutive 24-hour days apart from the process of evolution⁶⁸ and that Adam and Eve were historical persons.⁶⁹ We believe that mankind was created in the image of God and retains that image

⁶⁴ “And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

⁶⁵ Prophecy is no longer revelatory. The gift has ceased in the revelatory sense. The gift continues in the sense of speaking forth God’s truth for the purpose of building and encouraging people into Christlikeness. “On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” (1 Co. 14:3). In the non-revelatory sense of speaking God’s truth, the gift continues in the present time.

⁶⁶ “Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers” (1 Co. 14:22).

⁶⁷ “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Co. 12:12).

“Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Co. 15:8-9).

Note:

While some define the gift of apostleship in the present day as the gift of having the ability to pioneer new ministries, or in the sense of a messenger, that is not what we mean here. Here we mean the original men chosen by Jesus (John 15:16; Acts 1:21-26), confirmed by miracles (2 Co. 12:12; Heb. 2:3-4), and who were witnesses to his resurrection (1 Co. 9:1). They are called “apostles of Christ” and include the Twelve and Paul (Matthias eventually replacing Judas). They were unique in authority and the office ceased with the death of the Apostle John. They were foundational to the church (Eph. 2:20). Once the foundation was complete, the office ceased in the sense in which they possessed it.

“... as for tongues, they will cease...” (1 Co. 13:8).

“Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers” (1 Co. 14:22).

“Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20).

“(…No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments)” (1 Tim. 5:23).

“how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will” (Heb. 2:3-4).

Dr. Steve Lawson states, “There is no mention of these miraculous sign gifts in the New Testament past 56 or 57 A.D., when 1 Corinthians was written. Once you get past that date to the later general epistles and even Paul’s later epistles, there is no mention of these gifts, which indicates that they were beginning to pass” (<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/how-would-you-persuade-someone-that-the-sign-gifts-have-ceased>).

⁶⁸ “And there was evening and there was morning, the first day” (Gen. 1:5; cf. 1:8, 13, 19, 23, 31)

“Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:9-11).

⁶⁹ “then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature” (Gen. 2:7).

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Co. 15:22).

after the fall.⁷⁰ All humans, from the time of their conception, including those who are physically or mentally challenged, have value as image-bearers.⁷¹ Therefore, we affirm the dignity of human life and oppose the use of abortion or euthanasia to end life.⁷² We affirm that all people are worth pursuing for the cause of Christ.⁷³ Based on the model of God's creative design, we believe that marriage joins one man and one woman⁷⁴ and is the only relationship in which sexual intimacy should be expressed.⁷⁵

We believe that all human beings are totally depraved and guilty before God as a result of the fall of Adam.⁷⁶ We commit acts of sin because we are sinners by nature.^{77 78}

"For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13).

⁷⁰ "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:26-27).

⁷¹ "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" (Gen. 9:6).

⁷² "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13).

"There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood" (Prov. 6:16-17).

⁷³ "if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" (Col. 1:23).

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

⁷⁴ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24; cf. Matt. 19:4-6).

⁷⁵ "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Co. 7:2-5).

⁷⁶ "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

"And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil" (John 3:19).

"For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature" (Romans 1:26; i.e. The fall resulted in inability to know that something is against nature).

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

"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:7-8).

"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6; i.e. The fall resulted in the bondage of the will.).

"They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart" (Eph. 4:18; i.e. The fall resulted in a darkened intellect.)

⁷⁷ "among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:3).

⁷⁸ Mankind's only hope is to be born again.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

"...he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3)

"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

We believe that the Triune God saves sinners by grace alone⁷⁹ through faith in Christ alone.⁸⁰ God secures their eternal salvation,⁸¹ having sovereignly elected⁸² them to be willing

⁷⁹ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—” (Eph. 2:4-5).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

“But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man’s trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many” (Rom. 5:15).

“so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21).

⁸⁰ “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

“And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed” (Acts 18:27)

“the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom. 3:22).

