

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

PREFACE

The church is given the crucial task of labouring to handle the Scriptures accurately. This statement presents the convictions of *Grace Bible Church* regarding the major theological truths of the Bible. While we recognise that any doctrinal statement is but a fallible human attempt to summarise and systematise the riches of an infallible divine revelation, this in no way detracts from the importance of such a statement.

PURPOSE

Grace Bible Church exists to glorify God and glory in Christ through God-honouring services, Christ-like lives, fervent evangelism and loving fellowship.

God created us in His image to know Him forever (John 17:3; 1 John 3:2). Therefore, the chief end of man is to know God and enjoy Him forever.

We believe that doctrine is not an end in and of itself – but is an aide to helping us know God and enjoy Him forever. Therefore all truth should have a practical dimension that leads us to greater joy in God.

True salvation begins an ongoing transformation of heart and mind such that we endeavour to live every aspect of our lives to the glory of God, in Christ-likeness, by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is not just the *content* of our faith, but also the *conduct* of our faith that matters to God. Therefore, we must strive to live out these beliefs in a gracious godliness.

THE WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Holy Scriptures, as represented in the sixty-six books of the Bible (i.e. the Protestant Canon), constitute the infallible and authoritative word of God.

God has revealed Himself to man generally (i.e. in nature and conscience), but these avenues are insufficient for salvation because of man's sin (Romans 1:18-2:16). However, in the course of human history, our gracious God has also revealed Himself to man specifically. He has done this in a variety of ways which have now been made known to us through the Scriptures (Hebrews 1:1-4). The Old Testament was designed to anticipate Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44-47). The New Testament testifies to Jesus Christ (John 20:31; Luke 1:1-4).

Both testaments point to Jesus Christ as the one way of salvation and soul-satisfaction (John 14:6; 15:11).

To the children of God, His word is precious because it reveals the glorious wonders of who God is, what He is like, and what He has done to redeem sinners.

It further reveals His good, pleasing and perfect will – so that we may know how to joyfully offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1-2). And so, the word of God restores the soul, rejoices the heart and enlightens the eyes (Psalm 19:7-9), and every true child of God hungers to feed on the riches of God's word (1 Peter 2:2).

The Scriptures are God-breathed, and thereby are without error in the original manuscripts (2 Timothy 3:16; Matthew 5:18). As with Christ, the Living Word of God, the written word of God is fully divine and yet genuinely human. The Holy Spirit worked through a variety of human authors

using their distinctive personalities, backgrounds, and styles (Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15-17) to record God's message for every age (2 Peter 1:20-21) which is given to us in the Bible.

In light of all these truths, the Bible is fully authoritative. It alone is our infallible rule for faith and practice. The truth of Scripture is objective and stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it. (Deuteronomy 32:44-47; Isaiah 1:10; 8:16, 20; 30:8; 34:16; 40:6-8; 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29; Zechariah 7:12; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-19; John 10:35; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12-13).

In His sovereignty, God's word does not return void without accomplishing its purposes (Isaiah 55:11 – see also Joshua 1:7-8; Nehemiah 8:2-9:3; Psalm 19:7-8; 119; Jeremiah 5:14; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 2:7; 3:4-11; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 4:11). The crucial role of Scripture in God's redemptive plan demands that the Bible be handled with the utmost Spirit-enlightened precision (2 Timothy 2:15; James 3:1).

THE GOD OF THE WORD

We believe that there is but one living and true God (Isaiah 45:5-7; 1 Corinthians 8:4). This unique God is Triune, being one in essence (Deuteronomy 6:4), and yet existing ever and always in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 48:16; Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14). Within the Trinity there are distinct functional roles and subordinations but they never stand opposed to the full Deity that each of the Persons possesses (John 5:18-30; 10:30; 14:8-11; 14:16-17).

Our Triune God is Himself an eternal fellowship (John 1:1-2; John 17:5, 24). In creating and saving us, He invites us into that most glorious fellowship (John 14:1-3; 17:11) which alone can satisfy the soul of man (John 15:11; Revelation 21:1-7).

GOD THE FATHER

We believe that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, being spirit in His existence (John 4:24) is the sovereign Architect of both *creation* (including personal beings, time, space, and history) and *re-creation* (salvation & renewal; Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:3-14).

He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4-6); these same He lovingly draws to Christ (John 6:37, 44). Through adoption, He becomes Father to all those redeemed through Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5; Hebrews 12:5-9).

As Creator of all things – God is sovereign over all things (Revelation 4:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11).

