

UNLEASHING GOD'S TRUTH, ONE VERSE AT A TIME®



THE MACARTHUR
BIBLE
COMMENTARY

John MacArthur

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John MacArthur



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CONTENTS

General Information

Preface	v
The Nature and Purpose of the Bible	vi
Key Teachings of the Bible	xi
Dealing with God's Word	xx
Bible Book Abbreviations	xxv
List of Charts, Maps, and Articles	xxvi
List of Word Studies	xxxiv

THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Progress of Revelation—Old Testament	xxxvi
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The Pentateuch

Introduction to the Pentateuch	1
Genesis	4
Exodus	80
Leviticus	133
Numbers	165
Deuteronomy	193

The Books of History

Introduction to the Books of History	
History	246
Chronology of Old Testament Patriarchs and Judges	247
Chronology of Old Testament Kings and Prophets	249
A Harmony of the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles	251
Joshua	255
Judges	271
Ruth	288
1 Samuel	299
2 Samuel	349
1 Kings	387

2 Kings	430
1 Chronicles	478
2 Chronicles	494
Ezra	518
Nehemiah	533
Esther	553
The Wisdom Books	
Introduction to the Wisdom Books	562
Job	563
Psalms	595
Proverbs	695
Ecclesiastes	731
Song of Solomon	743
The Prophets	
Introduction to the Prophets	753
Isaiah	755
Jeremiah	844
Lamentations	883
Ezekiel	891
Daniel	947
Hosea	970
Joel	983
Amos	992
Obadiah	1001
Jonah	1006
Micah	1014
Nahum	1022
Habakkuk	1028
Zephaniah	1036
Haggai	1042
Zechariah	1049
Malachi	1077

The Intertestamental Period

Introduction to the Intertestamental
 Period 1089
 Chronology of the Intertestamental
 Period 1092

The New Testament

The Progress of Revelation—New
 Testament 1094

The Gospels

Introduction to the Gospels 1095
 The Ministry of Jesus Christ 1097
 A Harmony of the Gospels 1098

Matthew 1111
Mark 1188
Luke 1264
John 1338

The Acts of the Apostles 1429

The Epistles

Introduction to the Epistles 1497
Romans 1499
1 Corinthians 1561
2 Corinthians 1612

Galatians 1654
Ephesians 1680
Philippians 1708
Colossians 1729
1 Thessalonians 1747
2 Thessalonians 1763
1 Timothy 1772
2 Timothy 1801
Titus 1817
Philemon 1827
Hebrews 1832
James 1879
1 Peter 1899
2 Peter 1924
1 John 1944
2 John 1970
3 John 1974
Jude 1978

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Introduction to Revelation 1987
Revelation 1989

Introduction to the Pentateuch 1993
Genesis 1993
Exodus 2000
Leviticus 2005
Numbers 2013
Deuteronomy 2023
 The Books of History
 Introduction to the Books of History 2028
1 Samuel 2028
2 Samuel 2037
1 Kings 2047
2 Kings 2057
1 Chronicles 2067
2 Chronicles 2077
Ezra 2087
Nehemiah 2097
Esther 2107
 The Books of Poetry
 Introduction to the Books of Poetry 2113
Psalms 2113
Proverbs 2123
Ecclesiastes 2133
Song of Solomon 2143
 The Prophets
 Introduction to the Prophets 2148
Isaiah 2148
Jeremiah 2158
Lamentations 2168
Ezekiel 2178
Hosea 2188
Joel 2198
Amos 2208
Obadiah 2218
Jonah 2228
Micah 2238
Nahum 2248
Habakkuk 2258
Zephaniah 2268
Haggai 2278
Zachariah 2288
Malachi 2298

PREFACE

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people . . . they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading—Nehemiah 8:5, 8 (NKJV)

Although this momentous renewal of interest in Scripture occurred over 2,400 years ago (c. 445 B.C.), this has been the primary need of every subsequent generation, i.e., to read and understand—for the purpose of obedience—the Bible and to thereby know the blessing of God (Rev. 1:3). Therefore, I have undertaken, with the encouragement of Wayne Kinde at Thomas Nelson and the editorial partnership of Dr. Richard Mayhue, executive vice president of The Master's College and Seminary, to create a one-volume commentary which will meet this spiritual need in the twenty-first century.