“That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16)

“Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:2)

⁸¹ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46)

⁸² “And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48).

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29-30).

“So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace” (Rom. 11:5-6).

“even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:4-6).

“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction” (1 Thess. 1:4-5).

“To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood” (1 Peter 1:1-2).

“and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain” (Rev. 13:8; cf. 17:8).

recipients⁸³ of His grace in Christ,⁸⁴ whose blood was shed for the remission of sins.⁸⁵ We believe that all who receive through faith by grace the Lord Jesus Christ have been regenerated⁸⁶ by the Holy Spirit, thereby becoming children of God, a relationship in which they are preserved for eternity.⁸⁷

⁸³ “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

“And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:38-41).

“because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:9-13).

⁸⁴ “And because of him you are in Christ Jesus...” (1 Co. 1:30).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

⁸⁵ “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38; cf. 10:43).

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

⁸⁶ “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God...” (1 John 5:1a).

⁸⁷ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, ‘For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.’ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:31-39).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (John 10:27-29).

“to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:4-5).

We believe that salvation, while being given apart from good works, is demonstrated through good works that are part of a holy life.⁸⁸ We believe that every Christian has the joyous responsibility of evangelizing sinners in obedience to Christ's Great Commission.⁸⁹

We believe that the universal Church is the body of Christ,⁹⁰ comprised of all true believers from Pentecost⁹¹ until the Rapture.⁹² Jesus Christ is the sole head of the Church.⁹³

⁸⁸ "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock" (Matt. 7:24-25).

"The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil" (Matt. 12:35). "through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations" (Rom. 1:5).

"but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17).

"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall" (2 Peter 1:5-10).

⁸⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

⁹⁰ "And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18; cf. 2:19).

⁹¹ When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

"For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Co. 12:13).

⁹² "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Co. 15:51-52).

"For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:15-17).

⁹³ "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18).

"And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent" (Col. 1:18; cf. 2:19).

We believe that the local church is an assembly of immersed believers,⁹⁴ led by overseers/elders/pastors⁹⁵ with the support and involvement of the congregation⁹⁶ and served

⁹⁴ “...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). “And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:38).

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?’ And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

⁹⁵ “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

“The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

Note:

We define “husband of one wife” to mean “one woman man” as demonstrated by whole-hearted devotion to the elder or deacon’s one wife.

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17).

“This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God’s steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:5-9).

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

“I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

⁹⁶ “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church**. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17). - emphasis added

“And the twelve summoned the **full number of the disciples** and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty” (Acts 6:2-3). - emphasis added

“Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, **with the whole church**, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, **to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia**, greetings’” (Acts 15:22-23). - emphasis added

“**When you are assembled** in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (1 Co. 5:4-5). - emphasis added

“For such a one, this punishment **by the majority** is enough” (2 Co. 2:6). - emphasis added

by deacons and deaconesses⁹⁷ with the support and involvement of the congregation.⁹⁸ This is all done using the Scriptures so that ultimately there is one Shepherd (God/Christ)⁹⁹ over His church.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ “Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:8-13).

⁹⁸ “Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving” (Rom. 12:6-7a).

⁹⁹ “The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh” (Eccl. 12:11-12).

¹⁰⁰ The concept of deacons ruling over spiritual matters in the church is based on a mistranslation and misinterpretation of Acts 6:3. “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” The business that was being taken care of was the care of widows which is consistent with the future office of deacon. Dr. Howard Bixby of Baptist Bible Seminary states,

“As American churches adapted to the governmental and corporate culture of the USA, a legislative or board system developed. In Baptist and Bible church groups especially, strong lay boards and committees were elected to “run the church.” A misunderstanding (and misexegesis) of Acts 6:3 gave apparent support to the trend. “... Look for seven men... whom we may appoint over this business.” The term *business* in the Greek text actually refers to the ministry of caring for widows. As the term “business” became the focus, deacon boards were elected and organized to “rule” the church, hire pastors/church staff, and hold pastors accountable for doing the work of the church. In recent years the “ruling elder” position and board have been added on top of trustee and deacon board structures” (Bixby, Howard. *A Biblical Perspective Regarding Elder Rule*: Faculty Forum. Baptist Bible Seminary. 2006.).