His sovereign rule is all inclusive (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3), including circumstances of life (James 4:13-15); duration of life (Job 14:5); manner of death (John 21:18-19); helpful acts of men (Isaiah 44:28-45:7); harmful acts of men (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:20; Acts 4:27-28); salvation of sinners (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14); perdition for ungodly men (Proverbs 16:4; Romans 9:22; 1 Peter 2:8; Jude 4); history (Isaiah 46:9-11) – both the greatest world events (Daniel 2:20-21; Acts 2:22-23) and seemingly trivial circumstances (Proverbs 16:33; Matthew 10:29-30). (See also Psalm 103:19; 135:6; Isaiah 14:26-27; Daniel 4:34-35; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11).

God's comprehensive sovereignty never nullifies the responsibility and accountability of created, moral beings (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Acts 2:22-23; Revelation 20:10). In His sovereignty He is neither the author nor the approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38-47; James 1:13-15).

Our incomparable God's driving *purpose* in His sovereign plans is to magnify His glory and Himself (i.e., "His name's sake") in all things, because as the Supreme Being, perfect and esteemed in every way, He is the only person and object worthy of true worship (Exodus 7:2-5; Deuteronomy 5:24; Psalm 115:1; Isaiah 43:5-7; Isaiah 48:10-13; Romans 11:33-36).

He exhibits an array of attributes, some of which are unique (belonging to God alone) and some which are shared by humanity (Exodus 34:5-7; Deuteronomy. 7:9-10; 32:3-4; 1 Kings 8:22ff.; Psalm 145:8ff.; Nahum 1:2-8).

Those which are unique include God's:

- self-existence (Exodus 3:14)
- infinitude – including:
 - eternality (Psalm 90:2)
 - omnipresence [everything is totally exposed before Him] (Psalm 139:7-10)
 - omniscience [everything is fully known by Him] (Hebrews 4:13)
 - omnipotence [He is all-powerful over everything] (Revelation 11:17)
 - immutability [His unchanging perfections and purposes] (Malachi 3:16)

Those attributes which are shared include being:

- alive and active (Deuteronomy 5:26; John 5:17, 26)
- intelligent (1 Samuel 2:3)
- purposeful (Isaiah 14:26-27; Ephesians 3:11)
- expressive of emotions (Deuteronomy 5:9; Hosea 11:8; Romans 1:18)

These shared attributes derive from our creation in the image and likeness of God to the end that we might relate to God in a true and personal way.

God richly displays moral attributes such as justice or righteousness, grace (including His love, beneficence and restraint) and fidelity (respectively, Genesis 18:25; Psalm 103:4, 13; 119:68; 2 Peter 3:9, 15; Lamentations 3:23). All of these moral attributes are in accord with His absolute holiness and utter perfection (Leviticus 11:44; Isaiah 6:3; John 17:11; Matthew 5:48). They are therefore never perfectly expressed by His creatures in their fallen state.

While God does have attributes of *greatness* (He is over, above, and beyond all creatures; Psalm 113:4-6), nevertheless His attributes of *goodness* lead Him to be genuinely concerned and involved with all His creatures (Psalm 113:7-9; Isaiah 57:15; Matthew 5:44-45; Luke 6:35-36; Acts 14:16-17; 17:27).

GOD THE SON

We believe that God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, inherently possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is co-equal, co-eternal and of the same essence of being as the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

This full deity of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is attested in various ways. He is called "God" (John 1:1; 20:28; Romans 9:5), "Son of God" in the Semitic sense of sameness of nature and divine Davidic

King who is the heir of all things (John 5:18; 10:33; 19:7; Hebrews 1:1-4), “the Lord” (1 Corinthians 2:8), “the Holy One” (Acts 3:14 compared with Isaiah 48:17), “the first and the Last” (Revelation 1:17-18 compared with Isaiah 44:6), “the Alpha and Omega” (Revelation 22:13, 16 compared with 1:8), and “the Amen” (Revelation 1:17-18 compared with Isaiah 44:6). Also, He is especially recognised as Agent of creation, the Sustainer of creation, and the Saviour of men (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2; Colossians 1:15-17; Isaiah 43:11; Titus 2:13).

The Scriptures testify to the ministry of the Son before He became incarnate (Exodus 3:1-7; Judges 13:17-18 with Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 6 with John 12:42; Exodus 17:6 with 1 Corinthians 10:4).

In the incarnation (God taking on humanity), Christ did not empty Himself of His divine essence (Matthew 1:23, John 1:1, 14). But as taught in Scripture, “He emptied Himself by taking on the form of a bond-servant and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:7-8). Christ temporarily relinquished the fullness of His glory (John 17:5) and the independent exercise of His divine prerogatives during His first coming (John 5:30; 8:28). The means God used for the incarnation was the Virgin Birth (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35).

