

Essential Biblical Doctrines

DOCTRINAL SERIES



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TRUE JESUS CHURCH

International Assembly of the True Jesus Church
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Editors' Preface

The Second English Edition

The first English edition of the Essential Biblical Doctrines was published in 1970. After a few decades of widespread use, the publisher suggested a revised edition of Essential Biblical Doctrines be issued. At the present time, the new edition takes advances in biblical studies into account as well as improved translation. The editors have made some alterations to the first edition in order to keep Essential Biblical Doctrines current and more fluid in its translation.

Readers will find the following changes to the new edition:

1. Biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which replaces the King James Version used in the first edition.
2. Archaic terminology is replaced with more current literary expressions, which are more familiar to today's readership.
3. The text remains in an outline format, but certain areas have been expanded with further explanation.

Hopefully, the new edition of Essential Biblical Doctrines will be a helpful tool in leading today's readers to a deeper understanding of God's word. May you all be guided by the Holy Spirit in your pursuit of his word. Let all the glory be given to the name of our heavenly Father above, and may we faithfully serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

Editors,
Constance Lin, Jason Hsu, Chuck Helms
Los Angeles, USA
April 10, 1997

Translator's Preface

The Second English Edition

Biblical study is a life-long task for every Christian. This is a tremendous work, but it is well to begin with some systematic study. For this reason, a book that comprehensively covers various aspects of the words of God is timely. It is twenty-seven years since the first edition of the Essential Biblical Doctrines in English translation was undertaken. As it stands, the book has adopted a concordance format by attaching Scriptures to the content without a proper form of expository writing. In spite of this inadequacy, the book seems to have supplied a need for individuals and small Bible study circles. It has been in continuous demand on account of being such a handy reference dealing with important topics of the Bible doctrines, for instance, teaching on God, salvation, and eschatology.

Let this edition be a groundwork of theological studies about the kingdom and righteousness of God. May our Lord bless every serious Bible student in his or her fruitful pursuit of the divine words and work for the glory of the heavenly Father.

Meishi Tsai
Philadelphia, USA
December 24, 1996

Author's Preface

The First English Edition

The Bible, written under the inspiration of God, testifies for the Lord Jesus. The True Jesus Church in propagating the entrusted message is completely attuned to the Bible. This book entitled the Essential Biblical Doctrines is designed as the lecturing materials for the Theological Seminary and Bible students. It is a brief summary of the basic messages of the Bible, but it covers the necessary theological scope. Every reader is advised to study the Scriptures provided in the content of this book and to ponder further thereon.

There are altogether twenty chapters in this book, and it contains an important summary of the scriptural truth. For this reason, serious Bible students and believers are encouraged to have this book as a guide for their Bible studies. Meanwhile, this book is also recommended for fellow Christians and friends who are sincerely and soberly seeking for the message of “the way, the truth, and the life.”

The original Chinese version of this book was first published in 1960, and shortly after its publication 2000 copies were sold out. The author has intended to put the essential summary into an essay form, but it has been impossible for him to do so. Because of the recent demand the second edition has thus been put to publication with only a little revision. Incomplete quotations and illustrations are nevertheless inevitable. Suggestions are therefore very welcome. May the Lord bless the readers to bring forth the fruits as expounded from this book.

John Yang
Taichung, Taiwan
November, 1967

Abbreviations of the Books of the Bible

Old Testament

Genesis	Gen	2 Chronicles	2 Chr	Daniel	Dan
Exodus	Ex	Ezra	Ezra	Hosea	Hos
Leviticus	Lev	Nehemiah	Neh	Joel	Joel
Numbers	Num	Esther	Est	Amos	Amos
Deuteronomy	Deut	Job	Job	Obadiah	Obad
Joshua	Josh	Psalms	Ps	Jonah	Jon
Judges	Judg	Proverbs	Prov	Micah	Mic
Ruth	Ruth	Ecclesiastes	Eccl	Nahum	Nah
1 Samuel	1 Sam	Song of Solomon	Song	Habakkuk	Hab
2 Samuel	2 Sam	Isaiah	Isa	Zephaniah	Zeph
1 Kings	1 Kgs	Jeremiah	Jer	Haggai	Hag
2 Kings	2 Kgs	Lamentations	Lam	Zechariah	Zech
1 Chronicles	1 Chr	Ezekiel	Ezek	Malachi	Mal

New Testament

Matthew	Mt	Ephesians	Eph	Hebrews	Heb
Mark	Mk	Philippians	Phil	James	Jas
Luke	Lk	Colossians	Col	1 Peter	1 Pet
John	Jn	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess	2 Peter	2 Pet
The Acts	Acts	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess	1 John	1 Jn
Romans	Rom	1 Timothy	1 Tim	2 John	2 Jn
1 Corinthians	1 Cor	2 Timothy	2 Tim	3 John	3 Jn
2 Corinthians	2 Cor	Titus	Tit	Jude	Jude
Galatians	Gal	Philemon	Phm	Revelation	Rev

1. BIBLE



The Making of the Bible

A. The Bible Is the Book of God

1. The Bible is written through the inspiration of God (2 Tim 3:15–17)
2. No prophecy in the Bible ever came by human impulse, but people, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20–21)
3. Jesus Christ states that the Bible is the word of God, and that not an iota or a dot will pass away (cf. Mt 5:18; Mk 7:8–9; Jn 10:35)
4. The Lord Jesus said that the Scriptures testify of him (Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39)
5. The Bible outlines the standard of Christian faith (Isa 8:20; Acts 17:2; Gal 1:6–9)
6. The Scriptures cannot be added to, taken away from, or altered (Deut 12:32; Jer 26:2; Rev 22:18–19)

B. The Composition of the Bible

1. The Old Testament (TaNaK in Hebrew—Torah, Nevi'im, and Ketuvim)

The Old Testament (OT) consists of 39 books. These books were written in Hebrew and copied by Jewish scribes. In the Hebrew Bible, there are only 24 books, as the following combination of books are counted as one book/scroll: Samuel (1 and 2 Samuel); Kings (1 and 2 Kings); Chronicles (1 and 2 Chronicles); Ezra-Nehemiah; and the

Twelve (the minor prophets). The first book, Genesis, was written ca. 1500 B.C. and the last book, Malachi, ca. 400 B.C.

Using divisions of the Hebrew Bible, the OT is divided into three major categories—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings:

a. The Pentateuch or the Law (Torah)

The Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, is: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They are also called “the law of Moses” (2 Chr 30:16; Lk 24:44), “the book of Moses” (2 Chr 35:12), “Moses” (Lk 24:27; Jn 5:46), “the law” (Mt 5:17), and the writings of Moses (Jn 5:46–47).

The Pentateuch was used by the Jews at an early period, but its compilation and canonization took place ca. 400 B.C.

b. The Prophets (Nevi'im)

The Books of the Prophets are divided into Former and Latter Prophets:

- Former Prophets:
Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings
- Latter Prophets:
Major: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel
Minor: The Twelve—Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

The choice of these prophetic books lasted for about 400 years; their canonization took place ca. 250 B.C.

c. The Hagiographa or Writings (Ketuvim) can be subdivided into:

- i. Poetic books: Job, Psalms and Proverbs
- ii. Five scrolls: Ruth, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations
- iii. Apocalyptic book: Daniel
- iv. Historical books: Chronicles (one book), Ezra-Nehemiah (one book)

Most of these books date from the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. After the fall of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jewish

diaspora around A.D. 100, the Council of Jamnia finalized the canonization of the 24 books of the OT: the 5 Books of Moses, the 8 Prophetic Books, and the 11 Writings.

2. The New Testament

The New Testament (NT) is composed of 27 books. According to scholarly consensus, the Gospel of Mark was written first; conservative scholarship dates it circa A.D. 34. The final book, Revelation, can be dated circa A.D. 90. We can classify the NT canon, originally written in Greek, into four literary categories: gospel (the Four Gospels), history (Acts), correspondence/letters (Pauline epistles and others), and apocalypse (Revelation).

a. The Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

In the beginning of the Christian era, most Christians used the Septuagint, which was a Greek version of the Old Testament. The sayings of Jesus in the Gospels were preserved orally. “And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” (Acts 5:42). The sayings and acts of Jesus were regarded as the highest authority in the Christian faith. Naturally, a desire arose for a document that would distinguish the new religion, full of the grace and truth of Jesus, from other forms of Judaism, as well as from popular heresies (e.g., Gnosticism, Docetism, etc.). Thus, the four Gospels were gradually formed and recognized among the believers. The four Gospels became one of the first collections of NT texts to come together. This probably took place during the early part of the second century A.D.

b. Pauline Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles

The missionary work of Paul hastened the production of his letters. The thirteen letters, often called Pauline Epistles, are as follows: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

These Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles became another canon at the end of the second century.

c. Other Letters

Eventually, the NT canon also included other letters: Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude and Revelation. These documents were regarded as canon late in the second century. We do not know who wrote the book of Hebrews or to whom the letter was addressed.

C. The Writers of the Bible

God himself directed and dictated the writing of the Bible. The human authors of different backgrounds and occupations were merely his penmen.

1. The Old Testament

There were about 30 Hebrews who wrote the Old Testament (cf. Rom 3:2): prophets, like Isaiah (Lk 4:17–19); kings, like David (Mt 22:42–43); statesmen, like Daniel (Dan 6:1–3; Mt 24:15); and a shepherd, like Amos (Amos 7:14–15) were all penmen for the Old Testament. Apart from Ezra 4:8–6:18; 7:12–26; Jer 10:11; and Daniel 2:4–7:28, which were written in Aramaic, the Old Testament was written in Hebrew.

2. The New Testament

About nine people wrote the New Testament. Among them were fishermen, like Peter and John (Mt 4:18–22); a physician, like Luke (Col 4:14); a tax-collector, like Matthew (Mt 9:9); and a scribe, like Paul (Acts 22:1–3). The New Testament was written in Koine (or common) Greek.

D. The Transmission of God’s Oracles

The writers of the Bible were only God’s penmen, who were moved and inspired by the Spirit of God to make his will known to the world. The following are some illustrations of how God handed down his oracles:

1. God gave Moses two tablets of stone, on which the Ten Commandments, were written with the finger of God (Ex 31:18; Deut 10:2, 4)
2. God spoke to Moses face to face, instructing him many things (Num 12:7–8)

3. God spoke to the prophets directly in “a still small voice” (1 Kgs 19:12–18; 1 Sam 3:10–14)
4. God sent angels to reveal his will to the men of God (Dan 9:21–23; Acts 7:38, 53; Heb 2:2)
5. God made himself known through dreams and visions (Num 12:6; Rev 1:2, 11, 19)
6. The Holy Spirit moved men of God and revealed to them the will of God (2 Sam 23:2; Gal 1:12; Eph 3:5; 2 Pet 1:21)

E. The Canon and the Apocrypha

The word “canon” comes from the Greek word for “rule” or “standard.” Today, it refers to the correct list of divinely inspired books. The True Jesus Church uses the Protestant canon, which consists of 66 books (39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament); these books were eventually recognized by the Christian Church as genuinely inspired documents. The Apocrypha, on the other hand, include various religious writings of uncertain origin; they are not canon for our church. In fact, for the most part, they are impure and heretical texts, though we do refer to some apocryphal books for historical information. Apocryphal books are not part of the Protestant canon, but the Roman Catholic Church considers the Apocrypha as part of their canon. There are 14 apocryphal books included as part of the Old Testament in the Septuagint; and there are seven such books in the Vulgate (Latin Bible).

F. Some Important Versions of the Bible

1. Septuagint (Alexandrian Version)

During the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus (285–247 B.C.), arrangements were made for the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, for the benefit of Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt. The translation was undertaken by 70 men, or 72 to be exact. The translation began ca. 250 B.C. and continued for at least 75 years. In addition to the 39 books of the Hebrew canon, the Septuagint contains 14 apocryphal books: The First and Second Book of Esdras, The Book of Tobit, The Book of Judith, The Additions to the Book of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, The Book of Baruch, The Book of Susanna, The Song of

the Three Young Men, The Story of Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasseh, and The First and Second Book of the Maccabees.

2. The Vulgate

With so many Latin versions in existence, the need for revision became obvious. Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus, known as Jerome (A.D. 340–420), was commissioned by Pope Damasus to do the work of translation. Jerome was a famous scholar in his day and well trained in Greek and Hebrew, so he was well-suited for the task. After serving as a presbyter in Antioch, Jerome was made secretary to Pope Damasus. Jerome commenced his revision ca. A.D. 383 and continued the work in Bethlehem, where he lived for about 25 years. The result of his life’s work was the Vulgate (“currently received” or “common” Latin), which became the accepted text and the authoritative Bible of the Roman Church. The Latin text of Jerome was actually not designated Vulgate until the Council of Trent in A.D. 1546. The Vulgate consists of the Protestant Canon (Old and New Testaments) and seven apocryphal books.

3. The King James Bible, or the Authorized Version

In 1604, James I, who had succeeded Queen Elizabeth in 1603, called a conference to consider the petition of the Puritans to change the Prayer Book and service of worship. During the course of the hearings, and quite accidentally, the question of a new Bible came up. Dr. John Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, suggested that the king authorize the publication of a new English Bible. This authorization resulted in the popular King James Bible of 1611, which created a Bible in “the simple classic English style” of the time. The committee appointed to do the work consisted of 54 men, which included Anglicans, Puritans, high and low church men, clergy, and laymen.

The committee was divided into six sections: two to meet at Oxford, two at Cambridge, and two at Westminster. Each section was assigned to a certain portion of the Scriptures.

The work of each group was reviewed by the other groups. The first revised edition of the Authorized Version appeared in 1613 and included three hundred or so changes. This edition was followed by further revisions in 1629, 1762, and 1769.

4. The American Standard Version (1901)
5. The Revised Standard Version (1952)
6. The New American Standard Version (1960)
7. The New King James Version (1982)
8. The New Revised Standard Version (1989)

G. Chinese Versions

According to the Nestorian inscription of Singanfu, 27 books of the New Testament were known in China ca. A.D. 781. The following are some of the important Chinese translations:

1. The earlier Christian Bible (A.D. 635–650). This version is now buried in oblivion.
2. The Morrison's Bible (1814–1823). Robert Morrison, an English clergyman, translated the English New Testament to Chinese in 1814 and completed both Testaments in 1823.
3. The Union Version. In 1890, three versions were undertaken: the official Chinese (Mandarin), literary classic, and common classic. After the completion of these three versions, it was found that the literary and common forms of the classical Chinese versions were identical. Thus, only the common classic and the official Chinese (Mandarin) versions were printed.
4. The New Revised Version of Lu Chen-Chung's New Testament. This version, completed in 1952, was a direct rendering of the Greek text. This version is quite valuable for Bible study.

H. Chapters and Verses of the Bible

Originally, biblical texts were not divided by chapter or verse; rather, the text of each book was a continuous flow of letters. However, around 1236, Roman bishops began to divide biblical text into chapters. In 1660, Jewish rabbis divided the Old Testament text into verses. The New Testament was later divided into verses by French publishers. Altogether, the Bible has 1189 chapters (929 chapters in the Old Testament and 260 chapters in the New Testament) and 31,173 verses.



The Authority and Historicity of the Bible

A. The Lord Jesus Authenticated the Bible

1. The Lord Jesus testified to the writers of Scriptures
 - a. He referred to the writings of Moses (Mt 8:4; 19:8; Mk 7:10; Lk 16:31; 24:27; Jn 5:45–47; 7:22–23)
 - b. He mentioned David when he quoted a psalm (Mt 22:42–43)
 - c. He quoted the words of Isaiah (Mt 13:14–15; Mk 7:6; Lk 4:17–19)
 - d. He recalled the prophecy of Daniel (Mt 24:15)
 - e. He acknowledged the writings of the prophets (Lk 24:27)
2. The Lord Jesus attested that the Bible is the word of God
 - a. In quoting the Bible, he said, “For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother’” (Mt 15:4)
 - b. “And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was said to you by God” (Mt 22:31)
 - c. He summarized the law of the Old Testament and called it “the commandment of God” (Mk 7:8–9)
 - d. Jesus told the Pharisees that the Psalms were written by David through inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Mt 22:42–43; cf. 2 Sam 23:2)
3. The Lord Jesus acknowledged the following events in the Old Testament:
 - a. The creation (Mt 19:4–5; cf. Gen chaps. 1–2)
 - b. The flood (Mt 24:37–39; Lk 17:27; cf. Gen chaps. 6–8)
 - c. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Mt 10:15; 11:23–24; Lk 17:29; cf. Gen 19:12–29)
 - d. The transformation of Lot’s wife into a pillar of salt (Lk 17:32; cf. Gen 19:26)
 - e. The burning bush where God appeared to Moses (Mk 12:26; cf. Ex 3:2–6)

- f. The manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness (Jn 6:31, 35; cf. Ex 16)
- g. The brazen serpent lifted up by Moses (Jn 3:14; cf. Num 21:8–9)
- h. The glory of Solomon (Mt 6:29; cf. 1 Kgs 10:14–29)
- i. The murder of Abel and Zechariah (Mt 23:35; cf. Gen 4:3–9; 2 Chr 24:20–22)
- j. The cleansing of Naaman’s leprosy (Lk 4:27; cf. 2 Kgs 5:1–14)
- k. The unending supply of flour and oil for the widow of Zarephath (Lk 4:25–26; cf. 1 Kgs 17:8–16)
- l. Jonah in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights (Mt 12:39–40; cf. Jon 1:17)

B. The Fulfillment of Prophecies and Promises Testifies of the Authority of the Bible

Prophecies are predictions of what is to come, which are revealed by God to the prophets. God is omniscient, and His providence covers all dimensions of time and space. God fulfills all his promises in due time. The prophecies in the Bible have been continuously fulfilled one by one, and this confirms the claim that the Bible is indeed the word of God (Isa 46:9–10; Prov 30:5–6).

The following are some of the fulfilled promises and prophecies that support the authority of the Bible:

1. Prophecies concerning Israel
 - a. In his old age, Abraham was childless. However, God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars of heaven (Gen 15:1–5).
Fulfilled: Isaac was born to Abraham at the elderly age of 100. And from Isaac, came the nation of Israel, a numerous people (Gen 21:1–7).
 - b. It was foretold that the Israelites would become strangers in a foreign land, and they would serve a nation in affliction. It was also stated that thereafter the Israelites would be released from their bondage (Gen 15:13–14).

Fulfilled: The Israelites moved to Egypt in the days of Joseph, and were enslaved by the Egyptian Pharaoh until Moses led them out of their bondage by God's mighty hand (Gen 46:1–7, 26–27; Ex 1:22; 12:35–41).

- c. It was foretold that a king from Babylon would come to destroy Jerusalem, and Israel would be in captivity for 70 years (Jer 7:27; 25:8–12; 29:10).

Fulfilled: Because the kings, priests, and people transgressed the law of God and defiled the temple, God allowed the Chaldeans (a dominant tribal people in Babylonia) to burn the holy temple and the palaces down. The Chaldeans carried the people away to Babylon. After 70 years in Babylonian captivity, Cyrus, king of Persia, was moved by God to release the Jews. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah, the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple (2 Chr 36:14–23).

2. Prophecies concerning Christ

- a. Christ would be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14). He is the seed of the woman (Gen 3:15).

Fulfilled: The virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus by way of the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18–25).

- b. Jesus would be from the lineage of David (Jer 23:5; Mt 22:41–42)

Fulfilled: According to earthly genealogy, Jesus is the seed of David (Mt 1:1, 20).

- c. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Mt 2:4–6)

Fulfilled: Mary returned to Bethlehem, her home town, to register for the census; it was there that Jesus was born (Lk 2:1–7).

- d. The Messiah would be sold for the price of 30 pieces of silver (Zech 11:12)

Fulfilled: Judas Iscariot betrayed the Lord Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:14–15).

- e. The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced (Ps 22:14–18)

Fulfilled: Jesus was crucified on the cross and his hands and feet were pierced (Mt 27:22, 23, 26, 32–35).

- f. The Messiah would be raised up from the grave, or Sheol (Ps 16:10)

Fulfilled: Jesus resurrected from the tomb on the third day (Lk 24:1–7; Acts 2:25–32).

3. Predictions made by Jesus Christ himself

- a. The place of his suffering and death (Mt 16:21; Lk 13:33)
- b. The time of his death (Mt 16:21; 26:18)
- c. The person who would betray him (Mt 26:20–25)
- d. How he would die (Jn 3:14; 12:32–33)
- e. That he would resurrect on the third day (Mt 12:40; 16:21; 17:22–23)
- f. Jerusalem would be destroyed (Mt 24:1–2; Lk 19:41–44)
Jerusalem was besieged and burnt down by the Roman soldiers ca. A.D. 70.
- g. The promise of baptism by the Holy Spirit was made before the Lord's ascension (Acts 1:4–5; Jn 14:18; 16:7)

According to Jesus' promise, the Holy Spirit descended 10 days after his ascension, on the first day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). By the downpour of the Holy Spirit, the Lord's ascension and resurrection is thus verified. The coming of the Holy Spirit should compel man to have faith in the reliability of the Lord's promises (Acts 2:22–26).

- h. Jesus will come again, at the second coming, to bring his disciples into the kingdom of heaven (Mt 24:29–31; 25:31–46; Jn 14:1–3)

Though the Lord has not yet come, we must have full confidence that he will come soon to put an end to this world, and to receive the true believers into the heavenly kingdom (Rev 22:20). Since most prophecies and promises have been fulfilled, we must take heart and keep our faith strong.

[III]

The Efficacy of the Bible

- A. The Bible bears witness to Jesus as the Christ (Lk 24:27, 44; Jn 5:39, 46; Acts 10:42–43)
- B. The Bible gives humans the wisdom of salvation (Ps 119:98–99; 2Tim 3:15–16)
- C. The Bible serves as the canon, or standard, of our faith (Isa 8:20; Acts 17:2; Gal 1:6–9; 2 Jn 9)
- D. The Bible is the heavenly bread (Jer 15:16; Amos 8:11–13; 1 Pet 2:2)
- E. The Bible reflects like a mirror, by which we can examine ourselves (Heb 4:12; Jas 1:23)
- F. The Bible can cleanse hearts so that we can be purer (Ps 119:9; Jn 17:17; Eph 5:26)
- G. The Bible provides instructions in righteousness (Deut 17:18–20; 2Tim 3:16–17)
- H. The Bible provides warnings for the believers (1 Cor 10:11; 2 Pet 2:6–8)
- I. The Bible is a spiritual weapon to fight with in spiritual warfare (Eph 6:17; Rev 1:16; 12:11)
- J. The Bible is a primary source of spiritual strength and hope (Ps 19:7–8; Isa 55:2; Rom 15:4)

[IV]

How to Study the Bible

A. Surveying the Old and New Testaments

This method entails reading the entire Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Go slowly—chapter by chapter—to get a general survey of the stories, teachings, and content. You may choose to read the Old and New Testaments concurrently (i.e., a few chapters from the OT and a few from the NT), a method that works well for some.

B. Studying a Book In-depth

Study the background, purpose, and teachings/wisdom of the book. If you want to know a book well, go through the book over and over again until you know the contents in detail and can outline the structure of the whole book.

C. Studying a Chapter In-depth

Analyze the main theme of the chapter and grasp the main concepts within the context of preceding and following chapters. Look for important words to find the meaning of each verse. Additionally, you can use tools such as center column references and concordances to find related verses and words in other parts of the Bible. However, use biblical tools with care; we must always look to the Holy Spirit for divine guidance and wisdom.

D. Studying by Topic/Topical Studies

You can study the Bible by individual topics of interest. First of all, examine which field of study your topic falls under, e.g., Theology, Christology, Pneumatology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Demonology, Angelology, Anthropology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology, or Doctrines. Afterward, you may find pertinent biblical texts and references in your field of interest.

You should always humbly pray and consult spiritually-mature members if there are any questions or problems in your studies.

E. The Study of Typology and/or Prophecy

From shadows, prefigurations, and types in the Old Testament, we can learn a lot about the substance, figure, or antitype revealed in the New

Testament. The study of prefigurations and types can be very useful in teaching, exhortation, and self-edification. In this method of study, look for the fulfillment of the prophecies/promises through historical types and prefigurations.

F. Studying Biblical Characters

This method of study entails a biographical survey of various characters from the Bible. Just as we learn from the examples of those around us in our daily life, studying biblical characters provide us with enlightening insights into the mentality, actions, and consequences of their lives. We can learn from their mistakes as well as their virtues.

G. Historical Studies

This method of study entails a good understanding of biblical chronology, historical events, customs, and geography. In order to understand such things, you may need to consult knowledgeable members or extra-biblical references. This method of study is useful in understanding events that took place in biblical history and, ultimately, the plans of God for his chosen people.



Our Attitude Toward Bible Study

A. Have faith (Prov 30:5; Heb 4:2; 11:6; 1 Thess 2:13)

B. Depend on the Holy Spirit through prayer

While your prayer does not always have to be on your knees or in spiritual tongues, be sure to pray unceasingly before, during, and after reading the Scriptures. By depending upon the Holy Spirit, God often guides and reveals his truth to his people (Lk 24:45; Jn 16:13; 1 Cor 2:11; Eph 1:17; 1 Jn 2:27)

C. Prepare a pure heart and a receptive mind (Mt 5:8; Jas 1:21)

D. Be humble (Mt 5:3; cf. Acts 8:30–31)

E. Study the Bible everyday. Make Bible study a habit (Ps 119:147–148; Isa 50:4; Acts 17:11)

- F. Listen to sermons and resolve problems by talking with spiritually-mature members (Lk 2:46; Acts 8:34–35)
- G. Memorize and meditate upon the Scriptures day and night (Deut 6:6–9; Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2; Col 3:16)
- H. Keep the word of God in your heart after study and act upon it (Prov 8:32; Jer 42:6; Mt 7:24–25; Lk 11:27–28; Rev 1:3)
- I. Determine to spread the truth of the gospel with all diligence and courage after you have tasted the goodness of the word of God (Ezek 3:1; Mt 10:27; Rom 1:14–16; Tit 1:3; Rev 10:8–11)
- J. Do not alter the word of God

Neither add anything to God’s word nor take anything away from it. Do not let personal interpretations, personal pride, or self-interest compel you to distort or change God’s message of truth and salvation (Deut 12:32; Ps 119:89; Prov 30:5; Rev 22:18–19).

2. TRUE GOD



The Essence of God

A. God Is a Spiritual Being

1. A Spirit does not have flesh or bones (Lk 24:39)
 - a. God is called the Father of spirits (Heb 12:9). Moses called the Lord the God of the spirits of all flesh (Num 16:22; 27:16).
 - b. The Spirit of God is neither flesh nor material. As a spiritual being, God is omnipresent (Ps 139:7–8; Jer 23:23–24; Eph 1:23; 4:6).
2. The Spirit is invisible
 - a. “Lo, he passes by me, and I see him not; he moves on, but I do not perceive him” (Job 9:11; cf. Job 23:3, 8–9)
 - b. “Whom no man has ever seen or can see” (1 Tim 6:16; cf. Jn 1:18; Heb 11:27)
 - c. The beloved Son is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15)
3. The Spirit is self-manifesting
 - a. The Spirit is invisible. The Bible says that man can only see God through his manifestations (Gen 18:1–3; Ex 24:9–10; 33:18–23).
 - b. In the Old Testament, God often appeared as the angel of the LORD (Gen 16:7–10, 13; 21:17–19; 22:11–12; Judg 2:1–2)
 - c. God is Spirit and we should worship him in spirit and truth (Jn 4:24). We must not make idols for ourselves or worship them (Ex 20:4–5, 23; Acts 17:24–25).

B. God Is “I AM WHO I AM”

1. I AM—God is self-existing
 - a. All creatures have origins, for origins speak of creation. But the origin of all origins is God (Heb 2:10). He is the First Cause, a living Spirit who does not have any origin, for he is self-existing from all eternity (Ex 3:14).
 - b. God is “I AM WHO I AM,” thus he has no beginning of days (Heb 7:3). He is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega (Isa 44:6; Rev 1:8).
2. Eternal existence
 - a. Eternal existence means there is no beginning of days or end of life (Heb 7:3). The Bible says that God is he “who alone has immortality” (1 Tim 6:16).
 - b. God is everlasting (Gen 21:33; Isa 40:28) and eternal (Deut 33:27). “For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy” (Isa 57:15). He is the incorruptible God (Rom 1:23), whose years endure throughout all generations (Ps 102:24–28). He is the King of ages, immortal, and invisible (1 Tim 1:17).
 - c. God is eternal; therefore, he can give the believers everlasting consolation (2 Thess 2:16), eternal life (1 Tim 6:12), eternal glory (2 Cor 4:17; 5:1). All glory and praise be to God forever (Rom 1:25; 11:36; Gal 1:5; Eph 3:21).

C. God Is One

1. The Bible reveals that God is one
 - a. The Lord God is one Lord (Deut 6:4; Mk 12:29)
 - b. There is one God (1 Cor 8:6; 1 Tim 2:5; Jas 2:19). God is one (Rom 3:30; Gal 3:20), the only true God (Jn 17:3), and the only wise God (Rom 16:27). There is one Father who is in heaven (Mt 23:9; Mal 2:10).
2. There is no other god but the Lord
 - a. The Ten Commandments show that we should not have any other gods before the Lord God (Ex 20:3; cf. Deut 5:7; Isa 45:5)
 - b. God says, “See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me” (Deut 32:39; 1 Kgs 8:60)



The Almightyness of God

A. God Is Omniscient

The Bible reveals that God has complete knowledge of all things (Rom 16:27; 1 Jn 3:20).

1. God knows the ways of man (Ps 139:3)
 - a. Man's ways cannot be hidden from God (Prov 15:3; Jer 16:17)
 - b. God knew Achan took accursed things from the enemy (Josh 7:10–12, 16–26)
 - c. God knew of David's sin, though he committed them in secret (2 Sam 12:12; cf. 11:2–21)
 - d. God remembered the good works of Cornelius (Acts 10:1–4)
 - e. God cared for Jacob, who was ill-treated by Laban (Gen 31:23–24, 38–42)
2. God knows our words (Ps 139:4)
 - a. God will take into account people's careless words on the day of judgment (Mt 12:36, 37)
 - b. God heard what the king of Syria spoke in the bedchamber, though it was supposed to be a secret (2 Kgs 6:8–12)
 - c. We should bridle our tongue (Prov 10:19; Jas 1:26, 3:2)
 - d. Words of guile, falsehood, and judgment should not be spoken (Mt 7:1; Rom 2:1–2; 1 Cor 6:10; Rev 14:5)
3. God knows our thoughts (Ps 139:2)
 - a. God searches all hearts, and understands all the imaginations of the thoughts (1 Chr 28:9; Acts 15:8)
 - b. God knew that Sarah laughed within herself at the promise of giving birth to a son (Gen 18:10–15)
 - c. God knew the integrity of Abimelech's heart (Gen 20:6)
 - d. To allow our heart to stray away from righteousness is a sin (Mt 5:28; Acts 8:21; 1 Jn 3:15)

- e. Keep your heart with all vigilance, because God knows what is in it (1 Sam 16:7; Prov 4:23)
4. God is omniscient
- a. God determines the number of the stars and calls them all by name (Ps 147:4; Isa 40:26)
 - b. All creatures are open and laid bare in God's sight (Heb 4:13)
 - c. God declares the end from the beginning (Isa 46:9–10)
 - d. God's understanding is infinite, and the depth and riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God are beyond our description (Ps 147:5; Rom 11:33)
 - e. God is great in counsel and mighty in deed, for he is omniscient (Jer 32:19; Rom 2:16)

B. God Is Omnipotent

The Lord Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (Mt 19:26). "Is anything too hard for the LORD?" (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17, 27). God is the Almighty (Gen 17:1; Job 37:23; Rev 11:17).

1. God's omnipotence in relation to creation
- a. In the beginning, God created the world and all things. This is a sign of God's awesome power (Gen 1:1; Heb 11:3).
 - b. At present, the heavens and the earth are sustained by God (Ps 119:91; 2 Pet 3:7)
 - c. God made the sun and the moon stand still in the valley of Ajalon for about a day (Josh 10:12–14)
 - d. God opened the mouth of a donkey and it spoke to Balaam (Num 22:28–30)
 - e. God caused the widow of Zarephath's jar of oil and flour to flow continuously until rain once again fell upon the land (1 Kgs 17:14–16)
 - f. God fed one hundred men with twenty loaves of barley (2 Kgs 4:42–44)

2. God's omnipotence in relation to mankind
 - a. God acts according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth (Dan 4:35)
 - b. God cleansed the leprosy of Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria (2 Kgs 5:14)
 - c. God struck the army of Syria with blindness (2 Kgs 6:18–20)
 - d. God gave Abraham a son at the age of one hundred (Gen 18:10–15; 21:2–5)
 - e. God raised the dead (1 Kgs 17:17–23; 2 Kgs 4:32–37)
 - f. During the 40 years of journey in the wilderness, the clothing of the Israelites did not wear out, and their feet did not swell (Deut 8:4; Neh 9:21)
 - g. God took up Enoch and Elijah without letting them pass through death (Gen 5:24; 2 Kgs 2:11)
3. God's omnipotence in other aspects
 - a. Angels are obedient to the word of God (Ps 103:20)
 - b. God has the power to bind Satan (Rev 20:1–3)
 - c. All creatures are nothing before him (Isa 40:15–17, 22–23; Job 6:14)
 - d. God's mighty works are unfathomable (Job 11:7–11; Rom 11:33)

C. God Is Omnipresent

“Am I a God at hand, says the LORD, and not a God afar off? Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? says the LORD. Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the LORD” (Jer 23:23–24). David said, “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!” (Ps 139:7–8).