Similarly, A.D. Liftin notes in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, “The Bible never speaks of a corresponding group identity for deacons. The notion of deacons functioning as a “board” is never mentioned in the Bible.”

In reality, the Acts 6 account was likely much too early for the development of an organized church governmental structure. The church was in its infancy and still located in Jerusalem before the martyrdom of Stephen. The men selected were selected to meet a specific and urgent need. The two we know much about were almost apostle-like in their function and even could do signs and wonders (Acts 6:8; 8:13). They were likely a prototype for what would eventually become the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:8-13), but, in reality, were just meeting the current need and then used for other tasks according to the will of God. John MacArthur states,

“There is no strong reason from those epistles to believe that the office of deacon was instituted in Acts 6. Elders are mentioned later in the book of Acts and in several of the epistles to the churches, but no deacons. If Acts 6 is indeed the institution of the deacon’s office, it seems strange that deacons are never referred to again in Acts.... It is more likely that the seven were a group of highly qualified spiritual leaders, teachers, and honorable men chosen to administrate the situation. By doing what they did, they freed the apostles to devote themselves to the priorities of prayer and ministry of the Word” (<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/451020/answering-the-key-questions-about-deacons>).

Three terms are used that are associated with the word “deacon.”

- a. Diakonia (used 34 times) which means “service.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. service (Rom. 12:7; 1 Tim. 1:12)
 - b. serve (Rom. 12:7; 2 Co. 11:8)
 - c. relief (Acts 11:29; 2 Co. 8:4)
 - d. distribution (Acts 6:1)
 - e. ministry (2 Tim. 4:5, 11)
- b. Diakonos (used 30 times) which means “servant.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12, et al.)
 - b. servant/servants (Mark 9:36; Rom. 16:1, et al.)
 - c. minister/ministers (1 Co. 3:6; Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:7, et al.)
- c. Diakoneo (used 37 times) which means “to serve.”
 1. Translated variously as...
 - a. minister/ministering/ministered (2 Co. 8:19; Matt. 4:11; 25:44; et al.)
 - b. provided (Luke 8:3)
 - c. serve, served, serves (1 Tim. 3:10; 1 Peter. 4:10-11; et al.)
 - d. helpers (Acts 19:22)

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- e. bringing (Rom. 15:25)
 - f. delivered (2 Co. 3:3)
 - g. administered (2 Co. 8:20)
 - h. rendered (2 Tim. 1:18)
 - i. as you...do (Heb. 6:10)

Typically the words are translated with the idea of “serving” or “service” or “servant” with a few exceptions in some versions. They can also be translated as “minister” along with words associated with “minister” (e.g. ministry). The idea is that the word denotes “service” of varying kinds and types (i.e. serving food - Luke 4:39; John 2:5, 9; general service - John 12:26; spiritual service - Acts 20:19). Because of how the words for “service,” “serving” and “to serve” are used regarding so many different people in the early church, we learn that, in some sense, everyone is to be a deacon or “serve.” Every member should be a minister in the most basic sense of the word. Gene A. Getz states,

“...note that biblical writers used the basic terms *diakoneo* (to serve), *diakonia* (service), and *diakonos* (servant) to describe the *ministry all believers* should have within the body of Christ. For example, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he stated that it’s God’s plan that all believers are to be equipped “for works of service [*diakonia*]” (Ephesians 4:12). Though there are those who are to serve the body of Christ in a special way, every believer is to be a “deacon” or “servant” (*diakonos*) who participates in building up the body of Christ (v. 16).

Getz, Gene. A. *Elders and Leaders: God’s Plan for Leading the Church*. 2003. Moody Publishers. Chicago, Ill. p. 102.]

