

What We Teach

The Bible

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

Throughout history, God inspired His prophets to write His message for humanity; in some cases, God dictated what was written, in other cases, He guided the authors and editors so that the end result was exactly what God wanted.

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

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

God gave 39 books to the Jewish people and an additional 27 books to the Christian church.

The 39 books of the Hebrew Scriptures include:

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

The 27 books of the New Testament include:

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

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

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

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

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

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God

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

The Bible repeatedly affirms that there always has been, and always will be, one and only one true God, and that is Yahweh, the God of Israel.

Deut 4:35 (ESV) To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD [Yahweh] is God; there is no other besides him.

Throughout the Old Testament, the term LORD, in capital letters, always refers to Yahweh, the sacred personal name of the God of Israel.

1Cor 8:4 (ESV) Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”

The Bible also teaches that God is eternal; He always has and always will exist, and by His divine power and superior intellect, He designed and created the earth.

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

God is present everywhere throughout the universe; He sees everything and knows everything, past, present and future.

Jer 23:24 (ESV) Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the LORD.

The Bible also affirms that God never sins or does anything evil; He is morally perfect. He always keeps His promises.

Deut 32:4 (NIV) He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.

The Bible also affirms the deity and essential unity of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. At the Last Supper, Jesus began to reveal this deep truth to His disciples.

John 14:26 (ESV) But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

1Pet 1:2 (NLT) God the Father knew you and chose you long ago, and his Spirit has made you holy. As a result, you have obeyed him and have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ...

Thus, the one true God is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, holy, just, and good.

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Jesus

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

The apostle Paul confirmed the full divinity and humanity of Jesus.

Col 2:9 (NIV) For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form

Prior to His human birth, He manifested Himself to humanity as the God of the Old Testament; He created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, spoke to Abraham in the Promised Land, and gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Then, about 2000 years ago, God the Father sent Him to be the Savior of the world. He did not cease to be God; He incorporated a fully human nature into His divine nature. Through the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, He took on flesh and became a man.

Matt 1:18 (ESV) Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

Jesus lived a normal human life and experienced all the trials and temptations that we do.

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

After He completed His work of preaching the gospel to Israel and training His disciples to carry His message to the world, He suffered and died for the sins of His people. He was buried but rose bodily from the grave on the third day.

1 Cor 15:3 (ESV) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures

He appeared to His disciples as a physical human being, not as a ghost or apparition.

Luke 24:39 (ESV) See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.

Later, He ascended to heaven, where He guides and directs the work of His people, the church.

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

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

The Holy Spirit

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

The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is a divine person within the Godhead.

Act 5:3 (ESV) 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? 4 While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God.”

In this passage, Peter equates lying to the Holy Spirit with lying to God, and it is self-evident that you can only lie to a person, not an inanimate force or object.

However, the Bible also describes the Holy Spirit as proceeding from God the Father and God the Son, so He is the Spirit of both. Paul referred the Holy Spirit in the following way.

Rom 8:9 (ESV) You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

This passage shows that the Holy Spirit is responsible for spiritual regeneration. Many people today think that they are saved, but they have had a false conversion experience and are still spiritually dead because the Holy Spirit doesn't dwell in them.

Tit 3:5 (ESV) 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,

The Holy Spirit transforms and sanctifies the life of a true Christian by changing the heart and mind of that person on the inside. Paul described it this way.

Gal 5:22 (ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The Holy Spirit is also responsible for revealing truth to God's people and for the inspiration of Scripture. Jesus described the work of the Spirit to His disciples.

John 16:13 (ESV) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

So, the Holy Spirit is also responsible for prophecy and the inspiration of Scripture.

2Pet 1:21 (ESV) 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.

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However, prophecy is just one of many different gifts that the Spirit bestows on the Church.

1Cor 12:7 (ESV) To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1Cor 12:11 (ESV) All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

Everyone in the church receives at least one spiritual gift, but the Spirit bestows these gifts for the mutual edification of each Christian within the body of Christ.

Lastly, the Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the resurrection and glorification of the saints.