1. God is above all (Eph 4:6)
 - a. The Lord has established his throne in the heavens (Ps 103:19)
 - b. The Lord God says, “I dwell in the high and holy place” (Isa 57:15; 66:1)

- c. The Lord our God dwells on high, beholding the things in heaven and on earth (Ps 113:5–6)
 - d. God dwells in unapproachable light, and no flesh has seen him or can see him (1 Tim 6:16)
2. God is through all (Eph 4:6)
- a. God is before you (Isa 52:12; Mic 2:13)
 - b. God is around his people (Ps 125:2)
 - c. God says, “I will live in them and move among them” (2 Cor 6:16)
 - d. God fills all in all (Eph 1:23)
3. God is in all (Eph 4:6)
- a. God says, “And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek36:27)
 - b. The Lord Jesus promised to abide with the disciples forever (Jn 14:15–17)
 - c. God will be with those with a contrite and humble spirit (Isa 57:15)
 - d. We know that God abides in us by the Spirit that he has given us (1 Jn 3:24; 4:13)



The Attributes of God

A. God Is Holy

1. Holiness is one of God’s attributes
 - a. “For I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy” (Lev 11:44)
 - b. Joshua said, “For he is a holy God; he is a jealous God” (Josh 24:19)
 - c. “Extol the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!” (Ps 99:5)

- d. Moses said, “Who is like thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, majestic in holiness, terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” (Ex 15:11)
 - e. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5)
 - f. The place where God appears is a holy place (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15)
 - g. Even the heavens are not clean in God’s sight (Job 15:15)
- 2. God detests wickedness**
- a. God never does wickedness (Job 34:10)
 - b. God’s eyes are purer than the evil and the iniquities of man; God will not send his blessings upon the evil (Hab 1:13)
 - c. All who do evil things and who act dishonestly are an abomination to God (Deut 25:16; Prov 15:9, 26)
 - d. God was sorrowful to see great wickedness done on earth (Gen 6:5–6)
 - e. Twenty-four thousand died in the plague because of adultery and fornication; God will punish those who live according to their fleshly desires (Num 25:9–11)
- 3. God wants his children to be sanctified**
- a. God said, “You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6)
 - b. “For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness” (1 Thess 4:7)
 - c. “But as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet 1:15–16)
 - d. “May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess 5:23)
 - e. “Because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thess 2:13)
- 4. God rejects sinners who will not repent**
- a. Without holiness we shall not see the Lord (Heb 12:14; cf. Mt 5:8; Ps 24:3–4)

- b. God will not hear the prayers of sinners (Isa 59:1–2)
- c. God will not dwell in an unclean place (cf. Deut 23:9–14; Mt 21:12–13)
- d. God will not abide with the assembly or church even if it is one person who commits sin (Josh 7:11–12, 25)
- e. The wicked shall not stand tall in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous (Ps 1:5)

B. God Is Just

1. The Scripture reveals that God is just
 - a. God says that he is a just God (Isa 45:21; Jn 17:25)
 - b. “The LORD within her is righteous, he does no wrong” (Zeph 3:5)
 - c. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of God’s throne (Ps 89:14; 97:2)
 - d. The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings (Ps 145:17; Rev 15:4)
2. God’s legislation is just
 - a. The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous (Ps 19:9; 119:172)
 - b. “And what great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law which I set before you this day?” (Deut 4:8)
 - c. The testimonies that God has commanded are righteous and faithful (Ps 119:138)
 - d. “The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Rom 7:12)
 - e. “The sum of thy word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endures forever” (Ps 119:160)
3. God commands his children to be just
 - a. God wants the chosen to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with their God (Mic 6:8; Mt 23:23)

- b. We should pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness (Isa 56:1; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22)
 - c. God commands judges to be just in their judgments (Lev 19:15; Deut 1:16–17; 16:18–20)
 - d. Never discriminate against the poor or show partiality to the rich (Jas 2:1–4)
 - e. Righteousness will deliver us from death (Prov 10:2; 12:28)
 - f. A royal throne is established by righteousness (Prov 14:34; 16:12; 25:5)
4. The judgment of God is just
- a. God will judge the world righteously (Ps 9:4, 8; 96:10; 98:9)
 - b. God will by no means count the guilty as guiltless (Ex 34:7)
 - c. God’s judgments are right (Ps 119:75)
 - d. “All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them” (Prov 8:8)
 - e. God will render a righteous judgment to everyone according to their deeds (Gen 18:25; Rom 2:6; Rev 22:12)
5. God will punish the wicked
- a. “There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil” (Lam 1:18; Rom 2:8–9)
 - b. The soul of a sinner will die (Ezek 18:4; Dan 9:7–14)
 - c. Abimelech and the wicked men of Shechem were struck by God because of their iniquities (Judg 9:53–57)
 - d. Rehoboam fell at the hand of Shishak, king of Egypt, after he had transgressed against the Lord (2 Chr 12:1–7)
 - e. “The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed” (Ps 103:6)
 - f. The wicked will be cast into hell in the final judgment (Mt 13:36–42; 2 Thess 1:6–7; Rev 21:8)
6. God will reward the righteous
- a. God will give glory, honor, and peace to everyone who does good (1 Kgs 8:32; Rom 2:10–11)

- b. God will not forget man's good work and labor of love (Acts 10:4; Heb 6:10)
- c. God blessed Caleb because he followed him faithfully (Num 14:23–24; Josh 14:6–14)
- d. God saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and his household from the great flood (Gen 7:1; 2 Pet 2:5)
- e. "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart" (Gal 6:9)
- f. The righteous will be awarded a crown of righteousness as they enter into the heavenly kingdom on the last day (Mt 13:43; Rom 2:7; 2 Tim 4:8)

C. God Is Merciful

1. The Bible reveals that God is merciful
 - a. God is love (1 Jn 4:8, 18)
 - b. "God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6; Ps 86:15)
 - c. The Lord is gracious and full of mercy. His compassion is over all his works (Ps 145:8–9)
 - d. God's steadfast love endures forever (Ps 118:1–4; Jer 31:3)
2. Who is loved by God?
 - a. God loves those who fear him
 - i. God takes pleasure in those who fear him (Ps 147:11)
 - ii. "He who loves me [Jesus] will be loved by my Father" (Jn 14:21,23; 16:27; 17:23)
 - iii. "The steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon those who fear him" (Ps 31:19; 103:17; 145:19)
 - iv. God will show steadfast love to those who love him and keep his commandments, including their descendants (Ex 20:6)
 - b. God's heart is for our blessing, not cursing
 - i. God loves the world (Jn 3:16)
 - ii. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4)

- iii. God does not wish that any should perish (2 Pet 3:9)
- iv. The Lord is good to all (Ps 145:9; Mt 5:45)
- c. God loves sinners
 - i. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11)
 - ii. God is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish (Lk 6:35)
 - iii. Jesus Christ died for all sinners (Rom 5:6–8; Gal 1:4)
 - iv. God’s tender mercies are over all his works (Ps 33:5; 36:6; 145:9, 15–17)
- 3. The love of God is clearly manifested to man
 - a. God extends his loving care to his people and children
 - i. The Lord feeds his people (Gen 48:15; Ex 16:1–4; Ps 23:1)
 - ii. God keeps his people as the apple of his eye (Deut 32:10)
 - iii. God delivered Jacob from the hand of Laban (Gen 31:24, 42)
 - iv. God delivered Israel from the Egyptians (Ex 14:19, 20)
 - v. The Lord shelters his people all the day long (Deut 33:12)
 - vi. God was afflicted in all the affliction of his people, and he redeemed them by his love and mercy (Isa 63:9)
 - b. God chastises his children
 - i. “For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (Heb 12:6)
 - ii. “For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still” (Jer 31:20)
 - iii. God was indignant over the misery of Israel (Judg 10:10–16)
 - iv. God does not willingly afflict or grieve man (Job 37:23; Jer 29:11; Lam 3:32–33)
 - v. The chastened will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Deut 8:2–7; Heb 12:9–13)
 - c. God sacrificed his only begotten Son, who willingly gave up his life on the cross

- i. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (Jn 15:13)
- ii. God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten Son (Mt 20:28; Jn 3:16)
- iii. That Christ died for us is the manifestation of God’s love (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8; Gal 2:20)
- d. God forgives the iniquities of man
 - i. God often forgives us our iniquities, as he delights in mercy (Ps 103:3–4; Mic 7:18–20)
 - ii. God puts forth Jesus Christ as a propitiation by his blood, through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness and forbearance by forgiving our sins (Rom 3:21–26)
 - iii. We are called to be children of God through Jesus Christ, though formerly we were children of God’s wrath (Eph 1:5–6; 2:3; 1 Jn 3:1)
 - iv. Through Christ, God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3–4)
- e. God’s love is unconditional and free
 - i. God is like a hen that gathers her brood under her wings (Mt 23:37)
 - ii. God is like a shepherd tending his sheep (Ps 23:1–6; Isa 40:11; Jn 10:11)
 - iii. God is a spiritual Father who pities his children’s weaknesses (Ps 103:13; Lk 15:11–32)
 - iv. God’s love surpasses that of our earthly parents (Ps 27:10)
 - v. The love of God is beyond our knowledge (Eph 3:18–19)

D. God Is Truthful

- 1. The Bible reveals that God is the God of truth
 - a. God is a God of faithfulness and without iniquity (Deut 32:4)
 - b. God is faithful (1 Cor 1:9; 10:13)

- c. All of God's work is done in faithfulness (Ps 33:4)
 - d. God keeps faith forever (Ps 117:2; 146:6)
2. God's word is truthful
- a. God cannot lie (Tit 1:2; Heb 6:18)
 - b. "God is not man, that he should lie" (Num 23:19)
 - c. God will not alter the word that went forth from his lips (Ps 89:34)
 - d. The ordinances of God are true and righteous (Ps 19:9; 119:142, 151, 160)
 - e. The promises of the Lord are pure, like silver in a furnace that has been purified seven times (Ps 12:6; 119:140)
3. God keeps his covenant
- a. God keeps his covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, even to a thousand generations (Deut 7:9)
 - b. God delivered Israel out of Egypt to fulfill his covenant with Abraham (Ex 2:24–25; Lev 26:42)
 - c. God kept his covenant with David, so Joash's life was spared when Athaliah slew all the sons of the king (2 Kgs 11:2)
 - d. The covenant that the seed of David would become the highest king was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of David by genealogy of flesh (Ps 89:27–37; Mt 1:1; Heb 1:8; Gal 3:15–16)
 - e. All the promises of God are Yes in him (2 Cor 1:20)
 - f. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering (1 Cor 1:9; Heb 10:23)
4. God is reliable
- a. God is faithful, and he will make a way for you to escape when you are tempted (1 Cor 10:23; 2 Thess 3:3)
 - b. Often, God, in his faithfulness, will afflict and try us for our own good (Ps 119:75)
 - c. Cast all your burdens on the LORD (Ps 37:5; 55:22; 1 Pet 5:7)
 - d. Those who believe in God shall not be ashamed (Prov 30:5; Rom 9:33)

[IV]

God and the World

The Almighty God, the Lord of heaven and earth, created the universe long ago (Acts 17:24–25). God’s providence maintains divine order and harmony in this world, and he is leading humankind towards salvation at present. In the future, God will judge the world.

A. The Creation of the Universe

1. The Bible reveals that God created the heavens and the earth
 - a. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1)
 - b. All things were created by God—in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible (Jn 1:1–3; Col 1:16)
 - c. God is the builder of all things (Heb 3:4)
 - d. Scriptures relating to God’s creation include: Exodus 20:11, Nehemiah 9:6, Isaiah 44:24, Jeremiah 10:12, and Revelation 4:11. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 provide detailed information.
2. The purpose of creation
 - a. Creation in relation to God
 - i. Creation manifests God’s great wisdom (Jer 51:15; cf. Ps 104:24; 136:5; Prov 3:19)
Our redemption through Jesus Christ is the greatest manifestation of God’s profound wisdom in creation (Eph 3:9–11)
 - ii. Creation manifests God’s power and mighty deeds (Ps 145:10–12; cf. Ps 19:1; Rom 1:20)
 - iii. Creation manifests the glory of God (Ps 8:1; cf. Ps 19:1; Rev 4:11)
The children of God, called by His name, Jesus, are made for God’s glory (Isa 43:7; cf. Ps 86:9; Isa 60:21; Eph 1:5–6).
Therefore, Christians should glorify God (1 Cor 6:20; 10:31).
 - b. Creation in relation to mankind
 - i. The earth is the abode of humankind (Ps 115:16; Isa 45:18)

- ii. Lights in the firmament of the heavens are to divide the day from the night, and are for signs, seasons, days and years (Gen 1:14–17)
 - iii. Vegetation and animals are food for human beings (Gen 1:29; 9:3; cf. Gen 2:16; 1 Tim 4:4; 6:17)
 - iv. The wool of lambs can provide clothing (Prov 27:26)
 - v. Angels, ministering spirits, are sent forth to serve the heirs of salvation (Heb 1:14)
 - vi. God gave man dominion over all living creatures (Gen 1:26, 28; Ps 8:4, 6; cf. Gen 2:15, 19–20)
3. The ways of God's creation
- a. God created all things for his will and pleasure (Rev 4:11)
 - b. The world was framed by the word of God (Ps 33:6; 148:5; Heb 11:3; cf. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24)
 - c. All things were made by the Spirit of God (Gen 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps 104:30)
 - d. God created all things from nothingness (Heb 11:3)
 - e. Creation is the work of God alone (Isa 44:24; cf. Job 9:8; Isa 40:13; 45:12)
 - f. In six days, the heaven and the earth were created (Gen 2:1–3; Ex 20:11)
 - i. The first day: light, and the succession of day and night (Gen 1:3–5; cf. Isa 45:7; 2 Cor 4:6)
 - ii. The second day: the firmament (Gen 1:6–8; Isa 40:22)
 - iii. The third day: land and vegetation (Gen 1:9–13; cf. Ps 104:14)
 - iv. The fourth day: sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14–19; cf. Ps 8:3, 104:19, 136:7–9)
 - v. The fifth day: sea creatures and birds (Gen 1:20–23; cf. Ps 104:25, 26)
 - vi. The sixth day: land animals and human beings (Gen 1:24–31; cf. Gen 5:1; 9:6; Jer 27:5)

vii. The seventh day: God rested and sanctified this day as the holy sabbath (Gen 2:1–3; cf. Ex 20:8–11; 34:21)

B. God’s Providential Guardianship over His Creatures

God created all things and cares for them. This is called providence. “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Ps 103:19; cf. Ps 135:6).

1. God’s providence in the universe

- a. The word of his power sustains all things (Heb 1:3). “But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly man” (2 Pet 3:7; Ps 119:91).
- b. The seedtime and harvest, summer and winter, day and night remain the same (Gen 8:22; cf. Ps 74:17; Jer 33:20, 25)
- c. God prescribes the boundaries of the sea (Job 38:8–11; Jer 5:22; cf. Ps 104:9; Prov 8:29)
- d. God makes wind his messenger (Ps 104:4; cf. Ps 107:25, 29, 135:7). God caused a strong east wind to dry up the Red Sea, thereby opening a way for Israel to pass through (Ex 14:21). A strong wind brought quails from the sea to satisfy Israel’s desire for meat (Num 11:31).
- e. God gives rain in due season (Jer 5:24; cf. Job 38:25–28). God gives rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons (Acts 14:17; cf. Job 5:9, 10; Ps 65:9, 10; Isa 30:23). Famine or good harvest is in the hand of God. God foretold that Egypt would have seven years of good harvest, followed by seven years of famine (Gen 41:25–32). God also gave rain after three years of drought (1 Kgs 18:41–45; Lk 4:25; Jas 5:17). God sends rain on the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45). The false gods of the gentiles cannot cause rain (Jer 14:22). Sometimes God causes rain for chastisement and at other times for mercy (Job 37:11–13). Take for example, the deluge of forty days and forty nights that destroyed a whole generation of wickedness, but also kept Noah and his household alive (Gen 7:11–12, 21–23).
- f. Lilies, flowers, and grass are in the providential care of God (Job 38:26–27; Mt 6:28–30)

2. God's providence for birds and beasts

“Man and beast thou savest, O LORD” (Ps 36:6)

- a. God gives food to the beast, and to the young ravens that cry (Ps 147:9; cf. Job 39:8; Ps 104:14, 20–22)
- b. God sends the springs into the valleys that run among the hills, which give drink to every beast of the field. There the wild donkeys can quench their thirst (Ps 104:10–11).
- c. The high mountains are habitats for wild goats; rocks are a refuge for badgers (Job 39:6, 27–28; Ps 104:18)
- d. “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Mt 6:26). God provides subsistence for the birds of the air.
- e. No sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's will, for he watches over even the most insignificant creation (Mt 10:29)

3. God's providence for the nations

- a. For the kingdom is the Lord's; he is the governor among the nations (Ps 22:28; cf. Ps 66:7)
- b. “He makes nations great, and he destroys them: he enlarges nations, and leads them away” (Job 12:23)
- c. God sets the boundaries and limits for his chosen and mankind (Deut 32:8; Acts 17:26)
- d. God removes kings and sets up kings (Dan 2:21; cf. Dan 4:17; 5:19–21)
- e. Nebuchadnezzar's dream was a precursor to subsequent historical events among the nations (Dan 2:27–35). The interpretation was revealed by God: the golden head symbolized Babylon (Dan 2:38), the silver breast and arms symbolized the kingdoms of the Medes and Persians (Dan 2:32, 38), the brass belly and thighs symbolized Greece (Dan 2:32, 39), the iron legs symbolized the Roman Empire (Dan 2:33, 40), and the feet partly of iron and partly of clay symbolized the nations derived from the Roman Empire (Dan 2:33, 41–43).

4. God's providence for man

“But I trust in thee, O LORD, I say, ‘Thou art my God.’ My times are in thy hand” (Ps 31:14–15)

- a. God calls and appoints man from the mother's womb
 - i. God sees our unformed substance (Ps 139:16)
 - ii. God “had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace” (Gal 1:15)
 - iii. God foreknows our ways (Gen 25:21–23)
- b. Man's paths are directed by the Lord (Prov 20:24; Jer 10:23)
 - i. God sanctified and sent Jeremiah before he was born (Jer 1:5)
 - ii. The dreams of Joseph's rise to power (Gen 37:5–11) were fulfilled in the later years when Joseph was made prime minister of Egypt (Gen 41:37–43; 50:19–20)
- c. Marriage is instituted by God (Mk 10:7–9)
 - i. Houses and riches are the inheritance of fathers; but a prudent wife is from the Lord (Prov 19:14)
 - ii. God prepared Rebecca for Isaac (Gen 24:7, 44–48)
- d. Children are the heritage of the Lord (Ps 127:3; cf. Gen 33:5; 48:9)
 - i. Isaac was granted a child by God (Gen 25:21)
 - ii. God heard Hannah's request and gave her a child named Samuel (1 Sam 1:10–20)
- e. God gives us the power to attain wealth (Deut 8:18; 1 Chr 29:12)
 - i. Blessed by God, Isaac received a hundredfold from the land (Gen 26:12–13)
 - ii. God made Solomon prosperous (1 Kgs 3:13; 10:14, 15, 21, 27)
- f. God allows us to advance in position and rank (1 Sam 2:7; Ps 75:6–7)
 - i. Daniel was appointed as governor (Dan 1:9, 17, 20; 6:1–3)
 - ii. Mordecai was promoted to prime minister to the king (Est 6:1–11; 10:1–3)

- g. God has the power to kill and make alive (Deut 32:39; Jas 4:13–15)
 - i. God determines our times (Job 14:5; Acts 17:26, 28)
 - ii. God delivers us from death (Ps 68:20; 91:3–7; 121:3–8)
 - iii. God extends the number of our days, e.g. 15 years were added to Hezekiah’s life (Isa 38:1–8), and Dorcas was raised from death to life (Acts 9:36–41). “The fear of the LORD prolongs life” (Prov 10:27). Those who honor their parents may live long on the earth (Eph 6:1–3).
 - iv. Sometimes, God blesses by shortening a person’s life to spare him from future calamity (Isa 57:1). No one can make straight that which God has made crooked (Eccl 7:13). We do not have foreknowledge of life, death, happiness, or adversity. Therefore, Paul said, “It depends not upon man’s will or exertion, but upon God’s mercy” (Rom 9:16). So we should always humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet 5:6). We must not take pride in our own understanding, nor lean on our own wisdom (Prov 3:5). If there is anything magnified and honorable, praise and glory should be given to God. Nebuchadnezzar, after he was chastised by God, realized all glory and might belong solely to God; we too must learn this lesson (Ps 115:1; Dan 4:28–37).

C. God’s Special Ways of Providential Care

- 1. God’s providence through the wicked
 - a. **Hindrance:** God often hinders people in their plans in order to keep them from sinning or to deliver them from evil
 - i. God prevented Abimelech from defiling Sarah (Gen 20:1–7)
 - ii. God held back Laban from persecuting Jacob (Gen 31:24, 42)
 - iii. The king of Babylon could not burn Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to death (Dan 3:19–27)
 - b. **Tolerance:** God tolerates sinners while abhorring their sins. God is holy, and he detests sin. God should punish sinners, but he often tolerates them in order to lead them to repentance (Rom 2:3, 4). But if we take God’s grace for granted, we may

face a time when God gives us over to our own lusts. By then, last-minute repentance is too late, for God's grace period is over (Rom 1:28; 2 Thess 2:10–12).

- i. God let all the nations walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16; Rom 11:24–28)
 - ii. Israel did not listen to God; therefore he gave them up to the lust of their own hearts and allowed them to walk in their own ways (Ps 81:11–13; Hos 4:17).
 - iii. The Lord delays his second coming, which shows his forbearance toward us. God wishes that all would come to repentance (2 Pet 3:7, 9).
- c. Irony:** God detects the wicked's treacherous plans. God may directly hinder the wicked with obstacles; ironically, God may also carry out his will by allowing the wicked to carry out their plans (Ps 76:10).
- i. Obstinate Pharaoh, who refused Israel's request to depart from Egypt, caused the report of the ten plagues to spread among the nations, through which God's mighty deeds were manifested (Ex 9:13–17; Neh 9:9–10; Rom 9:17)
 - ii. Joseph was sold to Egypt (Gen 37:28), put in jail (Gen 39:19–20), and forgotten by the butler for two years (Gen 40:23). However, all these events led to Joseph's promotion by Pharaoh (Gen 41:37–43, 50:20).
 - iii. The Jews crucified Jesus. But ironically, the crucifixion fulfilled God's redemptive plan (Acts 2:23–24; 4:27–28).
- d. Restriction:** God often tests the faith of his chosen people. At times, God allows Satan or wicked people to tempt and attack God's children; however, these tests are held within God's limits (cf. 1 Cor 10:13).
- i. God restricted Satan in his assault on Job (Job 1:12; 2:6)
 - ii. David was not delivered into the hand of King Saul (1 Sam 23:7–14; 24–29)
 - iii. God ordered the angels not to spread the plague, which limited the plague (1 Chr 21:27; cf. 1 Chr 21:13–26)

- iv. Before the appointed time, no one could arrest Jesus (Jn 7:30; 8:20)
2. God's providence for the righteous
- a. **Assistance and Support:** "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will" (Prov 21:1). God gives support to his beloved by moving and controlling the hearts of other people.
 - i. The Spirit of God moved Amasai to follow David (1 Chr 12:18)
 - ii. God made the nations fear David (1 Chr 14:17)
 - iii. God moved Israel to obey the commands of Hezekiah in order to fulfill his purpose (2 Chr 30:12)
 - b. **Protection:** "The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them" (Ps 34:7). Though we are usually not conscious of the Lord's spiritual protection, the Lord—who is in the midst of his people—is mighty (Zeph 3:17).
 - i. God moved Pharaoh's daughter to nourish Moses when he was only a child. Afterward, God arranged for Moses to grow up in Pharaoh's household to learn all the wisdom of the Egyptians, which prepared Moses in his work for the Lord (Ex 2:1–10; Acts 7:18–22).
 - ii. God protected Isaac from the oppression of the herdsmen of Gerar (Gen 26:24; cf. Gen 26:12–31)
 - iii. God protected Jacob during his times of hardship (Gen 28:13–15; 48:15–16)
 - c. **Opening a Way:** God is faithful, and he opens a way for his chosen ones during their trials and adversities.
 - i. God opened up a path in the Red Sea for Israel to escape from the Egyptian soldiers (Ex 14:10–31)
 - ii. God rained manna in the wilderness to keep Israel from starvation (Ex 16:1–5; Deut 8:2–3)
 - iii. God mightily drove away the Syrians in order to rescue the Israelites (2 Kgs 7:1–20)

- d. **Responding to Requests:** The Lord Jesus once said, “Ask, and it will be given you” (Mt 7:7). God hears our prayers (1 Jn 5:14) and will fulfill the desire of those who fear him (Ps 145:19).
- i. God heard Joshua’s request to let the sun and the moon stand still until Israel had victory over the five kings (Josh 10:12–14)
 - ii. Ezra and the others fasted and prayed to God for safe passage in their return to Jerusalem; God heard their prayers and granted their request (Ezra 8:21–23, 31)
 - iii. God heard Elijah’s prayers and caused a drought that lasted for three years and six months. Afterward, God heard Elijah’s prayer again and it began to rain (1 Kgs 17:1; 18:41–46; Jas 5:17–18).
 - iv. David prayed to God to turn Ahithophel’s counsel into foolishness (2 Sam 15:31). God heard David’s request and moved Absalom to accept Hushai’s counsel rather than Ahithophel’s (2 Sam 17:1–14, 23).

God’s providence is righteous, truthful, and merciful (Ps 145:17). Just like Paul, we too must be confident that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his promise (Rom 8:28).

[V]

The Holy Name of God

A. How God Revealed His Name to Man

1. God revealed his name to Moses (Ex 3:13–15). The LORD said, “I AM WHO I AM... Say this to the people of Israel... the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you: this is my name for ever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations” (Ex 3:14–15). “I AM” is the memorial name of God (Ex 3:15, 34:5–6). In the English Bible, God’s memorial name is rendered in capital letters, i.e., “LORD,” “the LORD GOD,” and “God.”
2. God revealed his name to Israel. At Mount Sinai God declared to Israel, “I am the LORD your God” (Ex 20:2, 5, 7, 11).

3. God announced his name to the Gentile kings in the past. God's name is mighty among the nations (Jer 10:6, 7), and glorious in all the earth (Ps 8:1). To Cyrus, king of Persia, God said, "I am the LORD, and there is no other" (Isa 45:1, 5–6); subsequently, Cyrus acknowledged the LORD (2 Chr 36:23; Ezra 1:2–3).

B. How the Word "God" Is Used

1. The word *Elohim*, translated as "God," is found more than 2300 times in the Scriptures. *Elohim* is the plural form of *El*. *El* and *Elohim* denote the official title of God.
2. *El* is found 250 times in the Scriptures. It is often used in proper names such as Israel (striven with God, Gen 32:28), Ishmael (God heard, Gen 16:11), Samuel (asked of God), and Elijah (the LORD is my God). The singular form of *El* is found in *Eli* and *Elah*.
3. The words *El* and *Elohim*, in biblical usage, can apply to both the true God and false gods. In Genesis 31:32, Exodus 34:17, Leviticus 19:4, Deuteronomy 6:14, *Elohim* is used for false gods, i.e., idols.
4. The usage of *El* and *Elohim* is applicable to "God." Deuteronomy 7:9 reads: "Know therefore that the LORD your God [*Elohim*] is God [*Elohim*], the faithful God [*El* with a preceding adjective]." Deuteronomy 7:21 reads: "For the LORD your God [*Elohim*] is in the midst of you, a great and terrible God [*El* preceded by an adjective]." In Joshua 22:22, it records, "The Mighty One, God, the LORD! The Mighty One, God, the LORD! [Yahweh *El-Elohim*, Yahweh *El-Elohim*]." Most Bible scholars hold that "God" has the same meaning in its plural or singular form. The plural form of God has been interpreted to mean God as a representative of the heavenly court and/or to denote factors or multiplicities of power.
5. "God" in Greek is *Theos*, which has the same usage as *El*
6. *Shang-ti* (high emperor), a Chinese translation, is not the name of the true God. *Shang-ti* is the name for idols, e.g. *Yu-huang Shang-ti* (jade sovereign/high emperor), or *Xuan-tian Shang-ti* (the high monarch in the remote heaven). Therefore, *Shang-ti* in Chinese translations of the Bible are pagan usages that found their way into the Chinese translation of the Bible.

C. The LORD Is Elohim (God)

1. The Lord spoke to Abram, “I am God Almighty [El Shaddai]” (Gen 17:1)
2. “The LORD God,” mentioned by Moses in Genesis 2 and 3, is Yahweh Elohim in Hebrew (Gen 2:4–5, 7–8)
3. Elohim is a collective noun denoting a class of deity. God and the pagan gods belong to this category. A capital letter “G” for God is thus used for the Creator, in contrast to the class of gods. For instance, in Genesis 1:1–31, Elohim refers to God, the true Elohim.
4. Although El and Elohim can denote gods or idols, they cannot be compared to the true God and are therefore false gods. For this reason, the true God says, “Besides me there is no god” (Isa 44:6; 45:5–6).
5. The LORD is the only true God in all the world (Gen 14:19; Ps 83:18; Isa 54:5)

D. The Names and Titles Which Reveal God’s Character and Purpose:

- Almighty God (Gen 17:1)
- Most High God (Gen 14:18; Heb 7:1–3)
- God of seeing (Gen 16:13)
- God of faithfulness (Deut 32:4)
- Jealous God (Ex 34:14)
- Righteous God (Isa 45:21)
- Holy God (Josh 24:19)
- Everlasting God (Gen 21:33)
- The Lord (Ps 16:2, 62:12; Jn 6:68; 1 Tim 6:15)
- The LORD will provide (Gen 22:14)
- The LORD as the healer (Ex 15:26; 1 Pet 2:24)
- The LORD who sanctifies (Lev 20:8; Heb 10:9–10)
- The LORD is our banner (Ex 17:15)
- The LORD is peace (Judg 6:24; Eph 2:14)

- The LORD is our righteousness (Jer 23:6; 2 Tim 4:8; 1 Jn 2:29)
- The LORD is there (Ezek 48:35)
- The LORD of hosts (1 Sam 1:3; Isa 1:9; Jas 5:4)
- The LORD is my shepherd (Ps 23:1; Jn 10:7, 11, 14, 16; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4)

E. Jesus Is the Name of God

1. *Yahweh* (the LORD) is not the real name of God

- a. “*Yahweh*” is not a noun, but derived from the verb root *haya*, which means “to be” or “to exist,” and can mean “he who is” or “he who brings into being” (Ex 3:14). Moses was instructed to tell the people: “I AM has sent me to you” (Ex 3:14). In the next verse (3:15), the instructions are more specific. Moses was to tell the people that *Yahweh*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent him. The sacred name, transliterated from Hebrew to English as YHWH, is called the Tetragrammaton. There are no vowels in the Tetragrammaton because the Hebrew alphabet does not have vowels.

The pronunciation *Jehovah* appeared in late medieval times. It is an attempt to vocalize the Tetragrammaton using the vowels written under it by the scribes. The vowels were never intended to be used with the four consonants of YHWH.

- b. According to biblical scholars, the Pentateuch is a text in which several traditions, each with their own characteristics, have been blended together to create a composite work.¹

The *Yahwist* (*J*) tradition traces the worship of *Yahweh* far back beyond the period of Moses; this tradition affirms that in the time of Enosh, the grandson of Adam, men first began to invoke the name of *Yahweh* (Gen 4:26). The consistent use of the name from the creation onward represents a theological attempt to view human history in light of covenantal faith and the demonstration that *Yahweh* is not only the God of Israel but of all mankind.

¹ There are four main literary strands to which are assigned the symbols: J, E, D, and P. The J source comes from the time of the early monarchy, ca. 950 B.C.; the E source comes from the northern kingdom, ca. 850 B.C.; the D source, best represented in the book of Deuteronomy, comes from the southern kingdom ca. 650 B.C.; and P, the Priestly source, comes from the period after the fall of Israel, in 587 B.C., during the Babylonian exile. Many biblical scholars believe these four strands were woven together in various stages until the Pentateuch took its final form around 400 B.C.

On the other hand, the *Elohistic* (*E*) and the *Priestly* (*P*) sources seem to give a completely different view in Exodus 6:2–3. “And God (*Elohim*) said to Moses, ‘I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shaddai*], but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them” (cf. Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 48:3; 49:25).

In the Bible it seems that the name of YHWH was familiar to the patriarchs (Gen 12:7–8; 13:18; 15:1–2; 22:14), so the J tradition affirms *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, as both the Lord of creation and history. Furthermore, as we are told in Exodus 6:2–3, the patriarchs did not know the name of *Yahweh*; therefore, the *E* and *P* sources suggest that the name *Yahweh* became commonly accepted during the time of Moses, to whom we ascribe authorship of the Torah. God’s revealing of the name *Yahweh* signifies that Israel was to worship God, the only true God, and to worship him alone. All the traditions agree rather than contradict; Moses did not introduce Israel to a new god. *Yahweh* was not born in the Mosaic period. The God who spoke to Moses was none other than the God who had also led the patriarchs in their journey (“the God of the fathers”), the God who had been known previously as *El Shaddai*, or by other names (such as the *Yahwistic* or *Elohistic* names).

- c. God did not reveal his name to Jacob (Gen 32:29; cf. Judg 13:18)
 - d. The Ten Commandments forbid Israel to take the name of God in vain (Ex 20:7)
 - e. God promised to send an angel who comes in the name of the Lord—God’s name is in him (Ex 23:20–21; Ps 118:26)
2. God’s name is **Jesus**
- a. The name Jesus is the English form of the Hebrew *Yeshu*, which is short for *Yeshua*, which in turn is the shortened form of *Yehoshua* (Joshua). Jesus’ name means “Yahweh is salvation.” It is the personal name of the LORD, a heavenly name revealed by the angel Gabriel (Mt 1:21; Lk 1:30–31).
 - b. He (Jesus) comes in the name of the LORD (Mt 21:9; Lk 19:37–38)

3. The name of the heavenly Father, the LORD God, is Jesus
 - a. Jesus said, “I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world... I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known” (Jn 17:6, 26)
 - b. The name of Jesus is given by God: “Keep them in thy name, which thou hast given me... I kept them in thy name [Jesus]” (Jn 17:11–12)
 - c. In the Bible, Jesus did not declare *Yahweh* or other names of God to his disciples. Peter testified that “there is no other name [Jesus] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
 - d. *Yahweh*, the covenantal or memorial “name” of God in the Old Testament, and the compound names of God, like the *Yahwistic* and *Elohistic* names mentioned above, reveal the progressive revelation of God’s true name. Through this progressive revelation, we can better understand the full meaning, power, and significance of the true name of God—Jesus. Therefore, the name Jesus is the consummation of God’s revelation of his name, and thus himself, to the world.

4. The name of Jesus, which is above every name (Phil 2:9–11), is the name of God

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one (Jn 10:30; Rom 8:9). Therefore, when the Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to baptize people “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19), the disciples were clear in their understanding and baptized people in the name of the Lord Jesus; for they understood that Jesus is the name (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5; cf. Isa 9:6).

5. The name of God is only one

We should preach, act, and live in the name of Jesus. In the Lord’s church we exalt and magnify the name of Jesus; we must never exalt the name of any organization, early church worker, or denomination (Deut 12:5; 1 Kgs 8:43; Zech 14:9; Mt 6:9; Col 3:17).

3. ANGELS



The Origin of Angels

A. The Bible Confirms the Existence of Angels

1. Two angels came to Sodom one evening (Gen 19:1)
2. As Elijah lay and slept under a broom tree, an angel touched him (1 Kgs 19:5)
3. The Lord Jesus said, “In heaven their angels always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 18:10)
4. Jesus has gone into heaven, and angels, authorities, and powers are made subject to him (1 Pet 3:22)

B. Angels Were Created by God

1. “Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his host!... Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created” (Ps 148:2, 5)
2. “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created” (Ezek 28:13–15)
3. “For in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him” (Col 1:16)
4. Angels were created before the creation of the heaven and the earth (cf. Gen 3:1; Job 38:6–7)

C. Names and Titles of Angels

1. Cherubim (Gen 3:24; Ezek 11:22)
2. Seraphim (Isa 6:2, 6)
3. Angel of the LORD (Ps 34:7; Dan 6:22)
4. Angel (Acts 12:7–8)
5. Holy ones (Ps 89:5–7; Dan 4:13)
6. Host of heaven: the armies in heaven (1 Kgs 22:19; Rev 19:14)
7. Heavenly host (Lk 2:13)
8. Ministering spirits (Heb 1:14)

D. The Habitation of Angels

1. They are called heavenly messengers, and so they dwell in heaven (Mt 22:30)
2. When they have finished their mission, they go into heaven (Lk 2:13–15)
3. All the host of heaven have been standing beside the Lord on his right hand and on his left (1 Kgs 22:19; Dan 7:10)
4. They dwell in the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22)
5. They are sent forth everywhere (Ps 34:7)



The Hierarchy of Angels

A. Angelic Population

1. “A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him” (Dan 7:10)
2. The Lord came from the ten thousands of holy ones (Deut 33:2)
3. You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in joyful assembly (Heb 12:22; Rev 5:11)
4. The population of angels is innumerable (Ps 68:17; cf. Job 25:13; 2 Kgs 6:17)

B. Angelic Hierarchy

1. The archangel's name is Michael (Dan 12:1; 1 Thess 4:16; Jude 9)
2. Dominions, principalities, powers, authorities, and dignitaries are angelic ranks (Ps 82:1; Rom 8:38–39; Eph 1:20–21; 3:10; Col 1:16; 1 Pet 3:22; Jude 8 NKJV)
3. “Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:53). Six thousand soldiers form a legion. Therefore, we know angels have some type of organization.