The core around which this one-volume commentary has been arranged is the original notes of *The MacArthur Study Bible* published in 1997. Since then, (1) those notes have been thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and clarity, with appropriate revisions and corrections. (2) The outline for each book (located with the Introduction) has been integrated into the commentary. (3) A Further Study section has been added at the end of the commentary for each book which contains a bibliography of several other commentaries which can be consulted to expand on one's studies. (4) Most significantly, over 300 new maps, charts, diagrams, and word studies have been added to the over 350 found in the original *MacArthur Study Bible* for a total of almost 700 study/teaching aids, in addition to the commentary material.

This one-volume commentary on the whole Bible is in itself a minilibRARY which will be especially advantageous to those with financial and/or space limitations. To greatly expand the value of this commentary, one's studies can be vastly enhanced with the additional use of *The MacArthur Topical Bible*.

Everyone from new believers to pastors can benefit from this study tool. Its purpose and design are to make the precious truths of Scripture understandable and consequently obeyed by the people of God. May God's promise to Joshua over 3,400 years ago be just as real today because you have used this volume to know, understand, and obey the Word of God.

This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success—Joshua 1:8 (NKJV)

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of 66 documents inspired by God. These documents are gathered into two testaments, the Old (39) and the New (27). Prophets, priests, kings, and leaders from the nation of Israel wrote the OT books in Hebrew (with two passages in Aramaic). The apostles and their associates wrote the NT books in Greek. The two testaments go from creation to consummation, eternity past to eternity future.

The OT record starts with the creation of the universe and closes about four hundred years before the first coming of Jesus Christ.

The flow of history through the OT moves along the following lines:

- Creation of the universe
- Fall of man
- Judgment flood over the earth
- Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel)—fathers of the chosen nation
- The history of Israel
- Exile in Egypt—430 years
- Exodus and wilderness wanderings—40 years
- Conquest of Canaan—7 years
- Era of Judges—350 years
- United Kingdom—Saul, David, Solomon—110 years
- Divided Kingdom—Judah/Israel—350 years
- Exile in Babylon—70 years
- Return and rebuilding the land—140 years

The details of this history are explained in the 39 books divided into 5 categories:

- The Law—5 (Genesis—Deuteronomy)
- History—12 (Joshua—Esther)
- Wisdom—5 (Job—Song of Solomon)
- Major Prophets—5 (Isaiah—Daniel)
- Minor Prophets—12 (Hosea—Malachi)

After the completion of the OT, there were four hundred years of silence, during which God did not speak or inspire any Scripture. That silence was broken by the arrival of John the Baptist announcing that the promised Lord Savior had come. The NT records the rest of the story from the birth of Christ to the culmination of all history and the final eternal state.

While the thirty-nine OT books major on the history of Israel and the promise of the coming Savior, the twenty-seven NT books major on the person of Christ and the establishment of the church. The four Gospels give the record of His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Each of the four writers views the greatest and most important event of history, the coming of the God-man, Jesus Christ, from a different perspective. Matthew looks at Him through the perspective of His kingdom; Mark through the perspective of His servanthood; Luke through the perspective of His humanness; and John through the perspective of His deity.

The Book of Acts chronicles the impact of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord and Savior—from His

Ascension, the consequent coming of the Holy Spirit, and the birth of the church, through the early years of gospel preaching by the apostles and their associates. Acts records the establishment of the church in Judea, Samaria, and into the Roman Empire.

The twenty-one epistles were written to churches and individuals to explain the significance of the person and work of Jesus Christ, with its implications for life and witness until He returns.

The NT closes with Revelation, which starts by picturing the current church age, and culminates with Christ's return to establish His earthly kingdom, bringing judgment on the ungodly and glory and blessing for believers. Following the millennial reign of the Lord Savior will be the last judgment, leading to the eternal state. All believers of all history enter the ultimate eternal glory prepared for them, and all the ungodly are consigned to hell to be punished forever.

To understand the Bible, it is essential to grasp the sweep of that history from creation to consummation. It is also crucial to keep in focus the unifying theme of Scripture. The one constant theme unfolding throughout the whole Bible is this: God for His own glory has chosen to create and gather to Himself a group of people to be the subjects of His eternal kingdom, to praise, honor, and serve Him forever and through whom He will display His wisdom, power, mercy, grace, and glory. To gather His chosen ones, God must redeem them from sin. The Bible reveals God's plan for this redemption from its inception in eternity past to its completion in eternity future. Covenants, promises, and epochs are all secondary to the one continuous plan of redemption.