Lastly, Curtis C. Thomas states,

I was raised in a denominational church in which there was a single pastor and a board of deacons. The deacons were looked upon by the congregation as the leaders of the body. They hired and fired the pastor. They made the decisions for the body. They drew up the budgets, spent the church’s money, determined when congregational meetings were held, set the agendas, and were viewed as those who held the church together. The pastor was considered little more than a hired hand who was somewhat dispensable and often replaced.

But obviously that is not the proper role of deacons according to the New Testament. Elders are to be the spiritual leaders. Deacons are to serve the body. That is what the word *deacon* means—“servant.” This does not mean deacons are to have no spiritual qualities. In fact, in 1 Timothy 3 the qualifications for the offices of deacon and elder are the same except for one. The elder must be apt to teach; that is not required of the deacon. Thomas, C. C. (2001).

Practical wisdom for pastors: words of encouragement and counsel for a lifetime of ministry (pp. 106–107). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

For further information please see Pastor Ben’s sermons on deacons and elders in the following locations.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZrTD0_77sY&t=24s

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5cmt-j1LFo&t=17s>

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “Requirements of a Pastor: Part 3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvscUFi7Ik0&t=105s>

1 Timothy 3:8-13 “Deacons: Servants of Christ’s Church: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nudl0W_joh8&t=134s

1 Timothy 5:17-18 “Protecting Pastors and Ministering to Ministers.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6QTgREGIQM>

This is all to say that the God-ordained spiritual leaders of the church are the elders/overseers/pastors whose responsibility is to shepherd the flock of God exercising oversight (1 Peter 5:1-4) while using God’s Word to do it (Heb. 13:7; 2 Tim. 3:16) so that ultimately it is Christ as the One Shepherd ruling over His church through His Word (Matt. 16:18; Eccl. 12:11-12). There is no innate authority in any human person or group. As always, Scripture is the authority because God rules through His Word. God-ordained shepherds will love, care, and do what is best for the “flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2) because they love them and will have to give an account (Heb. 13:17). This involves the people in the church because their gifts and abilities are needed for the church’s ultimate health and spiritual growth (1 Co. 12:7; Eph. 4:12-16). The concern that often exists regarding sinful, domineering elders (1 Peter 5:3) is dealt with in 1 Tim. 5:19-21 and requires the biblical model of a plurality of elders to keep one another in check for the purpose of God’s glory and loving congregational care. Properly defined, a pastor/elder/overseer is a *mature* Christian man appointed to *lead* in the affairs of Christ’s church and *shepherd* the people of God toward Christlikeness by teaching the Bible in word and deed while knowing he is ultimately accountable to God for how he cares for the people of God. Alexander Strauch states,

“New Testament, Christianized elders are not mere representatives of the people; they are, as the passages above show, spiritually qualified shepherds who protect, lead, and teach the people. They provide spiritual care for the entire flock. They are the official shepherds of the church.” [Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Church Eldership*. Lewis and Roth Publishers. 1995. p. 108.]

Similarly, John MacArthur states,

“The consistent pattern throughout the New Testament is that each local body of believers is shepherded by a plurality of God-ordained elders. Simply stated, this is the only pattern for church leadership given in the New Testament. Nowhere in Scripture does one find a local assembly ruled by majority opinion or by a single pastor.”

This is a God-ordained position (Acts 20:28) to which the leaders will be held accountable (Heb. 13:17). For this reason, the flock of God is to follow their example and support them as they use the Bible to shepherd, lead, and direct the church (1 Thess. 5:12; Hebrews 13:7, 17). The following passages are clear:

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, **to care for the church of God**, which he obtained with his own blood (Acts 20:28).” - emphasis mine

“We ask you, brothers, **to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord** and admonish you, and to **esteem them very highly in love because of their work**. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thess. 5:12).” - emphasis mine

We believe that the local church is responsible to fulfill the Great Commission.¹⁰¹ It must observe the ordinances of believers' baptism¹⁰² and the Lord's Supper;¹⁰³ foster true fellowship,¹⁰⁴ prayer,¹⁰⁵ and worship;¹⁰⁶ edify and equip believers;¹⁰⁷ and evangelize the world.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

¹⁰² "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19-20).