The Nature of Angels

A. Angels Are Created Spirits (Heb 1:14)

1. Angels can manifest in human form but can also appear in other forms (Gen 18:1–2; Isa 6:1–3; Jn 20:12)
2. Angels can converse and dine with people (Gen 19:1–3; 12–22)
3. Angels do not die since they are spirits, nor do they marry (Mt 22:30; Lk 20:35–36)

B. Angels Are Perfect and Holy

1. Angels are called holy angels or holy ones (Ps 89:5, 7; Mk 8:38)
2. Angels are also called angels of light (2 Cor 11:14–15)
3. At the Lord's resurrection, an angel of the Lord is described as having a countenance like lightning and clothing as white as snow (Mt 28:3)

C. Angels Are Humble and Subordinate

1. Angels are not to be worshipped by us (Rev 19:10; 22:8–9)
2. Angels glorify the Lord (Isa 6:2–3; Rev 5:11–12)

[IV]

The Office of Angels

A. Angels Minister to God in Heaven

1. Angels praise the Lord around the throne (Rev 5:11–13)
2. Angels stand ministering the Lord before his presence (Dan 7:9–10)

B. Angels Are Sent as Mighty Messengers

1. Angels warn the chosen and save them (Gen 19:12–22)
2. Angels announce God's law (Acts 7:38, 53)
3. Angels report God's message to people (Lk 2:10, 17)
4. Angels fight against Satan and help the believers (Dan 10:21; Rev 12:7–8)
5. Angels are in charge of warfare in the human realm (Rev 7:1–3; 9:13–15)

C. Angels Minister to the Heirs of Salvation (Heb 1:14)

1. They protect the saints (Ex 23:20; Ps 34:7; 91:11)
2. They deliver the saints from dangers (Acts 5:17–20; 12:6–11)
3. They instruct and comfort the disciples (Mt 2:12–13; 19–20; Acts 27:23–24)
4. They escort the deceased saints to the heavenly home (Lk 16:22)

[V]

The Power of Angels

A. Angels Have Supernatural Might

1. They can seal the lions' mouths (Dan 6:21–22)
2. They can open the locks of jails (Acts 12:6–10)
3. One angel can kill one hundred and eighty-five thousand men (2 Kgs 19:35; 2 Chr 32:21)

B. Angels Are Mightier than Satan

1. In a vision seen by Daniel, Michael defeated the prince of Persia (Dan 10:13–21)
2. They have the authority to bind Satan (Rev 20:1–2)

C. Angels Are Far Inferior to God

1. Angels carry out God's commands though they excel in strength (Ps 103:20)
2. Angels are full of wisdom and perfect in beauty (2 Sam 14:17, 20; Ezek 28:12)
3. Angels are neither omnipotent nor omniscient (Job 4:18; Mt 24:30; 1 Pet 1:10–12)
4. We should not treat angels as our mediators, nor should we worship them (1 Tim 2:5; Rev 19:10; 22:8–9)

[VI]

Comparison Between Angels and People

- A. Angels are servants of God (Heb 1:5, 14)
People are the children of God (Lk 3:38; 1 Jn 3:1)
- B. Angels do not marry (Mt 22:30; Lk 20:35–36)
People marry (Gen 1:28)
- C. Angels may commit sin, but should not (cf. 2 Pet 2:4)
Similarly, God's sanctified people may commit sin, but should not (Heb 12:23; Rev 3:12). All creation should come under God's path and his righteousness, whether angel or human.

4. THE DEVIL



The Origin of the Devil

A. The Devil Was Originally an Angel

1. The devil once dwelt in the garden of Eden (Ezek 28:13)
2. The devil was an anointed guardian cherub (Ezek 28:14)
3. The devil was called “Lucifer [Day Star], son of the morning [Dawn]” (Isa 14:12, NKJV)

B. The Devil Was Expelled from Heaven Because of His Iniquities

1. “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you” (Ezek 28:15)
2. “Your heart was proud because of your beauty” (Ezek 28:17)
3. “You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high... I will make myself like the Most High’ (Isa 14:13–14; Jude 6)
4. Lucifer was cast out from the mountain of God because he sinned (Isa 14:14–15; Ezek 28:16; Lk 10:18; 2 Pet 2:4)

C. Lucifer Formed His Own Kingdom

1. The Lord asked, “And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?” (Mt 12:26) Thus, we know Lucifer has his own kingdom.
2. The demons have a ruler and the devil has his own angels (Mt 12:24; 25:41)
3. Their number is innumerable (cf. Mk 5:6–9; Lk 8:30)

D. Names and Titles of the Devil/Satan

1. Devil means “slanderer,” “accuser,” or “deceiver” (Mt 4:1). He defames God before mankind (Gen 3:1, 4–5) and defames man before God (Job 1:9, 11; 2:4–5). He accuses man before God (Rev 12:10).
2. Satan means “one who resists,” “opposes,” or “adversary” (Lk 10:18). His thoughts and actions obstruct God’s will, and Satan disapproves of righteousness (cf. Mt 16:22–23).
3. The ancient serpent refers to the “glittering” and “alluring” quality of Satan (Rev 12:9). He is sly and deceiving (cf. 2 Cor 11:3; 1 Thess 3:5).
4. The great dragon means “devouring” or “cruel” (Rev 12:9). He desires to devour the children of God (1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:4–5).
5. The god of this world (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Jn 5:19) and ruler of this world (Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
6. The evil one (1 Jn 2:14; 5:18)
7. The enemy (Mt 13:39)
8. The prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2)
9. The father of lies (Jn 8:44)
10. A murderer (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 3:12–15)
11. The devil is like a roaring lion (1 Pet 5:8)
12. Ruler of darkness (Eph 6:12)



The Nature of the Devil

A. Pride

1. Satan is proud in his heart because of his beauty (Ezek 28:17)
2. Satan wants to exalt himself to the likeness of God (Isa 14:13–14)
3. Proud people will be ensnared by the devil and will be retributed (1 Tim 3:6; 1 Jn 2:16)

B. Deceit

1. There is no truth in the devil's heart, and he is the father of lies (Gen 3:4–5, 9; Jn 8:44)
2. Satan is a deceitful worker (2 Cor 11:3, 13–15)
3. All dishonest actions come from the devil (Mt 5:37; Acts 5:1–3)

C. Uncleaness

1. Demoniacs do not like cleanliness (Mk 5:2)
2. He is called an unclean spirit (Lk 4:33; Rev 16:13)
3. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness and many evil acts come from the devil (Gal 5:19–21; Eph 2:2–3)

D. Cruelty

1. Satan was a murderer from the beginning (Gen 2:17; 3:19; 4:8; Jn 8:44)
2. Satan instigates battles (Rev 16:13–16)
3. Satan devours the children of God (1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:4–5)

E. Fountainhead of All Sins and Crimes

1. Satan is the enemy of all righteousness (Act 13:9–10)
2. All evil comes from Satan (Jas 3:14–16)
3. All who commit sins are of the devil (1 Jn 3:8)

[III]

The Work of the Devil and His Legion

A. Satan Thwarts God

1. Satan tried to ruin God's creation (Gen 3:1–6)
2. Satan desires to impede God's redemptive plan (Mt 2:13; 16:22–23)
3. Satan is eager to confuse God's true words (Acts 13:10; Gal 1:6–9)
4. Satan resists God's church (Acts 8:1; 12:1–4)

B. Satan Tortures Human Beings

1. Satan obstructs the happiness of humankind (Gen 2:8–16; 3:16–24)
2. Satan inflicts physical infirmities and mental maladies (Mt 17:14–15, 18; Mk 5:5; Lk 13:11–16)
3. Satan hinders people from believing in the Lord (Mt 23:13–14; Act 13:10–13)
4. Satan seduces believers to stray from the faith (Jer 10:14–15; Mt 4:5–7; 24:11, 23–24)

[IV]

The Power of the Devil

A. Satan Rules over Mankind

1. The world is under Satan's control because of sin (Jn 8:34; 1 Jn 3:8)
2. The whole world is in the power of the evil one (Acts 26:18; 1 Jn 5:19)
3. People cannot deliver themselves from the reign of Satan by their own means (Mk 5:2–4; Rom 7:15–24)
4. Though Satan is the ruler of this world, he cannot arbitrarily harm the children of God, i.e., Satan has limitations placed upon him (Num 23:23; 1 Jn 5:18)

B. Satan Can Perform Wonders and Signs

1. Satan can perform wonders through witchcraft or occult activity (Ex 7:10–12, 20–22)
2. Through false prophets and false christs, wonders and marvelous deeds can be, and are indeed now, accomplished (Mt 24:23–24)
3. By the power of the lawless one, all power, signs, and lying wonders are performed (2 Thess 2:9–11)
4. Satan can make fire descend from heaven (Rev 13:12–13)
5. The power of Satan is far inferior to that of God (Ex 8:16–19)

C. Satan Is Confined by God

1. God restricted Satan in inflicting physical infirmities on Job (Job 1:12)
2. God restrained Satan from killing Job (Job 2:6)
3. All power is in the hand of God (Mt 6:13; Lk 4:6)



The End of the Devil

A. The Lord Jesus Has Overcome Satan

1. The Lord said, “I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33)
2. Through the Lord’s death and resurrection, the Lord Jesus defeated Satan (Col 2:15; Heb 2:14)

B. Satan and His Followers Are Bound to be Judged

1. The Lord will judge them (2 Pet 2:4)
2. They will be cast into the lake of fire (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:10)
3. The devil himself knows that he has but a short time left (Rev 12:12; cf. Mt 8:29)

[VI]

How to Overcome the Devil

A. By the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

1. By the blood of the Lord (Gal 3:27; Col 1:13–14; Rev 12:11)
2. By the Spirit of the Lord (Mt 12:28; Rom 8:13)
3. Submitting ourselves to the word of God (Mt 4:7–11; Jas 4:7)

B. Humbling Ourselves

1. Do not desire self-glorification (Gal 5:26)
2. Let us esteem others better than ourselves (Phil 2:3)
3. Humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God (1 Pet 5:5–6)

C. Being Truthful and Faithful

1. Allow no room for guile or crookedness in your heart (Jn 1:47)
2. Speak the truth (Zech 8:16; Eph 4:15)
3. Be faithful and blameless (Dan 6:4, 22; Phil 2:15)

D. Being Perfect and Sanctified

1. Do not nourish seeds of lust in your heart (Gen 39:7–10; Mt 5:27–28)
2. Do not love the world (Lk 4:5–8; 1 Jn 2:15–16)
3. Refrain from unrighteousness (1 Cor 6:9–10; 2 Tim 2:19)

E. Loving Your Neighbor as Yourself

1. Do not envy others (1 Cor 13:4; 1 Jn 3:12)
2. Do not wrong your neighbors (Rom 13:10; 1 Cor 13:5)
3. Be willing to sacrifice yourselves for your brothers and sisters (Rom 15:1–2; 1 Jn 3:16)

F. Being Loyal and Faithful to the Lord till the End

1. Remain faithful to the Lord Jesus all your life
(1 Cor 11:2–4; Rev 2:10)
2. Be in fellowship with the Lord at all times (Jn 6:68; Rom 8:35–39)
3. Don't be afraid to die for the Lord's sake. Do not love your fleshly life even unto death (Acts 20:22–24; Rev 12:11).

5. MANKIND



The Origin of Man

A. Man Was Created by God

1. God created man, male and female (Gen 1:27, 31)
2. Adam is the son of God since he was begotten by God (Lk 3:38)
3. The Lord Jesus testified that God created man (Mt 19:4; Mk 10:6)

B. God Made All Nations from One Blood

1. God made all nations from one blood (Acts 17:26)
2. Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs (Gen 2:21–23; 1 Tim 2:13)
3. God created man with the intention of seeking godly offspring (Mal 2:15)



Man's Primitive State in the Garden

A. Man Had the Image of God

1. God created man in his own image, after his own likeness (Gen 1:26–27)
2. The likeness of God is true righteousness and holiness (Eccl 7:29; Eph 4:24)

3. Man lost the likeness of God because of sin; Christ came to make man a new creation and restore the image of God (2 Cor 3:18; 5:17; Col 3:9–10)

B. Man Had the Honorable Title of the Son of God

1. Adam was called the son of God (Lk 3:38)
2. Man had the privilege of communicating with God (Gen 2:16–17; 3:8–19)
3. Man was entrusted by God to rule over the living creatures of the earth (Gen 1:26–28; 2:19)

C. Man Led a Happy and Blessed Life

1. Man did not need to worry about food or clothing (Gen 2:8, 16, 25; 3:7)
2. Adam and Eve led a harmonious life (Gen 2:18, 22–24)
3. There was no threat of death (Gen 2:9; 3:22)



The Sin of Mankind's First Parents

A. Biblical Evidence for the Fall of Mankind

1. God said, “But at Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me” (Hos 6:7)
2. Job said, “If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom” (Job 31:33, NKJV)
3. Paul said, “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ” (2 Cor 11:3; cf. Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:22; 1 Tim 2:13–14)

B. The Fall of Man

1. Satan's tempting of Eve
 - a. At first, Satan made the woman doubt God's words. Satan asked Eve, “Did God say” (Gen 3:1; cf. Gen 2:16–17).

- b. Satan thwarted God's words by saying, "You will not die" (Gen 3:4; cf. Gen 2:17)
 - c. Satan tempted Eve with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (Gen 3:5–6; cf. 1 Jn 2:16)
2. Eve yielded to Satan's temptation
- a. Eve conversed amicably with Satan; therefore, he took advantage of this opportunity (Gen 3:1–2; cf. Jas 4:7)
 - b. Eve did not keep God's word firmly but changed God's word (Gen 3:2–3; cf. Gen 2:16–17)
 - c. Eve became a victim of Satan's deceit when she picked and ate the forbidden fruit. So blind was Eve to her own deception that she also handed the fruit to her beloved husband Adam (Gen 3:4–6).

C. The Effects of Sin

1. God's immediate judgment
- a. To Eve: "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing" (Gen 3:16)
 - b. To Adam: "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground" (Gen 3:19)
2. Expulsion from the garden
- a. God would not allow Adam and Eve to eat the fruit from the tree of life lest they should live forever, for it is miserable for an accursed man to live in this world (Gen 3:22). Therefore, God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden out of mercy and love.
 - b. God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden and placed the cherubim east of Eden. The cherubim with the flaming sword that turns every which way guards the way to the tree of life (Gen 3:23–24). No man could regain eternal life or paradise.
3. Death of the spirit and body
- a. God clearly said, "For in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen 2:17). Our first parents died spiritually on the day of the fall. They became alienated from God, and their bodies, which

were made of dust, eventually returned to the ground (Gen 3:19; Isa 59:2).

- b. By the disobedience of one man, namely Adam, all men became sinners. The spirit of mankind is darkened, the soul debased and corrupted, and the physical body subject to disease and death (Rom 5:12–19; 8:21; Eph 4:17–19).

[IV]

The End of Man

A. All Men Have Sinned

1. We sin because we do not have true love
 - a. The law of God can be summarized as follows:
 - i. Love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind (Mt 22:37; Lk 10:27)
 - ii. Love our neighbors as ourselves (Mt 22:39)
 - b. The lack of true love is seen in the following:
 - i. Not honoring our parents (Ex 20:12)
 - ii. Not loving our neighbors, relatives, friends, and others (Lk 10:28–37; 1 Tim 5:8)
 - c. Sinning against others is seen through:
 - i. Harming others physically
 - ii. Forcefully taking the rights and benefits due to others
 - iii. Disturbing the mental well-being of others (Ex 20:13–17; Rom 1:28–32)
2. We sin by not loving God
 - a. Even if you love your neighbor as yourself, but do not worship, honor, and love God, your Creator and Savior, you are a sinner in God's sight (Eccl 12:1, 13–14; Rom 1:19–20; Jn 3:16–18)
 - b. Worshiping idols and denying Jesus Christ is sin compounded upon sin (Ex 20:3–5; Isa 2:8–9; Rom 1:21–25)
3. Sin is a result of Adam's disobedience

- a. The Bible says, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom 5:19). “For as in Adam all die” (1 Cor 15:22). Adam’s posterity bears his sin by carrying his sinful nature
- b. Psalmist David said, “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps 51:5; cf. Ps 58:3; Job 25:4; 14:4; Rom 7:17–18)
- c. After Adam sinned, death came upon all men. Death is the evidence that all are sinners since death comes from sin (Rom 5:12, 14, 17; 6:23). All humankind, young and old alike, are ruled by sin; as the Bible says, “All have sinned” (Rom 3:23).

B. The Effects of Sin on Sinners

- 1. Sinners are under the devil’s dominion (1 Jn 3:8; 5:19)
 - a. Sinners become slaves to their sins (Jn 8:34; Tit 3:3)
 - b. Sinners do not have peace in their hearts or conscience (Isa 48:22; Rom 3:13–17)
 - c. Sinners do not have any hope for the future (Prov 11:7; Eph 2:12)
- 2. All sinners eventually come under God’s judgment
 - a. Sinners labor and toil for life (Gen 3:16–19; Ps 90:10)
 - b. A sinner’s physical death is inevitable (Rom 6:23; Heb 9:27)
 - c. Sinners will suffer eternal condemnation (2 Thess 1:8–9; Rev 21:8)

6. JESUS CHRIST



The Word Became Flesh

God named the Lord Jesus before his birth (Lk 1:31). Jesus is a common form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “Yahweh saves” or “May Yahweh save” (cf. Mt 1:21). “Christ,” translated from the Greek word *Christos*, which is “Messiah” in Hebrew, means the “Anointed One.”

A. Prophecies Concerning the Birth of Jesus Christ

1. Christ is born of a virgin (Isa 7:14); he is the “seed of the woman” (Gen 3:15)

Fulfilled: The virgin Mary divinely conceived through the Holy Spirit and gave birth to our Savior, Jesus Christ (Mt 1:18–25).

2. Christ is of the direct line of David (Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5; Mt 22:41–42)

Fulfilled: In his genealogy, Jesus Christ is the seed of David (Mt 1:1, 20; cf. Mt 9:27; 15:22).

3. Christ is born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; Mt 2:4–6)

Fulfilled: God drew Joseph and Mary out of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem for registration in the census decreed by Caesar Augustus. Joseph was required to go to Bethlehem because he was of the house and lineage of David (Lk 2:1–7).

B. God's Instruction in the Time of the Nativity²

1. God sent an angel to instruct Mary, "You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" (Lk 1:31; cf. Luke 1:26–38)
2. The angel of the Lord told Joseph, "Do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 1:20; cf. Mt 1:18–25)
3. On the eve of the nativity, an angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, with this great tiding: "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:8–20)

C. After the Nativity

1. The prophet Simeon and prophetess Anna announced to all in the temple that Jesus was the expected Savior, the consolation of Israel (Lk 2:22–39)
2. The wise men from the East came to worship the Lord upon seeing his star in the East (Mt 2:1–12)
3. By the instruction of God, the infant Jesus, Joseph, and Mary fled to Egypt to escape Herod's persecution. After the death of Herod, they returned to Nazareth where Jesus eventually grew up (Mt 2:3, 13–23).



The Ministry of Jesus Christ

A. Jesus Proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mt 4:23; 9:35)

1. Jesus began his ministry at about thirty years of age (Lk 3:23)
2. The message he proclaimed was to "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:17; Mk 1:14–15). Because he proclaimed

² The celebration of Christmas has no biblical basis. Additionally, there is no indication of any type of Christmas celebration in the Bible or in the records of the early church. Jesus Christ came, at the proper time, as the Son of Man. He came into this world in the form of human flesh. Neither the Bible, church documents, nor historians know the exact date Jesus was born. Jesus, the Word manifested in flesh, is God himself. Therefore, in reality, Jesus has no beginning and no end (Rev 1:17, 22:13). To impose a birth "date" on Jesus is not only arbitrary, but impious, since Jesus is God himself. We should know that Christmas has pagan origins that were adopted by Christian traditions. Furthermore, the annual celebration of Christmas in Christianized nations tends to be more commercially-oriented than spiritually-oriented. Therefore, the True Jesus Church does not encourage the celebration of Christmas for believers.

the good tidings of the heavenly kingdom, his message was thus called “the gospel” or “good news.” He was sent into the world for the purpose of preaching this good message of salvation (Lk 4:43).

3. The Lord Jesus revealed the existence of the heavenly kingdom and taught how to enter it:

a. The existence of the kingdom of heaven

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms”
(Jn 14:1–3; cf. Mt 25:34)

b. The glory of the heavenly kingdom

It is far better to be with Christ in heaven (Phil 1:23). The inheritance in heaven is “imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Pet 1:4). It is a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:28), and of enduring substance (Heb 10:34), in which there shall be no more tears, death, sorrow, or pain (Rev 21:4). The Lord Jesus said, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Mt 22:30; cf. Mt 13:43, 25:46ff).

c. The gateway to the kingdom of God

The Lord Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (Jn 14:6). “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5).

d. The law of the kingdom of God

The Lord Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another” (Jn 13:34). He summarized the law of God into two parts:

i. Love God to your uttermost

ii. Love your neighbors as yourself (Mt 22:36–40). If, in Christ, we love others, we also love God. By loving others with the love of the Lord, we fulfill the law of the kingdom of God.

e. The reward of the kingdom of God

The Lord Jesus said, “And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for

my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life" (Mt 19:29). From this statement, we know that it is of exceeding value to work in the service of the kingdom of God (cf. Mt 25:19–23).

B. Jesus Christ Performed Various Miracles, Signs, and Wonders

Jesus performed many miracles and healing in order to relieve people of their pain, sorrow, and daily concerns. Jesus did much to resolve other peoples' problems. All the signs, wonders, and miracles Jesus performed testify that he was indeed the Savior of mankind. As a result, many people were led to believe in the Lord (cf. Jn 3:1–2; 11:41, 42, 45; 15:24). Aside from supernatural manifestations—i.e. the angelic announcement of the virgin birth, the star that guided the wise men, Jesus' passing through hostile mobs, Jesus' cleansing of the temple, the Lord's transfiguration, the darkness at crucifixion, the torn veil in the temple, the opened tombs, the earthquakes, the soldiers falling like dead men, Jesus' resurrection, and the appearance of angels who testified to Jesus' resurrection—there are 35 specific miracles performed by Jesus that are recorded in the Gospels. They are listed as follows:

1. Seventeen healings of physical ailments:
 - a. Nobleman's son in Capernaum (Jn 4:46–54)
 - b. A sick man in Jerusalem (Jn 5:1–9)
 - c. Peter's sick mother-in-law (Mt 8:14–17; Mk 1:29–31; Lk 4:38–39)
 - d. A leper (Mt 8:2–4; Mk 1:40–45; Lk 5:12–15)
 - e. A paralytic (Mt 9:2–8; Mk 2:3–12; Lk 5:17–26)
 - f. Man with a withered hand (Mt 12:9–14; Mk 3:1–6; Lk 6:6–11)
 - g. Centurion's servant (Mt 8:5–13; Lk 7:1–10)
 - h. Two blind men (Mt 9:27–31)
 - i. Deaf and dumb man (Mk 7:31–37)
 - j. Blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8:22–26)
 - k. Blind man in Jerusalem (Jn chap. 9)
 - l. Woman with 18 years of infirmity (Lk 13:10–17)

- m. Woman with hemorrhage for 12 years (Mt 9:20–22; Mk 5:25–34; Lk 8:43–48)
 - n. Man with dropsy (Lk 14:1–6)
 - o. Ten lepers (Lk 17:11–19)
 - p. Blind Bartimaeus (Mt 20:29–34; Mk 10:46–52; Lk 18:35–43)
 - q. Malchus' ear (Lk 22:50–51)
- 2. Six cures of demoniacs:**
- a. A demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum (Mk 1:21–28; Lk 4:31–37)
 - b. A blind and dumb demoniac (Mt 12:22; Lk 11:14)
 - c. Demoniacs in Gerasenes (Mt 8:28–34; Mk 5:1–20; Lk 8:2–39)
 - d. A dumb demoniac (Mt 9:32–34)
 - e. The Syrophenician's daughter (Mt 15:21–28; Mk 7:24–30)
 - f. The epileptic boy (Mt 17:14–21; Mk 9:14–29; Lk 9:37–43)
- 3. Three raised from the dead:**
- a. Jairus' daughter (Mt 9:18–26; Mk 5:22–43; Lk 8:41–56)
 - b. Widow's son at Nain (Lk 7:11–15)
 - c. Lazarus at Bethany (Jn 11:1–44)
- 4. Nine miracles over forces of nature:**
- a. Water turned to wine in Cana (Jn 2:1–11)
 - b. Catch of fish near Capernaum (Lk 5:1–11)
 - c. Another catch of fish (Jn 21:6)
 - d. Tempest stilled (Mt 8:23–27; Mk 4:35–41; Lk 8:22–25)
 - e. The five thousand fed with five loaves of bread and two fish (Mt 14:13–21; Mk 6:30–44; Lk 9:10–17; Jn 6:1–14)
 - f. Jesus walked on the sea (Mt 14:22–36; Mk 6:45–52; Jn 6:15–21)
 - g. The feeding of the four thousand (Mt 15:32–39; Mk 8:1–10)
 - h. Money for the temple tax taken from the mouth of a fish (Mt 17:24–27)
 - i. A fig tree cursed (Mt 21:18–22; Mk 11:12–14, 20–25)

[III]

Perfect Attributes of the Lord Jesus Christ

A. Jesus Is Holy and Righteous

1. Jesus is without sin and never commits sin
 - a. Jesus himself testified that he committed no sin (Jn 8:46)
 - b. Pilate testified that Jesus was sinless (Mt 27:24; Lk 23:4, 14, 22)
 - c. Jesus' traitor, Judas Iscariot, testified that Jesus was innocent (Mt 27:3-4)
2. Jesus loves goodness and hates iniquity
 - a. Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil (Acts 10:38)
 - b. Jesus always did what was pleasing to God (Jn 8:29)
 - c. Jesus severely rebuked the hypocrites and the wicked (Mt 6:2, 5, 16; Mt chap. 23)
3. Jesus demands that his disciples be holy
 - a. Jesus taught his disciples that they should be clean (Mt 5:21-28)
 - b. Jesus prayed that his disciples would be sanctified (Jn 17:17)
4. Jesus laid down his life so that man could be sanctified (Mt 20:28)
 - a. Jesus died for the remission of our sins (1 Pet 2:21-24)
 - b. Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor 5:21)
 - c. Jesus' willingness to die for man's sanctification points to his own holiness, for only a sinless person could redeem sinners

B. Jesus Is Loving and Merciful

1. Jesus loved the Father
 - a. Jesus obeyed the commandments of the Father (1 Jn 5:3; Jn 6:38)
 - b. Jesus submitted to the will of the Father (Mt 26:39, 42; Phil 2:8)
 - c. Jesus glorified only the Father (Jn 7:18; 17:4)

2. Jesus loved people
 - a. Jesus felt compassion for the sick (Mt 8:17; Mk 1:40–41)
 - b. Jesus cared for the livelihood of others (Mt 14:15–21; 15:32–38)
 - c. Jesus treated the evil well (Mt 5:43–48; 26:49–50)
 - d. Jesus laid down his life for the whole world (Mt 20:28; Jn 15:13)

C. Jesus Is Meek and Humble

1. Jesus is extremely gentle
 - a. Jesus was not irritable (Mt 5:22; Lk 9:51–56)
 - b. Jesus did not cause strife with other people (Mt 26:62–63; 1 Pet 2:22–23)
 - c. Jesus endured mockery and scorn (Mt 5:39; 26:67–68; Isa 50:6)
2. Jesus is extremely humble
 - a. Jesus received sinners (Lk 5:27–32; 15:1–2)
 - b. Jesus humbled himself to serve others (Mt 20:28; Jn 13:12–17)
 - c. Jesus never glorified himself (Jn 5:41; 8:50; Phil 2:6)

[IV]

The Death of Jesus Christ

A. Predictions and Typologies Concerning Jesus' Death

1. Predictions
 - a. He was to be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:12–13)
Fulfilled in Mt 26:15–16; 27:3–10.
 - b. The silent suffering of Jesus recorded in Isaiah chapter 53 (Isa 53:7)
Fulfilled in Mt 27:12–14.
 - c. Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors (Isa 53:12)
Fulfilled in Lk 23:33.
 - d. The sin-offering recorded in Psalm 22 (Ps 22:13–18)
Fulfilled in Jn 19:17–24.

- e. Jesus foretold to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem; suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes; be killed; and resurrect on the third day (Mt 16:21; 17:22–23). Jesus once said, “Even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).
Fulfilled when Jesus gave his life for us, as recorded in the passion narratives of all four Gospels.

2. Types

- a. Garments of skins, which imply the sacrifice of an animal (Gen 3:21)
- b. Abel’s offering, which involved blood sacrifice (Gen 4:4)
- c. Abraham’s offering of Isaac, a type of another Father’s offering of his beloved Son on the same mountain (Gen chap. 22)
- d. The Passover lamb (Ex chap. 12)
- e. The Levitical sacrificial system (Lev 1:1–7, 16)
- f. The bronze serpent (Num 21; Jn 3:14–15)
- g. The slain Lamb (Isa 53:6–7; Jn 1:29)
Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29; 1 Pet 1:19). Therefore, we must be baptized into his precious blood for our eternal condemnation to be taken away. From the typologies of Jesus’ sacrifice in the Old Testament, we learn of the Lord’s eternal and sacrificial love for mankind.

B. The Purpose of Jesus’ Death

- 1. Jesus died to remit the sins of the world

The Lord Jesus did not die for his own sins (Jn 19:6). Rather, he died to bear the sins of many (Mt 20:28; Rom 8:3; 1 Cor 15:3; Heb 9:28).

- 2. Jesus died to fulfill the law

According to the law, almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. If the Lord did not shed his blood on the cross, the sins of the world could never be cleansed (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22).

Jesus died on Calvary to fulfill the law of God (Mt 5:17; Heb 10:1–10).

3. The result of Jesus' death
 - a. General effects
 - i. Jesus' death draws people to believe in the Lord (Jn 12:32–33)
 - ii. Jesus' death provides expiation for the sins of the world (Rom 3:25; 1 Jn 2:2)
 - b. Effects on believers
 - i. Redeems us from the curse of the law (Rom 7:1–6; Gal 3:13)
 - ii. Forgives our sins (Eph 1:7; Heb 9:13–14; 10:10)
 - iii. Liberates us from the power of slavery and death (Lk 1:74–75; Heb 2:14–15)
 - iv. Reconciles us to God (Rom 5:10; Eph 2:13)
 - v. Justifies us (Rom 5:9; 2 Cor 5:21)
 - vi. Provides us a way to the heavenly kingdom (Eph 2:19; Col 1:13–14)
 - c. Effects on Satan
 - i. Nullifies and destroys the devil (1 Cor 15:55–57; Heb 2:14)
 - ii. Dethrones the devil (Jn 12:31–32)
 - iii. Disarms the principalities and powers, and triumphs over them (Col 2:14–15)

[V]

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

A. Predictions and Typologies of the Lord's Resurrection

1. In the Old Testament

“For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit” (Ps 16:10; cf. Acts 2:31)
2. Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, and foretold this to his disciples several times (Mt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:32)

3. Jonah as a type of Jesus' resurrection

Jonah was in the belly of a great fish for three days and three nights. Afterward, however, Jonah was vomited out of the belly of the fish. This typifies Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Jon 1:17; Mt 12:40).

B. Witnesses of the Lord's Resurrection

1. Mary Magdalene (Mt 28:1–10; Jn 20:1–2)
2. Simon Peter (Jn 20:3–8; Acts 2:24–32)
3. An angel (Mt 28:5, 7; Lk 24:5–8)
4. The soldiers guarding the tomb (Mt 28:4, 11–15; cf. Mt 27:62–66)
5. Paul (1 Cor 15:3–8; 2 Tim 2:8; cf. Acts 9:3–8)

C. Significance of the Lord's Resurrection

1. Jesus' resurrection was a declaration of Jesus' sonship of God (Rom 1:4)
2. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated his victory over death and the devil, for it is an example of eternal life (1 Cor 15:22, 54–55; 2 Tim 1:10)
3. Jesus' resurrection gives evidence of the coming great judgment (Acts 17:31; cf. Jn 5:22, 27–29)
4. Jesus' resurrection gives us both evidence and confidence of our own resurrection (1 Cor 15:13–14; 1 Thess 4:14; 1 Pet 1:3–4)
5. Jesus' resurrection gives evidence that we too should walk in newness of life, for he has overcome all sins in the flesh (Rom 6:4, 10–13; 8:3–11)

[VI]

The Ascension of Jesus Christ

A. Historical Facts and Notes on the Ascension

1. While the Lord Jesus raised his hands to bless his disciples, he ascended to heaven (Lk 24:50–51)

2. As the disciples looked up toward heaven, two angels appeared and reaffirmed that Jesus had indeed just gone to heaven (Acts 1:9–11)
3. Jesus went into heaven; therefore, angels, authorities, and powers are now made subject to him (Heb 4:14; 1 Pet 3:22)

B. Results of Jesus' Ascension

1. Jesus' ascension allows us to understand the mighty power of God (Eph 1:18–21)
2. Jesus' ascension resulted in all authority in heaven and on earth being given to the Lord (Mt 28:18; Phil 2:9–10)
3. God gave the promised Holy Spirit ten days after Christ's ascension. The Holy Spirit descended for the first time on the day of Pentecost (Jn 7:39; 14:16–17; 16:7; Acts 1:5; 2:33). Christ will come again to take up the saints in order to judge the world (Rev 22:12).