There is one God. The Bible has one Creator. It is one book. It has one plan of grace, recorded from initiation, through execution, to consummation. From predestination to

glorification, the Bible is the story of God redeeming His chosen people for the praise of His glory.

As God's redemptive purposes and plan unfold in Scripture, five recurring motifs are constantly emphasized:

- the character of God
- the judgment for sin and disobedience
- the blessing for faith and obedience
- the Lord Savior and sacrifice for sin
- the coming kingdom and glory

Everything revealed on the pages of both the OT and NT is associated with those five categories. Scripture is always teaching or illustrating: (1) the character and attributes of God; (2) the tragedy of sin and disobedience to God's holy standard; (3) the blessedness of faith and obedience to God's standard; (4) the need for a Savior by whose righteousness and substitution sinners can be forgiven, declared just, and transformed to obey God's standard; and (5) the coming glorious end of redemptive history in the Lord Savior's earthly kingdom and the subsequent eternal reign and glory of God and Christ.

It is essential as one studies Scripture to grasp these recurring categories like great hooks on which to hang the passages. While reading through the Bible, one should be able to relate each portion of Scripture to these dominant topics, recognizing that what is introduced in the OT is also made more clear in the NT.

Looking at these five categories separately gives an overview of the Bible.

1. The Revelation of the Character of God

Above all else, Scripture is God's self-revelation. He reveals Himself as the sovereign God of the universe who has chosen to make man and to make Himself known to man. In that self-revelation is established His standard of absolute holiness. From Adam and Eve through Cain and Abel and to

everyone before and after the Law of Moses, the standard of righteousness was established and is sustained to the last page of the NT. Violation of it produces judgment, temporal and eternal.

In the OT, it is recorded that God revealed Himself by the following means:

- creation—primarily through man—who was made in His image
- angels
- signs, wonders, and miracles
- visions
- spoken words by prophets and others
- written Scripture (OT)

In the NT, it is recorded that God revealed Himself again by essentially the same means, but more clearly and fully:

- Incarnation—the God-man, Jesus Christ, who was the very image of God
- angels
- signs, wonders, and miracles
- visions
- spoken words by apostles and prophets
- written Scripture (NT)

2. The Revelation of Divine Judgment for Sin and Disobedience

Scripture repeatedly deals with the matter of man's sin, which leads to divine judgment. Account after account in Scripture demonstrates the deadly effects in time and eternity of violating God's standard. There are 1,189 chapters in the Bible. Only four of them don't involve a fallen world: the first two and the last two—before the Fall and after the creation of the new heaven and new earth. The rest is the chronicle of the tragedy of sin.

In the OT, God showed the disaster of sin—starting with Adam and Eve, to Cain and Abel, the patriarchs, Moses and Israel, the kings, priests, some prophets, and Gentile nations. Throughout the OT appears the re-

lentless record of continual devastation produced by sin and disobedience to God's law.

In the NT, the tragedy of sin becomes more clear. The preaching and teaching of Jesus and the apostles begin and end with a call to repentance. King Herod, the Jewish leaders, and the nation of Israel—along with Pilate, Rome, and the rest of the world—all reject the Lord Savior, spurn the truth of God, and thus condemn themselves. The chronicle of sin continues unabated to the end of the age and the return of Christ in judgment. In the NT, disobedience is even more flagrant than OT disobedience because it involves the rejection of the Lord Savior, Jesus Christ in the brighter light of NT truth.

3. The Revelation of Divine Blessing for Faith and Obedience

Scripture repeatedly promises wonderful rewards in time and eternity that come to people who trust God and seek to obey Him. In the OT, God showed the blessedness of repentance from sin, faith in Himself, and obedience to His Word—from Abel, through the patriarchs, to the remnant in Israel—and even Gentiles who believed (such as the people of Nineveh).

God's standard for man, His will, and His moral law were always made known. To those who faced their inability to keep God's standard—recognized their sin, confessed their impotence to please God by their own effort and works, and asked Him for forgiveness and grace—there came merciful redemption and blessing for time and eternity.