Rom 8:11 (ESV) If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

Thus, it is through the miracle working power of the Holy Spirit that Christians will be resurrected with immortal, spiritual bodies when Christ returns.

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

Humanity

We teach that God created humanity in His image, but because of Adam's sin, humanity became cut off from God, spiritually corrupt, and doomed to death. Apart from Jesus Christ, every human being shares this fate and stands in need of God's grace and salvation.

Moses explained how the human race came into existence at Creation.

Gen 1:26 (ESV) 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."

Humanity isn't the product of billions of years of evolution; we were designed and created for a purpose. God made us in His image; unlike the animals, humans are self-aware. We have superior intellect and free will, the ability to form complex relationships and a sense of morality.

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and offered them the gift of eternal life if they chose to obey Him, but they rejected God's offer and chose the path of rebellion and sin.

As a result, humanity experienced three distinct curses. First, sin separated humanity from their Creator. God is holy and can't abide the presence of sin.

Isa 59:1 (ESV) Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

So, God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden and cut them off from His presence.

The second curse is that human nature became thoroughly corrupt. Once the human race was cut off from God's presence, people no longer had access to the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit to change their hearts and minds to become holy and pure. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer 17:9 ESV).

The third curse is death and eternal damnation in the lake of fire.

Rom 5:12 (ESV) 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.

Except for Jesus Christ, who lived a completely sinless life, every human being since Adam and Eve has suffered these three curses: alienation from God, a corrupt human nature, and death.

But, Paul also described how we can escape these plagues: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23 NIV).

Although we don't deserve any mercy, God's grace and salvation are freely available to everyone who is willing to repent and come to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Satan

We teach that Satan is a fallen angel, who rebelled against God and was cast out of heaven. Together with the demons, he seeks to deceive, tempt, accuse, and destroy all of humanity. They will be cast into the lake of fire and suffer eternal damnation.

The Bible reveals that God created the angels before He made the physical universe, however, before God created Adam and Eve, a powerful cherub led a great angelic rebellion against his Creator.

2Pet 2:4 (NASB) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment

The Bible refers to the leader of this rebellion as the devil and Satan; the term “Satan” is a transliteration of the Hebrew “Ha Satan,” which means The Adversary. The Book of Revelation indicates that a third of the angels followed Satan and became the demons. From the time of Adam and Eve until the present, Satan and his demons have been deceiving, tempting and manipulating humans.

Eph 2:1 (NLT) Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

Peter warned Christians not to underestimate the power of Satan.

1Pet 5:8 (ESV) Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

The Book of Revelation indicates that, at the time of Christ’s return, Satan and his angels will make one more attempt to invade heaven but he will fail.

Rev 12:9 (ESV) And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

The Bible is clear that Satan has deceived the whole world; he controls the nations, the political parties, the religions, the commerce, the financial markets, the armies and wars on earth. In the end, however, he and his followers will be cast into a lake of fire.

Jesus described the final damnation of sinners who rejected God’s offer of salvation.

Matt 25:41 (ESV) Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’

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Human beings who are cast into the lake of fire will be destroyed and cease to exist forever; but fire can't harm spiritual beings, so Satan and his demons will suffer mental anguish for eternity.

Rev 20:10 (NIV) And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

When God creates the new heavens and the new earth, after the Millennium, He will remove everything evil and impure; there is no mention of Satan and his demons ever again. Evidently, God will cast them into utter darkness in a different dimension where they will never again come into contact with God's people.

The Church

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

The English term “church” comes from the Greek word *ekklésia*, which means a congregation or assembly. In the New Testament, it refers to the collective body of believers in Jesus Christ who have received God’s Holy Spirit.

1Cor 12:13 (NASB) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

After His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus gathered His disciples just before He ascended to heaven and gave them the following mission.

Matt 28:19 (ESV) 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, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

So, Jesus explicitly commanded the church to proclaim the Gospel throughout the whole world, to baptize new converts and teach them to obey the Word of God. He also gave His disciples a general command about how they should live in this world.