[VII]

Jesus Christ Is the True God

A. Jesus Has the Names and Titles of God

1. The first and the last (Rev 1:17; 2:8; 22:13; cf. Jn 8:57–58)
2. The Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13)
3. The Lord (Mt 22:43–45; Acts 2:36; 3:15; 10:36; Rom 10:12)
4. Immanuel (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23)
5. God (Isa 9:6; Jn 20:28; Acts 20:28; Rom 9:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Tit 2:13; Heb 1:8; 1 Jn 5:20; cf. Jn 10:30; 14:9–11, 18)

B. Jesus Has the Attributes of God

1. Omnipotence
 - a. He heals and cures the sick (Mt 9:27–30; 14:14, 35–36; Jn 9:1–3, 6–7)
 - b. He raises the dead (Lk 7:14–15; 8:54–55; Jn 11:43–44)
 - c. He subdues the devil (Mt 8:14; 12:22; Lk 13:10–13)

- d. He controls the universe (Mt 8:26–27; 14:24–32; 17:24–27; 21:18–19)
- e. He maintains all things in the universe (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3)
- f. He has all power in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18; Jn 3:35; Eph 1:20–22; Phil 2:9–11)

2. Omniscience

- a. He knows peoples' past (Jn 1:47, 48; 4:5–19; 11:3–14)
- b. He knows peoples' thoughts (Mt 9:3, 4; Mk 2:8; Lk 6:7–8; Jn 2:24–25)
- c. He knows peoples' future (Mt 26:30–35, 74–75; Lk 5:4–6; 22:10–13; Jn 21:18)
- d. He knows hidden things (Mk 14:12–16; Jn 1:48)
- e. He is the origin of wisdom and knowledge (1 Cor 1:24; 2:7; Col 2:3)

3. Omnipresence

- a. When Jesus was on earth, he was also in heaven (Jn 3:13, NKJV; cf. Jn 14:11; 17:21)
- b. Jesus promised that he would be in the midst of his disciples when they gather (Mt 18:19–20; 28:20; Acts 18:9–10; 23:11)
- c. Jesus dwells in the believers (Jn 14:20; 17:21–23; 2 Cor 13:5)
- d. The fullness of the Lord fills all in all (Eph 1:23; 4:10)

C. Jesus Executes Divine Work

- 1. Jesus creates (Jn 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2, 10)
- 2. Jesus forgives sin (Mk 2:5–10; Lk 7:40–49; Jn 5:14)
- 3. Jesus judges (2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1; Rev 22:12)
- 4. Jesus resurrects the dead and gives eternal life (Jn 6:39, 44; 1 Cor 15:52–53; Phil 3:21)

D. Jesus Is the God of the Old Testament

1. God is the Creator (Gen 1:1; Neh 9:5; Isa 42:5)
Jesus is the Creator (Jn 1:1–3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:10)
2. God is the Savior (Isa 43:11; Hos 13:4)
Jesus is the Savior (Lk 2:11; Acts 4:12; Jude 24)
3. God is King (Ps 10:16; 96:10)
Jesus is King (Rev 11:15)
4. God is the King of glory (Ps 24:10)
Jesus is the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:8)
5. God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords (Deut 10:17; Dan 2:47)
Jesus is the Lord of lords and the King of kings (Rev 17:14; 19:16)
6. God is the Lord of life (Deut 32:39; Jer 38:16)
Jesus is the Lord of life (Jn 1:4; 11:25; 14:6)
7. God is the first and the last (Isa 44:6; 48:12)
Jesus is the first and the last (Rev 1:17; 22:13)

7. SALVATION



The Meaning of Salvation

A. Salvation from a Negative Perspective

1. Delivering humanity from death
 - a. Our souls die because of sins (Gen 2:17; Lk 9:60; Eph 2:1)
 - b. Without salvation, we are eternally dead (Mt 25:41, 46; Rev 21:8)
 - c. The Lord Jesus can save us from death (2 Cor 1:10; Rev 20:6)
 - d. Through his death, the Lord Jesus destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (1 Cor 15:54–57; Heb 2:14)
2. Delivering humanity from sin
 - a. Death comes from sin. If there is no remission of sins, no one can escape death (Rom 5:12; 6:23)
 - b. Under the Mosaic law, without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22)
 - c. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners (Mt 1:21; 1 Tim 1:15)
 - d. Jesus Christ shed his blood for the whole world, and he can cleanse us of all our sins (Tit 2:14; Heb 9:12–14)
3. Delivering humanity from the dominion of the law
 - a. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law (Rom 5:13; 1 Cor 15:56)

- b. Jesus Christ was born under the law to redeem those under the law (Gal 4:4–5)
 - c. Jesus was made a curse for us on the cross to redeem us from the curse of the law (Gal 3:13; Col 2:14, 16–17)
 - d. Those who have been redeemed by the Lord are no longer under the law. They are liberated from the bondage of the law (Rom 6:14; 7:4, 6).
4. Delivering humanity from the power of the devil
- a. Satan is the evil one that causes sin and death (Jn 8:44; Jas 3:14–16; Rev 20:10)
 - b. The whole world lies under the reign of Satan (1 Jn 5:19)
 - c. The Lord Jesus has overcome the devil (Jn 16:33; Heb 2:14; 4:15; Rev 3:21)
 - d. In Christ Jesus, we can turn away from the power of Satan and overcome the world (Acts 26:18; 1 Jn 5:4–5, 18)

B. Salvation from a Positive Perspective

1. Leading man into the kingdom of heaven
- a. The message that Jesus Christ proclaimed is the good news of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 4:17)
 - b. Jesus' disciples also proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (Mt 10:7)
 - c. Those who believe in the gospel will be saved by the Lord into the kingdom of heaven (2 Tim 4:18)
 - d. Receiving the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our heavenly inheritance (Eph 1:13–14)
2. Giving man everlasting life
- a. The Lord's words are called the "words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68; Acts 5:20)
 - b. Salvation is called "the grace of life" (1 Pet 3:7)
 - c. Jesus laid down his life to give us eternal life (1 Jn 2:25; Jn 3:16, 36; Rom 5:21)

- d. By the promised Holy Spirit, we obtain eternal life (Jn 4:14; 7:37–39; Rev 22:17)
- 3. Bestowing glory on man
 - a. The grace of God is boundless. The Lord justifies those whom he calls and bestows glory on them (Rom 8:30; Heb 2:10).
 - b. The Lord will change our lowly body into the likeness of his glorious body (Phil 3:21)
 - c. The Lord Jesus protects and assures our glorious heavenly inheritance (Col 3:24; 1 Pet 1:4)
 - d. The Lord will reward the saints with an unfading crown of glory (1 Pet 5:4, 10)



The Redemptive Plan of God

A. The Necessity of Salvation

- 1. People cannot save themselves from sin and death
 - a. The whole world is subject to the devil (Eph 2:1–3; 1 Jn 5:19)
 - b. Mankind is bound by sin (Jer 13:23; Rom 7:14–15, 24)
 - c. Humanity’s lot is to be judged and condemned (Rom 6:23; Rev 21:8)
- 2. God is love and he cannot endure to see mankind’s condemnation
 - a. God treasures his creation, especially mankind (Ps 8:3–4; 144:3)
 - b. God takes no pleasure in seeing people perish (Ezek 33:11; 2 Pet 3:9)
 - c. In mercy, God planned to redeem a fallen humanity (Ps 103:13; Prov 24:11–12; Isa 49:15; 1 Jn 4:8, 16)

B. The Promise of Salvation

1. God told the devil that the seed of the woman would bruise his head (Gen 3:15)
2. God promised Abraham that the Savior would come from his seed, and that all nations would thus be blessed by him (Gen 22:18; 12:1–3; 17:1–6)
3. God renewed his covenant with Israel from time to time, promising that a Savior would be given to Israel in due time
 - a. Jacob prophesied that Shiloh (meaning “the one who brings peace”) would come from Judah, and to him would belong the obedience of the people (Gen 49:10, NKJV)
 - b. God promised he would raise up a prophet in his name from Israel to guide the people (Deut 18:15–19)
 - c. God’s firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth, would come from the seed of David (Ps 89:27–37; Jer 23:5–6)
 - d. “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called ‘Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace’” (Isa 9:6)
 - e. All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God (Isa 52:10)

C. Typologies of Salvation

1. Garments of skins (Gen 3:21)

God made garments of skins to cover the shame of our first parents, Adam and Eve. This covering typifies God’s sending of his anointed to shed his blood. Jesus was God’s anointed and sinless Son, but through God’s mercy, Jesus shed his blood for the remission of our sins. From the typology of Adam and Eve’s covering, we understand that it is through Jesus’ blood that we can cover our shame and receive justification (cf. Jn 1:29; 1 Pet 3:18; 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:27).

2. The bronze serpent (Num 21:9)

God told Moses to set a bronze serpent on a pole. The Israelites bitten by the fiery serpents lived when they beheld the bronze serpent (Num 21:4–9). Therefore, the bronze serpent typifies Jesus

Christ and the redeeming sacrifice of the cross. Those who have faith in Jesus and look to his coming will not be condemned; rather, they will be saved (cf. Jn 3:14–15).

3. God sent Moses to deliver Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh. This typifies Jesus' coming to the world in order to save God's chosen from the terrible reign of Satan (cf. Deut 18:15–19; Acts 3:22–23). Moses, as a type of Jesus Christ, is a prefiguration of Jesus in the following ways:
 - a. Moses was persecuted by Pharaoh during his infancy. Likewise, the Lord Jesus was persecuted by Herod (cf. Ex 1:15–16, 22; Mt 2:16–18).
 - b. Moses rejected the prosperity and glamour of Egypt. The Lord Jesus became poor for our sake (cf. Heb 11:24–27; 2 Cor 8:9).
 - c. Moses guided the Israelites through the Red Sea, a prefiguration of baptism. The Lord Jesus wants to save us from this sinful world, typified by Egypt and Babylon. Through water baptism, we belong to Christ (cf. Ex 14:21–23; 1 Cor 10:1–2; Gal 3:27).
 - d. Moses built the tabernacle in the wilderness, which is symbolic of this world. The Lord Jesus, likewise, built his church in the world (cf. Ex 25:8–9; Acts 20:28; Heb 8:1–2).
 - e. Moses was faithful in the matters of God's household. The Lord Jesus humbled himself and became obedient unto death for God's household—the church (cf. Num 12:7; Phil 2:4–8; Heb 3:2, 5).



Jesus Christ Has Fulfilled the Promise of Salvation

A. Salvation Is Manifested through Jesus Christ

1. Grace and truth come through Jesus Christ (Jn 1:15–17)
2. Grace is given to those in Christ (Eph 2:7; 2 Tim 1:9–10)
3. No other name under heaven, except Jesus, is given among men, whereby we can be saved (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12)
4. To see Jesus is to see God's salvation (Lk 2:29–32; 3:6)

B. The Blood of Jesus Christ Fulfilled Salvation

According to the law, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb 9:22). But the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sins (Heb 10:1–4). Hence, the Lord Jesus had to shed his blood in order to fulfill salvation (Heb 10:5–10). The effects of the blood of Jesus Christ are as follows:

1. Jesus’ precious blood is a ransom
 - a. Man is sold to sin, being a slave of sin (Jn 8:34; Rom 7:14)
 - b. The redemption of mankind depends upon the blood of Christ, since the life of all flesh is in the blood. We can obtain redemption and forgiveness of sins through Jesus’ blood (Lev 17:11; Mt 20:28; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19).
 - c. Jesus purchases Christians with his precious blood (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 6:20; Rev 5:9)
2. Sin is cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ
 - a. The sacrificial rites in the Old Testament were just shadows of the good things to come (Heb 10:1–4)
 - b. Only the precious blood of the Lord can purify our conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5)
 - c. Through baptism, the blood of the Lord Jesus can wash away our sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 3:25)
3. The blood of the Lord Jesus leads us to see God
 - a. People are separated from God by sin (Isa 59:2)
 - b. We are reconciled with God through the blood of Jesus Christ (Eph 2:13; Col 1:20)
 - c. By the blood of Jesus, we can boldly enter the Holy of Holies (Heb 10:19–20; cf. Mt 27:50–51; Heb 9:7–9)

[IV]

The Giving and Receiving of Salvation

A. God's Salvation Is Universal

1. God desires for all people to be saved, for he is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9)
2. God loves man, regardless of race or social status (Jn 3:16; Gal 3:27–28; Rev 7:9)
3. The Lord commanded the disciples to proclaim the gospel to every created being (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:47)
4. God's salvation is offered to all mankind, but according to the Bible, God will not save fallen angels (Heb 2:16; 2 Pet 2:4)

B. Salvation Is a Gift from God

1. Salvation is not the result of our own deeds, but by God's grace (Eph 2:8–9)
2. It is the Lord who chose us, not vice versa (Jn 15:16; Eph 1:5–6)
3. God will have mercy upon whom he wills (Rom 9:14–18)
4. God grants us an inexpressible gift (2 Cor 9:15; cf. Jn 1:16)

C. Salvation Is a Free Gift

1. Now to one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his wage (Rom 4:4–5)
2. We are not saved by our own doings (Rom 4:6–7; Eph 2:9)
3. We are not saved by the deeds of the law (Rom 3:20, 28)
4. Salvation is freely given by God's grace to mankind (Rom 3:24; Rev 22:17)

D. We Receive Salvation through Faith

1. By God's grace we are saved through faith (Rom 3:25; Eph 2:8)
2. Salvation is given to everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16–17; 10:13)

3. The just shall live by faith (Rom 1:17; Heb 11:6)
4. True faith is manifested by deeds (Jas 2:20–26)

E. Now Is the Acceptable Time and the Day of Salvation

1. Now is the time of the Holy Spirit of the latter rain, a time of God's acceptance (Lk 4:10, 19; Joel 2:28–29, 32; Zech 10:1)
2. Pray to God before the floods of great waters rush over you (Ps 32:6; 69:13). Turn to God before the imminent final judgment (1 Pet 4:7; 2 Pet 3:4–9).
3. Accept Jesus Christ today before it is too late (Lk 16:22–31; Ps 95:7; Heb 2:1–3)
4. Behold, now is the acceptable time and the day of salvation! (Prov 27:1; Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2)

8. FAITH

The Bible says, “Without faith it is impossible to please him” (Heb 11:6). “The righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith” (Rom 1:17). Faith is therefore an indispensable factor in salvation.



What Do We Believe?

A. We Believe in God (Jn 14:1)

1. We believe that God is one (Mk 12:29; Jn 17:3; 1 Cor 8:6)
2. We believe that all things in the universe were created by God (Gen 1:1; Heb 11:3; 3:4)
3. We believe that life, death, prosperity, and adversity are all in the hand of God (Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6, 7; Isa 45:7)
4. We believe that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent (Mt 19:26; Rom 16:27; Eph 4:6)
5. We believe that God loves the world, and is gracious and true in his treatment of all mankind (1 Kgs 6:35; Ps 145:9; Jn 3:16)

B. We Believe in Jesus Christ

1. We believe that Jesus was born by the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit, i.e. the Word manifest in the flesh. Afterward, Jesus was crucified on the cross for the sins of the world and was buried for three days. According to biblical prophecy, Jesus resurrected on the third day and ascended into heaven forty days after his resurrection. In the future, the Lord will come again from heaven to judge the

world according to everyone's deeds (Mt 1:18–23; 25:31–34, 41, 46; Jn 1:1–2, 14; Acts 1:3, 9; 17:31; 1 Cor 15:1–4; 1 Pet 3:22).

2. We believe that Jesus is the only Savior, for only through his precious blood can we be saved and reconciled with God (Lk 2:11; Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12; Heb 10:19–20)
3. We believe that Jesus and the Father are one, i.e. Jesus Christ is God (Isa 9:6; Jn 10:30; Rom 9:5)

C. We Believe in the Holy Spirit

1. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, and is God himself, because the Lord Jesus says that “God is Spirit” (Mt 3:16; Jn 4:24)
2. We believe that the Holy Spirit is one Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of Jesus because the Father and Jesus are one (Mt 10:20; Acts 16:7; 1 Cor 12:4; Eph 4:4).
3. We believe that Christians must receive the promised Holy Spirit as a seal, proof, and guarantee of their entrance into the heavenly kingdom (Lk 11:13; Jn 7:37–39; Eph 1:13–14)
4. We believe that speaking in tongues is the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44–46; 19:6–7; 1 Cor 14:2)

D. We Believe in the Word of God—the Holy Scriptures

1. We believe that Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21)
2. We believe that the word of God is true and reliable, and that every word of God is pure and powerful (Prov 30:5; Lk 1:37)
3. We believe that biblical promises and prophecies shall all be fulfilled (Isa 46:10; Ezek 12:26–28; Rom 4:20–21)
4. We believe that God will judge the world according to his word (Jn 12:48; Rom 3:19; Jas 2:12)
5. We believe that the words of God cannot be added to or taken away from (Deut 12:32; Rev 22:18–19)

E. We Believe that the True Jesus Church Is Established and Approved by God

1. To listen to the true church is to hear and follow Christ; to reject the true church is to reject Jesus Christ (Mt 18:17; Lk 10:16)
2. The Jews of old believed in the LORD, but rejected Jesus as the Messiah. While it may seem harsh, because of their rejection of Jesus Christ, their faith could not be true to God; rather, they were deceived by Satan (Jn 8:37–45).
3. Today, if one believes in Jesus Christ yet rejects the true church established by the Holy Spirit, their faith does not abide in the truth. To oppose the true church is enmity with Christ. Why? Because the church is the Lord's body, which we cannot go against (Acts 9:4–5; Eph 1:23).
4. The true church should meet the following requirements:
 - a. The Spirit of Christ is in the true church (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:13)
 - b. Signs, miracles, and wonders shall follow the true message (Mk 16:17–20; Heb 2:3–4)
 - c. The message of their gospel must be in complete accordance with the Scriptures (2 Cor 4:6; 11:2–4; Gal 1:6–9)
5. The true church is a place where the Lord executes forgiveness and retainment of sins (Mt 18:17–18; Jn 20:21–23)



What Is Genuine Faith?

A. Faith Sincerely Motivated by Our Innermost Being

1. Genuine faith is faith in God's words—a humility and openness to take the Bible as the truth we live by (Gen 15:5–6; Mk 11:22; Jn 4:50–53; Rev 21:5)
2. Accept God's words fully (Rom 10:9; 1 Tim 1:15; 4:8–9)
3. Believe in God's words completely (Rom 4:20–21)

B. Faith Entails Absolute Obedience

1. Faith without obedience is not true faith. Some examples of this principle are: Naaman, who did not listen to Elisha (2 Kgs 5:10–12) and the rich young man, who did not obey the Lord (Mt 19:21–22).
2. Obedience is the true expression of faith. Good examples of this principle at work are found in the faith of both Abraham and the blind man in John’s gospel (Jn 9:6–7; Heb 11:8, 17).
3. Faith without deeds is dead (Jas 2:19–26)

C. Faith Entails Complete Trust

1. Belief without trust is little to no faith (Mt 8:23–26; Mk 4:35–40)
2. Firmly believe in the providential care of God (Mt 6:30–32; 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 11:6; 1 Pet 5:7)
3. Entrust everything to the Lord (Ps 37:5; Isa 26:3; Phil 4:4–7)



The Effects of a Genuine Faith Are Great

A. Genuine Faith Is Acceptable in God’s Sight

1. By faith, Abel offered God an excellent sacrifice, through which he received approval that he was righteous, God bearing witness to this by accepting his gifts (Heb 11:4)
2. By faith, Enoch walked with God; he so pleased God that he was translated without seeing death (Heb 11:5)
3. Without faith, it is impossible to please God (Heb 11:6)

B. Justification by Faith

1. Justification does not result from the works of the law (Rom 3:20, 28; Gal 2:16)
2. Justification does not result from good works (Rom 4:4–7; Eph 2:8–9)
3. Man is justified through the redemption of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:24–25, 28; Gal 3:7)

C. Faith Yields Salvation of Souls

1. The end of faith is the salvation of our souls (1 Pet 1:9)
2. The word of the Lord is able to save souls (Jas 1:21)
3. The gospel of Christ will save all who truly believe (Jn 3:15–16, 36; Rom 1:16)

D. Faith Enables People to See the Future

1. By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the things to come (Gen 27:27–29, 38–40; Heb 11:1, 20)
2. By faith, Joseph made mention of the Israelite exodus and gave directions concerning his burial (Gen 50:24–25; Heb 11:22)
3. By faith, we know the end of all things and the glory of the heavenly kingdom (Rom 8:17–18; 1 Cor 2:9; 2 Pet 3:8–10)

E. Faith Makes Our Prayers Acceptable to God

1. The Lord Jesus said, “And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith” (Mt 21:22; Mk 11:24)
2. The prayer of faith will heal the sick (Mt 9:20–22; Jas 5:14–15)
3. Those who waver in doubt receive nothing from the Lord (Jas 1:6–7)

F. Faith Brings the Protection and Care of God

1. By faith, Noah heeded God’s warning and constructed an ark for his family’s salvation (Gen 6:13–22; 7:17–23; Heb 11:7)
2. By faith, Israel kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood to escape death (Ex 12:1–13, 21–29; Heb 11:28)
3. By faith, Rahab the harlot did not perish with the rest of Jericho (Josh 2:12–14, 17–21; Heb 11:31)

G. Faith Triumphs over the Impossible

1. By faith, Sarah bore a son when she was past childbearing age (Rom 4:19–21; Heb 11:11)
2. By faith, Abraham offered up Isaac, with full assurance that God could even raise him from the dead (Gen 22:9–14; Heb 11:17–19)
3. By faith, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea (Ex 14:13–30; Heb 11:29)

H. Faith Produces Courage

1. By faith, Moses' parents hid Moses for three months and were not afraid of the king's edict to kill male babies (Ex 1:22; 2:1–2; Heb 11:23)
2. By faith, Ezra courageously made a hazardous journey to Jerusalem without the escort of Persian soldiers (Ezra 7:9; 8:21–23, 31–32)
3. By faith, Christians of old did not fear the hardships and perils of life (Ps 46:1–3; Acts 21:13; Heb 13:5–6)

I. Faith Compels Sincere Offerings

1. By faith, Abraham offered up his only son (Gen 22:15–17; Heb 11:17–18)
2. By faith, the widow of Zarephath hospitably received Elijah, even though she was at the point of starvation (1 Kgs 17:8–16)
3. By faith, believers in the early church offered their properties to the church for the common good (Acts 2:44–45; 4:36–37)

J. Faith Gives Strength to Sacrifice Oneself

1. By faith, Moses chose to suffer affliction with Israel rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin (Heb 11:24–26)
2. By faith, the people of God suffered trials of cruel mockings, scourgings, chains, imprisonments, and even death (Heb 11:35–38)
3. By faith, early Christians rejoiced in their suffering for the Lord (Mt 5:10–13; Rom 8:17, 18; 1 Pet 4:12–13)

K. Faith Produces Victory over Foes

1. By faith, Israel encircled Jericho seven days, and the walls of Jericho fell down (Josh 6:11–20; Heb 11:30)
2. By faith, David subdued Goliath, a Philistine giant (1 Sam 17:31–51)
3. It is the victory of our faith that overcomes the world (1 Pet 5:9; 1 Jn 5:4)

[IV]

What Are the Sources of Faith?

A. Hearing God's Word

1. Paul said, "Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom 10:17)
2. On the day of Pentecost, the people in Jerusalem were cut to the heart upon hearing the testimony of Peter and the apostles, and three thousand were baptized in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:37–41)
3. The truth gives man both faith and hope (Jn 20:30–31; Rom 15:4; 2 Tim 3:15)

B. Faith Is God's Gift

1. God assigns each person a measure of faith (Acts 3:16; Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:9)
2. Faith does not rest in human wisdom, but in God's power (1 Cor 2:4–5; Eph 2:8)
3. Be sure to pray to the Lord to increase our faith (Mk 9:24; Lk 17:5)

C. Strengthened by the Trial of Our Faith

1. Faith is much more precious than gold, which though perishable, is tested with fire (1 Pet 1:7; Jas 1:2–4)
2. From the trial he faced in sacrificing his son Isaac, Abraham built up steadfast faith that "the Lord would prepare." Thus, Abraham ordered his old and faithful servant, Eliezer, to go and fetch a wife for Isaac from his homeland. He firmly believed that God is Jehovah-Jireh, i.e., the Lord will provide (Gen 24:2–7, 40; cf. Gen 22:13–14). We learn, therefore, that our faith grows through our trials in life.

[V]

The Misery of Unbelief

A. Chastisement in Our Earthly Life

1. Most of the Israelites died in the wilderness because of their unbelief (Num 14:11–12, 26–30; 1 Cor 10:5; Heb 3:19)
2. A Samaritan lord disbelieved Elisha’s prediction that within twenty-four hours they would have plenty of provisions. Later, he was trodden to death by the people before the gate, just as the prophet Elisha predicted (2 Kgs 7:1–2, 17).
3. Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, did not believe the message of the angel; therefore, the angel struck him dumb (Lk 1:19–20)

B. Condemnation in the Afterlife

1. If we do not believe, we will be condemned (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:18)
2. Unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20; 21:8)
3. Those who do not know God, and do not obey the gospel of Christ, will be punished with eternal destruction (2 Thess 1:8–9)

C. Unable to Stand

1. Only by faith can we remain steadfast in our belief in God’s word (Rom 11:20; 2 Cor 1:24)
2. Cast all doubts and fears aside (Heb 3:12; Jas 1:6)
3. Keep the full assurance of the understanding and knowledge of Jesus Christ with you always (Col 2:2; 1 Thess 1:5)

9. REPENTANCE



The Importance of Repentance

A. The Message of Repentance in the Old Testament

1. At the time of the fall
 - a. From God's questioning of Adam and Eve, an innocent confession of their transgression and repentance was expected (Gen 3:11)
 - b. Instead, Adam laid all the blame upon Eve. Likewise, Eve laid blame upon the serpent. Both Adam and Eve pleaded extenuating circumstances for their sins without sincere repentance (Gen 3:12–13).
 - c. Therefore, the Bible states that Adam covered up his transgression (Job 31:33)
2. In the days of Noah
 - a. The earth was full of violence and wickedness (Gen 6:5, 11–12)
 - b. God commanded Noah to build an ark and preach righteousness, to warn a wicked generation of a global flood. Noah's warning manifests God's kindness to Noah's generation, for the Lord hoped they would repent and live (2 Pet 2:5).
 - c. While God's mercy was given, no one accepted God's grace or repented. As a result, no one survived the deluge except for Noah's household (Gen 6:3; 7:21).

3. Sodom and Gomorrah
 - a. The sins of Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely serious in God's eyes (Gen 18:20; 19:13)
 - b. God sent two angels to save those who were God-fearing (Gen 19:12–14)
 - c. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they sinned and yet failed to repent (Gen 19:23–25; 2 Pet 2:6–8; Jude 7)
4. Nineveh
 - a. The wickedness of the city of Nineveh came up before God (Jon 1:1–2)
 - b. God gave warnings and instructions, through Jonah, that in forty days Nineveh would be destroyed. During this interval, God expected the people of Nineveh to repent (Jon 3:1–4).
 - c. Happily, the people of Nineveh sincerely repented and God graciously withdrew the sentence of destruction he had passed upon them (Mt 12:41; Jon 3:5–10; 4:11)
5. The faithless Israelites
 - a. When the Israelites transgressed God's law, God often sent prophets to warn and instruct them. God sent these messengers in the hope that they might repent and return to God's ways (Jer 8:6; 17:27; 26:12–13; Ezek 14:6; 18:30–32).
 - b. However, the Israelites were stiff-necked and did not turn away from their iniquity. The unfortunate result of their faithlessness was that most of them were killed or captured (2 Chr 36:11–20).
 - c. The Bible says, "Be not like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD" (Zech 1:4)

B. The Message of Repentance in the New Testament

1. John the Baptist urged the people to repent
 - a. John the Baptist said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2, 8, 11)

- b. Many came to John the Baptist, confessing their sins (Mt 3:5–6; Mk 1:5)
 - c. John the Baptist preached a baptism of repentance (Acts 13:24; 19:4)
2. The Lord Jesus stressed repentance
- a. In Jesus’ ministry on earth, he told the people to repent; even after his ascension, Jesus urged the church to repent (Mt 4:17; Rev 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3, 19)
 - b. Jesus said, “There is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Lk 15:7, 10)
 - c. Jesus once said, “Unless you repent you will likewise perish” (Lk 13:1–5)
3. The apostles emphasized repentance
- a. On the day of Pentecost, Peter instructed the people, who had asked what they should do, to first repent (Acts 2:38)
 - b. In his ministry, Paul urged the people to repent (Acts 17:30; 26:20)
 - c. The forbearance and long-suffering of God are the riches of God’s goodness, through which he hopes to lead sinners to repentance (Acts 17:30; Rom 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9)



The Meaning of Repentance

A. Consciousness of Sins Committed

- a. To be conscious of your own sins and be determined to correct yourself is the starting point of repentance (1 Kgs 8:47; Lk 10:13)
- b. A self-righteous person can never learn repentance, for he or she will always feel self-satisfied (Jer 2:35; Lk 18:9–12)
- c. We should realize that no one is perfect in the presence of God (Eccl 7:20; Jas 3:2)

B. Sorrow over Our Sins

1. In our sorrowing over our sins, we show awareness of our transgressions and weaknesses (Ps 38:18; Joel 2:12–13; Lk 7:36–38)
2. Godly grief produces a repentance without regret (Lk 22:32, 61–62; 2 Cor 7:9–10)
3. God will not despise a broken and contrite heart (Ps 51:17; Isa 57:15; 66:2)

C. Confession of Sins and Asking for Forgiveness

1. We must acknowledge our sins before God and ask for forgiveness (Lev 26:40; Num 14:39–40; Ps 32:5)
2. Confessing our sins to one another and praying for one another play important roles in repentance (Mt 5:23–24; Acts 19:18; Jas 5:16)
3. Those who conceal their sins shall not prosper (Prov 28:13; Acts 5:1–10)

D. Returning to God

1. In repentance we must cast away all our idols and evil doings. We must return to God with all our heart and serve him alone (1 Sam 7:3; Acts 26:20; 1 Thess 1:9)
2. Humble yourself and submit to God's commandments (2 Chr 32:26; 33:10–13; Acts 2:38, 41)
3. If we confess our sins with our lips but our heart does not return to God, we have not truly repented (Ex 9:27; 1 Sam 15:24)

E. Hate Evil and Keep Yourself from Wickedness

1. Repenting is to hate evil (Job 42:6; Ps 97:10; Amos 5:15)
2. Forsake doing evil in repentance (2 Chr 7:14; Isa 55:7; Jon 3:8–10)
3. Abstain from every form of evil (Ps 19:13; 34:13–14; 1 Thess 5:22)

F. Yield Fruits of Goodness

1. Perform deeds worthy of repentance (Mt 3:18; Acts 26:20)
2. Compensate those you have trespassed against (Num 5:5–7; Lk 19:8)
3. Bring forth the good fruit of “fearing God and loving man” (Lk 3:11; 7:37–38; 19:8)



The Effects of Repentance

A. Sins Are Forgiven

1. In the New Testament, a person is cleansed of all his past sins on account of faith in the Lord and repentance, and subsequently by the blood of Jesus through the Spirit of God when he is baptized (Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 6:11; 1 Pet 3:20–21)
2. Sins (not including mortal sins) that we have committed after putting on Christ can only be pardoned by sincere repentance (Jas 5:15–16; 1 Jn 1:9; 5:16–17)
3. Repentance is a necessary step for the remission of our sins (2 Chr 7:14; Ps 32:5; Lk 7:37–38, 47)

B. God's Wrath Is Removed

1. God will withdraw his punishments if we would only repent and turn to him (Joel 2:12–13)
2. King Hezekiah and the people humbled themselves so that the wrath of God would not come upon them (2 Chr 32:26)
3. The destruction of the city of Nineveh was averted because the people repented (Jon 3:8–10; Mt 12:41)

C. God's Providential Care Follows Repentance

1. If we return to God with all our heart, put away our evil ways, and serve him alone, God will deliver us out of the hand of our enemy (1 Sam 7:3)
2. Salvation came to Zacchaeus because he truly repented (Lk 19:8–9)
3. No church will progress if she does not truly repent (Rev 2:5; 3:19)

[IV]

Causes for Repentance

A. Enlightenment through the Truth

1. In the time of Nehemiah, the Israelites repented upon hearing God's word. Consequently, the Israelites revived their faith (Neh 8:8–10; 9:1–4).
2. Nineveh repented upon hearing Jonah preach God's word (Jon 3:1–5)
3. The word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, "piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Thus, God's word allows us to be more conscious of our sin (Acts 2:37; 1 Cor 14:24–25; Heb 4:12).

B. Repentance Caused by Witnessing Miracles

1. People repented upon seeing God's mighty work through Elijah on Mount Carmel (1 Kgs 18:21–23, 37–39)
2. Jesus once remarked that the people should have repented when they saw his miracles (Mt 11:20–24)
3. It was through miraculous events that Jesus Christ called Paul to repentance (Acts 9:1–9; 1 Tim 1:13–16)

C. Repentance Caused by the Lord's Chastisement

1. Plague or calamity is one way in which God chastises to invoke repentance (1 Kgs 8:46–50; Rev 9:20–21; 16:9)
2. During the period of the judges, Israel called upon the Lord to deliver them from the oppression of their enemies (Judg 3:7–9, 12–15; 4:1–3; 6:1–6; 10:6–10)
3. We should always consider in the day of our adversity (Eccl 7:14; Rev 2:5)

D. Repentance Urged by the Grace of God

1. A contrite heart of repentance is given by God (Acts 5:31; 11:18)
2. The Holy Spirit will “convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment” (Jn 16:8)
3. We should pray that God allows us to understand our faults and to return to him constantly when we stray (1 Kgs 18:37; Ps 19:12; Jer 31:18; 2 Tim 2:25)

10. BAPTISM



The Origin of Baptism

A. Baptism in the Old Testament

1. The Israelites washed their clothes and bathed after they were defiled (Lev 15:5–13; 16:26, 28; 17:15–16). This cleansing ritual is an Old Testament type of baptism.
2. The Old Testament records a few specific instances of Gentiles brought into the Israelite community, e.g. Rahab the Canaanite (Josh 6:25), Caleb the Kenizzite (Josh 14:6), and Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:22). The Bible states that Gentiles must be circumcised in order to participate in God's community (Gen 17:12–13; Ex 12:43–44, 48–49). Traditionally, as stated in some rabbinical texts, proselytes were immersed in water as a sacrament.

B. The Baptism of John

The Lord Jesus asked the scribes and chief priests: “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?” (Lk 20:4). Jesus regarded the baptism of John as coming from God. The purpose of John's baptism was to urge repentance as well as to prepare for the coming of the Savior (Mt 3:1–12; Lk 3:7–17; 7:29). The mode of his baptism was immersion (Mt 3:15–16; Jn 3:23).

C. Baptism by the Church in the New Testament

Whether the baptism of John the Baptist was influenced by the cleansing rites of the Old Testament or by the ritual washing of Jewish proselytes

does not matter. Again, whether the baptism performed by the early church was or was not influenced by the baptism of John does not matter. What we should note is that the baptism of John did not come through human will (Lk 20:4). We must also emphasize that the Lord clearly commanded his disciples to perform baptism (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15–16). However, the baptism of John and the baptism of the church differ in meaning and function (cf. Acts 19:3–5).



The Effects of Baptism

A. Rebirth

1. The Lord Jesus said, “Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3)
2. To be reborn of water and Spirit is indispensable for entering the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5)
3. To be baptized is to be born again. Paul referred to baptism as “the washing of regeneration” (Tit 3:5)
4. Adam is a type of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:14; 1 Cor 15:45). God made Eve from the rib of Adam while he was asleep (Gen 2:21–25). The creation of Eve prefigures the Lord Jesus suffering death, the piercing of his side, and the shedding of his precious blood in order to recreate man through baptism and to establish the church, which is his bride (Jn 19:10–35; Acts 20:28; Eph 5:25–27)

B. Remission of Sin

1. The remission of sin comes only through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus (Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19)
2. The precious blood of Jesus Christ purges the baptized from their sins through the medium of water. This is mysterious and amazing, with the Spirit testifying to its efficacy (Zech 13:1; Heb 9:13–14; 10:19–22; 1 Jn 5:6–8)
3. Therefore, baptism has the effect of remitting sin and washing them away (Acts 2:38; 22:16)

4. Paul explained that baptism into the death of the Lord Jesus is to crucify the old self with the Lord. The body of sin is destroyed and we shall not be slaves to sin again; for through baptism, we are saved from the law of sin (Rom 6:3–7). Thus, the destruction of the sinful old self is effected through water baptism.