The glory of His incarnate life is that the Son displays in human form the very character and nature of God (John 1:18; Hebrews 1:3). He appropriated all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man – humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Colossians 2:9) – and ultimately the uniquely perfect Revealer, Saviour, Mediator, High Priest and the Judge of all men (respectively John 1:18/14:8-11/Hebrews 1:1-2; Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16/8:1; John 5:27).

Though fully human and being tempted in all things, Jesus remained sinless and so is able to genuinely sympathise with us in our weakness (Hebrews 4:14-16). Because He alone knew no sin, He alone could become a satisfactory sacrifice for the sins of men, fulfilling the righteous requirements of the Law on our behalf (2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 8:1-4).

He fully accomplished His mission which culminated in His sacrificial death on the cross, burial, resurrection, and ascension, furnishing the grounds for the forgiveness of sinners who believe (respectively, Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Romans 6:1-11; Romans 1:4; 4:25; Acts 1:9). His death was voluntary, substitutionary, redemptive and propitiatory (effectively satisfying the just wrath of God) so that through His shed blood men may have the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7).

He rose from the dead and is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He mediates as our Advocate, High Priest and King (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-36; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

He is the head of His body, the Church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

In the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that He has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus’ bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26-29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe that God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, inherently possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is co-equal, co-eternal and eternally of the same essence of

being as the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31-34 with Hebrews 10:15-17).

He is a divine person, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10-13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13-14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13).

His works also attest to His full deity. We recognise His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7).

With regard to mankind, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; enlightens sinners; glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ; and transforms believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7-9, 14; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 2:22).

The Holy Spirit has always been active in regeneration and renewal (in personal salvation and sanctification), and vitally associated with our adoption (John 3:1-10; Titus 3:5; Romans 8:12-17; Ephesians 1:13; 5:18). He indwells, sanctifies, instructs and empowers believers for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:30).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit began at Pentecost when He was sent from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16-17; 15:26; Acts 2:4). In this present age, all genuine believers are baptised into the Holy Spirit by Christ thus uniting them into one body, the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4).

The Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who infallibly guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed God's revelation into writing (2 Peter 1:20-21). Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to walk in the Spirit (Romans 8:9; Galatians 5:16).

God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Ephesians 4:7-12).

The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14).

MAN AND SIN

We believe that God chose to personally create man according to His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27) and therefore as morally responsible beings we are obliged to worship and enjoy God forever (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Acts 17:30-31).

In the Garden of Eden, despite the manifold blessings of God which included unhindered fellowship with Him, man prized self-exaltation over God-exaltation (Genesis 2 and 3). This is idolatry, the essence of evil.

Since God is the only being worthy of worship, any action not motivated by seeking the glory of God as its ultimate ground is sin. Evil deeds are the manifestation of a lack of faith in what God has revealed about His worth and His ways. Therefore even deeds done to benefit others which do not

flow from a desire for the glory and honour of God are ultimately self-glorifying, which is idolatrous.

The fall of man in the Garden destroyed the fellowship man was created to enjoy with God, and the image of God in man was defaced but not erased (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). As a result, all who are not in Christ are now at enmity with God. He thus incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death and became subject to the wrath of God (Romans 2:4-5; 5:12-21).

Adam was given dominion over all creation and was the representative of all mankind (Genesis 1:26-30). Because all were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been imparted to all people of all ages. Jesus Christ, the second Adam, is the only exception (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-21; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Consequently, all persons from their conception are innately unholy and stand condemned before their Creator and Judge (Psalm 51:5; Ephesians 2:1-3), and are storing up wrath for themselves, a wrath which will be justly poured out upon them on judgement day (Rom 2:4-5).

Man's depravity is total in breadth (1 Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:1-3; Isaiah 1:2-6; 53:6; Romans 3:9-20) and depth (Ecclesiastes 9:3b; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:14-23). All the faculties of man – the rational, volitional and emotional – are morally tainted by sin (Genesis 6:5; Ecclesiastes 7:29; Ephesians 4:17-19) leaving mankind utterly hopeless and helpless in respect to any kind of human reformation or rescue (Isaiah 64:5; Jeremiah 13:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Colossians 1:21-22).

As a result, man's only hope is for Christ to free us from the punishment, the power, and one day the very presence, of sin.

SALVATION

We believe that salvation – rescue from God's righteous wrath – is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and not because of or aided by any human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The salvation of sinful men ultimately depends upon the sovereign grace of God (Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:8-9). God's sovereign plan of salvation was divinely designed and decreed in eternity past (Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8), including all of its provisions and processes (Titus 3:3-7).