Matt 5:16 (ESV) In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

So, in addition to preaching the Gospel and nurturing new disciples, Christians should strive to bring glory and honor to God in everything that they say and do in this world.

Jesus also established an organizational structure and system of governance for the church; the apostles routinely selected certain men in each congregation as elders and deacons to carry out the functions of the church.

Act 20:28 (ESV) 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.

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

Tit 2:15 (ESV) Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

These and other related Scriptures clearly show that the elders of the church are responsible for doctrine, administration, and discipline within the body of Christ.

Salvation

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

Paul summarized the relationship between grace and works in the following way.

Eph 2:8 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Grace is unmerited favor or kindness; it is an act of love and mercy that isn't deserved and can't be earned. Every human deserves the death penalty in the lake of fire, and there is nothing that people can do to escape this fate; no amount of good works or penance or future obedience can save us from this punishment, but Jesus Christ freely gave His life so He could pay the penalty for our sins.

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

Faith is something that is invisible inside the mind and heart. Anyone can claim to have saving faith, so God expects people to demonstrate their faith by what they do. Repentance, obedience and good works are the concrete and tangible evidence of inner faith.

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

Genuine faith always brings forth the good fruit of obedience and good works while unbelief always brings forth the bad fruit of sin and selfishness. So, God judges all people based on how they behave, and He expects His people to live a consistently holy life.

Heb 10:26 (ESV) For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

Jesus came to save us from our sins, not in our sins. God expects His people to grow in faith and overcome sinful habits and tendencies as long as they live. So, faith and repentance are both necessary for salvation, however, obedience and good works are the evidence of genuine faith, not the means of forgiveness and justification.

As part of the New Covenant, God promises to deliver His faithful people from death in the lake of fire and give them the gift of eternal life in sinless perfection, so we can dwell with Him in holiness and righteousness for all eternity.

Baptism

We teach that baptism is a mandatory covenant ratification ceremony. An adult convert must express repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. A minister must baptize by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. This is followed by the laying on of hands with prayer to receive the Holy Spirit.

After His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus Christ ordered the church to make disciples in every nation and baptize them. So, baptism is a command, not a suggestion. There is no such thing as an unbaptized Christian anywhere in the Bible.

Baptism is a covenant ratification ceremony; it marks the end of an old, sinful way of life and the start of a new, righteous life washed clean by the blood of Jesus Christ and led by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. A sinner renounces his citizenship in the kingdom of Satan and becomes a naturalized citizen of the kingdom of God.

After the ascension of Jesus Christ, God poured out the Holy Spirit on the early church during the feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. Peter preached the gospel to a large crowd of people; they were convicted by his words and asked Peter what they should do.

Acts 2:38 (ESV) 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.”

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

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

The Jewish people at the time of Jesus were very familiar with the concept of baptism; they regularly practiced ritual immersion in pools of fresh water to be cleansed of ritual impurity as required by the Torah. In fact, there are a large number of these ritual pools near the temple mount where Peter preached that famous sermon on the feast of Pentecost. This is illustrated in Acts 8, where Philip preached the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch.

Acts 8:36 (ESV) 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?” 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

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

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immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins; this is followed by the laying on of hands with prayer for the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:14 (NIV) When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. 15 When they arrived, they prayed for the new believers there that they might receive the Holy Spirit, 16 because the Holy Spirit had not yet come on any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 17 Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 19, Paul came across a group of men in Ephesus who were disciples of John the Baptist who had undergone a baptism of repentance, so Paul told them about Jesus Christ.

Acts 19:5 (ESV) On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying.

In Acts 10, God sent Peter to preach the gospel to a group of Gentiles at Caesarea.

Acts 10:44 (ESV) While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word... 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

In this case, God decided to give the Holy Spirit prior to baptism, but Peter still commanded them to be baptized.

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

The Mosaic Law

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

Six hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ, God told the Israelites that He intended to make a New Covenant with them.