In the NT, God again showed the full blessedness of redemption from sin for repentant people. There were those who responded to the preaching of repentance by John the Baptist. Others repented at the preaching of Jesus. Still others from Israel obeyed the gospel through the apostles' preaching. And finally, there were Gentiles

all over the Roman Empire who believed the gospel. To all those and to all who will believe through all of history, there is blessing promised in this world and the world to come.

4. The Revelation of the Lord Savior and Sacrifice for Sin

This is the heart of both the OT, which Jesus said spoke of Him in type and prophecy, and the NT, which gives the biblical record of His coming. The promise of blessing is dependent on grace and mercy given to the sinner. Grace means that sin is not held against the sinner. Such forgiveness is dependent on a payment of sin's penalty to satisfy holy justice. That requires a substitute—one to die in the sinner's place. God's chosen substitute—the only one who qualified—was Jesus.

Salvation is always by the same gracious means, whether during OT or NT times. When any sinner comes to God, repentant and convinced he has no power to save himself from the deserved judgment of divine wrath, and pleads for mercy, God's promise of forgiveness is granted. God then declares him righteous because the sacrifice and obedience of Christ is put to his account.

In the OT, God justified sinners that same way, in anticipation of Christ's atoning work. There is, therefore, a continuity of grace and salvation through all of redemptive history. Various covenants, promises, and epochs do not alter that fundamental continuity, nor does the discontinuity between the OT witness nation, Israel, and the NT witness people, the church. A fundamental continuity is centered in the Cross, which was no interruption in the plan of God, but is the very thing to which everything else points.

Throughout the OT, the Savior and sacrifice are promised. In Genesis, He is the seed of the woman who will destroy Satan. In

Zechariah, He is the pierced one to whom Israel turns and by whom God opens the fountain of forgiveness to all who mourn over their sin. He is the very One symbolized in the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Law. He is the suffering substitute spoken of by the prophets. Throughout the OT, He is the Messiah who would die for the transgressions of His people; from beginning to end in the OT, the theme of the Lord Savior as a sacrifice for sin is presented. It is solely because of His perfect sacrifice for sin that God graciously forgives repentant believers.

In the NT, the Lord Savior came and actually provided the promised sacrifice for sin on the Cross. Having fulfilled all righteousness by His perfect life, He fulfilled justice by His death. Thus, God Himself atoned for sin, at a cost too great for the human mind to fathom. Now, He graciously supplies on their behalf all the merit necessary for His people to be the objects of His favor. That is what Scripture means when it speaks of salvation by grace.

5. The Revelation of the Kingdom and Glory of the Lord Savior

This crucial component of Scripture brings the whole story to its God-ordained consummation. Redemptive history is controlled by God, so as to culminate in His eternal glory. Redemptive history will end with the same precision and exactness with which it began. The truths of eschatology are neither vague nor unclear—nor are they unimportant. As in any book, how the story ends is the most crucial and compelling part—so with the Bible. Scripture notes several very specific features of the end planned by God.

In the OT, there is repeated mention of an earthly kingdom ruled by the Messiah, Lord Savior, who will come to reign. Associated with that kingdom will be the salvation of

Israel, the salvation of Gentiles, the renewal of the earth from the effects of the curse, and the bodily resurrection of God's people who have died. Finally, the OT predicts that there will be the "uncreation" or dissolution of the universe, and the creation of a new heaven and new earth—which will be the eternal state of the godly—and a final hell for the ungodly.

In the NT, these features are clarified and expanded. The King was rejected and executed, but He promised to come back in glory, bringing judgment, resurrection, and His kingdom for all who believe. Innumerable Gentiles from every nation will be included among the redeemed. Israel will be saved and grafted back into the root of blessing from which she has been temporarily excised.

Israel's promised kingdom will be enjoyed, with the Lord Savior reigning on the throne, in the renewed earth, exercising power over the whole world, having taken back His rightful authority, and receiving due honor and worship. Following that kingdom will come the dissolution of the re-

newed, but still sin-stained creation, and the subsequent creation of a new heaven and new earth—which will be the eternal state, separate forever from the ungodly in hell.