God's unconditional election in salvation (Jer 1:5; Rom 9:10-18; Eph 1:4-11; 2 Tim 1:9) does not in any way contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust in Christ as Lord and Saviour (Ezek 33:11; John 3:18-19, 5:40; Acts 2:22-23). And as sheep follow their Shepherd (John 10:27), so genuine saving faith will evidence itself in bearing spiritual fruit (Jn 15:1-6; 1 Jn 2:3-4). All true Christians are disciples of Christ (Matthew 28:19,20; Luke 9:23-26, 62; 14:25-35; Acts 11:26).

God's intention in the salvation of man is that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and thereby make the name of God great in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Malachi 1:11; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

God's sovereign work in salvation includes the following aspects:

Election

We believe that election displays the glory of God's grace and that election is motivated by His love, mercy and kindness (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; Romans 9:11-16; Ephesians 1:4-6). So, all believers ought to find comfort and encouragement in this precious doctrine.

Election is the sovereign act of God before the foundation of the world, in which He chose those whom He graciously predestines to salvation (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2). Again, this does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Saviour and Lord (John 3:18-19, 36). All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

The unmerited favour that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own, nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will. Instead, election is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Romans 9:16; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

Regeneration

We believe that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:4). It is instantaneous, occurs at the moment of salvation, and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24).

Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the direction of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Spirit-inspired Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such conformity reaches its climax in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

Justification

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

Sanctification

The grace of God in salvation focuses on renewing the image of God, defaced in us by sin, until it is finally perfect and eternally established (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). This image renewal is known as sanctification.

We believe that every believer is *positionally* sanctified (set apart) unto God to be holy and blameless before Him (1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:4). Believers are therefore declared to be holy and identified as saints (1 Corinthians 1:2). This positional sanctification is instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. It has to do with the believer's standing, not

with his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2,30; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10,14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

There is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a *progressive* sanctification by which the state of every believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys. When the believer abides in the love of Christ, He draws us closer to Him and discloses more of Himself to us (John 15:1-17). The result is a greater love for Christ and a greater desire to keep His commandments through the spiritual disciplines provided for believers (1 Timothy 4:7). He abides in us through the Holy Spirit Who enables and empowers the saints to live a life in which they continually pursue holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23; Titus 2:11-14). This leads to a growing hatred of sin and separation from worldliness, which is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments (Psalms 1 and 15; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 2:19).

Therefore, we believe that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict. The new creation in Christ does battle against the flesh, but more than adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life (Romans 7:15-25; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:5-9).

Eternal Security

We believe that once a sinner is saved, he is then kept by God's power and is therefore secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:3-5; Jude 24).

The believer is declared righteous, given eternal life, adopted into the family of God and sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance (John 10:15,18; Romans 3:24-25; 5:8-9,19; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; 1 John 4:10).

Although we teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, it is important to distinguish the perception of personal assurance (which is subjective), from the reality of eternal security (which is objective).

God has designed the Christian life in such a way that our assurance of salvation grows as we see the fruit of His Spirit develop more and more in our lives (2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:5-11; 1 John 2:3-4).

We recognise that every Christian sins, but we also overcome by the power of the Holy Spirit so that sin is a lapse rather than a lifestyle (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 John 1:8, 5:4). Furthermore, the doctrine of eternal security clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as opportunity for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:1-2; 15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13,25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

THE CHURCH

We believe the Church is a unique spiritual organism designed and built by Christ. It is made up of all the people of God saved under the New Covenant (1 Corinthians 11:25; 2 Corinthians 3:6-18; Hebrews 8 and 9; Ephesians 2:11-3:6).

All the people of God are saved by God through faith under the provision of the covenant made with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3, 15:6; Romans 4). This means that while the Church and Israel share

the same root, they are different branches (Romans 11). In other words, they are different administrations (old and new covenant) of the same promise (Abrahamic covenant).

All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

Under the terms of the new covenant, commencing at Pentecost (Acts 2), Christ is building His Church (Matthew 16:18). This Church exists both universally (i.e. the total number of genuine disciples throughout Church history) and locally (i.e. those gathering in localised assemblies).

Although salvation is bestowed and appropriated individually, the Scriptures mandate each individual Christian to become a contributing member of a local church (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 3:9-17; 12:4-27; Hebrews 10:24-25). Christ establishes and oversees the unity and diversity of the local Church so that it becomes the primary context for worship and service, especially regarding edification and evangelism (Ephesians 4:1-16). The primary purpose of the Church, whether viewed from the local perspective or the universal, is to glorify God (Ephesians 1:2-14; 3:21).

The priority of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23,27; 20:17,28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1).