"And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38).

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

¹⁰³ "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Co. 10:16-17). "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world" (1 Co. 11:23-32).

¹⁰⁴ "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47; see also Acts 4:32-37; Compare with poor fellowship in 1 Co. 11:17-22).

¹⁰⁵ "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:7-15).

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42; cf. Acts 4:23-31).

"praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:18).

"pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

"But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20).

¹⁰⁶ "...But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

¹⁰⁷ "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12).

¹⁰⁸ "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We believe that the only biblical mode of baptism is immersion;¹⁰⁹ that baptism is for believers only;¹¹⁰ that it is a testimony of their identity by faith with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection;¹¹¹ and that it is a prerequisite for local church membership.¹¹²

We believe that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is solely a memorial of Christ's death, and that the body and blood of Christ are not present in the bread and cup.¹¹³

We believe in the priesthood of all believers¹¹⁴ and that we have direct access to God apart from any mediator except Christ.¹¹⁵ We respect the God-given capacity of individual soul liberty through which each person will give account for living by the dictates of his own conscience.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ Only immersion properly represents death and burial as one testifies to his union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6). Every instance of NT water baptism allows for immersion in water and "to immerse" is the primary meaning of the Greek verbs *baptizo* and *bapto*.

¹¹⁰ "...Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20). "And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:38). "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (Acts 8:35-38; cf. Acts 10:43-48; 16:14-15, 30-34; 18:8; 19:4-5).

¹¹¹ "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin" (Rom. 6:3-6). "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32-33).

¹¹² Church membership is implicitly taught in Scripture as necessitated by the commands for unity amongst local believers (Phil. 2:1-2; Eph. 4:1-6), the need for purity regarding who was "in" and who was "out" (Matt. 18:15-17; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Co. 5:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:20), and the need for polity and identifying who one's leaders are (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4). That the early church kept track of its converts is another clear indication of a record of church membership (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Specific local assemblies are identified as "the church in Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1), "the church at Antioch" (Acts 13:1), "the church at Cenchreae" (Rom. 16:1) etc. and letters of recommendation were sent from one assembly to another (Acts 18:27 - Apollos; Rom. 16:1-2 - Phoebe; 1 Co. 16:10-11 - Timothy; etc.).

¹¹³ "Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'" (Matt. 26:26-28; cf. Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19, 20).

Note: Jesus was still alive and present when He established the ordinance clearly denoting that the imagery was representative. Later, Luke and Paul recorded that it was to be a "remembrance" (Luke 22:19; 1 Co. 11:24-25).

¹¹⁴ "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10; cf. 20:6).

¹¹⁵ "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

"Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

"But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises" (Heb. 8:6; cf. 9:15; 12:24).

¹¹⁶ "I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 9:1). "Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience" (Rom. 13:5).

We believe in the separation of church¹¹⁷ and state,¹¹⁸ and that believers must fulfill biblical responsibilities to each.¹¹⁹

We believe that the Bible directs us to a life of holiness,¹²⁰ requiring separation from worldliness¹²¹ and ecclesiastical apostasy unto God.¹²²

“For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you” (2 Co. 1:12).

¹¹⁷ “Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands” (Eph. 5:24).

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

¹¹⁸ “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God’s wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed” (Rom. 13:1-7).

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good” (1 Peter 2:13-14).

¹¹⁹ When the state oversteps its boundaries and tries to dictate church affairs regarding faith and practice, we “must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Christ is head of the church, not Caesar. It must also be granted that ultimately Christ is the head of government and rulers reign/serve by His sovereign ordination (Rom. 13:1). Evil rulers will ultimately serve his purposes and be held responsible for their evil (see Isaiah 10:5-19). For further study on this topic see “Christ, not Caesar, Is Head of the Church” by John MacArthur at <https://www.gty.org/library/blog/B200723>.