C. Justification and Salvation

1. Salvation is present redemption from the sins of this world and, in the future, deliverance into the heavenly kingdom. Baptism has the effect of remitting our sin so that “he who believes and is baptized will be saved” (Mk 16:16; Acts 16:30–33).
2. Peter spoke of baptism as corresponding to the salvation of Noah and his household through water. This baptism effects our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which we are justified (1 Pet 3:20–21).
3. Since the precious blood of Jesus has cleansed our sins, we are justified in the sight of God (Rom 3:25; 5:9)

D. Put on Christ

1. We were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise (Eph 2:12)
2. By the precious blood of the Lord, God redeemed people of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation (Rev 5:9–10)
3. Through baptism, we put on Christ, belong to Christ, and are within Christ. And through baptism we become Abraham’s offspring and heirs of the heavenly heritage (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27–29).
4. Eve was created from Adam’s side, which symbolizes that husband and wife are one flesh. Eve was Adam’s flesh and bone, and she was joined in marriage to Adam to become one flesh (Gen 2:22–25). In the same manner, the children of God, reborn through the precious blood of Jesus, are also the bride of Christ. In this way, the church today must be united with the Lord in both love and deeds. Just as the Lord gave his life for us, as his bride, we too must honor and obey the Lord as our husband (Acts 20:28; Eph 5:29–32).

E. Adoption as the Children of God

1. People were originally children of God (Lk 3:38), but they lost this honorable position because of disobedience (Jn 8:44; 1 Jn 5:19)
2. “God sent forth his Son... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Gal 4:4–5). We are redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:18–19). Through Jesus’ precious blood, we are brought back to God (Heb 10:19–22) and adopted as children of God (Eph 1:4–5).
3. After Jesus came out of the water, the Spirit descended upon him, and a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:16–17). If we receive the proper mode of water baptism, our sins and iniquities will be washed away. We shall be adopted by God as his children and receive the promised Holy Spirit, which testifies that we are the children of God (Rom 8:15–16; Gal 4:6).



The Mode of Baptism

A. Immersion

1. Typologies of baptism
 - a. Noah and his household were saved by water. This water prefigures baptism (1 Pet 3:20–21). During the deluge, heavy rain and tremendous waters completely covered the land and the ark (Gen 7:17–20).
 - b. Passing through the Red Sea typifies water baptism. God opened a way in the sea for Israel. They walked upon dry ground, and the waters, divided beside them on the right and left, were high above their heads (Ex 14:21–22; Isa 43:16; 1 Cor 10:1–2).
2. Baptism in prophecy
 - a. “Thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (Mic 7:19)
 - b. “On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness” (Zech 13:1)

- c. The depths of the sea are a way for the redeemed to pass over (Isa 51:10)
3. The cleansing ceremonies of the Old Testament
 - a. The ceremonial cleansing of uncleanness in the Old Testament is connected to the baptism of the New Testament. For the Jews, bathing the whole body in water was a means of restoration from a state of ceremonial uncleanness. Leviticus 15:5–8, 10–11, 18; Numbers 19:19 read, “bathe his body in running water”; Leviticus 15:13, 16; 16:4, 24, 26, 28; Numbers 19:7–8 read, “bathe his body in water”; and 2 Kings 5:10 reads, “wash”—all use the same word: *rachats*. *Rachats*, a Hebrew word, means “to wash or bathe,” or “to dip.” Moreover, the term “baptize” also means “to immerse or dip,” which corresponds to the practice of the early church.³
 4. The word for “baptize” in Greek means “to dip,” “immerse,” or “sink.” Therefore, immersion of the entire body during baptism is consistent with the meaning of the word in the original language. For baptism, to completely dip or immerse oneself in living (i.e. moving or active) water is thus the right mode of baptism.
 5. The Greek Orthodox Church, which uses the Greek Bible, understands that the correct mode of water baptism, as recorded in the Bible, is full immersion, and she performs baptisms of her members accordingly.
 6. The example of the Lord Jesus and the apostles
 - a. “And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water” (Mt 3:16). “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water” (Mk 1:9–10). “John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there” (Jn 3:23). We can infer that John would not have baptized people in a place of “much water” had his mode of baptism not required much water. Only full immersion requires much water. Later, when the custom of sprinkling became popular for the sake of ease, much water was not necessary. Thus, the mode of baptism the Lord received was by full immersion.

³ Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, (Edinburgh, New York, 1930), Vol. 2, p. 406.

- b.** Philip baptized the eunuch of Ethiopia: “And they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38–39). If Philip baptized the eunuch with pouring or sprinkling of water on the head, then why would both of them take the trouble of going down into the water? Again, how could they come out of the water had they not been fully immersed in the water?
- 7.** Apostle Paul explained that by baptism, one is buried and resurrected with the Lord Jesus (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12). Since it is a form of burial, one must be fully immersed in water. Pouring or sprinkling does not signify burial and resurrection. We cannot use our own methods or thinking in carrying out the sacraments so we do not end up in the way of disobedience (1 Sam chap. 15). Just as Ezekiel’s prophecies had to be symbolically “acted out” in obedience, we too must obey. Ezekiel could not just say, “I just want to tell them instead of doing these actions!” (Ezek 4:1–17)

B. Face Downward

- 1.** In the likeness of the death of the Lord, one faces downward when baptized (Rom 6:5, 8). The Bible records the likeness of Jesus’ death: when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, he bowed his head (Jn 19:30).
- 2.** The proper expression of a sinner’s attitude toward repentance, and the correct manner in asking God for forgiveness of sins, is a head bowed downward.
 - a.** Our iniquities have gone over our heads (Ezra 9:6; Ps 38:4)
 - b.** Iniquities have taken hold of us, so that we are not able to lift up our heads from under its burden (Ps 40:12; Lk 18:13)
 - c.** Sinners should not be stiff-necked, but must be humble (Job 10:15; Acts 7:51)

C. In the Name of Jesus Christ

- 1.** To baptize in the name of Jesus Christ is the Lord’s command

- a. The name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is Jesus (Mt 28:19). We must take note that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not names. Moreover, the name is singular not plural. That name is Jesus (cf. Acts 4:12).
- b. The apostles knew the meaning of Jesus' commission, so they baptized converts in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38, 8:16, 10:48, 19:5)
- c. Through the name of Jesus, one receives remission of sin (Acts 4:12, 10:43, 22:16)

[IV]

The Baptist and the Baptismal Candidate

A. Requirements for the Baptismal Candidate

1. Believe (Mk 16:16)
 - a. Believe that Jesus Christ is the only Savior (Acts 4:12, 16:31–33)
 - b. Believe that Jesus Christ died and resurrected on the third day for our sake (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 15:3–4)
 - c. Believe that Jesus' precious blood cleanses you of sin during baptism (Zech 13:1; Jn 19:34; Rom 3:25; Heb 9:13–14, 22; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 Jn 5:6–8)
 - d. By the grace of the Lord, the True Jesus Church has witnessed miraculous signs in the baptismal waters, which often turn blood red during the baptism. These signs testify that during baptism in the name of Jesus, the water becomes the precious blood of the Lord through the working of the Holy Spirit. Many cripples could walk after baptism, many demoniacs and those with fatal diseases were cured after coming out of the water. Praise the Lord! These facts have been witnessed by innumerable believers and non-believers alike, which testify that water baptism is not simply a ceremonial check-mark on the list of things to do. God's power is present during water baptism, through which he gives the grace of forgiveness of sins (Mk 2:5–13).

- e. Believe in the True Jesus Church, in which the Holy Spirit dwells and works. Be sure to serve the Lord actively, receive spiritual blessings, and receive the truth preached in the church (Jn 15:1–6; Rom 8:9; Gal 4:26; Eph 1:23; 4:4; 1 Jn 2:19).
2. Repent (Acts 2:38)
 - a. Confess one’s own sins (Ps 32:3–5; Mt 3:6; Acts 19:18–19)
 - b. Shun wickedness (Ps 37:27; Jon 3:5–10; Acts 3:26)
 - c. Turn to God (Isa 55:7; Acts 20:21; 26:20)
 - d. Determine to follow righteousness and do good deeds (Mic 6:6–8; Lk 3:7–14)
 3. Be determined
 - a. Bear one’s own cross and follow the Lord (Lk 14:25–33)
 - b. One must pass through many tribulations before entering the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22; 1 Thess 3:3)
 - c. “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk 9:62). Therefore, we must determine to be steadfast in faith and march forth courageously toward the heavenly kingdom (Mt 24:13; Acts 20:24). For those who have sincere faith, repent soberly, and strongly desire to be in Christ, their request for baptism should be accepted (Acts 2:37–41; 8:36–38; 16:15, 30–33).

B. Qualifications of the Baptist

1. The baptist must be one with their sins purged (cf. Num 19:19). Those who officiate baptism must have been baptized already in the proper mode (Acts 2:38). The baptist must be baptized to be clean and thus qualified to baptize others. The priests in the Old Testament washed themselves before they performed holy work (Ex 29:4). Before his ministry, the Lord Jesus was also baptized—he was sinless and committed no sins, but his baptism was to set an example for us (Mt 3:13–16).
2. The baptist must be commissioned by God. “And how can men preach unless they are sent?” (Rom 10:15) One who is ordained and commissioned by human agency alone is not entitled to partake in the holy mission of God. The Lord Jesus said, “As my Father

has sent me, even so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on the disciples, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (Jn 20:21–22). The heavenly Father sent Jesus by the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:18–19; Jn 1:32–34) and similarly, Jesus sent his disciples by the Holy Spirit. Those who have not received the Holy Spirit are not sent by Jesus Christ. Consequently, they do not have the authority of the Lord’s divine commission to remit the sins of a baptismal candidate (Jn 20:22–23). Before his ascension, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. In addition, he also requested that they preach the gospel after they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–8). The efficacy of baptism, for the remission of one’s sins, depends on the precious blood of Jesus Christ, one’s faith, the name of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 6:11). Therefore, if anyone performs baptism, yet does not have the infilling of the Holy Spirit, God neither sent him nor is God with him when he baptizes (1 Jn 3:24). As a result, the baptism administered by this person would be ineffective.

3. One receives baptism only once in a lifetime. But if the baptismal candidate received baptism in an unbiblical manner, he should—like the believers in Ephesus—be baptized once again in the proper mode approved by God. This is the only way in which a baptismal candidate’s sins can be cleansed. Additionally, the baptismal candidate will then be able to receive the abidance of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38, 19:1–7; Eph 4:5).
4. One should not commit sins after baptism, for he is cleansed by Jesus’ blood (Jn 5:14; Heb 6:4–8; 10:26–29)

[V]

Infant Baptism

- A. Infants are sinful from birth (Ps 51:5; Rom 5:13–14)
- B. The Israelites passed through the Red Sea, a type of water baptism, without leaving their babies behind in Egypt

(Ex 10:10; Num 14:31)

- C. Israelite boys were circumcised eight days after birth according to the covenant. Circumcision is a prefiguration of baptism (Gen 17:9–14; Col 2:11–12).
- D. The Scripture records a few cases of baptism “with all his household,” in which babies would inevitably be included (Acts 16:15, 32–34; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16)
- E. The grace of God extends to little children (Ps 115:13; Acts 2:38–39)
- F. The Lord Jesus does not refuse children (Mt 18:13–15; Lk 18:15–16)
- G. Baptism of infants depends upon the faith and conviction of the baby’s parents (Mt 15:28; Jn 4:49–51)
- H. After baptism, the parents are responsible for educating and guiding their children to walk in the steps of the Lord Jesus (Gen 18:19; Deut 6:6–7; Prov 22:6; Eph 6:40)

11. FOOTWASHING



Origin of Footwashing

A. A Clear Difference between the Footwashing Jesus Performed and That of Jewish Custom

The Lord Jesus poured water into a basin and washed his disciples' feet during the last supper (Jn 13:1–5). John chapter 13 is the foundation of the church's practice of footwashing. From this passage, we see that Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet was clearly different from the Jewish practice of footwashing. Likewise, the passages about the establishment of the Holy Communion clearly differentiate the last supper from the customary Passover feast. The Lord's consecration of the bread and the cup gave them a significance beyond mere commemoration of the Passover feast (cf. Lk 22:19–20). Likewise, the Lord Jesus' footwashing in John 13 had a significance beyond mere Jewish customs and practices. Jesus said to Peter, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" (Jn 13:8). Jesus also said, "You are clean, but not every one of you" (Jn 13:10). If the Lord's footwashing was simply a customary practice, why does the Bible clearly relate the Lord's footwashing to having a "part with the Lord" and to being spiritually clean?

B. The Lord Jesus Commands Us to Perform the Footwashing Sacrament (Jn 13:15)

After the Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he commanded them, "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (Jn 13:15). Furthermore, before his ascension, Jesus told his disciples

“to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20). Since footwashing is one of Jesus’ commandments, we cannot neglect to perform footwashing simply because we think it is insignificant. Jesus commanded us to follow his example and so we ought to.

C. Blessed Are They Who Do All That the Lord Commands (Jn 13:16, 17)

We dare not ignore or refuse to heed the Lord’s commandments. For as obedient children of God, we must perform the sacrament of footwashing with due diligence and care. The Lord Jesus passed down to us an example and said, “If you know these things, happy are you if you do them” (Jn 13:17). If this is the Lord’s command, how can we not do it?



Significance of Footwashing

A. Footwashing Illustrates the Lord’s Great Love (Jn 13:1)

1. Out of his great love for them, the Lord called his disciples. Even so, the disciples argued about who would be the greatest among them (Mk 10:30–45). In addition, Jesus’ disciple Judas Iscariot was deceived by Satan to betray the Lord (Jn 13:2). However, in order to illustrate the extent of his love for his disciples, Jesus set an example for them by washing their feet (cf. Ezek 18:32; Mt 12:20).
2. As Jesus’ disciples today, we must follow the Lord’s footsteps and love with the love of Christ. Jesus loved with all his heart, strength, and life; we too must follow the Lord’s example (Jn 13:34–35; 1 Jn 3:16–18).

B. Footwashing Illustrates Jesus’ Requirement that His Disciples Be Holy (Jn 13:10–11)

1. The Lord said, “He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over; and you are clean, but not every one of you” (Jn 13:10). “Feet” are symbolic of a person’s behavior and deeds (cf. Prov 4:14, 26–27). The word “wash” signifies a cleansing. Jesus is essentially saying that once a believer is baptized,

i.e. spiritually “bathed,” he or she need only cleanse their paths or “feet.” If believers can keep their “feet” clean after being baptized in the name of Jesus, then they are truly “clean all over.” At the time of Jesus’ speaking, his disciple Judas was unclean; therefore, by washing all of his disciples’ feet, the Lord Jesus made it clear that they should all remove the evil from their hearts. In the end, however, Judas did not repent. Rather, he walked down a path leading to a horrible demise (Jn 13:26, 27).

2. Those who have been baptized and have received footwashing as commanded by the Lord should understand its significance. Disciples must always examine the path they are walking, making sure to keep their feet from the way of iniquity (Prov 4:26–27). If believers should ever be defiled, they should receive the spiritual washing of the word in order to keep their body and soul wholly clean (Jn 17:17, 19; Eph 5:26–27).

C. Footwashing Illustrates the Lord’s Humility and Service (Jn 13:12–14)

1. The Lord said to the disciples, “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” (Jn 13:14). At the time, Judas was unclean. Furthermore, the disciples, envious of one another, fought among themselves over who would be the greatest (Mt 26:20–28). However, the Lord Jesus voluntarily lowered himself to wash his disciples’ feet—a lowly and servile act—to show his disciples what humility, service, and love for one another consisted of. Therefore, Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master” (Jn 13:16). Though Jesus was their Master, he was humble enough to take the form of a servant. We too must do likewise.
2. In principle and organization, a church ought to be different from an ordinary social community (Mk 10:42–45) or a hypocritical religious body (Mt 23:1–12). In humility and service, we must remember the spiritual teachings imparted in footwashing. We should not aspire to the vain glory of this world. Rather, we must humble ourselves and learn to serve others (Rom 12:16; Gal 5:26; Phil 2:3).

D. Footwashing Illustrates the Lord's Forgiveness

1. Judas was called through the love of the Lord Jesus, but at the end, he wanted to betray the Lord. Although the Lord knew this, Jesus showed Judas that he forgave him by washing his feet, hoping that Judas would abandon his evil intentions. In this sense, Jesus washing Judas' feet was an act of forgiveness at the highest level (cf. Ps 41:9; Jn 13:11–12).
2. In the household of God, misunderstanding and conflict among members can and do occur. However, when we remember the extent of the Lord's forgiveness and love, demonstrated as he washed the feet of his disciples, we should no longer hold grudges. Rather, we must forgive one another in love (Mt 18:21–35; Col 3:12–13).

E. Footwashing Signifies Having a Part in the Lord (Jn 13:8)

1. Peter was shocked to hear the Lord say, "If I do not wash you, you have no part in me" because he knew that each and every word of the Lord was significant in truth and concerned eternal life (cf. Mt 5:37, 24:35; Jn 6:68, 12:48). To have no part with the Lord simply means having nothing to do with the Lord, i.e. an outcast from God's salvation (cf. Eph 2:12). Jesus' serious remark highlights the striking difference between the sacrament of footwashing and the Jewish practice of footwashing as a form of customary hospitality. From this, we understand the life-giving nature of the sacrament.
2. In order to have a part in the Lord, we should always be ready to receive the washing of the word, which cleanses us of our faults, i.e. corrects and disciplines us (cf. Mt 18:15–18; Rev 22:14).



Performance of Footwashing

A. The Administrator

1. The one who performs the footwashing sacrament represents the Lord as one who is "sent" (Jn 13:16). In the sacrament of footwashing, one accepts the Lord's washing by accepting the washing by those "sent" by the Lord. Jesus said, "He who receives me receives him who sent me" (Jn 13:20). As a rule, elders, deacons, deaconesses, or

preachers are those who are sent. Those who are sent are generally God's holy workers.

2. We should follow the example that Jesus set for us in footwashing (Jn 13:15–17). The administrator is in the position of Jesus. Therefore, the person must perform footwashing with an attitude of humility and loving service. The person must humbly pour water in a basin and wash the recipient's feet one after the other before drying them with a towel (Jn 13:4–5).
3. The sacrament is performed in the name of Jesus. Since the administrator represents the Lord during the sacrament, footwashing should be performed in the name of Jesus (Col 3:17). Customarily, brothers' feet are washed by an ordained male minister and sisters' by an ordained female minister.

B. The Person Who Receives the Footwashing

After believing in the Lord and receiving water baptism, one must also receive footwashing. This sacrament need only be performed once. One should understand the significance of this sacrament, receive it with thanksgiving, and be determined to obey the Lord's teachings. At the same time, one must be willing to accept and receive continual spiritual washing throughout life, in order to be sanctified and remain in fellowship with the Lord (cf. Jn 13:8).

C. To Wash One Another's Feet

The Lord's footwashing is a sacrament endowed with spiritual teachings that are very important to the establishment of the church. Mutual footwashing, where it is a local custom, should be practiced with humility and love. Where mutual footwashing is not a local custom, the spirit behind footwashing should be practiced in daily life (Jn 13:14).

12. HOLY COMMUNION



Institution of the Holy Communion

- A. The Holy Communion is Established by the Lord Jesus
1. The last supper was prepared during the Passover feast that Jesus kept with his disciples on the night he was betrayed (Lk 22:7–15)
 2. The Holy Communion was instituted by the Lord Jesus at the Passover feast (Lk 22:19–20). Luke 22:17 refers to the cup of the Passover, whereas the bread in verse 19 is the bread of Holy Communion, and the cup in verse 20 is the cup of Holy Communion. By the Lord's blessing and words, the sacrament of Holy Communion was established.
- B. When the Lord established the Holy Communion, he told the disciples to perform it in remembrance of him (Lk 22:19). For this reason, the church performs the sacrament of the Holy Communion.
- C. After his ascension, the Lord revealed to Paul the significance of the Lord's supper (1 Cor 11:23–25; cf. Gal 1:11–12)



Significance of the Holy Communion

A. In Memory of the Lord Jesus' Death

The Passover feast is kept in remembrance of God's deliverance of Israel from death and Egyptian bondage (Ex 12:21–27; 13:3). The Holy Communion is held in remembrance of Jesus' suffering and death for our sins (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24–26). Therefore, before blessing the bread and the cup, the minister should speak about the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus to move the congregation with thanksgiving and compel them with the love of Christ.

1. The Lord Jesus was born in a simple manger and lived his life in poverty for our sakes (Lk 2:6–7; 9:58; 2 Cor 8:9). Jesus was arrested, scourged, mocked, and spat upon for our transgressions and iniquities. He wore a crown of thorns and was nailed on the cross, suffering a bloody and tormented death (Ps 22:12–16; Mt 27:18–59; Rom 4:25).
2. Jesus was forsaken by God for our sins, and his soul went to Hades to taste death (Mt 27:45–52; Acts 2:30–32; Heb 2:9)
3. Because of God's grace to us, the chastisement for our peace is upon Jesus, and by his stripes we are healed (Isa 53:4–6)

B. Partakers of the Blood and the Body of the Lord (1 Cor 10:16)

1. The breaking of the bread signifies that the Lord broke his body for us (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24)
2. The cup signifies that the Lord shed his blood for us (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25)
3. After the bread and the cup are consecrated, they become the body and the blood of the Lord (Mt 26:26–28; 1 Cor 11:29)
4. Those who eat the Lord's flesh and drink his blood have everlasting life, and they will be raised on the last day (Jn 6:53–54)

Partaking of the sacrament of Holy Communion is a mystery in itself. Paul pointed out the danger of receiving the Lord's body and blood in an unworthy manner. Some believers became weak and sick, and some died because they did not discern the significance and value of the Lord's

body and blood (1 Cor 11:28–30). Therefore, those who commit sin and feel guilty before God should not partake of the Holy Communion. Paul drew a contrast between partaking the Lord's supper and partaking food offered to idols. The latter is fellowship with the devil, while the former is fellowship with the Lord (1 Cor 10:19–22). Jesus said, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6:56). Therefore, the Holy Communion is a mysterious and spiritual communion. By examining and judging ourselves, we partake the Holy Communion worthily and can thus receive fullness of life. If we live a life of examination and have Holy Communion with the Lord in a worthy manner, the Lord will preserve us and resurrect us on the last day. Recognizing the grace of the Lord, we should partake the Lord's supper with full thanksgiving until Jesus comes again.



Performance of the Holy Communion

A. The Sacrament of Holy Communion—Frequency and Time

1. Some Christians feel the Lord's supper need only be held once each year during Passover. They feel that Holy Communion is merely an outward religious form and symbolic ritual, thus Christians do not need to observe it (cf. Gal 4:10–11). However, the Lord's supper is commanded by the Lord for his remembrance, and by it we have spiritual communion with the Lord. It can be held often till Jesus comes again (1 Cor 11:26).
2. There is no need to dispute over the time for holding the Holy Communion. Although the Lord was betrayed and had the last supper during the night, he was crucified in the daytime. We need not set a fixed date, e.g. Passover, or time, e.g. night only, for this sacrament.

B. Sacramental Materials in the Holy Communion

1. Unleavened Bread

No leaven was allowed during the feast of the Passover. Therefore, the Lord undoubtedly used unleavened bread during the last supper (cf. Lev 23:4–6).

In addition, according to the Bible, leaven represents evil and corruption (1 Cor 5:7–8; cf. Mt 16:5–12). Thus, we must take care not to add leaven into the bread.

2. One Bread

The body of the Lord is only one. No matter how many members are in the congregation, only one bread is to be used. The one bread is broken and distributed according to the number of partakers (1 Cor 10:16–17; Eph 4:4).

3. Grape Juice

Wine is fermented and cannot represent the innocent blood of the sinless Lord. While wine is often a symbol of enjoyment and bounty (cf. Isa 25:6; Jn 2:1–11), God’s workers were prohibited from drinking wine because of its effect in dulling one’s senses in one’s drunkenness (cf. Lev 10:8, 9; Ezek 44:21; Prov 20:1; 23:29–31). As stated above, leaven was not allowed during the Passover. “Leaven” usually refers to highly fermented dough, but “leaven” was also used in reference to the lees in a bottle of wine, i.e. the sediment on the bottom of a container of wine. Therefore, it is not appropriate to use wine in the sacrament of the Holy Communion. Had the Lord meant “wine” and not “fruit of the vine,” he could have easily specified “wine” by saying so. Therefore, the cup of the Lord consisted of the “fruit of the vine,” namely grape juice, which was unfermented by the lees or leaven (Mt 26:29; Mk 14:25).

C. The Administrator

1. The Holy Communion sacrament is administered, in principle, by elders, deacons, or preachers, i.e. by the workers sanctified to God (Ex 30:30).
2. The sacrament is performed in the name of the Lord Jesus, because the Lord is Lord of Holy Communion and will be in the midst of those who gather in his name (Mt 18:20). The church where the Holy Spirit’ abides is the kingdom of God, and Jesus will ever

commune with the church in the place where God rules and lives, namely the Father's kingdom (Mt 26:29).

3. After the sermon and remembrance of Jesus, the sacred worker administering the sacrament should give thanks and bless the bread with a prayer of understanding in Jesus' name. Afterward, the sacred worker should then break the one unleavened bread by hand for distribution to the congregation (Mt 26:26). After this, the sacred worker should consecrate the cup similarly to the bread, and distribute the cup to the congregation (Mt 26:27). The grape juice may be poured into little cups for the sake of convenience.

D. Self-Preparation and Attitude Before Partaking in Holy Communion

1. Be prepared and holy

A week or two in advance of the Holy Communion, the congregation is to be informed. This gives them time to self-examine and prepare themselves mentally and spiritually. Thus, the partakers should sanctify and ready themselves—to purge out the old leaven in their lives (1 Cor 5:6–8; 10:18–21; 11:27–28).

2. Discern the significance and value of the Lord's body and blood

Through the Lord's promise, the bread and cup become the Lord's flesh and blood after consecration. Thus, the partaker must distinguish the Holy Communion from an ordinary meal, lest God execute judgment on those who treat his body and blood lightly (1 Cor 11:29–30).

3. The proper place/time for partaking the Holy Communion

The congregation should respectfully and quietly meditate on the Lord's love when partaking the Lord's supper—waiting patiently for the bread and cup. The whole process should be orderly and within the sacrament premises, usually the church premises. Never take either the bread or grape juice outside of the sacrament premises—the sacrament elements must be taken at one place (1 Cor 10:16–17; 11:33; cf. Ex 12:46). Do not leave the elements until the next morning (cf. Ex 12:10). Thus, the general principle is that the congregation should partake in one place at “one sitting,” i.e., not leaving the sacrament elements until morning.

4. Those who are not baptized should not partake in Holy Communion. Additionally, anyone committing a sin unto death must not partake in the sacrament (cf. Ex 12:42, 45; Ezra 2:62–63; 1 Cor 11:27–30).

E. Christian Life After Partaking in the Holy Communion

1. We must begin to live for the Lord Jesus, because he died for us (Rom 14:7–8; 2 Cor 5:14–15)
2. We must lead a sanctified and holy life, i.e. an “unleavened” life. As recorded in the Old Testament, God’s chosen kept the feast of unleavened bread after the Passover (Ex 12:15–20; 1 Cor 5:6–13).
3. We should love one another and learn the lesson of unity— not only with the Lord but also with the brothers and sisters in Christ. The lesson of unity in Jesus Christ must be learned in order to form a unified church body—symbolized by the one unleavened bread used in Holy Communion (1 Cor 10:17; 12:12–27).
4. At each Holy Communion, we should be reminded to look forward to the second coming of our Lord, as well as our ultimate resurrection and return to our heavenly home on the last day (Jn 6:54; 1 Cor 11:26; Rev 19:7–9)

13. HOLY SPIRIT



What Is the Holy Spirit?

A. Who Is the Holy Spirit?

In the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is often called the Spirit of God, showing that the Spirit and God are one and the same. They are indivisible.

1. The Holy Spirit is the one true God
 - a. God said, “I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:27; cf. 37:14)
 - b. Jesus said, “God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:24)
 - c. Paul said, “There are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one” (1 Cor 12:6; cf. Phil 2:13)
 - d. Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit... you have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3–4)
 - e. John said, “We know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us” (1 Jn 3:24)
2. The Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ
 - a. “And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Gal 4:6)
 - b. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor 3:17)

- c. In Acts, the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot [i.e. the Ethiopian eunuch’s chariot]” (Acts 8:29). After Philip finished his work with the eunuch, the Spirit of the Lord [Jesus] caught Philip away (Acts 8:39). Thus, we see that the Spirit and the Spirit of the Lord are the same (Acts 8:29–39).
- d. In Acts 16:6, Paul and the others were forbidden to preach in the Roman province of Asia. In Acts 16:7, some manuscripts read “the Spirit of Jesus” did not allow them to go into Bithynia.
- e. “But the anointing which you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that any one should teach you; as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him” (1 Jn 2:27). From this passage, we know that the “anointing” refers to the Holy Spirit or Holy One (1 Jn 2:20). Also, “the anointing which you received from him” may refer to anointing by Jesus Christ (1 Jn 2:27).
- f. “But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9).
From this passage we learn that the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ [Jesus] refer to the same Spirit. Thus, the Holy Spirit is God, for God is Spirit (Jn 4:24), and the Holy Spirit is Jesus Christ, for in Jesus is the essence of God (Col 2:9).



Names and Titles of the Holy Spirit

- A. The Spirit of God; the Spirit of the LORD (Isa 11:2; Mt 3:16)
- B. The Spirit of the Father; the Spirit of the Lord (Mt 10:20; Lk 4:18)
- C. The Spirit of Christ; the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Rom 8:9)
- D. The Spirit of truth; the Counselor/Comforter/Advocate (Jn 14:26; 16:13)

- E. The Spirit of holiness; the Holy Spirit (Lk 2:26; Rom 1:4)
- F. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation (Deut 34:9; Eph 1:17)
- G. The Spirit of burning; the Spirit of the fear of the Lord (Isa 4:4,11:2)
- H. The Spirit of grace; the Spirit of life; the Spirit of compassion and supplication (Zech 12:10; Rom 8:2; Heb 10:29)



The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

A. Creation

1. At the time of creation, the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters (Gen 1:2)
2. “When thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created” (Ps 104:30)
3. “By his wind the heavens were made fair” (Job 26:13)
4. “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4)

B. Giving Power to People

1. God’s Spirit gave Joseph the ability to rule (Gen 41:38–41)
2. He gave Joshua leadership ability (Num 27:18–20; Deut 34:9; cf. Josh 4:14)
3. He enabled seventy elders to rule over Israel (Num 11:16–17)
4. He gave knowledge and craftsmanship to Bezalel and others (Ex 31:2–6; 35:30–31)
5. He gave Samson immense strength (Judg 14:6, 19; 15:14; 16:28–30)
6. He gave Daniel the ability to interpret dreams (Dan 4:8, 9, 18; 5:14; cf. Dan 1:17–20)

C. The Instruction, Warning and Prophecy of the Prophets (Neh 9:30; Zech 7:12; Heb 1:1; 2 Pet 1:21)

1. The Spirit of the LORD moved David to prophesy (1 Sam 16:13; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Chr 28:12)
2. God's Spirit moved Azariah to exhort king Asa (2 Chr 15:1-7)
3. The Spirit of the LORD moved Jahaziel to predict for King Jehoshaphat the victory of Judah (2 Chr 20:14-17)
4. God's Spirit moved Zechariah to warn King Joash (2 Chr 24:20-22)
5. Micaiah predicted that King Ahab would die in the battlefield (1 Kgs 22:13-25)
6. Ezekiel was brought by God's Spirit to speak to the people of captivity in Chaldea (Ezek 11:22-25)
7. Micah, filled with power from the Spirit of the LORD, declared to Israel all their transgressions and sins (Mic 3:8)

[IV]

Symbols of the Holy Spirit

A. Wind (Jn 3:8; Acts 2:2)

“Wind,” “breath,” and “spirit” are all the same word in Hebrew and Greek

1. Wind (breath) sustains life
 - a. Breathing gives us life, and the wind is our breath (Ezek 37:9-10)
 - b. Likewise, our soul cannot live without the Spirit of God (Ezek 37:14)
2. Wind blows away the clouds (Job 37:21)

In nature, wind blows away clouds, which clears up the skies. Likewise, the Holy Spirit will also blow away the cares and sorrows of those who have the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Naturally, with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, our inner brightness and joy will overflow in abundance (cf. Acts 5:41; Gal 5:22; 1 Pet 4:12-14).

3. People can see the movement of the wind (Jn 3:8)

The wind itself is not visible, but objects blown by the wind can be perceived. The same is true for those who have received the Holy Spirit. While we cannot see the Spirit, we can perceive when one has received or been touched by the Holy Spirit, e.g. through bodily movement or a renewed life (Acts 2:33; 8:18; 10:44–47).

B. Fire (Isa 4:4; Acts 2:3)

1. Fire is hot

- a.** The Holy Spirit helps God's chosen to be fervent (Acts 2:44–47)
- b.** Jeremiah was moved by the Holy Spirit, which was like a burning fire within his heart (Jer 20:9)

2. Fire emits light

- a.** The light of the Holy Spirit shines in us (2 Cor 4:6)
- b.** The Holy Spirit helps us to distinguish between good and evil (1 Cor 2:10; Eph 1:17–18)
- c.** The Holy Spirit guides our way (Ex 13:21–22; 40:38; Ps 105:39)

3. Fire burns and melts

- a.** The Holy Spirit burns away our filth (Isa 3:3–4)
- b.** The Holy Spirit fuses the many different believers into one body (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 4:3)

C. Rain (Zech 10:1)

1. Rain waters the earth (Isa 55:10)

- a.** The Spirit of God comes to us like rain, which waters the earth (Hos 6:3)
- b.** The human heart is like “a garden without water” (Isa 1:30)
- c.** After the downpour of the Holy Spirit, the barren wilderness of the human heart becomes a fruitful field that bears various fruits (Isa 32:15–16; Gal 5:22–23)

2. God causes rain to pour abundantly upon mankind by gathering small drops of water in the air to form clouds (Job 36:27–28)

- a. If clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth (Eccl 11:3). This distilling of the clouds may show that those full of the Spirit will spread their goodness on the earth.
- b. The Holy Spirit comes upon those who seek God fully and earnestly in their prayers (Lk 11:5–13; Acts 1:14; 2:1)

D. Water (Jn 7:37–39)

- 1. Water quenches thirst (Ps 104:10–11; Jn 4:13). The Holy Spirit satisfies man's spiritual thirst (Jn 4:14; Rev 22:17).
- 2. Water washes away filth (Num 31:23–24; Heb 10:22)
 - a. The Holy Spirit sanctifies people (Rom 15:16; 2 Thess 2:13)
 - b. Water flows downward, which teaches us that the Holy Spirit will be given to those who are humble (Acts 5:32; 1 Pet 5:5)

E. Oil (Heb 1:9; 1 Jn 2:27)

- 1. Oil was sanctified by God in sacrificial rites (Ex 30:25–29).
It was used for:
 - a. Anointing prophets (1 Kgs 19:16)
Those in the ministry must be anointed by the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:18; Acts 1:4–5, 8).
 - b. Anointing priests (Ex 40:12–15)
All who are anointed by the Holy Spirit—the anointing of grace—are holy priests (1 Pet 2:5; Rev 1:6; 5:10).
 - c. Anointing kings (1 Sam 16:13)
He who has received the Holy Spirit receives the authority to reign as king (Jn 20:22–23; Rev 1:6; 5:10).
- 2. Oil is a fuel for lamps (Lev 24:2)
Filled with the Holy Spirit, people will radiate the light of life (Mt 5:16; 25:1–13).

F. Dove (Mt 3:16)

- 1. Gentle and meek (Mt 10:16)
The Holy Spirit grants peace, goodness, and tenderness (Gal 5:22, 23; cf. Isa 65:25).