The Scriptures establish two offices within the Church: elders (also called overseers) and deacons (Philippians 1:1) to lead and serve the flock under Christ. Those who serve in these capacities must be appropriately qualified (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5) by being men of noteworthy integrity (i.e. above reproach). The elders and deacons who have been given a divinely delegated authority are especially accountable for the spiritual welfare of their Master's flock. He will judge them and their guidance of His sheep (1 Corinthians 4:4; Hebrews 13:7; James 3:1). These leaders must lead or rule as servants of Christ (Mark 10:42-45). Elders are given His authority in directing the Church regarding such matters as doctrine, membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; Romans 15:26-27; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7,13; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The congregation is to lovingly submit to their leadership in such a way that the leaders shepherd their flock with joy (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Since the primary purpose of the Church is to glorify God, it is His ordained context for both edification and admonition – that the saints might grow in conformity to the image of Christ (Matthew 18:15-22; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16).

Two ordinances have been committed to the local Church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42).

Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that whereas the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16-22).

We hold to the autonomy of the post-apostolic local Church under the authority of the Great Shepherd Christ (1 Peter 5:1-4). We believe that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other to see the Lord's name magnified throughout the world. The elders are given the responsibility to determine the extent of any such cooperation.

ANGELS

We believe that angels were apparently the first issue of God's creation (Job 38:6-7 with Genesis 1:1; Nehemiah 9:6; Colossians 1:16). In relation to men, these created spirit beings currently have greater powers (2 Peter 2:11), and yet, holy angels minister on behalf of the saints (Hebrews 1:14). Furthermore one day redeemed people will judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

Morally, angels may be classified under two headings: holy or elect angels (Mark 8:38; 1 Timothy 5:21) and evil angels or demons (Matthew 25:41).

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

There seem to be various hierarchies of angels; for example, archangel (Jude 9), seraphim (Isaiah 6:2,6), cherubim (Ezekiel 10:7) and rulers and principalities (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:10; 1 Peter 3:22).

At the head of all fallen angels stands Satan (Job 1:6-9, 12; Matthew 4:10). Among his many names, he is also called 'the devil' (Matthew 4:1,5,8,11; 25:41; Revelation 12:9). He introduced sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1-15 Romans 16:20; 1 Timothy 3:6).

In the church age, Satan is banished from heaven by the work of Christ on the cross (Revelation 12:9) He now roams the earth making war with the church (1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:17), but his end is ultimately guaranteed by the finished work of Christ (Revelation 12:12).

During the coming millennium, Satan will be bound and unable to deceive the nations (Revelation 20:1-3). After his release, he will have a final but futile expression of rebellion (Revelation 20:7-8). Then he and his demons will be eternally consigned to the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).

LAST THINGS

We believe that the study of the last things (eschatology) is to encourage us to live in light of eternity rather than fix our hope in this present world. We are thus to be more concerned with the ethical impact of His return than with the details of what lies ahead (1 Corinthians 15:56-58; 2 Peter 3:10-14; 1 John 2:28-3:3). Too often a focus on the sequence of future events has divided the church rather than united us in light of the blessed hope and the appearing of our Lord Jesus (Titus 2:13).

Personal consciousness is not interrupted by physical death (Luke 16:19-31; Revelation 6:9-11). For believers, their souls/spirits are ushered immediately into the presence of Christ at physical death (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8) until the time of the rapture when they – along with those disciples physically alive at the Lord's return (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) – will receive glorified bodies suited for a new, ultimately eternal order (1 Corinthians 15:12-58; Philippians 3:20-21). The souls/spirits of the unregenerate at physical death also continue, but in conscious torment until they are resurrected. This will be followed by the final judgement (Revelation 20:13-15). Everyone will experience a bodily resurrection: the saved to eternal life and overwhelming joy giving everlasting

glory to the Lord; the unsaved to eternal separation and everlasting punishment (Daniel 12:2-3; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:19-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-11).

The consummation of history is the unchallenged reign of God in His universal kingdom which continues throughout eternity (Psalm 145:13; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

We hold to the physical return of Christ, “the blessed hope” (Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13) and the rapture of the saints (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). However, prior to His first coming, it was not easy to discern a two-staged coming of Christ from the Old Testament Scriptures. Likewise it is difficult to itemise the sequential details concerning His second coming. The events associated with His final coming, rapture and consummation, are most often mentioned side-by-side without clear distinctions in the New Testament contexts (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2:8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13). This has led to a number of different systems of eschatology within orthodox Christianity which all have various strengths and weaknesses. What is crystal clear is that the primary responsibility of the true disciple is to wait expectantly and serve faithfully until He comes (Mark 13:35-37).