Jer 31:33 (ESV) 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 [my Torah] within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

The context of this passage is clear; every Israelite who heard these words understood that God was going to write the Law of Moses, the Torah, on their hearts just as He had written them on tablets of stone at Mount Horeb.

God never intended to abolish the Law of Moses; instead, He promised to transform the hearts of His people so they would be able to keep His laws. This is exactly what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, when He explained the significance of the New Covenant to His disciples.

Matt 5:17 (ESV) Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 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. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus didn't come to save people in their sins; He came to save them from their sins. He came to change the hearts and minds of His people so they can and will obey God perfectly by the power of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies believers.

True Christians love God's laws and keep His commandments. This is the same message that Paul taught Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Rom 3:31 (NIV) Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Again, the context of this passage is clear; Paul is speaking of the Law of Moses. Far from abolishing the Mosaic law, Paul affirmed the authority and importance of the Torah for all Christians.

The Law of Moses defines good and evil, right and wrong, for all people for all time; it is the constitution of the nation of Israel and the Kingdom of God. It is the basic legal and moral framework for the Old and New Covenants.

The Sabbath and Holy Days

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

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

Gen 2:3 (ESV) So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

God established the seventh day Sabbath at Creation for Adam and Eve and all their children. So, the weekly Sabbath is a blessing from God to all humanity; it reminds us that God is the Creator and Ruler of all things and that we are His people.

When God brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, He taught them to observe His Sabbaths and biblical festivals throughout the year.

Lev 23:1 (ESV) The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts...’

Notice that God called these days My appointed feasts; they are the feasts of the Lord, not just the holy days of the Jews.

Lev 23 tells us that God expects His people to observe the weekly Sabbath, the Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day Assembly.

God always intended for all humanity to keep these days. This is made clear in Lev 23 and throughout the Bible.

Mark 2:27 (ESV) And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

In this passage, Mark used the Greek term *anthropos*, meaning mankind or humanity in general, to show that God made the Sabbath for all of mankind, not just the Jews. It was the pre-Incarnate Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, who made the Sabbath at Creation and gave it to Adam and Eve and their children as a blessing.

Later, Paul taught Jewish and Gentile Christians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

1Cor 5:7 (NASB) Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us celebrate the

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feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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

Finally, Bible prophecy clearly shows that Israelites and Gentiles will keep the Feast of Tabernacles during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Zech 14:16 (NKJV) And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

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

The Lord's Supper

We teach that the Lord's Supper is an annual observance on the 14th of Aviv, which includes foot washing as an ordinance of humility and partaking of unleavened bread and wine as symbols of our Lord's body and blood; it is distinct from the Passover and is only for baptized Christians.

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

During the Last Supper, Jesus taught His disciples to observe three distinct ceremonies, which Paul called the Lord's Supper.

The first ceremony involves the washing of one another's feet. During the Last Supper, Jesus laid aside His garments and washed His disciples' feet. When He was finished, He said to them:

John 13:14 (ESV) If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

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

Paul describes the next two ceremonies of the Lord's Supper:

1Cor 11:23 (ESV) 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, 24 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." 25 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

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

According to church history, the apostle John and Phillip the evangelist taught the Christians of Asia Minor to observe this ceremony every year on this same date. People called these Christians Quartodeciman, those who observe the Lord's Supper on the 14th day of Aviv. They continued to follow this apostolic practice in the second, third and fourth centuries despite opposition from apostates who had fallen away from keeping God's Sabbaths and Holy Days.

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

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

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

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

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

The Apostolic Fathers, 2nd edition, edit. Michael W. Holmes, trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, 1989.

Tithing

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

We are indebted to our Creator for each and every second that we exist in His universe. God created every molecule of air that we breathe, every drop of water we drink, every atom in the food that we eat. Every heartbeat that we enjoy is gift from God. So, all of us should be deeply grateful to God for everything that He has done for us.

Deut 8:18 (ESV) You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

The Bible tells us how we should remember the LORD our God, how we should express our gratitude to Him for His material blessings.

Prv 3:9 (ESV) Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.