2. The prefiguration of Noah's dove (Gen 8:8–12)
 - a. When Noah first sent out the dove, the dove returned to the ark because the flood had not yet subsided. This typifies that in the Old Testament era, the time had not yet come for the Holy Spirit to dwell among men. There are two reasons for this:
 - i. The time was not full. The Lord Jesus had not yet come in flesh (Gal 4:4).
 - ii. Christ had not yet died for the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit would not come until God's redemptive plan was manifested (Jn 7:37–39).
 - b. When Noah sent the dove the second time, the dove returned to the ark with an olive leaf in its beak (cf. Jer 11:16; Hos 14:6)
 - i. The dove's second return typifies the period of the "early/fall rain" (i.e. the apostolic era), when the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost. The early church bore many spiritual fruits (cf. Jas 1:18) by the Holy Spirit, which is symbolized by the olive leaf. This is something we too should try to exemplify today.
 - c. After seven days (i.e. God's designated time), Noah sent forth the dove for a third time, but it did not return to the ark. The dove's failure to return indicated that the ground was dry and the work of the ark was complete—thus typifying God's sending of his Holy Spirit during the period of the "latter/spring rain" to establish his true church on earth. The ministry of the Holy Spirit will not end until the work of the church is complete and Jesus comes again (cf. Joel 2:28–31; Jas 5:7, 8).

G. Seal (Eph 1:13)

1. The seal of the Holy Spirit proves that one belongs to God (2 Tim 2:19). No one belongs to Christ without having the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9).
2. The seal of the Holy Spirit seals us for the day of redemption (Eph 4:30)

- a. Written documents, authorized by a seal, may not be reversed or obliterated (Est 8:8; Dan 6:15–17)
- b. The Holy Spirit guarantees our heavenly inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession (2 Cor 5:4–5; Eph 1:13–14)



The Promise of Bestowing the Holy Spirit

We must treasure the fact that the Almighty God gives us his Holy Spirit. The following are prophecies and promises concerning the Holy Spirit.

A. Prophecies of the Prophets

1. Explicit and definite promises
 - a. “Give heed to my reproof; behold, I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you” (Prov 1:23)
 - b. “For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring” (Isa 44:3; cf. 32:15)
 - c. “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will take the stony heart out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek 11:19; cf. 36:26; 37:14)
 - d. “And I will not hide my face any more from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel” (Ezek 39:29)
 - e. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh” (Joel 2:28–29; cf. Zech 12:10)
 - f. John the Baptist said, “But he who is coming after me is mightier than I... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Mt 3:11)
2. Implied and metaphorical promises
 - a. “He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain” (Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24)

- b. “Be glad... for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before” (Joel 2:23–24)
- c. “There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High” (Ps 46:4; cf. Ezek 47:9; Jn 7:38; Rev 22:1)
- d. “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter” (Zech 14:8)

B. Promises Made by the Lord Jesus Himself

1. Before the crucifixion

- a. “He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (Jn 7:38–39)
- b. “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever” (Jn 14:16–18)
- c. “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” (Jn 16:13; cf. Lk 11:13; Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 17)

2. After the resurrection

- a. “He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (Jn 20:21–23)
- b. “And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:49)
- c. “Before many days you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4–5, 8)

[VI]

The Holy Spirit Has Come

The Lord is a faithful and merciful God who keeps his covenant (Deut 7:9). He remains faithful and cannot deny himself (2 Tim 2:13). He will fulfill what he has promised.

A. The Former Rain, A Metaphor for the Descent of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Era

The former rain came at God's appointed time.

1. John the Baptist predicted Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:11; Jn 1:32–33)
2. During Jesus' ministry, the Holy Spirit did not descend until Jesus had died on the cross, resurrected, and ascended for ten days (Jn 7:38–39)
3. Jesus promised his disciples, "If I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (Jn 16:7)
4. The disciples obeyed the Lord, and waited in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4–5, 12–14)
5. It came to pass that on the day of Pentecost, the promised Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1–4, 16–18)
6. During the early church period, those who repented of their sins, believed in Jesus, were baptized in Jesus' name, and prayed earnestly, received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14–20; 10:44–47; 11:15–17; 15:8; 19:1–7; Eph 1:13–14)
7. "Our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain" (Jer 5:24)

The former rain and the latter rain, or the fall rain and the spring rain, metaphorically indicate periods when the Holy Spirit descends. In the near east, rainfall occurs in two seasons. The autumn or fall rain comes before the sowing season, bringing agricultural life to the parched land after summer. The spring rain, on the other hand, usually arrives in time to help ripen the crops. The Holy Spirit first descended on the day of Pentecost, resulting in the rapid growth of the early church, much like the fall rain results in agricultural growth

(Acts 1:8; 2:46–47; 6:7). Thus, the Holy Spirit the early believers received in the early church period was the “former rain.”

B. The Downpouring of the Holy Spirit Ceased

The downpour of the Holy Spirit continued in the early church for a century or two. However, due to the heresies, apostasy, and false doctrines spreading the early church, the Holy Spirit departed from the corrupted church. The Holy Spirit’s departure from a corrupted church was not accidental, God knew beforehand what would occur in the midst of such corruption.

1. Passages and prophecies concerning the discontinuation of the downpour of the Holy Spirit
 - a. “You have polluted the land with your vile harlotry. Therefore, the showers have been withheld, and the spring rain has not come; yet you have a harlot’s brow, you refuse to be ashamed” (Jer 3:2–3). This passage is about God’s chosen compromising with the world and being unfaithful to God, which resulted in a lack of rain.
 - b. The vineyard brought forth wild grapes, i.e. those of degraded quality. Therefore, God commanded the clouds not to rain upon the vineyard (Isa 5:3–7; Jer 2:21).
 - c. “He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants” (Ps 107:33–34)
 - d. “On account of the evil of your doings, because you have forsaken me. The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust” (Deut 28:20, 24)
 - e. During King Ahab’s reign, because of the apostasy of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel, there was no rain in the kingdom of Israel. This typifies that God does not want to give the Holy Spirit to the apostate church (1 Kgs 16:29–17:7).
2. The decline of the early church
 - a. In the early church period, some preached another gospel—thus changing the original gospel (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–9)

- b. Jude exhorted the saints to “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3)
- c. From Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we know that the early church struggled in the faith and that many churches were already corrupt
- d. How then could the Lord Jesus abide with, or the Holy Spirit indwell in, a church that was disobedient and had perverted the gospel? (Mt 28:20; cf. Josh 7:12)

C. The Latter Rain, A Metaphor for the Descent of the Holy Spirit in the End Times—A Sign that the Church Must Resume the Divine Mission

1. Prophecies concerning the latter rain
 - a. “Be glad, O sons of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD, your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before” (Joel 2:23; cf. Deut 11:14; Jer 5:24)
 - b. The farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and has great patience for it, until it receives the early and the latter rain (Jas 5:7). The former (autumn or early) rain comes between September and October; the latter (spring) rain comes between March and April. Rain symbolizes the Holy Spirit. The rain falls in two seasons, signifying that the Holy Spirit will likewise descend in two periods. In the apostolic epoch, God gave the Holy Spirit as the “former rain.” And in order to complete the ripening of crops for harvest, i.e. salvation before the dreadful day of the Lord, God has given the Holy Spirit in the “latter rain” period (Joel 2:28–31).
 - c. “Ask rain from the LORD in the season of the spring rain” (Zech 10:1)
2. End-time typologies of the restoration of the Holy Spirit in the True Jesus Church
 - a. The type of Elijah’s prayer for rain
 - i. Elijah, a powerful prophet, prayed to God so that rain ceased to descend for three and a half years. Later, Elijah

prayed for the restoration of rain in the kingdom of Israel. The prophecy in Malachi 4:5 states that the Lord will send Elijah before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, which indicates that the True Jesus Church, like Elijah, will be sent to perform God's works before his coming. Elijah guided an apostate Israel to return to God, which assuaged God's wrath and resulted in long-awaited rain (cf. 1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1, 21–22, 41–45; Jas 5:17). Likewise, by the Holy Spirit's power, the true church must contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. The true church's responsibilities include guiding people to the truth, and leading people away from idolatry and false doctrines. Through the True Jesus Church, God gives the promised Holy Spirit to those who believe and accept with faith the words of the Bible. Therefore, the True Jesus Church must boldly work to spread salvation, lest the Lord comes and strikes the earth with a curse (Mic 3:8; Mal 4:6).

- ii. Elijah prefigures John the Baptist. John was a forerunner paving the way for the Lord Jesus. In the last days, the true church appears in the world to pave the way for the Lord's second coming (Isa 40:3–5; Mt 17:10–13; Lk 1:15–17).

b. The type of temple restoration

- i. The temple Solomon built was burned down as God's punishment for the apostasy of his people Israel. Many Israelites were taken into Babylonian captivity (2 Kgs 25:8–12). According to the prophecy, the captivity would last seventy years. To fulfill the prophecy, God stirred up Cyrus, king of Persia, to decree that Israelites could return to Palestine to rebuild the temple (2 Chr 36:17–23).
- ii. The temple restoration typifies the rebuilding of the spiritual temple—the true church, which would likewise follow the same pattern: institution, destruction, and restoration (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; Eph 2:19–20; 1 Pet 2:5). Seventy years signify a period of time designated by God. At present, it is time to restore the temple (cf. Isa 58:12; 61:4; Amos 9:11). In the Old Testament, the building of the physical temple depended upon the Spirit of God (Zech 4:6). The present time is no

different; the building of the true church also depends on our reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Holy Spirit descended in this century shows that we must rely on the Holy Spirit. All of God's people have been working for the holy mission under the guidance of God's Spirit (cf. Neh 6:3; Acts 1:8).

- iii. According to God's promise, the splendor of the latter house shall be greater than the former one (Hag 2:9). The latter house refers to the spiritual temple.
- c. Where will the true church, established by the Holy Spirit, be in the last days?
 - i. "And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed" (Gen 2:8). This passage suggests that God placed his chosen in the east.
 - ii. "At the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). The flaming sword suggests that the only way to enter into eternal life or salvation is to go through the flames (suggesting the baptism of the Holy Spirit and fire; cf. Mt 3:11; Acts 2:3).
 - iii. "The glory of the God of Israel came from the east; and the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters" (Ezek 43:2; cf. Rev 19:6-7; 21:10-11). Here, the passage describes God's glory coming from the east (cf. Mt 24:27).
 - iv. "Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God" (Rev 7:2; cf. Eph 1:13). The messenger ascends from the east to seal people with the Holy Spirit.
 - v. "Surely these shall come from afar. Look! Those from the north and the west, and these from the land of Sinim [Chin/Syene]" (Isa 49:12, NKJV). Sinim represents the east.
 - vi. The gate to gain entrance to the tabernacle faced east, toward the rising sun, where Judah pitched its tents (Num 2:3). Thus, whoever entered the tabernacle must do so in the light (Jn 3:19-21).

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:5–6) and later moved to Egypt (Mt 2:13). After returning from Egypt, he stayed and grew up in Nazareth, a place from which no prophets had ever emerged (Mt 2:23; Jn 1:46; 7:52). Interestingly, the True Jesus Church emerged from and grew in the east, a very unlikely place given Christianity's long association with the Western society.

[VII]

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

- A. The Holy Spirit gives people spiritual power (Lk 24:49; Acts 1:8; 4:13, 31; 13:9–12; 1 Cor 2:4; Eph 3:16)
- B. He convicts people with consciousness of sin (Jn 16:8; Acts 2:37; cf. 1 Jn 2:27–28)
- C. He guides people to know the Lord Jesus (Jn 15:26; Acts 16:14; 1 Cor 12:3)
- D. He reveals the truth (Jn 16:12; 13; 1 Cor 2:11; Eph 1:17–19; 3:5)
- E. He prays for the believers (Zech 12:10; Rom 8:26–27; 1 Cor 14:2, 14–15; Eph 6:18; Jude 20)
- F. He sanctifies the believers (Rom 15:16; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2)
- G. He causes believers to bring forth fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22–23; Rev 22:1–2)
- H. He gives various spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:4–12)

[VIII]

The Holy Spirit Is Vitally Related to Salvation

- A. To enter the kingdom of God, one should be reborn in the Holy Spirit (1 Sam 10:6; Jn 3:5; Acts 2:38; Tit 3:5)
- B. The Holy Spirit gives man everlasting life (Ezek 37:14; Rom 8:2; 1 Cor 15:45; Gal 5:25; 1 Jn 5:12; Rev 22:17)
- C. No one belongs to Christ without the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 2Tim 2:19; 1 Jn 3:24)
- D. The Holy Spirit adopts the believers as children of God (Mt 3:16–17; Rom 8:16; Gal 4:6–7)
- E. The Holy Spirit is a pledge given to people for entering the heavenly kingdom (2 Cor 1:21–22; Eph 1:13–14)
- F. On the last day, the Holy Spirit will resurrect us (Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 5:1–5; Phil 3:21)

[IX]

The Evidence of Receiving the Holy Spirit

Believing in the Lord and receiving the Holy Spirit are two different matters (Acts 19:1–2; cf. 1:4–5). In the same way, receiving water baptism and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit are two different matters (Acts 8:15–16).

- A. The apostles regarded speaking in tongues as the evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit (Mk 16:17; Acts 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6–7)
- B. When the Holy Spirit comes upon us, our bodies will be visibly shaken (Acts 2:33; 8:18; cf. 4:31; 16:25–26). The state of being filled with the Holy Spirit may sometimes be mistaken for being drunk (Acts 2:13) or having gone mad (1 Cor 14:33). At times, some may accuse us of being possessed of evil spirits.

[X]

What Is Speaking in Tongues?

- A. It is an utterance of the tongue, spoken by the movement of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 19:6)
- B. Generally, no man understands the tongue (Acts 2:13; 1 Cor 14:2, 14, 16)
- C. It is not an earthly language (1 Cor 14:10–11, 13)
- D. When speaking in tongues, the Holy Spirit prays and makes supplication for believers (Rom 8:26–27; 1 Cor 14:15)
- E. Speaking in tongues edifies believers (1 Cor 14:4)
- F. Speaking in tongues is meaningful, and God moves other people to interpret the tongue, i.e. through the gift of interpretation, if necessary (Acts 2:5–11; 1 Cor 12:10)
- G. If someone interprets the tongue, i.e. has the gift of interpreting others' tongues, speaking in tongues becomes a prophecy understandable to all (1 Cor 12:10; 14:26–28)
- H. “To another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor 12:10). Here the tongues edify others and the church (1 Cor 14:26–28) and are interpretable if one is so moved. This kind of tongues is a special gift, and not every believer who has received the Holy Spirit receives this gift of speaking different kinds of tongues (1 Cor 12:30; 14:5, 13, 28).
- I. Sometimes a person filled with the Holy Spirit is moved to sing spiritual songs (1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16)
- J. One should never restrain others from speaking in tongues, whether for self-edification or for the edification of the church (1 Cor 14:39–40; cf. 1 Thess 5:19)

[XI]

How Can One Receive the Holy Spirit?

- A. A person should have a genuine and correct faith (Jn 14:15–16, 21–22; Acts 5:32; 10:44–48; Gal 3:14; Eph 1:13)
- B. A person should be baptized in the name of Jesus for the remission of sin (Acts 2:38; 19:2–6)
- C. A person should receive the laying of hands by the ordained elders or deacons (Acts 8:14–17; 19:6; cf. Num 11:17–25)
- D. A person should pray earnestly and diligently (Lk 11:5–13; Acts 1:14; 2:1–4)
- E. A person should wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit in the holy city—the true church (Zech 14:17; Lk 24:49; Acts 1:4–5; cf. Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22)

[XII]

How Can We Distinguish the Holy Spirit from Other Spirits?

When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she often manifests physical vibratory movements. However, people may also vibrate when filled with other spirits, namely, evil spirits.

- A. The vibratory movement of people filled with the Holy Spirit is orderly and proper. Sometimes, while speaking in tongue during prayer in the Spirit, one may laugh, cry, clap their hands, or sing spiritual songs. After the person concludes the prayer in which he or she was moved by the Holy Spirit, the person is as composed as usual. Speaking in tongues or singing spiritual songs is powerful and heart-felt. Moreover, after the infilling of the Holy Spirit, a person who has the indwelling Holy Spirit feels very peaceful and spiritually joyous (cf. Jn 7:38; Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 14:32–33, 39–40).

B. Possession by an evil spirit is usually manifested by a very disorderly vibratory movement. Their crying or laughing is abnormal. Additionally, their facial or physical gestures are often grotesque. When one is controlled by evil spirits, the person becomes uncontrollable. He speaks in false tongues which are generally short, quick, vague, and feeble. The sound comes from the lips. Also, the utterance is often mixed with intelligible words, though they may be in a foreign language. At times, the actions of the demoniac may be extravagant or excessive. He may become haughty and proud, calling himself Jesus, the Holy Spirit, a great saint in the Old Testament. Sometimes, a demoniac may quote from the Bible, pretending to be an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14), but his words are mostly concerning worldly matters, misinterpreting the Scriptures. A demoniac's spiritual songs are mostly the tunes of this world, i.e. popular or secular music. When someone is possessed by the evil spirit, he loses consciousness and cannot control himself. He may chirp or mutter during a possessed state (Isa 8:19), and he may seem to be in agony or heavily burdened. Sometimes, a demoniac may roll on the floor, foam at the mouth, have bodily convulsions, or inflict pain on himself or others. His face may turn pale and his hands and feet are usually cold (cf. 1 Sam 18:10; Isa 8:19; Mk 5:5; 9:8; Jn 3:31; Acts 16:16–18; 1 Jn 4:3, 5).

14. SABBATH DAY



The Sabbath in History

A. The Sabbath Was Established During the Creation

1. “So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation” (Gen 2:3)
2. God completed his creation on the sixth day. And on the seventh day, God sanctified the day as a “holy day,” i.e. a sabbath day and blessed the seventh day. This is the origin of the holy sabbath (Gen 2:1–2; Ex 20:8–11).

B. God First Commanded His People to Observe the Sabbath After the Exodus

1. After the fall, the Bible did not mention the Sabbath again until Israel came to the wilderness of Sin. Moses said to Israel, “Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the LORD” (Ex 16:1, 23). The holy Sabbath was thus made known to Israel in the wilderness after the exodus. The Sabbath became a day when people and animals could rest from their labor (Ex 23:12). Thus, after God’s command, the people rested on the seventh day (Ex 16:30).
2. In the wilderness, Israel was given manna—a heavenly food. The Israelites did not need to worry about food—God’s wondrous provision recalled the Edenic days (Gen 2:16). However, some Israelites failed to keep the Sabbath according to the Lord’s grace and provisions (Ex 16:25–29).

C. The Sabbath Was Included in the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai

1. Since Israel did not observe the Sabbath, God specifically included its observance in the Ten Commandments, which was written by God himself (Deut 9:10). The Fourth Commandment reveals the Sabbath's significance:

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex 20:8–11; cf. Deut 5:12–15).

2. Through this commandment, God intended Israel to remember his creation. Thus, we can infer that God also meant for Adam and Eve to enjoy the Sabbath in the wonderful garden of Eden.
3. In the reiteration of the Ten Commandments, Moses stressed the remembrance of God's salvation (Deut 5:15)

D. Judah's Failure to Keep the Sabbath Led to the Babylonian Captivity

The people of Judah profaned the holy Sabbath (Jer 17:21–23; cf. Ezek 20:12–13). Through prophet Jeremiah, God warned his people of the consequences of failing to observe the Sabbath: “But if you do not listen to me, to keep the sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched” (Jer 17:27). Unfortunately, the Israelites were stiff-necked. During Zedekiah's reign, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, came to burn down the holy temple and the royal palaces. Numerous people died, and the people of Judah fell into captivity. Thus, the seventy years of Babylonian captivity finally offered the opportunity for the land to enjoy its sabbaths (2 Chr 36:17–21).

E. Sabbath Observation was Enforced During and After the Rebuilding of the Temple

In order to fulfill Jeremiah's prophecy, God moved Cyrus, king of Persia, to release God's people upon the completion of seventy years (Jer 25:11–12). Thus, the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple (2 Chr 36:22–23). At that time, however, some Jews transgressed the Sabbath. Nehemiah, their governor, rebuked them severely by saying, "What is this evil thing which you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this evil on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath" (Neh 13:15–18). Therefore, he ordered the Levites to close the city gates on the Sabbath so as to hallow the day (Neh 13:19–22). From then on, the Jews strictly observed the Sabbath up until the apostolic era. However, the rules became even stricter during the Hasmonean, i.e. Maccabean, era. As time went on, the prohibitions of work and other activities became more and more stringent. The rabbis of the second century imposed many additional regulations aimed at enhancing the sanctity of the Sabbath day.



Purpose of Establishing the Sabbath

The Lord Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath" (Mk 2:27). The establishment of the Sabbath is not to bind people under the law with elaborate regulations, but for mankind's benefit.

A. To Remind Mankind of God's Creation

The Sabbath is a day to commemorate the completion of God's creation. Established by God, the Sabbath allows man to remember that God is the Creator and Provider of all creation (Ex 20:8–11; Ezek 20:20).

B. To Allow People Physical and Spiritual Rest

"Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your ass may have rest, and the son of your bondmaid, and the alien, may be refreshed" (Ex 23:12)

- The Bible tells us that the everlasting God, the Creator, does not faint and is not weary (Isa 40:28). God does not need to rest, but out of

his love for the world, created the Sabbath to give a day of rest and refreshment to his creation.

- Rest became necessary in Adam's days, because Adam had to till and keep the garden (Gen 2:15) and had dominion over the whole earth (Gen 1:28). The establishment of the Sabbath day was a provision for Adam. God blessed this day (Gen 2:3), and those who keep the Sabbath will not confront serious hardships to survive (cf. Ex 16:29). Obviously, day-to-day hardships encountered by all mankind are excluded.

C. To Remind Mankind of God's Salvation

"You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day" (Deut 5:15)

People forget God and his grace quite easily. Therefore, God demanded that the Israelites hold a holy convocation on this day to remember his delivering his people from bondage (Lev 23:3; Ps 103:2–3).

In the New Testament, God's chosen should all the more remember the Lord's salvation and grace, since Jesus redeemed us from the bondage of sin and death. We must especially remember the Lord's great salvation on the Sabbath (Acts 26:18; 2 Cor 5:14–15).

D. To Remind God's People That God Sanctifies Them

"Moreover I gave them my sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I the LORD sanctify them" (Ezek 20:12). The Sabbath, given by God, is a grace to those who keep it. God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it in creation (Gen 2:3). Consequently, it is different from the other days of the week. God wants his people to keep the Sabbath day holy and to avoid profane activities (Neh 13:22; Isa 58:13–14). Thus, Sabbath observance generally consists of a church gathering for the following reasons: spiritual communion with God, to listen to God's word, and to strive "for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord" (Heb 12:14; 1 Pet 1:15). Therefore, the Sabbath reminds God's people that he sanctifies them (2 Thess 2:13; Heb 10:10, 14).

E. To Allow the Chosen People to Look Forward to the True Rest in the Heavenly Kingdom

The Sabbath is a present type of the coming true rest in heaven. After God's redemptive plan is accomplished, his children will enter eternal rest in the kingdom of heaven. The Bible says, "There remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his" (Heb 4:9–10). There is no true rest in this world (Ps 90:10) except in the Lord (Mt 11:28–29). Having received the promise of eternal rest in the future, we should keep the Sabbath while looking forward to the Lord's second coming. For at the second coming, Jesus will receive the saved ones into the heavenly kingdom to enjoy the true, eternal sabbath. Thus we will leave behind the pangs and sufferings of the world (Rom 8:22–23; Heb 4:1).



Did the Early Church Keep the Sabbath?

The Sabbath is on the seventh day (Gen 2:1–3), which is Saturday according to the Roman calendar (Lk 23:56–24:2). However, many Christian churches observe on Sunday. But in the Bible, there is no evidence of Sabbath observance on Sunday by the early church. The following biblical passages are often used as “proof” texts by Sunday observers:

- A. Sunday observers state that the Lord Jesus resurrected on the first day of the week, instituting a new Sabbath. Christians should therefore observe Sunday. However, the Bible does not tell believers to observe or remember the day of the Lord's resurrection.
1. In the four Gospels, “the first day of the week” is recorded in six places (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2, 9; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1, 19); yet, none of these six passages record that the disciples gathered to commemorate the Lord's resurrection
 2. The reason that the Bible specifically records “the first day of the week” is to emphasize the fulfillment of prophecy—namely that Lord Jesus would be buried and then raised on the third day

3. John 20:19 states that the Lord appeared in the midst of his disciples. This cannot be regarded as proof of Sunday observance since the disciples were hiding for fear of the Jews. Moreover, the Lord did not appear to the disciples on the first day alone, for the Bible clearly records that the Lord appeared to the disciples “after eight days” (Jn 20:26; cf. Acts 1:3).
4. Some regard John 20:19 as grounds for the disciples’ Sunday observance, but the Bible is clear when it says the doors were shut for fear of the Jews. Furthermore, while the Lord Jesus appeared on that first day, some of his disciples (e.g. Thomas) did not even believe the Lord resurrected (Mt 28:17; Mk 16:14; Jn 20:25). How then can we assume the disciples already began to keep a Sunday Sabbath in memory of the Lord’s resurrection?

B. Some take Acts 20:7 as an illustration of Sunday Sabbath observance

1. The breaking of bread in Acts 20:7 was not necessarily a church doctrine or custom. There is no fixed day for breaking bread, since the Bible records believers breaking bread daily in the temple and at home, i.e. house churches (Acts 2:46–47).
2. This gathering in Acts 20:7 could continue until midnight because there were many lamps in the upper room (Acts 20:8)
3. The lengthy gathering was held because Paul intended to depart the next day (Acts 20:7, 11). It was a farewell service. How can we use this verse to assert that the disciples substituted Sunday observance for Saturday?

C. Some hold that 1 Corinthians 16:2 supports Sunday Sabbath observance

However, close analysis reveals the weakness of this argument. “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come.” First, the passage gives no indication that a meeting was held, nor is there any indication that offerings were given on Sunday. Paul merely told the believers to lay aside offerings collected the previous week so that contributions would not be necessary on his arrival.

D. Some quote Revelation 1:10 as proof of Sunday Sabbath observance

However, "the Lord's day" here is not referring to the day of resurrection. Sunday-keepers interpret "the Lord's day" as a reference to the day of the Lord's resurrection. But this interpretation is based on inference rather than evidence from the Bible.

[IV]

Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?

A. Many Sunday observers assert that Christians need not keep the Sabbath since they are not Jewish. Thus, many Sunday observers are really non-Sabbath observers, since even Sunday is not sacred. In light of this argument, let us examine the following:

- 1.** God gave the Sabbath to Israel, because they were the chosen people through whom his oracles and will were proclaimed to the world (cf. Rom 3:1–2)
- 2.** The Lord Jesus said that “the sabbath was made for man” (Mk 2:27). Therefore, God established the Sabbath after he had created man on the sixth day. When the Lord said “man,” was he only referring to the Jewish man? Most likely not, since there were no Jews in the beginning; in fact, there were no racial differences in the beginning. Thus, we are all “man,” i.e. human beings, and the Sabbath was made for us according to Jesus.
- 3.** The Bible tells us that strangers who joined themselves to the Lord had the privilege of enjoying the grace of the Sabbath (Isa 56:2–7). These strangers were Gentiles.
- 4.** The Sabbath reminds man of God’s creation. Is God the God of the Jews only? Can Gentiles be exempt from remembering the Creator and from worshiping him? (Eccl 12:1; 13; 1 Cor 8:6; Phil 2:9–11)

- B. Many non-Sabbath observers argue that Christians are saved by grace, so they do not need to keep the Ten Commandments. However, according to the Bible:**
1. Salvation does not come from works of law, but through the Lord's precious blood and faith in the Lord (Rom 3: 25, 28)
 2. However, under the grace of the Lord, Christians can never abolish the Ten Commandments, nor should they transgress the commandments at will. Paul told us to uphold the law through our faith (Rom 3:31; 6:15; cf. Mt 19:17; 1 Cor 7:19; Rev 12:17; 14:12). The ordinances of the law have been taken away by the cross, so we do not need to keep them anymore (Eph 2:15; Col 2:14, 16; Heb 9:10). But this is not to say that we are free to break the Ten Commandments. Rather, through the help of the Holy Spirit, we ought to keep them more perfectly than as were previously observed under the law (cf. Mt 5:17–18, 21–23; Heb 8:10; Jas 2:10–12).
 3. Unlike the way the Israelites kept the Sabbath under the law, who did so in fear (Ex 35:1-3; Num 15:32-36) and felt bound by it (Mt 12:1, 2; Mk 3:1, 2), Christians keep the Sabbath as if we are in the Garden of Eden, enjoying the grace of the Lord with joy and without fear (cf. Gen 2:3; Ex 16:23-25).
- C. Non-Sabbath day observers argue that the Sabbath is “a shadow of the things to come,” and that Christ came to eliminate the Sabbath. Thus, Christians are no longer required to observe Sabbath. However, according to the Bible:**
1. In Colossians 2:16–17, the food, drink, festival, new moon and sabbath are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance is of Christ. These “shadows” have been eliminated or overtaken by the cross. The Passover, for instance, has moved from shadow to true substance with Christ (1 Cor 5:7–8). The ceremonial laws in the Old Testament concerning food and drink are no longer observed in the New Testament, but the substance cannot be done away with—the substance in Christ. Likewise, the stifling legalistic or rabbinical rules, oral or written, concerning Sabbath observance have been abolished by the Lord Jesus; however, the true substance of the Sabbath itself, instituted by God from the beginning, is not eliminated.

2. From Colossians 2:14–17, Christians should clearly understand that we must not return to legalistic regulations, lest we incite judgment from others (2:16). However, Christians should take care not to judge another Christian because he or she keeps the Sabbath under grace. As stated, Sabbath observance under grace is very different from observance under law.

Therefore, the “food, drink, festival, new moon, and sabbath” under the law are merely a shadow of things to come, for the substance is indeed of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gave us victory by his death on the cross, on which all the ordinances and rituals were nailed with the Lord. Though we do not observe the Old Testament Sabbath ordinances and practices, we must still observe the Sabbath under grace lest others judge us hypocrites; we must not take the Sabbath lightly just because we are no longer bound by stringent regulations. Liberty should not be used as a cover for vice. The “things to come” in Colossians 2:17 may refer to the completion of the Lord Jesus’ work of salvation at his second coming, when we shall enter the true and eternal substance of Sabbath rest found in Christ (Heb 4:10).

D. Non-Sabbath Sunday observers use Galatians 4:10 and Romans 14:5–6 as evidence that there is no difference in keeping the Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday, since the observance of either day is unto the Lord. However, according to the Bible:

1. “One day,” “another day,” and “everyday” in Romans 14:5–6 do not refer at all to “the Sabbath” or “Sunday.” Close analysis of the passages in context reveals that these two verses deal mainly with special fasting and feast days, including all the physical ordinances of food, drink, washings, etc. (Heb 9:10). In the Old Testament, there were many feasts and days of fasting, such as fasting on the day of atonement (Lev 16:29–31; 23:27–32), fasting on the day of Purim (Est 9:31), and fasting in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth month (Zech 8:19; cf. 2 Kgs 25:25; Jer 39:1–2; 52:12–13).
2. Looking at the two passages in context, we understand that some believers of the early church followed the legalistic practices of the Old Testament, observing days (feast and fasting days), new moons, sabbatical years, and dietary laws. Many of these believers simply

focused on legalistic practices, forgetting the true substance of the gospel. For this reason, Paul exclaimed, “I am afraid I have labored over you in vain” (Gal 4:11). Galatians 4:10 and Romans 14:5–6 were not in fact written to refute the Sabbath. We know this for at least two good reasons. First, Paul himself observed Sabbath under grace according to his custom (Acts 17:2). Second, we must remember that the Sabbath controversy over keeping the Sabbath versus Sunday had not yet arisen during Paul’s time, when he wrote the two epistles. The Sabbath controversy only arose after Sunday observance became popular and was proclaimed by Constantine in A.D. 321, which was many years after Paul.

[V]

Jesus Christ and the Sabbath

Non-Sabbath Sunday observers often maintain that the Lord Jesus abolished the Sabbath. Therefore, we should look into the statements and actions of Jesus on the Sabbath, since he is lord of the Sabbath (Mt 12:8).

A. Judah Failed to Honor the Sabbath

Judah was taken captive by Babylon due to their failure to honor the Sabbath unto the Lord (2 Chr 36:17–21; Jer 17:27). After returning from Babylon, the Jews deeply understood that the rise and fall of their nation depended on the observance of God’s laws (Neh 13:15–22). In fact, many Jews made oaths that they would keep the Sabbath from then on without fail (Neh 10:29–31).

In light of this emphasis upon Sabbath observance, rabbinical tradition added many rules to the Sabbath. The Mishnah⁴ codified 39 different kinds of work forbidden on the Sabbath. These additional traditions are complicated and burdensome regulations that bind Sabbath observers to the Sabbath, i.e. making man for the Sabbath. In contrast, the Lord Jesus said “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”

⁴ “Mishnah” is applied to the whole of the oral law, which supplemented the written law and comprised both the interpretation and homiletic exposition of the Scriptures (Midrash) and the supplementary laws and statutes not contained in the written law (Halachah—“regulation, law”). The term Mishnah today signifies: (a) a single item of the oral law; (b) the entire content of the traditional oral law developed by the end of the second century A.D.; (c) the body of teachings (or “Mishnah”) of any of the Tannaim—the sages who flourished until about the same time. See Pictorial Biblical Encyclopedia, New York, 1964, pp. 522–528.

According to Jewish tradition, anyone who transgressed the rules would be expelled from the synagogue by the rabbis.

B. Jesus Christ Observed the Sabbath

While Jesus was in the world, “he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read” (Lk 4:16).

In another instance, Jesus went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught the people on the Sabbath (Lk 4:31).

As the Son of Man, Jesus himself “ceased,” in a symbolic sense, his work on the seventh day (Jn 19:31), rested in the tomb, and resurrected on the first day of the week to continue his work of salvation (Lk 23:54–56; 24:1, 2).

C. Jesus Christ Instructed the Disciples to Keep the Sabbath

The controversy between Lord Jesus and the Pharisees arose over the legal aspects of the Sabbath (Mt 12:9–14; Mk 3:1–6). The reason was not because the Lord Jesus did not observe the Sabbath, but because the method, attitude, and perspective of Sabbath observance differed greatly between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees (cf. Jn 9:14–16).

During Jesus’ time, the Jews kept the Sabbath under Mosaic Law, in addition to many traditional restrictions. Prohibitions and rules according to the law were strictly enforced, including the following:

1. No labor is allowed on the Sabbath (Ex 20:10)
2. No fire is to be kindled on this day (Ex 35:3)
3. All should rest on this day even during plowing and harvest time (Ex 34:21)
4. Anyone who profanes the Sabbath shall be put to death (Ex 31:12–17; 35:2; Num 15:32–36)

The Lord Jesus—the lord of the Sabbath—brings us abundant grace (Jn 1:14, 17). Jesus redeemed us from the curse of the law (Gal 4:5). Therefore, the Lord’s Sabbath observance does not follow the physical ordinances of the law. Under God’s grace and favor, Jesus observed the Sabbath as a free, joyful, and gracious blessing rather than a burden (cf. Gen 2:3; Ex 16:23–25; Isa 58:13).

Although both kept the Sabbath, the Pharisees kept it under the law, while the Lord Jesus kept it under grace. For this reason, the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for looking upon him as a lawbreaker. The Lord Jesus came to proclaim the true substance of the Sabbath. Thus, Jesus set an example of Sabbath observance for his disciples, keeping the Sabbath in a gracious manner despite constant threats and persecution from others.