¹²⁰ “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness” (1 Thess. 4:3-7).

“but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

¹²¹ “I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth” (John 17:14-17)

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1-2)

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

¹²² “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:1-5). “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us” (1 John 2:19).

We believe in the personal existence of angels as created spirit beings. God's holy angels are ministering spirits.¹²³ Satan and other fallen angels can influence believers,¹²⁴ but believers cannot be demon possessed.¹²⁵

We believe in the pre-tribulational rapture¹²⁶ and bodily resurrection of the Church at Christ's imminent coming.¹²⁷ Believers will give account for their works at the Judgment Seat of Christ,¹²⁸ which will follow the Rapture.

¹²³ "And to which of the angels has he ever said, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet' Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:13-14)?

"Bless the Lord, O you his angels, you mighty ones who do his word, obeying the voice of his word" (Ps. 103:20).

"he makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4).

¹²⁴ "so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs" (2 Co. 2:11).

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

"Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1).

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

"And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you'" (Jude 6-9).

¹²⁵ "Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

¹²⁶ "Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10).

Note: The word "church" is missing from Revelation chapter 4 to Revelation 22:16 where the word "churches" is mentioned. This is likely due to the absence of the church through the Tribulation Period (Rev. 6-19). Also, the NT epistles are free from warnings or instructions to the church regarding the future Tribulation Period. One would have to assume that God would have warned believers of the coming time of suffering if they were going to potentially have to endure it. These warnings are absent.

¹²⁷ "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

"Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Co. 15:51-53).

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

¹²⁸ "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire" (1 Co. 3:10-16).

"Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart" (1 Co. 4:5).

We believe in the distinction between the nation of Israel and the Church, the Spirit-baptized Body of Christ.¹²⁹ The Church is not the collection of all believers of all times.

We believe that God will fulfill the biblical covenants made with the nation of Israel.¹³⁰ Though they are now dispersed among the nations, they will be re-gathered in the land of Israel and saved as a nation at the premillennial coming of Christ to the earth.¹³¹ At that time, Christ will begin his Davidic rule over the world for 1,000 years¹³² and continue to reign in the eternal state.¹³³

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Co. 5:10)

“Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God” (Rom. 14:10).

¹²⁹ “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Co. 12:13; cf. Acts 2:1-4).

¹³⁰ “As regards the gospel, they are enemies for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy. For God has consigned all to disobedience, that he may have mercy on all” (Rom. 11:28-32).

Note: The promises given to the patriarchs were unilateral and unconditional as seen by the following “I will” [s] indicating that God would literally fulfill them (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:13-14; Jer. 31:31-37).

“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Gen. 12:1-3).

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam. 7:12-13).

“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” Thus says the Lord, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the Lord of hosts is his name: “If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the Lord, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever.” Thus says the Lord: “If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the Lord” (Jer. 31:31-37).

¹³¹ “And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob’; ‘and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins’” (Rom. 11:26-27).

¹³² “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years” (Rev. 20:6).

Note: New Testament authors were looking for a literal earthly reign of Messiah (Luke 1:67 - Zechariah; Acts 1:1-7 - Disciples at the Ascension; Acts 3:13-26 - Peter; Acts 15:13-18 - James; Hebrews 6:13-17 - writer of Hebrews; Rom. 3:1-4 - Paul; Luke 19:11 - Disciples).

¹³³ “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more” (Rev. 21:1; cf. 21:2 - 22:21).

We believe in the bodily resurrection and judgment of unbelievers after the millennial reign of Christ.¹³⁴ We believe in the eternal existence and punishment of all unbelievers in the lake of fire¹³⁵ and the eternal existence and blessedness of all believers in the new heavens and earth.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:11-14).

¹³⁵ “And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire” (Rev. 21:15; cf. 21:8).

¹³⁶ “...And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46; Dan. 12:2; 2 Thess. 1:9). “...and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29).