From the beginning, God's people have given tithes and offerings to God as an expression of faith and worship toward their Creator. Tithing involves setting aside a tenth of one's income to financially support God's work. The practice of tithing existed during the time of the Patriarchs, long before the Moses and the Old Covenant.

Gen 14:18 (NLT) And Melchizedek, the king of Salem and a priest of God Most High, brought Abram some bread and wine. 19 Melchizedek blessed Abram with this blessing: "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. 20 And blessed be God Most High, who has defeated your enemies for you." Then Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the goods he had recovered.

Tithing is God's method for financing His work in this world; it is His way of providing for His servants as they serve the spiritual needs of His people.

Num 18:21 (NIV) I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the tent of meeting.

So, tithing represents a quid pro quo; God's ministers serve God's people in spiritual matters, and in return, God's people give contributions to God's work to meet the material needs of His ministers. This principle began during the time of the Patriarchs and continued throughout the Bible straight into the New Covenant.

1Cor 9:13 (ESV) Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? 14 In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

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In this passage, Paul clearly says that the same principle of giving tithes and offerings to support the Levitical priesthood in the Old Covenant applies specifically to the ministry of the church in the New Covenant. And, this is not Paul's personal opinion; this is what the Lord Himself commanded the church to do. The Christians of each congregation have a responsibility to make sure that the fulltime ministry receives a decent salary that is comparable to what they are earning in their particular community.

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

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The Food Laws

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

Before the Flood, God told Noah which animals to take with him into the ark.

Gen 7:2 (ESV) Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate

This passage clearly shows that, prior to the Flood, prior to the Patriarchs, prior to Moses and the Exodus, God had already taught human beings which animals were ritually clean and suitable for use as sacrifices.

Later, when God brought the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, He taught them what they could and could not eat.

Lev 11:1 (ESV) And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying to them, 2 "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, 'These are the living things that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth...

God called Israel to be a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a people set apart for a special ministry. He permitted them to eat any of the clean animals that they wanted but strictly commanded them not to eat any unclean creatures of any kind. God wanted His people to set an example to unbelievers, and they enjoyed clear health benefits as a result of their obedience.

When Gentiles began coming into the early Christian church, Paul taught Jewish and Gentile believers to separate themselves from any kind of defilement.

2Cor 6:17 (ESV) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you

This is not talking about spiritual defilement in the heart or mind; Paul specifically commanded Christians not to touch anything that is unclean, and the only place in the Bible that defines what is clean or unclean is in the Torah, the Law of Moses.

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

In the late first century, Jesus gave the apostle John a powerful revelation about the future of the world and detailed prophecies about His Second Coming. At the conclusion of the Book of Revelation, John saw the destruction of the satanic Babylonian kingdom that has oppressed God's people since the foundation of this age. John saw an angelic messenger bringing a powerful announcement.

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Rev 18:2 (ESV) And he called out with a mighty voice, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.”

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

Anointing the Sick

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

When God delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, He killed the firstborn of Egypt, parted the Red Sea, and defeated Pharaoh's army. Despite these miracles, Israel repeatedly lacked faith and grumbled about their circumstances, but God always met their needs. At the waters of Marah, God made a remarkable promise to Israel.

Ex 15:26 (NASB) And He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and listen to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer."

God promised to heal Israel if they carefully obeyed Him. God's promises are not a blank check; there are always conditions that are explicitly stated or implied. One of the general conditions is that God only answers the prayers of those who repent and obey Him.

Centuries later, King David thanked God for His wonderful blessings.

Ps 103:2 (NIV) Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits — 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases

David was a man after God's own heart, and he acknowledged that God had been faithful to forgive him and heal him.

Throughout Israel's history, God sent many prophets who performed powerful miracles. Elijah resurrected the son of the widow in Zarephath, while Elisha healed Naaman of leprosy and raised the son of the Shunammite woman back to life. They were able to accomplish great miracles through faith.

Heb 11:6 (ESV) And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Faith is the second general condition for all of God's promises. Jesus often lamented that miracles would not occur because Israelites lacked faith, while on other occasions, Gentiles displayed great faith and Jesus answered their prayers.