D. Controversies Surrounding Jesus' Sabbath Observance

1. One time, the Pharisees pointed out the “unlawful act” of the Lord’s disciples on a Sabbath day. The “unlawful act” occurred on a Sabbath when the hungry disciples, following Jesus through the grainfields, plucked heads of grain to eat. Upon seeing this, the Pharisees took offense, seeing the act as a form of labor (Mt 12:1–2). However, Jesus justified their act by quoting precedents accepted by the Pharisees themselves:
 - a. David and his followers unlawfully ate the bread of the Presence out of hunger (Mt 12:3–4, 7)
 - b. The priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath and were guiltless. They were justified because any work performed in the temple was considered temple service. The temple typifies Jesus Christ (Jn 2:19, 21) and all the disciples are priests (Rev 5:9–10). Thus, if the disciples performed acts under the Lord’s grace, they should be considered guiltless, even though they did not stop working on the Sabbath (Mt 12:5–6, 8).
2. The Pharisees opposed Jesus’ healing of the sick on the Sabbath
 - a. On a Sabbath day, Jesus healed a man with a withered hand (Mt 12:9–13). The Pharisees were offended by Jesus’ act. The Lord Jesus countered, “What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath” (Mt 12:11–12).
 - b. On a Sabbath day, Jesus healed an invalid who had suffered for 38 years by the pool of Bethzatha in Jerusalem. At the hypocritical protest of the Pharisees, Jesus became furious. He answered,

“If on the sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the sabbath I made a man’s whole body well?” (Jn 5:5–18; 7:23).

- c. On a Sabbath day, the Lord cured a woman of her 18-year spirit of infirmity. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant at the miraculous cure, saying, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” (Lk 13:11–16).

From the above passages, the contention between the Lord Jesus and the Jews was not focused on the Sabbath day itself, since the Lord did not mean to change the day at all. Rather, the emphasis was on the manner and attitude of keeping the Sabbath. The Pharisees kept the Sabbath according to the Mosaic Law and the rabbinical tradition, but the Lord Jesus kept it under the Lord’s grace since he himself is the lord of the Sabbath.

The instructions of the Lord can be summarized as follows:

- i. It is lawful to do the service of God on the Sabbath
(Mt 12:5; Jn 7:23)
- ii. It is lawful to do good works on the Sabbath
(Mt 12:12; Mk 3:4)

As the Lord’s disciples, we should follow Jesus’ example—putting aside all secular activities on God’s designated Sabbath. What we should do on the Sabbath is to remember God’s grace, worship him, and perform good deeds that glorify his name (Gen 2:3; Isa 58:13–14; Mt 15:9).

[VI]

The Apostles Observed the Sabbath

Many Christian churches are inclined to lay the abolition of the Sabbath on the Lord and the apostles. There is no scriptural evidence to support either the Lord Jesus or the apostles abolishing the seventh-day Sabbath. On the contrary, we see that Paul and the other apostles of the Lord kept the Sabbath, which was their custom (Acts 17:1–2).

A. Paul and Barnabas in Antioch

“But they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets...” (Acts 13:14–15). “The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44).

B. Paul and Silas in Philippi

“And on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together” (Acts 16:13).

C. Paul and Silas in Thessalonica

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and for three weeks he argued with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:1–2).

D. Paul in Corinth

“And he argued in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks” (Acts 18:4).

E. James at the Jerusalem Council

James testified at the council, “For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues” (Acts 15:21).

F. The Lord Jesus told the disciples to pray that their flight would not be in the winter, nor on the Sabbath day (Mt 24:20). The

Lord knew that when the Roman army destroys Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the disciples would still be keeping the Sabbath.

[VII]

Who Changed the Sabbath Day from Saturday to Sunday?

If the Lord and the disciples did not abolish the Sabbath, who did?
How did Sunday, often called “the Lord’s day,” come to replace the seventh-day Sabbath?

- A. According to the Catholic Church, “The Church of God [i.e. the Catholic Church] has in her wisdom ordained that the celebration of the sabbath should be transferred to the Lord’s day” (Catechism of the Council of Trent, Donovan translation, 1829, p. 267)
- B. “It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is a homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] church” (Mgr. Segur, Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, p. 213)
- C. The Sunday legislation, dating from the first Sunday edict issued by the Emperor Constantine in March, 321 B.C., has been carried on in Christendom.
- D. The term “the Lord’s day” did not appear in any civil legislation concerning Sunday until the year A.D. 387, more than two generations after the first law (“Sunday,” Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol. 11, p. 147).
- E. “Is there no express commandment for observing the first day of the week as the sabbath, instead of the seventh day? None whatever. Neither Christ nor his apostles, nor the first Christians celebrated the first day of the week instead of the seventh as the sabbath” (New York Weekly Tribune, May 24, 1900)

- F. Dr. Edward T. Hiscox (Baptist) commented, "There was and is a commandment to 'keep holy the sabbath', but that sabbath was not Sunday. It will, however, be readily said, and with some show of triumph, that the sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week. Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not" (in a paper read before a New York Ministers' Conference, November 16, 1893).
- G. "It [the Roman Catholic Church] has reversed the fourth commandment, doing away with the sabbath of God's word, and instituting Sunday, as a holy day" (N. Summerbell, *History of the Christians*, p. 418)
- H. "Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claims to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles... From the beginning to the end of the Scriptures there is not a single passage that warrants the transference of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first" (Catholic Press, Sydney, Australia, August 25, 1900)
- I. "The Catholic Church... by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday" (Catholic Mirror, Baltimore, September 23, 1893)
- J. "Question: Which is the sabbath day?
 Answer: Saturday is the sabbath day.
 Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?
 Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church in the Council of Laodicea... transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday" (Rev. Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, 3rd edition, 1913, p. 50, a work which received the "apostolic blessing" of Pope Pius X, January 25, 1910).
- K. "The seventh-day sabbath was... solemnized by Christ, the apostles, and primitive Christians, till the Laodicean Council did, in a manner, quite abolish the observation of it. The Council of Laodicea (A.D. 364)... first settled the observation of the Lord's day" (Prynne's *Dissertation on the Lord's day*, pp. 33, 34, 44).

- L. “Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church [Catholic] has the power to institute festivals of precept?
Answer: Has she not such power she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her: she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day of the week—a change for which there is no scriptural authority” (Rev. Steven Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, p. 174, New York: Edward Dunigan & Brothers, 1851).

Church history gives ample evidence of the origin of Sunday observance, “a venerated day of the sun,” which has pagan rather than biblical origins. The Catholic Church abolished the Sabbath, an act that she has triumphantly declared to the world. Therefore, Christians should not assume Jesus and his disciples substituted the first day of the week (Sunday) for the seventh day (Saturday) just because it is a long-standing tradition. Rather, Christians must return to the truth and observe the true Sabbath under the Lord’s grace (cf. Mt 15:9; Rev 22:18–19).

[VIII]

How Do We Keep the Sabbath?

So far, we have examined how the Sabbath was established by God at creation, how it was made known to Israel before the giving of the law, how it was included in the Ten Commandments, how it was related to the severe legalistic rules of the Old Testament, and how it was given new significance by the Lord Jesus, whose observation practices were handed down to the apostles. Let us now look into the Scriptures for how we should observe the Sabbath:

A. Put aside all secular activities

“If you turn back your foot from the sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly...” (Isa 58:13).

B. Attend church services/gatherings

“Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work on it; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings” (Lev 23:3).

“And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read” (Lk 4:16).

“The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44).

C. Perform evangelical and charitable works

“And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught” (Mk 1:21).

“And on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together” (Acts 16:13).

“So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath” (Mt 12:11–12; Mk 3:4–5).

As for determining the duration of the Sabbath day, it is to be kept “from evening to evening” (Lev 23:32, cf. Mk 1:21, 32). That is, from Friday evening to Saturday evening.

At first glance, it may seem difficult to reconcile the different time zones around the globe. However, all we need to do is honor and keep the Sabbath according to the local time and day. Therefore, regardless of in which country a true believer dwells, he or she can keep the Sabbath according to God’s commandment, and enjoy abundant spiritual blessings.

15. PRAYER

Prayer can be likened to spiritual respiration for a Christian. Prayer maintains a Christian's spiritual strength and improves spiritual character. Thus, a life of prayer is vital in order to receive God's power.



The Purpose of Prayer

A. To Praise the True God

1. We praise God because he gives all things to mankind (1 Chr 29:10–13; Ps 103:1–2, 5)
2. Because he heals all our diseases (Ps 103:3; Isa 38:9–20)
3. Because he forgives all our iniquities (Ps 103:3; Rev 5:8–10)
4. Because he extends his providential care to us everyday (Ps 103:4; 121:7–8)
5. Because of his bountiful grace (Ps 103:1–2; 1 Thess 5:18)

B. To Have Spiritual Communion with God

1. As the deer pants for streams of water, so should Christians long for God (Ps 42:1–2)
2. Christians who are fully filled with the Holy Spirit reach a profound level of spiritual communication with God (Acts 10:9–10; 1 Cor 14:2, 4; Jude 20)

3. Communicate with the Lord through meditation (Ps 104:34)
 - a. Meditate on all of God's work (Ps 77:12)
 - b. Meditate on the glorious splendor of God's majesty (Ps 145:5)
 - c. Meditate on God's precepts (Ps 119:15)

C. To Make Our Requests Known to God

1. Request that everyone hallow God's holy name (Mt 6:9; 1 Tim 2:1–6)
2. Request God to strengthen his work:
 - a. To choose more laborers (Mt 9:38)
 - b. To open the door for the word (Col 4:3)
 - c. To increase the number of God's children (Isa 26:15)
3. Request God to enhance the spirituality of his children:
 - a. For oneself (Ps 19:12–14; 119:35–37)
 - b. For one's children (1 Chr 29:19; Lk 23:28)
 - c. For God's workers (1 Sam 12:23; Eph 6:18–19)
4. Request God to care for our everyday life:
 - a. For our daily food (Prov 30:8–9; Mt 6:11)
 - b. For our diseases to be healed (Jas 5:14–16; cf. 2 Chr 16:12)
 - c. For security and protection (Ezra 8:21–23; Acts 12:1–5)
 - d. In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let all requests be made known to God (Phil 4:6)

D. To Confess Our Sins Before God

1. Simon the sorcerer asked Peter to intercede on his behalf to God for the forgiveness of his transgression (Acts 8:20–24)
2. Before requesting the Lord's healing, confess your sins to one another and also pray for one another (Jas 5:14–16)
3. The Holy Spirit urges churches everywhere to repent (Rev 2:4–5; 3:2–3, 15–19)
4. The Lord will not hear the prayers and requests of those who do not confess their sins and repent (Ps 66:18; Isa 59:1–3)



How to Pray

A. In the Name of Jesus Christ

1. “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (Jn 14:13; 15:16)
2. “Always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father” (Eph 5:20; Col 3:17)

B. To Whom We Pray

1. The heavenly Father (Mt 6:9; Phil 4:6)
2. The Savior Lord Jesus (Acts 7:59; 2 Cor 12:8, 9). The Lord Jesus is one with the Father (Isa 9:6; Jn 10:30). When we pray to Jesus, we pray to the Father (1 Jn 2:23).

C. Languages of Prayer

1. Prayer in understanding—namely, prayer with intelligible words (cf. 1 Cor 14:15)
2. Prayer in spiritual tongues—the mysterious, unknown tongue through the Holy Spirit’s movement (1 Cor 14:2, 4, 14–15; Rom 8:26–27)
3. Prayer in spirit and meditation (Neh 2:4; Jn 4:24)

D. Prayer Positions

1. Kneeling (Lk 22:41; Acts 20:36)
2. Prostrating (Num 16:22; Rev 4:9–10)
3. Standing (Ps 135:2; Mk 11:25)

E. Prayer Times

1. In the morning (Ps 5:3; Mk 1:35)
2. At noon (Ps 55:17; Acts 10:9)

3. At night (Ps 77:2; Lk 6:12)
4. Before work (Prov 3:5, 6; Mt 4:1)
5. After work (Mt 14:13, 23; Jn 6:15)
6. During the busy hours (Mk 6:31; Lk 5:15–16)
7. Before meals (Mt 14:19; Acts 27:35)
8. Before death (Lk 23:46; Acts 7:59)
9. Constantly (Ps 71:8; Dan 6:10; 1 Thess 5:17)

F. Places of Prayer

1. In the house of God (Mt 21:13; Acts 3:1)
2. In one's secret chamber (Mt 6:6; Acts 9:40)
3. In the field or on the mountain (Lk 5:16; 9:28)
4. Everywhere (Jn 4:21–23; 1 Tim 2:8)



The Effects of Prayer

A. Prayer's Effect on Nature

1. In answer to Moses' prayers, God divided the Red Sea (Ex 14:15–16)
2. In answer to Joshua's prayers, God made the sun and the moon stand still (Josh 10:12–14)
3. In answer to Elijah's prayers, God ceased the rain for three years and six months (1 Kgs 18:37–45; Jas 5:17–18)

B. Prayer's Effect on People

1. Disease can be cured
 - a. Because of Hezekiah's sober request, God added fifteen years to his life (Isa 38:1–8)
 - b. Blind Bartimaeus received his sight from the Lord Jesus through his earnest petition (Mk 10:46–52)
 - c. Paul prayed for the father of Publius whose sickness was eventually healed by God (Acts 28:7–9)

2. Evil spirits can be exorcized
 - a. Because of the great faith of the Canaanite woman, Jesus cast out the devil from her daughter (Mt 15:21–28)
 - b. Jesus cast out the dumb spirit from a child (Mk 9:17–29)
 - c. Paul cast out the devil from a girl in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 16:16–18)
3. The dead can be raised
 - a. Elijah prayed to God and raised back to life the dead son of the widow at Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:17–24)
 - b. Elisha prayed to God and raised back to life the Shunammite’s dead son (2 Kgs 4:18–37)
 - c. Peter prayed to God and raised Tabitha back to life (Acts 9:36–42)

C. Prayer’s Effect on Other Things

1. Ezra fasted to beseech God for the safe return of the Israelites to Palestine (Ezra 7:8–9; 8:21, 23)
2. Through the unceasing and earnest prayers of the early church, Peter was rescued from prison (Acts 12:1–10)
3. The Lord Jesus prayed for Peter so that his faith might not fail (Lk 22:31–34, 60–62)
4. Through one’s fervent and incessant prayers for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, one can overcome one’s fleshly desires and the devil’s temptations (Rom 8:13; Phil 4:13)

[IV]

Elements of Effective Prayer

A. Faith (Mt 21:22)

1. Believe in God and that he rewards those who diligently seek him (Heb 11:6)
2. Believe in the power of the Almighty God. The woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years was cured through her faith (Mk 5:25–34)

3. Believe that God will fulfill his promises (Rom 4:20–21)
4. The cripple in Lystra was cured because of his faith (Acts 14:8–10)

B. Sincerity (Jn 4:24)

1. Pray out of a sincere faith (2 Tim 1:3–5)
2. Prayers should be made in truth and in spirit. Do not make long prayers out of pretense or impure motives (Mt 6:5–6; Mk 12:40)
3. Do not let your fasting be known to others, but pray to God to subdue the flesh (Mt 6:16–18)
4. God extends his powerful hand to help those who are blameless and truthful to him (2 Chr 16:9; Ps 145:18–19)

C. Humility (Jas 4:6)

1. Humble yourself, and know that you are unworthy to request anything from God (1 Chr 29:13–14; Ps 142:3)
2. Know your weaknesses, and do not pray with arrogance (Lk 18:9–14)
3. Manasseh humbled himself in his affliction and prayed to God, and God restored him to the throne (2 Chr 33:10–13)
4. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5)

D. Love (1 Jn 3:22–23)

1. Those who practice love and make peace with others will have effective prayers (Mt 5:23–24; 18:35)
2. God grants the request of those who take care of the poor and the needy (Ps 41:1; Prov 21:13)
3. The prayers of love offered by the believers caused Dorcas to come back to life (Acts 9:36–41)
4. Love exists in the form of harmony. Prayers in one heart will be accepted by the Lord (Ex 17:8–13; Mt 18:19; Acts 1:14; Jas 1:6–8)

E. Righteousness (Jas 5:16)

1. God is delighted by the prayer of the righteous (Prov 15:8, 29)
2. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are inclined to their cry (Ps 34:15)

3. God does not listen to the prayers of sinners (Prov 28:9; Jn 9:31)
4. God fulfills the desire of those who abide by his words (Zech 7:13; Jn 15:7)

F. A Steadfast Heart (Rom 12:12)

1. Importunity (Lk 11:8; Rom 15:30–32)
2. Elijah prayed continuously for rain (1 Kgs 18:42–45)
3. Those who pray, in God's will, with importunity receive their requests (Lk 18:1–8; Jas 4:3)
4. When in the flesh, the Lord Jesus offered prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears in the Garden of Gethsemane (Heb 5:7)



Fasting Prayer

A. To Receive Power from Above

1. The Lord Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights before his ministry (Mt 4:1–2)
2. The apostles fasted and prayed with one accord before sending out sacred workers (Acts 13:1–3)
3. Healing and casting out the devil should be done through fasting and prayers (Mt 17:19–21)

B. To Request God's Help

1. Ezra fasted and prayed for God's protection (Ezra 8:21–23)
2. Esther fasted for three days and nights before taking the risk of seeing the king (Est 4:16)
3. Nehemiah fasted and prayed before God to request his merciful grace (Neh 1:4–11)

C. To Understand the Truth

1. Daniel fasted for the revelation of things to come (Dan 10:2–12)
2. Moses fasted for forty days and forty nights on Mount Sinai before he received the Ten Commandments of God (Ex 34:27–28)
3. The apostles fasted for God to reveal the right path to follow (Acts 13:1–2)

D. To Confess, Repent, and Request Forgiveness of Sins

1. The people of Nineveh fasted and repented and as a result, God forgave them (Jon 3:5–10)
2. The Israelites fasted, confessed their sins, and turned to God (1 Sam 7:3–6)
3. The Israelites fasted and confessed their sin to obtain God's mercy (Neh 9:1–4)

E. Things to Remember When Fasting

1. Do not intentionally let others know that you are fasting (Mt 6:16–18)
2. Do not fast for profit, nor for evil doings (Isa 58:3–5)
3. Fasting is for doing good works and for helping the poor (Isa 58:6–9)
4. Fasting is for offering up prayers with totality of mind and spirit; therefore, one ought to constantly pray to God when one fasts (Ps 62:8; Dan 10:12; Acts 13:3)

16. MIRACLES



What Is a Miracle?

A miracle is a mighty act or manifestation of the true God. In fact, the natural world is a miracle in and of itself. However, since people are so used to natural phenomena, they are not considered special. For that reason, we define miracles/wonders as extraordinary, supernatural events. Let us examine the following biblical miracles:

A. Miracles Involving Nature

1. The Red Sea was divided (Ex 14:21–22)
2. The pillar of cloud and of fire in the wilderness (Num 9:15–22)
3. Water came out of a rock (Ex 17:5–6)
4. The ground was split apart (Num 16:31–33)
5. The sun and the moon stood still (Josh 10:12–14)
6. Rain after a three and half year drought (Jas 5:17–18)
7. A storm was stilled (Mt 8:23–26)
8. The multiplication of a limited quantities, e.g. the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fish (Mt 14:16–21; cf. Mt 15:34–38; 1 Kgs 17:13–16; 2 Kgs 4:1–7)
9. A great amount of fish was caught (Lk 5:4–7; cf. Jn 21:6–11)
10. Tongues of fire were seen (Acts 2:1–3)

B. Miracles Dealing Specifically with People

1. People

- a. The clothes of the Israelites did not wear out, nor did their feet swell (Deut 8:4; 29:5)
- b. Samson was endowed with great strength (Judg 15:14–16)
- c. Elijah was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kgs 2:1–11)
- d. Gehazi became a leper (2 Kgs 5:26–27)
- e. The Syrian soldiers were struck with blindness (2 Kgs 6:18–19)
- f. Daniel's three friends were cast into a burning fiery furnace, yet they were all unharmed (Dan 3:24–27)
- g. Nebuchadnezzar became insane (Dan 4:24–33)
- h. When Daniel was in the lions' den, the lions' mouths were shut so that he was not hurt (Dan 6:22)
- i. Jonah did not die when he was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights (Jon 1:17; Mt 12:40)
- j. The Holy Spirit caught Philip away from the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:39–40)

2. Healing

- a. A paralytic was healed (Mk 2:1–12)
- b. A man with a withered hand was healed (Mk 3:1–5)
- c. A woman, with an issue of blood for twelve years, was healed (Mk 5:25–34)
- d. A man with dropsy was healed (Lk 14:2–4)
- e. The lepers were cleansed (Mt 8:3; Lk 17:11–14)
- f. The blind men recovered their sight (Mt 9:27–30; Lk 18:35–43; Jn 9:1–7)
- g. A deaf man with a speech impediment was healed (Mk 7:32–35)
- h. Peter's mother-in-law was healed of her fever (Lk 4:38–39; cf. Jn 4:52–53)

- i. Malchus' right ear was healed (Lk 22:50–51; Jn 18:10)
 - j. Those who were bitten by snakes were healed (Num 21:8–9; Acts 28:3–6)
- 3. Exorcism**
- a. A dumb demoniac was cured (Mt 9:32–33; Lk 11:14)
 - b. A blind and dumb demoniac was cured (Mt 12:22)
 - c. The daughter of a Canaanite woman, who was demon-possessed, was cured (Mt 15:21–28)
 - d. A demoniac in the synagogue at Capernaum was cured (Mk 1:23–26)
 - e. An epileptic boy was cured (Mk 9:16–27)
 - f. Seven demons were cast out of Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2)
 - g. A woman with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years was cured (Lk 13:10–16)
 - h. Unclean spirits were cast out by Philip (Acts 8:5–7)
 - i. The spirit of divination in the slave girl was cast out by Paul (Acts 16:16–18)
- 4. Resurrecting the dead**
- a. The son of the widow of Zarapheth was resurrected (1 Kgs 17:17–24)
 - b. The Shunammite's son was raised to life (2 Kgs 4:32–37)
 - c. Jairus' daughter was raised from death (Mk 5:35–43)
 - d. The widow's son of Nain was raised from death (Lk 7:11–15)
 - e. Lazarus was raised back to life four days after he died (Jn 11:39–44)
 - f. The Lord Jesus himself was resurrected (Jn 20:1–18; cf. Jn 10:18)
 - g. Dorcas was raised to life (Acts 9:40–41)
 - h. Eutychus was restored to life (Acts 20:9–10)



Why Does God Perform Miracles?

A. God's Purpose

1. To execute his deliverance
 - a. The ten plagues were miracles delivering the chosen people out of Egypt (Ex 3:20; 7:20–12:36)
 - b. The Israelites received manna in the wilderness to keep them from starvation (Ex 16:4–5)
 - c. The Lord delivered Peter when he began to sink into the sea (Mt 14:28–31)
2. To execute his judgment
 - a. The flood destroyed the wicked generation in Noah's time (Gen 7:4, 17)
 - b. Fire and brimstone from heaven destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24–25)
 - c. Ananias and Sapphira deceived the Holy Spirit and died immediately (Acts 5:1–11)
3. To glorify his name
 - a. God's name is proclaimed through his mighty deeds (1 Chr 17:21)
 - b. The paralytic walked again for the glory of God (Mk 2:12)
 - c. Lazarus' death was for God's glory (Jn 11:4)

B. For the People

1. Miracles convince people to believe in God
 - a. The official believed in God after his son was healed (Jn 4:46–53)
 - b. Many believers were added to the Lord through the signs and wonders performed by the apostles (Acts 5:12–16)

- c. The proconsul believed in the Lord when he witnessed God's power working on the sorcerer (Acts 13:12)
 - d. The mighty signs and wonders done by the Holy Spirit caused the Gentiles to obey (Rom 15:18)
2. Miracles confirm the true message
- a. The Lord worked with the apostles and confirmed the message they preached with the signs that followed them (Mk 16:20)
 - b. The Lord testified to the word of his grace by working great miracles through apostle Paul and others (Acts 14:3)
 - c. Signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit bear witness to the gospel of salvation (Heb 2:3–4)
3. Miracles confirm the divine commission
- a. Signs and wonders proved that Moses was chosen and sent by God (Num 16:28–30; 17:1–11)
 - b. The Lord Jesus worked miracles to testify that he is the Christ (Mt 11:2–6; Jn 5:36; 10:37–38)
 - c. The signs of Paul's apostleship among the people were performed in all patience, with signs and wonders and mighty deeds of God (2 Cor 12:12; cf. Lk 9:1–2)
 - d. The true church with the abidance of the Holy Spirit should abound with all kinds of miracles (Mk 16:17–18; Lk 10:19; 1 Cor 12:9, 28)
4. Miracles strengthen the believers' faith
- a. The power of Christ's miracles resolved the doubts of John the Baptist (Mt 11:2–6)
 - b. Thomas' doubts were dispelled upon seeing the miracle of the resurrected Lord (Jn 20:24–28)
 - c. Miracles caused early believers and others to fear God and to hold the apostles in high honor (Acts 5:11–13)
 - d. Paul reported the miracles and wonders God performed among the Gentiles at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15:12)
5. God's miracles surpass sorcery and magic

- a. Aaron’s rod swallowed up the Egyptian magicians’ rods (Ex 7:10–13)
 - b. The magicians acknowledged that they were overpowered and that the plague, performed through Aaron, was “the finger of God” (Ex 8:18–19)
 - c. Simon the sorcerer believed in God upon seeing Philip perform God’s great miracles (Acts 8:9–13)
 - d. Elymas the magician was struck with temporary blindness because he opposed Paul (Acts 13:8–11)
6. Miracles disclose God’s judgment
- a. Most of the Israelites died in the wilderness because of their unbelief, even though they saw God’s power and should have had faith (Ps 106:19–26)
 - b. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were severely condemned, because they saw Christ’s many miracles yet did not repent or believe (Mt 11:20–24)
 - c. Those who have seen miracles, yet remain in unbelief, will be condemned (cf. Jn 15:22–24)
 - d. The Lord Jesus’ resurrection was a miracle in the Lord’s generation (Mt 12:39–41). Moreover, the Holy Spirit’s descent today confirms the Lord’s resurrection (Acts 2:32–33). Thus, those who see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, i.e. speaking in spiritual tongues (Mk 16:17; Acts 10:44–46; 16:17; 1 Cor 14:22), yet do not believe in the saving Lord will not be excused from their sins (Jn 16:8; Acts 17:30–31)



Requirements for Performing/Receiving Miracles

A. Miracles Should Be Performed in Jesus’ Name

- 1. The Lord Jesus told his disciples to perform miracles in his name (Mk 16:17)
- 2. Demons were subject to the disciples in Jesus’ name (Lk 10:17)

3. Peter asked the lame man to stand up and walk in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:6, 16)
4. In contrast, itinerant Jewish exorcists could not cast out demons, even though they used Christ's name (Acts 19:13–16)
5. Those who work miracles in Jesus' name, in faithful reliance on the Lord, should know his will. Never use Jesus' name in vain, instead always petition the Lord's name according to his will (Ex 20:7; Jn 17:12; 1 Jn 5:14)

B. Have Great Confidence in Jesus Christ When Performing/Receiving Miracles

1. Miracles are done by those with great faith
 - a. Elijah believed that God would send rain even though he did not see any sign of rain from the clouds (1 Kgs 18:41)
 - b. Moses trusted that God would open a way for Israel, even though he was at a dead end (Ex 14:13–14, 21)
 - c. The Lord Jesus told the disciples, “For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you” (Mt 17:20)
2. Those who desire to be healed should believe in Jesus and his mighty power
 - a. The unceasing cries of the two blind men demonstrated their belief that Jesus was the Son of David—the Savior (cf. Mt 22:41, 43); additionally, their cries showed their trust in Jesus' power (Mt 9:27)
 - b. Jesus said to the centurion, “Go; be it done for you as you have believed” (Mt 8:13)
 - c. Paul perceived that the cripple had faith to be healed (Acts 14:9)
3. For those incapable of believing and trusting (e.g. babies or demoniacs), their family or household should possess a strong faith
 - a. The Canaanite woman prayed for her demon-possessed daughter (Mt 15:22)

- b. The centurion petitioned for his servant (Mt 8:5–13)
 - c. The four people who brought the paralytic to the Lord showed great faith (Mk 2:3–5)
4. The sick, who have little or no faith, should be strengthened and encouraged
 - a. Jesus told the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe” (Mk 5:36)
 - b. Jesus told Martha, “Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” (Jn 11:40)
 - c. Jesus told a demoniac’s father, “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes” (Mk 9:23, NKJV)

C. Miracles Are Done Through God’s Spirit

1. The Lord cast out devils by the Spirit of God (Mt 12:28)
2. Miracles cannot be done without God’s presence (Jn 3:2; Acts 10:38)
3. Paul was able to subdue the devil because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:9–11)
4. The ability to heal the sick and work miracles is not by human power, but rather is a spiritual gift given by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:9–10)

D. Miracles Often Occur After Fervent and Unceasing Prayer

1. Elijah prayed three times to resurrect the widow’s dead son (1 Kgs 17:21–22); he prayed seven times for rain to end the long drought (1 Kgs 18:42–43)
2. The request of the Canaanite woman was finally granted by the Lord through her incessant prayers and petitions (Mt 15:22–27)
3. Despite opposition and rebuke, the blind man near Jericho cried out loudly for Christ’s favor and blessing; as a result, he was healed by the Lord (Lk 18:38–43)
4. The Lord said “But this kind [of demon] never comes out except by prayer and fasting” (Mt 17:21)

E. Miracles Often Occur After Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins Through Confession

1. The Lord forgave the paralytic's sins before he healed him (Mk 2:5–12; cf. Jn 5:5–9, 14). Some illnesses may be related to sin (cf. Jn 5:5–9, 14)
2. Confessing one's sins and faults to another may be necessary before praying for healing (Jas 5:14–16)
3. Elijah prayed for rain after the Israelites rejected Baal and repented (1 Kgs 18:39–44)
4. God does not hear a sinner's prayers (Ps 66:18; Isa 59:1–2; Jn 9:31)

[IV]

How Does God Work Miracles?

A. Through Hands

1. By the laying of hands
 - a. Jesus laid hands on the sick (Lk 4:40)
 - b. Jesus laid hands on the woman with a spirit of infirmity (Lk 13:11, 13)
 - c. Paul laid hands on the father of Publius to heal him (Acts 28:7–8)
 - d. The Lord said the power of healing by the laying of hands would be given to the disciples (Mk 16:18)
2. By touch
 - a. Jesus touched the leper and his leprosy was cleansed (Lk 5:13)
 - b. Jesus touched the eyes of the two blind men and restored their sight (Mt 9:29)
 - c. Jesus touched the eyes of the two blind men near Jericho and restored their sight (Mt 20:34)
3. By taking the sick by the hand
 - a. The Lord took Jairus' daughter by the hand and she was raised to life (Lk 8:54–55)

- b. Jesus took Peter’s mother-in-law by the hand and the fever left her (Mk 1:30–31)
 - c. Peter took the lame man by the hand and lifted him up (Acts 3:7)
4. By anointing the sick with oil (generally consecrated olive oil and generally by hand)
- a. The disciples healed the sick by anointing them with oil (Mk 6:13)
 - b. Anoint the sick with oil in the name of Jesus and pray for them (Jas 5:14)

The above-mentioned examples show that miracles are often connected with the hands (Acts 5:12; 19:11). Nevertheless, faith is a much more important factor than following ancient customs (e.g. anointing the head with oil). Miracles of healing and blessing are granted according to the degree of faith of the person in need.

B. Other Methods of Healing the Sick

1. For the sick who have little faith
 - a. Jesus spat on the eyes of the blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8:22–25)
 - b. Jesus spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the blind man’s eyes with the clay and told him to wash in the pool of Siloam (Jn 9:6–7)
 - c. Peter told the people to go out of the house and then knelt down and prayed by himself to raise Dorcas to life (Acts 9:40–41)
2. For the sick who have greater faith
 - a. By a word of the Lord, the paralytic stood up and walked (Mk 2:10–12)
 - b. By a word of the Lord, the blind man at Jericho recovered his sight (Lk 18:41–43)
 - c. The Lord Jesus answered a leper’s inquiry by saying, “I will [to clean you]; be clean.” And the leper was cleansed at once (Mt 8:3)

3. Other ways of healing the sick who have faith
 - a. The woman, with an issue of blood, touched the garment of Jesus and was healed (Mk 5:25–34)
 - b. The sick were brought into the streets on beds and couches, hoping that Peter’s shadow might fall on them and cure them. This was the expression of their eagerness to be healed. The sick were all healed (Acts 5:15–16)
 - c. Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons cured many diseases, and caused many evil spirits to come out of the sick (Acts 19:12)
 - d. The Bible records many special cases of healing accomplished because of the Lord’s great mercy and compassion. Thus, regardless of one’s level of faith, a sick person may be healed through the Lord’s mercy.
 - i. The widow’s son who had died at Nain was raised (Lk 7:13–15)
 - ii. The man with a 38-year infirmity was told to stand up and walk and so he did (Jn 5:5–9)

C. Demoniacs and Exorcism

1. Demoniacs
 - a. Mary Magdalene was possessed by seven demons (Lk 8:2)
 - b. A man at Gerasenes was possessed by many devils, and his name was “Legion” (Lk 8:27–30)
 - c. Demons may cause one to be out of control (Mt 17:15, 18)
 - d. A dumb man was demon-possessed (Mt 9:32–33)
 - e. A slave girl with a spirit of divination appeared to be good, for she followed Paul and other coworkers crying out that they were proclaiming the way of salvation. However, the spirit in her was evil (Acts 16:16–17; cf. 2 Cor 11:14)
 - f. The practice of divination, astrology, sorcery, enchanting, charming, mediumship, wizardry, or necromancy is evil and usually relates to demonic workings (Deut 18:10–12; cf. Acts 8:9–11)

2. Methods of exorcism
 - a. The laying of hands is not used in casting out demons. Rebuke the devil/demons and never submit to its request.
 - b. The Lord Jesus rebuked the devil and told it to be silent (Lk 4:33–35)
 - c. The Lord commanded an unclean spirit to get out of a man (Mk 5:8)
 - d. The Lord Jesus rebuked an unclean spirit, saying, “You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again” (Mk 9:25)
 - e. The Lord cast out the spirits with a word (Mt 8:16)
 - f. Paul cast out the devil in the name of Jesus (Acts 16:8)
 - g. The devil is not willing to depart from any person it inhabits and dwells in (Mk 5:7–10). One casts out demons in the name of Jesus by faith, and fasting is necessary in most cases (Mk 9:28–29).



Important Points to Remember in Performing Miracles

A. Guard Against Opposition and Resistance from the Devil

Signs and wonders release people from the devil’s bondage and proceed to bring them back to God (Lk 13:11, 16). When great miracles are performed, the devil will attempt to greatly oppose, hinder, and resist God’s work (1 Cor 16:9).