Those are the five topics that fill up the Bible. To understand them at the start is to know the answer to the question that continually arises—Why does the Bible tell us this? Everything fits into this glorious pattern. As you read, hang the truth on these five hooks and the Bible will unfold, not as sixty-six separate documents, or even two separate testaments—but one book, by one divine Author, who wrote it all with one overarching theme.

My prayer is that the magnificent and overwhelming theme of the redemption of sinners for the glory of God will carry every reader with captivating interest from beginning to end of the story. Christian—this is your story. It is from God for you—about you. It tells what He planned for you, why He made you, what you were, what you have become in Christ, and what He has prepared for you in eternal glory.

KEY TEACHINGS OF THE BIBLE

The Holy Scriptures

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

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

▫ We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matt. 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12, 13; 17:17; 1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15–17; Heb. 4:12; 2 Pet. 1:20, 21).

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

We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal, grammat-

ical-historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12–15; 1 Cor. 2:7–15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of people; never do people stand in judgment of it.

God

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deut. 6:4; Is. 45:5–7; 1 Cor. 8:4), an infinite, all-knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

God the Father

We teach that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Ps. 145:8, 9; 1 Cor. 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1–31; Eph. 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Ps. 103:19; Rom. 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator, He is Father to all men (Eph. 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph. 1:11). He

continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chr. 29:11).

In His sovereignty, He is neither author nor approver of sin (Hab. 1:13), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Pet. 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Eph. 1:4–6); He saves from sin all those who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as His own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Heb. 12:5–9).

God the Son

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created “the heavens and the earth and all that is in them” according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operations (John 1:3; Col. 1:15–17; Heb. 1:2).

We teach that in the Incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. In His Incarnation, the eternally existing second person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God-man (Phil. 2:5–8; Col. 2:9).

We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Mic. 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9, 10; Col. 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin-born (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26–35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the Incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God’s kingdom (Ps. 2:7–9; Is. 9:6; John

1:29; Phil. 2:9–11; Heb. 7:25, 26; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

We teach that, in the Incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Phil. 2:5–8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the Cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24).

We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Rom. 3:25; 5:8, 9; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical Resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24:38, 39; Acts 2:30, 31; Rom. 4:25; 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God 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; Rom. 4:25; 6:5–10; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His body, unto Himself at the Rapture and, returning with

His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9–11; 1 Thess. 4:13–18; Rev. 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22, 23):

- a. Believers (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10);
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matt. 25:31–46); and
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15).

As the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5), the head of His body the church (Eph. 1:22; 5:23; Col. 1:18), and the coming universal King who will reign on the throne of David (Is. 9:6, 7; Ezek. 37:24–28; Luke 1:31–33), He is the final judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt. 25:14–46; Acts 17:30, 31).

God the Holy Spirit

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity, including intellect (1 Cor. 2:10–13), emotions (Eph. 4:30), will (1 Cor. 12:11), eternity (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10), omniscience (Is. 40:13, 14), omnipotence (Rom. 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19; Acts 5:3, 4; 28:25, 26; 1 Cor. 12:4–6; 2 Cor. 13:14; and Jer. 31:31–34 with Heb. 10:15–17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in the creation (Gen. 1:2), the Incarnation (Matt. 1:18), the written revelation (2 Pet. 1:20, 21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5–7).

We teach that a unique work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ

(John 14:16, 17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the body of Christ. His activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7–9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Rom. 8:9–11; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine teacher who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible (2 Pet. 1:19–21). 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 be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (Rom. 8:9–11; Eph. 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13, 14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:4–11; 2 Cor. 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints today and that speaking in tongues and the working of sign miracles in the beginning days of the church were for the purpose of pointing to and authenticating the apostles as revealers of divine truth, and were never intended to be characteristic of the lives of believers (1 Cor. 12:4–11; 13:8–10; 2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 4:7–12; Heb. 2:1–4).

Man

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self-determination, and moral responsibility to God (Gen. 2:7, 15–25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Is. 43:7; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing what is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1–19; John 3:36; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine affirmation (Ps. 14:1–3; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:9–18, 23; 5:10–12).

Salvation

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Eph. 1:4–7; 2:8–10; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19).

Election

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Rom. 8:28–30; Eph. 1:4–11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18, 19, 36; 5:40; 2 Thess. 2:10–12; Rev. 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph. 1:4–7; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Rom. 9:11–16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:25–28; 2 Tim. 1:9).