The New Covenant contains many great and precious promises, and one of those includes healing. Just as God promised to heal the Israelites in ancient times, He also promises to heal Christians today.

James 5:14 (ESV) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith

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will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

God expects the elders of the church to continue the ministry of healing that Jesus carried out while He was on the earth. In ancient times, people used olive oil as an ointment to promote healing; it also symbolizes the intercessory prayers of the elders for the anointing of the Holy Spirit to heal the individual.

This passage also implies that the person has a serious illness because the prayer of faith will save the individual, which implies that there is some kind of serious danger, and God will raise him up indicating that he is bedridden.

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

There is an additional promise here that God will forgive the person if he committed sins. God will sometimes use sickness as a punishment, but many times, sickness is merely the result of accidents, germs, or advancing age. The important point is that God will not forgive or heal those who stubbornly continue to sin, but if they humbly repent, God will respond and answer their prayers.

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

Military Service

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

The Bible clearly teaches that Satan is in control of the whole world and will remain in control until Jesus Christ returns to set up His kingdom on earth. When the Jewish leaders arrested Jesus and handed Him over to the Romans for trial, Pilate asked Jesus if He claimed to be a king.

John 18:36 (NASB) Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”

Jesus didn’t come to establish His kingdom on the earth at this time. Only God can put an end to Satan’s kingdom, so Christians should not get ahead of God’s will and try to set up the kingdom through political revolution or armed military conflict.

2Cor 10:3 (NIV) For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Christians must live in the world, but we are not to be of the world; we are like ambassadors of Jesus Christ living in a foreign country, but our first allegiance is to God and His kingdom.

Php 3:20 (NLT) But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.

The leaders of this world are constantly working to increase their own power and tear down the power of their rivals through deception, manipulation, intimidation, and violence. Therefore, Christians should not enlist in the military of any government. Doing so, would inevitably place a Christian in a position of disobeying God and violating one’s conscience.

2Cor 6:14 (ESV) Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Paul also warned the Christians to maintain their liberty at all times and not come under the authority of others.

1Cor 7:23 (NASB) You were bought for a price; do not become slaves of people.

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

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

The Dead

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

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

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

The Bible tells us that, in the beginning, God fashioned a physical body from the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into Adam, and he became a living soul. At death, the spirit of life returns to God who gave it and our bodies return to the dust from which we came.

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

Many people claim to have been conscious during a near death experience, but these reports are completely unreliable. The human brain can remain alive for 20 minutes or more after the heart stops beating; when these people are revived through CPR or artificial respiration, they enter a semi-conscious state where dreams or hallucinations can occur.

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

The Bible tells us that the dead are completely unconscious until the resurrection of the body.

Eccl 9:5 (NLT) The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered.

Eccl 9:10 (NLT) Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.

David also says that the dead are inactive.

Ps 6:5 (NIV) Among the dead no one proclaims your name. Who praises you from the grave?

Ps 115:17 contains the answer to this question.

Ps 115:17 (ESV) The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence.

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This is why the Bible often describes death as being like a dreamless sleep, where the dead are not aware of the passing of time. When David was in danger, he cried out for help.

Ps 13:3 (NIV) Look on me and answer, LORD my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death

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

The Second Coming

We teach that the return of Jesus Christ will be personal, visible, and pre-millennial. He will come again to set up His earthly kingdom and judge the living and the dead.

Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and ascended into the clouds. Luke says that a pair of men, dressed in white, appeared to His disciples and spoke to them.

Act 1:11 (NIV) “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

At the Second Coming, Jesus Christ will descend out of the clouds of heaven, and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. This isn't going to be an invisible or spiritual return; every person alive at that time will see His return.

Rev 1:7 (ESV) Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

The people of the earth are going to mourn because God is going to pour out His wrath on this sinful world just before the Second Coming; He is going to destroy the earth and kill billions of people through a series of disasters accompanied by the blowing of seven angelic trumpets. Then, God will establish the rule over the earth.