Regeneration

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accom-

plished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. 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 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 5:17–21; Phil. 2:12b; Col. 3:12–17; 2 Pet. 1:4–11). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Such a conformity is climaxed in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Rom. 8:16, 17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 1 John 3:2, 3).

Justification

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Rom. 8:30, 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; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; Is. 55:6, 7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Rom. 10:9, 10; 1 Cor. 12:3; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Rom. 3:20; 4:6) and involves the placing of our sins on Christ (Col. 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:21). By this means, God is enabled to "be just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

Sanctification

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2

Thess. 2:13; Heb. 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:2).

We teach that there is also, by the work of the Holy Spirit, a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the likeness of Christ through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Rom. 6:1–22; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Gal. 5:16–25; Phil. 3:12; Col. 3:9, 10; 1 Pet. 1:14–16; 1 John 3:5–9).

Security

We teach that all the redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Rom. 5:9, 10; 8:1, 31–39; 1 Cor. 1:4–9; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet. 1:4, 5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an excuse for sinful living and carnality (Rom. 6:15–22; 13:13, 14; Gal. 5:13, 16, 17, 25, 26; Titus 2:11–14).

Separation

We teach that separation from sin is clearly

called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness will increase (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; 2 Tim. 3:1–5).

We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from any association with religious apostasy, and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Cor. 5:9–13; 2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; 1 John 2:15–17; 2 John 9–11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:11, 12; Heb. 12:1, 2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness demonstrated by a beatitude attitude (Matt. 5:2–12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Rom. 12:1, 2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Heb. 12:14; Titus 2:11–14; 1 John 3:1–10).

The Church

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12, 13), the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:23–32; Rev. 19:7, 8), of which Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the body of Christ, began on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–21, 38–47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born-again believers in this present age (Eph. 2:11–3:6). The church is distinct

from Israel (1 Cor. 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Eph. 3:1–6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Gal. 1:2; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Cor. 11:18–20; Heb. 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated officers serving under Christ and over the assembly are elders (males, who are also called bishops, pastors, and pastor-teachers; Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualification (1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1–5).

We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Tim. 5:17–22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Heb. 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matt. 28:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matt. 18:15–17), as well as the need for discipline for sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matt. 18:15–22; Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 5:1–13; 2 Thess. 3:6–15; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; Titus 1:10–16).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the

faith. Local churches, however, through their pastors and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judges of the measure and method of their cooperation (Acts 15:19–31; 20:28; 1 Cor. 5:4–7, 13; 1 Pet. 5:1–4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph. 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Eph. 4:13–16), by instruction of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2, 15; 3:16, 17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38–42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Cor. 15:58; Eph. 4:12; Rev. 22:12).

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph. 4:7–12) and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5–8; 1 Cor. 12:4–31; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11).

We teach that there were two kinds of gifts given to the early church: miraculous gifts of divine revelation and healing, given temporarily in the apostolic era for the purpose of confirming the authenticity of the apostles' message (Heb. 2:3, 4; 2 Cor. 12:12); and ministering gifts, given to equip believers for edifying one another. With the New Testament revelation now complete, Scripture becomes the sole test of the authenticity of a person's message, and confirming gifts of a miraculous nature are no longer necessary to validate a person or his message (1 Cor. 13:8–12). Miraculous gifts can even be counterfeited by Satan so as to deceive

even believers (Matt. 24:24). The only gifts in operation today are those non-revelatory, equipping gifts given for edification (Rom. 12:6–8).

We teach that no one possesses the gift of healing today, but that God does hear and answer the prayer of faith and will answer in accordance with His own perfect will for the sick, suffering, and afflicted (Luke 18:1–8; John 5:7–9; 2 Cor. 12:6–10; James 5:13–16; 1 John 5:14, 15).

We teach that 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 Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Rom. 6: 1–11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible body of Christ (Acts 2:41, 42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Cor. 11:23–32). We also teach that whereas the elements of Communion are only symbolically 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 Cor. 10:16).

Angels

Holy Angels

We teach that angels are created beings and are, therefore, not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9–14; Heb. 1:6, 7, 14; 2:6, 7; Rev. 5:11–14).