Rev 11:15 (NIV) The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Jesus will return after the Great Tribulation and establish His millennial kingdom along with the resurrected saints. There will be a thousand years of peace and righteousness on the earth, then, there will be a final resurrection, and Jesus will gather every human being who has ever lived before His throne for judgement.

The Resurrection

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

The Bible clearly says that God has the power to raise the dead. The first time this occurred, Elijah resurrected the son of a widow in Zarephath, and then his successor, Elisha, raised the son of the Shunammite woman back to life. Later, God began to reveal His plan to resurrect everyone.

Dan 12:2 (ESV) And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

Jesus raised several people from the dead during His ministry including Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, and He also spoke of a future, general resurrection of all humanity.

John 5:28 (ESV) Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, God revealed that there would be two different resurrections. The first will occur when Jesus Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God on the earth.

1Cor 15:22 (ESV) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

1Cor 15:50 (ESV) I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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.

1Thes 4:16 (ESV) 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. 17 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.

These passages show that God will eventually resurrect everyone who has ever lived, but this will occur in two distinct stages. First, God will transform every Christian, living or dead, and give them immortal, spiritual bodies at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Christians who experience this first resurrection will rule the earth with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev 20:4 (ESV) Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had

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not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Rev 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. 6 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.

So, every Christian will receive eternal life at the first resurrection when Jesus Christ returns to establish His millennial kingdom on the earth. God will resurrect the rest of the dead back to physical life during the second general resurrection at the end of the Millennium.

God showed the prophet Ezekiel what this miraculous event would look like. Ezekiel saw a valley filled with the dry bones of human beings. God reassembled these bones, put flesh on them and brought them back to life. God told Ezekiel that these bones represented the entire nation of Israel and that someday He was going to rise them from the dead.

Ezek 37:13 (ESV) And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. 14 And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.”

This appears to be a description of the second general resurrection at the end of the Millennium. God will resurrect these people with mortal, physical bodies.

Many people have wondered about the fate of all the people who died without ever hearing the gospel. They wonder about children who died and never reached the age of accountability. They wonder about people who had serious mental issues who could never make an informed, rational choice about personal salvation. Would God cast all these people into hell?

Based on these and other Scriptures, it appears that God is going to give everyone an opportunity to hear the gospel and make a choice about personal salvation. But, at some point, after the second resurrection, Jesus will gather everyone before the His throne for Judgement Day.

Rev 20:11 (ESV) 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. 12 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.

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

Final Judgment

We teach that after the second general resurrection, Jesus Christ will gather every human being and judge them according to their works. He will destroy everyone not listed in the Book of Life by a second death in the lake of fire from which there will be no resurrection.

In John 12:32, Jesus made an important promise related to His crucifixion: “And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself” (TLV). He was talking about being hung on the cross to die for the sins of His people.

Ever since His death, burial and resurrection, Jesus Christ has been spreading His message of salvation throughout the world. Some are willing to repent and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, while many others reject Him and go their own way.

Jesus promised that this process will continue until everyone has had a chance for salvation. Once God’s plan of salvation is complete, every single human being who has ever lived has an appointment with Jesus Christ on Judgement Day.

2Cor 5:10 (ESV) 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.

Those who choose to follow Jesus and obey the Gospel have nothing to fear, but those who choose to go their own way and rebel against God are destined for fiery punishment.

Mal 4:1 (ESV) For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.

The Book of Revelation tells us that Judgement Day will occur after the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ and the second general resurrection.

Rev 20:13 (ESV) 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. 14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Ultimately, every person will either live forever in the kingdom of God or be annihilated in the lake of fire and cease to exist. Jesus warned His disciples about hell fire.

Matt 10:28 (ESV) And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

God will not torment people for eternity in the lake of fire; the wicked will die and cease to exist; God will destroy both soul and body in hell and never again resurrect the wicked. The lake of fire will burn up everything evil, then God will create a new heaven and a new earth and live with His people in perfect righteousness and joy for all eternity.