Fallen Angels

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Is. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:1-14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1-15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Is. 14:13, 14; Matt. 4:1-11; Rev. 12:9, 10), the prince of this world who has been defeated through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:20), and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Is. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

Last Things (Eschatology)**Death**

We teach that physical death involves no loss of our immaterial consciousness (Rev. 6:9-11), that there is a separation of soul and body (James 2:26), that the soul of the redeemed passes immediately into the presence of Christ (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23), and that, for the redeemed, such separation will continue until the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-17) which initiates the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6), when our soul and body will be reunited to be glorified forever with our Lord (1 Cor. 15:35-44, 50-54; Phil. 3:21). Until that time, the souls of the redeemed in Christ remain in joyful fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:8).

We teach the bodily resurrection of all people, the saved to eternal life (John 6:39; Rom. 8:10, 11, 19-23; 2 Cor. 4:14), and the unsaved to judgment and everlasting punishment (Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Rev. 20:13-15).

We teach that the souls of the unsaved at death are kept under punishment until the

final resurrection (Luke 16:19-26; Rev. 20:13-15), when the soul and the resurrection body will be united (John 5:28, 29). They shall then appear at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) and shall be cast into hell, the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41-46), cut off from the life of God forever (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:41-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

The Rapture of the Church

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

The Tribulation Period

We teach that immediately following the removal of the church from the earth (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18) the righteous judgments of God will be poured out upon an unbelieving world (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 9:27; 12:1; 2 Thess. 2:7-12; Rev. 16), and that these judgments will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth (Matt. 24:27-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 2:7-12). At that time, the Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be raised and the living will be judged (Dan. 12:2, 3; Rev. 20:4-6). This period includes the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:24-27; Matt. 24:15-31; 25:31-46).

The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign

We teach that after the Tribulation period, Christ will come to earth to occupy the throne of David (Matt. 25:31; Luke 1:32, 33; Acts 1:10, 11; 2:29, 30) and establish His messianic kingdom for a thousand years on the

earth (Rev. 20:1–7). During this time, the resurrected saints will reign with Him over Israel and all the nations of the earth (Ezek. 37:21–28; Dan. 7:17–22; Rev. 19:11–16). This reign will be preceded by the overthrow of the Antichrist and the false prophet, and by the removal of Satan from the world (Dan. 7:17–27; Rev. 20:1–6).

We teach that the kingdom itself will be the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel (Is. 65:17–25; Ezek. 37:21–28; Zech. 8:1–17) to restore them to the land which they forfeited through their disobedience (Deut. 28:15–68). The result of their disobedience was that Israel was temporarily set aside (Matt. 21:43; Rom. 11:1–26), but will again be awakened through repentance to enter into the land of blessing (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezek. 36:22–32; Rom. 11:25–29).

We teach that this time of our Lord's reign will be characterized by harmony, justice, peace, righteousness, and long life (Is. 11; 65:17–25; Ezek. 36:33–38), and will be brought to an end with the release of Satan (Rev. 20:7).

The Judgment of the Lost

We teach that following the release of Satan after the thousand-year reign of Christ (Rev. 20:7), Satan will deceive the nations of the earth and gather them to battle against the saints and the beloved city, at which time Satan and his army will be devoured by fire from heaven (Rev. 20:9). Following this, Sa-

tan will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10); whereupon Christ, who is the judge of all people (John 5:22), will resurrect and judge the great and small at the Great White Throne judgment.

We teach that this resurrection of the unsaved dead to judgment will be a physical resurrection; whereupon receiving their judgment (John 5:28, 29), they will be committed to an eternal, conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11–15).

Eternity

We teach that after the closing of the Millennium, the temporary release of Satan, and the judgment of unbelievers (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:7–15), the saved will enter the eternal state of glory with God, after which the elements of this earth are to be dissolved (2 Pet. 3:10) and replaced with a new earth wherein only righteousness dwells (Eph. 5:5; Rev. 20:15, 21, 22). Following this, the heavenly city will come down out of heaven (Rev. 21:2) and will be the dwelling place of the saints, where they will enjoy forever fellowship with God and one another (John 17:3; Rev. 21; 22). Our Lord Jesus Christ, having fulfilled His redemptive mission, will then deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23–28) that in all spheres the triune God may reign forever and ever (1 Cor. 15:28).

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