1. Slander
 - a. The Pharisees blasphemed the Holy Spirit and Jesus by saying that Jesus cast out demons by the prince of the demons (Mt 9:34; 12:22–24)
 - b. The Pharisees tried to convince the blind man Jesus healed that Jesus was a sinner (Jn 9:24)

2. Indignation
 - a. The scribes were filled with anger when they saw Jesus restore a man's withered hand on the Sabbath (Lk 6:10–11)
 - b. The priests were filled with indignation when they saw that the apostles healed the sick and demoniacs by Jesus' power (Acts 5:16–18)
3. Rejection
 - a. The people of the Gadarenes begged Jesus to leave them after Jesus cast the devils out of a demoniac (Mt 8:34)
 - b. Bar-Jesus tried to turn the deputy away from the faith (Acts 13:6–8)
4. Persecution
 - a. The Lord raised Lazarus back to life. Afterward, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council to put Jesus to death (Jn 11:47, 53; 12:10)
 - b. When Paul healed a cripple in Lystra, the Jews persuaded the people to stone Paul (Acts 14:9–10, 19)

B. Remember to Give All the Glory to God

1. Miracles happen because of God's power and grace; they are not the direct result of human power or religious piety (Acts 3:12)
2. Elisha cleansed Naaman's leprosy, but he did not accept Naaman's gifts of gratitude—he knew it was God's doing (2 Kgs 5:15–17; cf. Mt 10:8)
3. Paul cured the cripple in Lystra, but he refused the honorable tribute from the city (Acts 14:11–15; cf. Ps 115:1; Lk 2:13–14)
4. A servant of God should never take pride in miracles God does through him or her. Also, a sacred worker should never look down on his coworkers, since it is God who grants his workers spiritual gifts (Mt 7:22–23; Lk 10:20; 1 Cor 12:28–30).
5. Give God glory through your behavior. The Lord said to the healed, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you" (Jn 5:14; cf. 2 Pet 2:20).

[VI]

False Miracles

True miracles are performed by God's will and power. The Bible says, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things" (Ps 72:18; 136:4).

"The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders" (2 Thess 2:9). Since the Lord will come again soon, Satan is working hard by utilizing false signs and miracles. How do we discern the work of Satan? From antiquity to the present, Satan has deceived the world and distorted the truth, thus revealing his satanic power.

A. False Miracles by Sorcery

1. The Egyptian magicians turned rods into serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed them up (Ex 7:11–12)
2. The Egyptian magicians and sorcerers turned the water of the Nile into blood (Ex 7:20–22)
3. The Egyptian magicians also brought up frogs from rivers and pools (Ex 8:6–7)
4. Simon the sorcerer practiced his magic in Samaria, and Simon was mistakenly thought to be the "power of God which is called Great" (Acts 8:6–11; cf. 13:6–7; 19:19)

B. False Miracles by False Prophets and False Christs

1. "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mt 24:24). The false messengers work signs and wonders by the power of Satan (2 Thess 2:9)
2. The beast, coming up out of the earth with two horns like a lamb and speaking as a dragon, is the false Christ who has the power to work great signs and wonders. It can even make fire come down from heaven (Rev 13:11–13)

3. False prophets can perform wondrous things (Rev 16:13–14; 19:20)
4. The Holy Spirit “expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” (1 Tim 4:1). Therefore, every believer should be very cautious in discerning the spirits. One should never be seduced by any strange power or miracles, especially if the performers of such miracles and power do not agree with the Bible (Deut 13:1–5; cf. 2 Cor 11:3–4; Gal 1:6–9).

17. CHURCH



Importance of the Church

A. What Is a Church?

1. The Greek word “ecclesia” is translated as “church” in English. “Ecclesia” simply means an assembly that is called out (Acts 20:28). In the New Testament, the church is a sanctified assembly redeemed out of the world by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus (cf. Acts 20:28; Rev 5:9–10).
2. In the Old Testament, God chose Israel to be “a people dwelling alone, and not reckoning itself among the nations” (Lev 20:26; Num 23:9; Deut 14:2).
3. In the Old Testament, people were circumcised to become the children of God (Gen 17:9–14). In the New Testament, people follow the steps of faith by believing, repenting, and being baptized in the Lord to become members of Christ’s body (Jn 3:5; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27; Col 1:12–14).

B. The Significance of the Church

1. The church is the body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph 1:23; Col 1:24).
2. Christ is the head of the church, and the believers are members of the church. To persecute the church is to persecute Christ (Acts 9:1–5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 5:23).

3. The church, as Christ's representative body, has the power to retain and forgive sins. To obey the church is to obey the Lord; likewise, to reject the church is to reject the Lord (Mt 18:17–18; Lk 10:16; Jn 20:22–23).

C. The Church and Salvation

1. The church is a place where God grants his grace, manifests his power, and reveals his will to man. It is the place where God is glorified (Eph 1:23; 3:10, 21).
2. The church is the house of the living God. To enter the church is to enter God's house (Eph 2:17–19; 1 Tim 3:15). Anyone who rejects the true church will not be saved (cf. Josh 2:18–19).
3. The church is the only true vine, and believers are like branches. The branches will wither and be burned if apart from the vine (Jn 15:1–6). Thus, believers spiritually die if they leave the true church—the Lord's body (cf. 1 Kgs 2:36–37, 39–46; 1 Jn 2:19).
4. The church is the Lord's fold. Those who are in the fold are the Lord's sheep and will gain abundant life (Jn 10:1, 7–10, 16; 1 Pet 2:25).



Church Organization

A. Local Church Administration

1. Each local church is comprised of saints, elders, and deacons (1 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:1)
2. Paul appointed elders in the church (Acts 14:23) and told Titus to ordain elders in every city (Tit 1:5)
3. Deacons were established as ministers of the church (cf. Acts 6:1–6; 21:8). This office is important in the house of God, so Paul instructed Timothy on how to ordain deacons in the church (1 Tim 3:8–15).

B. Requirements for Elders and Deacons, and Their Office

1. Elders are also called bishops (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Tim 3:1–7; Tit 1:5–8). The term “elder” refers specifically to one's spiritual advancement.

The Greek word for “older man” used in 1 Timothy 5:1 and 1 Peter 5:5 is translated as “elder.” The term “bishop” refers specifically to the office of overseer or guardian of the church, i.e. an elder (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:5).

2. Qualifications for elders and deacons

As in the early church era, the present requirements for elders and deacons, as recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1–13 and Titus 1:5–9, are:

- a. A holy worker should be full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3; cf. Acts 6:10; 1 Tim 3:13; Tit 1:9)
- b. A holy worker should be full of wisdom (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:4–5, 9, 12; Tit 1:9)
- c. A holy worker should have a good reputation (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim 3:2–3, 8, 11; Tit 1:6–8)

A new believer must not be appointed as a bishop or elder (1 Tim 3:6). A church should examine the personal background and character of a deacon to ensure he is blameless (1 Tim 3:10).

3. The elder’s office and duties

- a. Elders must exhort and convince, by sound doctrine, those who contradict (Tit 1:9; 1 Tim 3:2)
- b. They should tend the Lord’s sheep (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–4)
- c. They are the stewards of God’s house and should take good care of the church (1 Tim 3:5; 5:17; Tit 1:7)

The elders minister the church according to God’s will—not as a forced duty, but willingly; not with eagerness for dishonest gain, but with an eager heart to serve. Thus, elders are not to wield their power over members, but are to set an example for the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2–3). Believers should submit to their elders (Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5) and honor them as God’s workers (1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 5:17–19).

4. A deacon’s office and duties

- a. The term “deacon” refers to a servant or minister. In the New Testament, “servants” (Mk 9:35; Jn 2:5) and “deacons” (Rom 15:8; 1 Cor 3:5; Col 1:7; 1 Tim 3:8) are more or less synonymous.

- b. Seven men were appointed to the office of deacon, though they were not called deacons at the time (Acts 6:1–3)
- c. Besides taking care of church affairs, deacons should also witness for the Lord and work for God’s glory by his grace and power (Acts 6:8–10)
- d. Philip, one of the original seven deacons, preached God’s good tidings in every city he went to (Acts 8:5–13, 26–40; 21:8)
- e. Paul said deacons should hold the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience and have a boldness for the faith (1 Tim 3:9, 13)

Deaconesses may be appointed (Rom 16:1; 1 Tim 3:11–12). Like the elders, deacons are stewards of God’s house and should serve the Lord with all their mind and strength—exercising their spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor 4:1–2; 1 Pet 4:9–11).

C. Interrelationship of Various Local Churches

Local churches, while scattered in every town and city, are still all members of Christ’s body. Thus, local churches are closely knit in organic unity (1 Cor 12:12–27).

1. The local churches were closely interrelated during the apostolic time (Rom 16:1–2, 16, 21–24; Col 4:15–16)
2. Ministerial regions should communicate closely with one another
 - a. During the early church era, regions were divided according to ministerial work (2 Cor 10:13–16; Gal 3:8)
 - b. Financial assistance was in place and was practiced among the regions (Acts 11:27–30; Rom 15:25–27; 1 Cor 16:1–3)
 - c. Communication centers were set up for specific ministries. Jerusalem was the center for the Jewish ministry (Acts 8:14–15); Antioch was the center for the Gentile ministry (Acts 13:1–3; 14:26–28; 15:30–41).
 - d. A headquarter was set up to connect various centers of ministry. Jerusalem was the headquarters of all ministerial regions (Acts 15:1–4; 18:22; 21:17–20).

All churches are members of Christ's body, of which Christ is the head. "And not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God" (Col 2:19; Eph 4:16).

D. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit and Church Offices

The Holy Spirit appoints elders and deacons in each local church in order to equip the saints for the ministry and edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:12; cf. Acts 20:28). In addition, Jesus Christ appoints apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Rom 12:4–8; 1 Cor 12:28–31; Eph 4:11). Thus, most workers will simply work in certain local areas, but some workers will work with a large number of local churches.

1. Apostles

Besides the twelve apostles, Paul and Barnabas were also called apostles (Acts 14:14). Apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church (Mt 16:18; 1 Cor 3:10; Eph 2:20). Apostles have special authority over the entire church (Mt 16:19; Acts 15:22–33; 16:4–5; 1 Cor 5:4–5; 2 Cor 10:6, 8; 13:10; 3 Jn 9–10). They devote themselves to the preaching of the gospel and the establishment of the church (Rom 15:22–23; Col 1:23, 25).

The qualifications to become an apostle are: first, one must possess spiritual gifts; second, one must have been considered apostles historically among the people. Apostles must have seen the Lord in person (Acts 1:21–22; 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8), be directly called by the Lord (Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1, 12), and have God's power to perform miracles, signs, and wonders (2 Cor 12:11–12).

2. Prophets

Prophets are those who receive the Lord's revelation and become the Lord's mouthpiece—to boldly proclaim God's will to the people. This is a special gift of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:10; 14:2, 6, 30; Eph 3:5–6). Receiving the Lord's revelation, prophets often predict future events (e.g. predicting famine or Paul's imprisonment, see Acts 11:28; 20:23; 21:4, 8–11). Prophetic duties include: prophecy, exhortation, comforting and warning (Acts 15:32; 1 Cor 14:3, 31).

Prophecy comes from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. However, people moved by the Holy Spirit may sometimes mingle human will and their personal ideas with God's revelation—thus tainting the prophecy (cf. Acts 21:4, 10–14). Therefore, we must carefully discern prophecies (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20–21).

3. Evangelists

Evangelists are preachers (Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5) and bearers of good tidings (cf. Rom 10:15). They receive the spiritual gift of eloquence and have the ability to evangelize (Acts 6:9–10). In order to make their work effective, God often gives them the power to work wonders, heal the sick, and cast out demons (Acts 6:8; Rom 15:18; 1 Cor 12:28). Philip was known as an evangelist, who by the Holy Spirit, preached the gospel of Christ, worked many miracles, and led many to baptism in Christ (Acts 8:5–13, 26–40; 21:8). Since the mission of evangelists is to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation,” evangelists will usually not stay in any particular place for extended periods of time.

4. Pastors

Paul said, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Cor 3:6). “Planting” refers to evangelical work, while “watering” refers to pastoral work. Pastoring entails solidifying the members’ faith and spirituality. Apollos was a good pastoral worker. Pastoral work is an important part of church ministry. Before the Lord’s ascension, the Lord told Peter three times to feed his sheep (Jn 21:15–17). Bearing children is a one-time deal, but feeding and nurturing them is a life-long job. Thus, pastoral work requires a great deal of long-suffering and patience to endure through difficulties.

Pastors should possess the qualities of love, meekness, tenderness, sincerity, and forbearance (1 Thess 2:7–11; 2 Tim 2:24–25; 4:2, 5). Elders in a local church may perform pastoral work (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:1–3). Others, like Peter and Paul, may perform pastoral work in many churches (Jn 21:15–17; Acts 8:14–17; 18:11; 20:31; 2 Cor 11:28).

5. Teachers

A teacher's responsibility is to teach God's word in faith and truth (Gal 6:6; 1 Tim 2:7). The Bible is their best text (2 Tim 3:16–17). Teachers receive the gift of spiritual knowledge and are able to correctly handle and analyze the word of truth (1 Cor 12:8; 2 Tim 2:15). Apollos was a very good teacher (Acts 18:24–28). At first, Paul was a teacher in Antioch; later, he became the teacher of many (Acts 13:1; 2 Tim 1:11). Teachers play an important role in the work of spiritual progress and edification of the church (1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 2:2).

Believers should have sound biblical knowledge to prevent from being “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning of men, by their craftiness in deceitful wiles” (Eph 4:14; Hos 4:6).

E. Characteristics of Church Administration

The Lord Jesus tells us, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant” (Mt 20:25–26).

The church is the house of God, and no one can rule over her as a king or a governor (1 Tim 3:15). Thus, one can only uphold and care for the church as a faithful steward.

1. The head of God's house is the Lord Jesus

Jesus is the only head. No one can replace Jesus Christ as head, for the Lord lives and works in the church (Mt 28:20; Eph 4:15; Col 1:18; cf. 1 Sam 8:4–9; 12:19).

2. All believers are brethren (Mt 23:8)

Paul (2 Pet 3:15), Apollos (1 Cor 16:12), Silas (1 Pet 5:12), and Timothy (Heb 13:23) were called brothers. Phoebe was called a sister (Rom 16:1). The apostles in Jerusalem called themselves brothers (Acts 15:23; Rev 1:9).

3. Elders, evangelists, and pastors are not appointed to have dominion over believers, but to be their servants (Mt 20:26; 2 Cor 4:5; 1 Pet 5:1–3)

4. Elders and the young people should form a parent-child relationship (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; 1 Jn 2:1, 12, 18; 3:7). The younger members should treat the elderly members like their parents (Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 5:1–2).
5. Paul was sorry to say that there were ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet not many fathers (1 Cor 4:15). Paul himself treated believers like a loving father (Acts 20:31–35; 2 Cor 12:14–15; 1 Thess 2:7–11).



Requirements of a True Church

The Lord predicted that false prophets and false christs would arise in his name to deceive many (Mt 24:4–5, 11, 23–24). Thus, we must take care to judge which church is true—distinguishing the true from the false (cf. Prov 14:12). A true church should meet the following requirements:

A. A True Church Must Have the Holy Spirit

1. The church is the Lord’s body, and she must therefore have the Holy Spirit. Without the true infilling of the Holy Spirit, a church is not accounted a church of Christ—no matter how many members she boasts, no matter how remarkable her organization, no matter how much she receives in contributions. A church without the Holy Spirit is only a secular organization created out of human will (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 12:13; 1 Jn 3:24).
2. Evidence of the Holy Spirit’s abidance with the church confirms that she is from God rather than human will (Jn 1:32–33; 3:34)
3. With the Holy Spirit working in the midst of the church, the church has the power to forgive and retain sins. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is the pledge of the heavenly inheritance of believers (Jn 20:21–23; Eph 1:13–14).

B. A True Church Must Be Accompanied by Signs, Wonders, and Miracles

1. The Lord promised, “And these signs shall follow them that believe.” Signs, wonders, and miracles are to confirm the Lord’s abidance with his true believers (Mk 16:16–20).

2. God bears witness to the true gospel with signs, wonders, different miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 14:3; Heb 2:1–4)
3. Signs and wonders are signs of apostleship, i.e. signs of those who are truly sent by God (Mt 11:2–6; 2 Cor 12:12)

C. A True Church's Gospel Must Follow the Bible Completely

1. A true church must be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:19, 20)
2. No one should transgress Jesus' doctrine, nor should anyone teach beyond what is written in the Bible, perverting the gospel (1 Cor 4:6; 2 Jn 9–11)
3. Paul stressed that anyone who preached any other gospel than what Paul and the other apostles preached would be accursed. The severity of Paul's claim is due to the fact that a false gospel cannot save man from sin. Rather, a false gospel leads people to condemnation (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6–9).
4. A church that is accompanied by signs and miracles but preaches a gospel that is different from that preached by the apostles cannot be considered the perfect church (Isa 8:20; Mt 28:20; Rev 22:18–19).

[IV]

Mission of the True Jesus Church in the Last Days

A. To Restore the Early Apostolic Church

1. The destruction and restoration of the temple in the Old Testament typifies the decline and restoration of the church in the New Testament
2. The downpour of the Holy Spirit, symbolized by the latter rain, restores the true church of the apostolic era (Zech 4:6; 10:1; cf. Acts 1:8)
3. The temple will be rebuilt "as in the days of old." This typifies the true church in the last days being like the apostolic church in construction and ministry (Ezra 3:3; Jer 33:7; Amos 9:11; Gal 1:8; Eph 2:19–20).

4. The glory of the latter temple—the true church, the spiritual temple—will be greater than the glory of the former temple (cf. Hag 2:9)

B. To Correct Fallen Churches

1. Elijah is a prefiguration of the true church in the last days

He prayed for the coming of rain that had been withheld for three years and six months. Before being caught up to heaven, he fought for the Lord and scolded apostate Israel in order to bring Israel back to God. Likewise, the true church, in the last days, should courageously denounce the errors of churches that have strayed from the truth, humbly lead them back to God, and present to them the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit (1 Kgs 18:17–40; Mic 3:8; Mal 4:5–6; Tit 3:5).

2. The Lord sent the twelve apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mt 10:6)
3. Paul, following the Lord's will, testified for Christ to the Jews (Acts 13:44–46). He pleaded to God for Israel's salvation, for while Israel was religiously fervent and devout, Israel did not have the truth of the gospel (Rom 10:1–3).

At present, many Christians, as well as many churches, are like the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Many Christian churches are zealous for God; they have devoted themselves to the work of God's salvation. However, they do not follow the truth of the gospel found in the Bible. Therefore, it is our duty to spread the life-saving message to them and to pray that the Holy Spirit moves and leads them to return to the one fold of the Lord (Jer 23:3–4; Jn 10:16).

C. To Admonish Idolatrous and Atheist Unbelievers

1. The Lord Jesus commanded the disciples to preach the true message in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit (Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8)
2. An angel warns people in the last days against the danger of idolatry, and urges them to turn to God (Rev 14:7–8; cf. 1 Thess 1:9; Rev 9:20–21)

3. The true church proclaims that the last day is coming. God's people should immediately depart from "Babylon"—the sinful world—to avoid being destroyed along with it (Isa 52:11; Jer 51:6–9; Acts 17:29–31; Rev 18:1–5; cf. Rev 21:8).

D. To Complete the Construction of the True Church

1. The destruction of the world in Noah's days is a type of the destruction of the world on the last day

Noah preached the message of righteousness and salvation while building the ark. Likewise, the true church should preach the life-saving gospel to the world while devoting itself to the building and perfecting of its members, thus fulfilling the Lord's entrusted mission. The true church must be perfect and complete by the day of the Lord's coming (Gen 6:13–14; Mt 24:37; 2 Pet 2:5; Rev 21:1–2).
2. Members of the true church receive the same Spirit and will, in unity of faith, fulfill the Lord's will before his second coming (Jn 10:16; 17:11, 21–23; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:10; 4:3, 13)
3. Before the marriage of the Lamb, the Bride, i.e. the church, should make herself ready (Rev 21:2). The church's faith, love, and holiness are perfected through trial of fire, i.e. tribulations. After attaining perfection, the church will be taken up to meet the Lord (Mal 3:2–3; 1 Pet 1:7; 4:7–8; 2 Pet 3:11–14; Rev 19:7–8).

18. OFFERINGS



Why Should We Make Offerings?

A. All Things Belong to God

1. The world and all things in it belong to God (Ps 50:10–12; 89:11)
2. God gives people the ability to attain wealth (Deut 8:18; 1 Sam 2:7; 1 Chr 29:12)
3. Life is given by God (Deut 32:39; Jas 4:13–15)
4. We are stewards of God’s house, so we should do what he commands us (Lk 16:1–2)

B. God Commands Us to Make Offerings

1. “Honor the LORD with your substance and with the first fruits of all your produce” (Deut 26:1–3, 10; Prov 3:9)
2. The Lord said, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth... but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal” (Mt 6:19–20)
3. God said, “Bring the full tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house; and thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing” (Mal 3:10)
4. “Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God” (Heb 13:16)

C. We Pay Tribute to the Grace of God Through Offerings

1. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to humankind, so humanity could be saved through him (Jn 3:16)
2. God freely forgives our sin by his grace, through the redemption of Christ (Ps 103:2–3; Rom 3:23–25; cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16)
3. God adopts us as his children, giving us the Holy Spirit as a seal of our adoption (Rom 5:5; 8:15–16; Gal 4:6; Eph 1:13–14)
4. God heals our diseases and gives us our daily food (Ps 103:3; Acts 14:15–17)
5. The Israelites were to offer two male lambs, one ewe lamb, three tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, and one log of oil when cleansed of leprosy (Lev 14:1–2, 10–11). Today, our sins have been cleansed by the Lord. Should we not offer more than the Israelites? (cf. Lk 17:12–19; 2 Cor 5:14–15)



How Do We Make Offerings?

A. Tithes

1. The origin of tithes
 - a. Abraham offered a tenth of everything to Melchizedek— the priest of the Most High God (Gen 14:18–20; Heb 7:2). Abraham’s children do the works of Abraham (Jn 8:39). Those who are baptized into Christ are the seed of Abraham (Gal 3:27–29).
 - b. Jacob vowed to give tithe to God (Gen 28:22)
 - c. The offering of tithes in the law was called “the LORD’s; it [the offering] is holy to the LORD” (Lev 27:30, 32)
 - d. When King Hezekiah revived the nation’s faith, he commanded the people to offer tithe (2 Chr 31:4–8)
 - e. After returning from Babylon, Nehemiah commanded the enforcement of tithe offerings (Neh 10:37–38; 12:44; 13:10–12)
 - f. In the days of Malachi, some people did not offer tithe and were severely rebuked by God (Mal 3:8–10)

- g. In Jesus' time, the Jews offered tithe as a regular practice (Lk 18:18)
 - h. Concerning tithes, the Lord said we should not neglect "the weightier matters of the law" (Mt 23:23; Lk 11:42). Furthermore, Jesus said to render "to God the things that are God's" (Lev 27:30; Mt 22:21).
2. The use of tithes
- a. Tithe is the portion of God's workers
 - i. Abraham offered a tenth of all to the priest of God (Gen 14:18–20)
 - ii. God gave Israel's tithes to the children of Levi because they served the tabernacle of the congregation (Num 18:21, 24). The first-born males of Israel were set apart for the Lord (Ex 13:12–13), but God chose the Levites instead of the first-born children of the other eleven tribes to serve in the tabernacle. For this reason, the other eleven tribes offered tithes to the Levites (Num 3:40–41). In turn, the Levites offered to God a tenth of what they received (Num 18:25–26; Neh 10:38).
 - iii. God said, "Take heed that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land" (Deut 12:19; 14:27). Paul said that the Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should get their livelihood from the gospel. This means preachers live off offerings from believers, just as the Levites lived off Israel's tithes (1 Cor 9:13–14; cf. Lk 10:7; 1 Cor 9:11; 1 Tim 5:17–18). Paul made a living by making tents because no one supported him (Acts 18:1–3; 20:32). However, he told Timothy, "No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him" (2 Tim 2:4–7). He went on, "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?" (1 Cor 9:7).
 - b. The tithe remaining after the allocation to the Levites could be used for good purposes. However, one should never forget God's workers (Deut 14:22–29). Moreover, tithes can be stored up for charitable works— helping God's workers, widows, orphans, and strangers (Deut 14:28–29; 24:12–13).

B. Offerings

Offering tithes is our obligatory duty to God, so we should offer accordingly. If one does not offer tithes, the person robs God (Mal 3:8).

Israel's offering of the firstborn and the first fruits was regulated by God (Ex 13:12–13; 23:19; Neh 10:35–36). The burnt offering, the grain offering, and the peace offering were all important offerings for Israel (cf. Lev 1–3). Besides these, the Israelites offered willingly and freely for the building of the tabernacle and for helping the poor. These two offerings are important for Christians today but are to be offered according to one's freewill.

The following are examples of offerings and their spiritual teachings in the Old and New Testaments:

1. For the construction of the tabernacle or the temple
 - a. The Israelites offered gifts for the tabernacle (Ex 25:1–7; 35:5–9)
 - b. King David, the commanders, and the officers all offered willingly for the construction of the temple (1 Chr 29:1–9)
 - c. Jehoash told the people to offer for temple repairs (2 Kgs 12:4–5)
 - d. Josiah collected silver for temple repairs (2 Kgs 22:3–5)
 - e. The Israelites readily and willingly offered silver, gold, goods, and beasts to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:4–11; 2:68–69)
 - f. In order to rebuild the wall, Nehemiah received nothing from the people. Instead, Nehemiah offered what he could have kept for himself (Neh 5:14–19)
2. For helping orphans, widows, and the poor
 - a. God commanded Israel to treat orphans, widows, and strangers magnanimously (Ex 22:21–24; Gal 2:10; Jas 1:27)
 - b. There was a year of release every seventh year, i.e. a sabbatical year, to relieve poor debtors (Deut 15:1–11; cf. Rom 12:13)
 - c. God told the Israelites to leave the gleanings of their harvest and vintage for the poor (Deut 24:19–22; Lev 19:9–10)
 - d. The land was to rest every seventh year, and the poor could eat what the farmers had grown and left in the field (Ex 23:10–11)

- e. The Lord Jesus said, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Mt 19:21)
 - f. Zacchaeus gave the poor half of his goods (Lk 19:8)
 - g. The Macedonian brethren offered beyond their ability to help the believers in Jerusalem (2 Cor 8:1–5).
3. The proper attitude and method in offering
- a. Do not offer with reluctance; rather, offer with a willing heart
 - i. God said that “from every man whose heart makes him willing you shall receive the offering for me” (Ex 25:2; 35:4–5)
 - ii. “Then the heads of fathers’ houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king’s work” (1 Chr 29:6–9)
 - iii. “Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you” (Ps 110:3)
 - iv. “Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 8:3; 9:7)
 - b. Offer sincerely and whole-heartedly
 - i. David and the people offered willingly with a whole heart (1 Chr 29:9, 11)
 - ii. The church at Macedonia was “begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints” (2 Cor 8:4)
 - iii. The Lord said, “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Mt 6:3–4)
 - iv. The deceitful offering of Ananias and Sapphira caused their death (Acts 5:1–11)
 - c. Offer the best portion
 - i. Offer the sacrifice that is without blemish (Lev 22:17–25; Mal 1:6:8)
 - ii. Offer the firstfruits of all your produce (Ex 24:26; Prov 3:9)

- iii. Offer the firstlings of the flock (Gen 4:4)
- iv. Abraham gave a tithe of the spoils (Heb 7:4)
- d. Put in your best effort when offering
 - i. The churches of Macedonia offered beyond their means (2 Cor 8:1–3)
 - ii. Mary offered her best when anointing Jesus with the precious oil of spikenard (Mk 14:8–9; Jn 12:1–8)
 - iii. The poor widow put in two copper coins—which was all she had—into the temple treasury (Lk 21:1–4)
 - iv. The believers of the early church were moved by the Holy Spirit to offer all their possessions (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37)
 - v. The Lord said, “Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more” (Lk 12:48)
- e. The proper time for offering
 - i. When you are rich (1 Tim 6:17–18)
 - ii. Before the evil days come (Eccl 11:2; cf. Ezek 7:19)
 - iii. Make use of money in good ways when it is still useful. At the Lord’s coming, all offerings will be useless (Lk 16:9).
 - iv. When you are still alive (Eccl 9:10)
 - v. When the Lord needs it:
 - Joseph of Arimathea buried the body of Jesus at the opportune time (Mk 15:42–46; Lk 23:50–53)
 - Nicodemus offered a mixture of myrrh and aloes to anoint Jesus’ body at the proper time (Jn 19:39–40)
 - The women prepared spices and ointments and brought them to the tomb. But it was too late, for the Lord Jesus had already resurrected (Lk 23:56; 24:1–2). This is not to say their deed was bad, since they rested on the Sabbath. However, we should offer at the proper and opportune time before it is too late.

[III]

Offerings and Their Usefulness

A. Offer for God's Holy Work

1. So that there will be food in God's house (Mal 3:10)
2. Offerings will enable more workers to devote themselves to the ministry of God's church (cf. Neh 13:10–11; Mt 9:37–38; 1 Cor 9:7–11; Phil 4:15–16; 2 Tim 2:4)
3. Offerings will help sacred work—such as sacred workers' training seminars, evangelical work, church publications and chapel construction—to function smoothly. As a result, offerings glorify God and benefit man.

During Zerubbabel's time, the people were so self-centered and selfish that the rebuilding of the temple was halted for quite a while (cf. Hag 1:2–8).

B. Offer to Render Assistance to Those in Need

1. Tend to the ones in need (Deut 15:7; 1 Jn 3:17–18; Jas 2:15–16)
2. Those in need can be encouraged in their faith and appreciate God's grace more, giving him praise and glory (2 Cor 9:12–13)
3. Those in need may pray for those who have extended contributions to them (Job 29:13; 31:20; 2 Cor 9:14)

C. Benefits to the Offeror

1. Offerors may be materially blessed
 - a. "He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor" (Prov 22:9)
 - b. "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed" (Prov 19:17)
 - c. God will open the windows of heaven, and pour out blessing to those who offer tithes (Mal 3:10–12)
 - d. God will provide sufficiency in all things (Deut 15:10; Prov 3:9–10; 11:24–25; 2 Cor 9:8)

- e. God will deliver those who help the poor in times of trouble (Ps 41:1)
 - f. Dorcas did many good works and acts of charity, and God raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36–41)
2. Offerors are spiritually blessed
- a. Cornelius, a devout man who gave much alms to the people, was remembered by God. He and his household received God’s salvation—they received the Holy Spirit and were baptized in Jesus’ name for the remission of sins (Acts 10:1–8, 44–48).
 - b. “He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever” (2 Cor 9:9)
 - c. Doing good works and distributing money to the poor provide a good foundation against the time to come, so that one may lay hold of eternal life (Mt 6:20; 1 Tim 6:17–19)
 - d. When money becomes useless, through their offerings, God’s faithful ones may be received into everlasting habitations—the heavenly kingdom (Lk 16:9; cf. Mt 19:20)
 - e. The Lord said, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21). Offerings can spur concern for church work and draw people nearer to God.

D. Consequences to the Stingy

1. They will become poor (Prov 11:24)
2. Their prayers will not be heard or granted (Prov 21:13)
3. They provoke God
 - a. The people were cursed by God because they did not offer tithes (Mal 3:8–9)
 - b. God did not care for the people who were not concerned about the temple of God (Hag 1:9–11)
 - c. Belshazzar’s impious feast, in which he defiled the temple vessels and provoked God, resulted in his punishment. Since he did not repay God, the Lord divided Belshazzar’s kingdom and he died (Dan 5:18–24, 27–30).

- d. Hezekiah did not repay God according to the grace given him, and thus God's wrath was upon him (2 Chr 32:25)

We should remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). We must repay God's grace and do our best in offering. We must help others in order to please the Lord.

In addition to freewill offerings for the holy work of the church, Christians should present their bodies as living sacrifices—holy and acceptable to God—and devote themselves to the ministry. In short, we must offer our lives for the Lord (Rom 12:1–2; 14:7–8).

19. CHRISTIAN ETHICS

PART ONE: A CHRISTIAN'S FAMILY LIFE

David made this remark, “I will give heed to the way that is blameless” (Ps 101:2). The Lord Jesus also said, “Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house” (Mt 5:15).

A Christian's responsibility in family life includes guiding one's entire household to be saved by the Lord Jesus. Every Christian should abide by God's way and shine God's light at home, which may convince unbelieving family members of the faith or compel family members to love the Lord all the more.

[I]

Marriage

A. Marriage Is Instituted by God

God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18–23; cf. Gen 24:12–14; Mk 10:9; 1 Cor 11:11).

B. Marriage Is to Be Honored by All (Heb 13:4)

1. Do not choose a partner indiscriminately; rather, choose carefully (Gen 6:2)
2. Do not defile the marriage bed (Heb 13:4)

Jacob was engaged to Rachel for seven years, yet he kept himself apart from her until they got married (Gen 29:20–21; cf. Mt 1:18–19; 2 Cor 11:2).

C. Do Not Marry Unbelievers (Deut 7:3–4; Josh 23:11–13)

1. Abraham made Eliezer, his servant, swear that he would not marry Isaac to a Canaanite woman (Gen 24:2–4)
2. Solomon sinned against God because he married pagan women (Neh 13:23–27)
3. This law still stands in the New Testament: do not marry unbelievers (1 Cor 7:39; 2 Cor 6:14–18)

D. Monogamy Is the Original Lawful Institution

1. God created one man and one woman in the beginning (Gen 2:25; cf. Mal 2:15)
2. Two become one flesh (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31)
3. A man with two wives, both of whom he married before his Christian conversion, should not be ordained as a minister (1 Tim 3:2, 12; Tit 1:6)

E. Is Divorce Lawful?

1. Paul said, “But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so” (1 Cor 7:15). But he continued to say to the believing spouse, “How do you know whether you will save your husband?” (1 Cor 7:16; cf. 1 Pet 3:1). Evidently, Paul’s hope for the one who has been forsaken by the spouse is for that person to endure. Paul counsels that if a wife separates, “let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband” and “that the husband should not divorce his wife” (Mk 10:11–12; 1 Cor 7:11) because God hates divorce (Mal 2:16).
2. Only under one condition can believers be divorced—when one spouse commits adultery and the other has been faithful (Mt 5:31–32; 19:8,–9; cf. Deut 22:20–21)

F. After the death of her husband, a woman may remarry (Rom 7:2–3; 1 Cor 7:8–9, 39)

G. Celibacy Is Good for the Ministry

1. It is good for ministers of the church to remain celibate; however, celibacy is a gift from God (1 Cor 7:25–35; cf. Mt 19:10–12)
2. The church should not forbid marriage (1 Tim 4:1–3)

H. Parents Should Concern Themselves with Their Children's Marriage

1. Be sure to guide your children to follow God's will in marriage (Gen 24:1–6; 28:1–3)
2. It is a great sin to make your daughter a prostitute (Lev 19:29; Deut 23:17)
3. "You shall not bring the hire of a harlot... into the house of the LORD your God" (Deut 23:18)



Relationship Between Husband and Wife

A. How Should a Husband Treat His Wife?

1. As Christ loves the church, so should a husband love his wife as his own body (Eph 5:25, 28–29)
2. A husband ought to honor his wife and be considerate of her weaknesses (1 Pet 3:7)
3. Never mistreat your wife (Col 3:19; Mal 2:16)
4. Take your wife's opinions into account (1 Cor 7:3–5)
5. Live joyfully with your wife (Eccl 9:9; cf. Gen 24:67; Song 4:7–15)
6. A prudent wife is a gift from the Lord (Prov 18:22; 19:14)

B. How Should a Wife Treat Her Husband?

1. As the church submits to Christ, so should a wife submit to her husband (Eph 5:22–24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1–5)
2. The wife should respect her husband, just as Sarah called Abraham lord (Eph 5:33; 1 Pet 3:6)
3. The wife does not rule over her own body, just as a husband doesn't rule over his own body (1 Cor 7:3–5)
4. The wife should help her husband, just as Eve was Adam's helper (Gen 2:18)
5. Proverbs 31:10–31 highly extols a virtuous wife:

- She does her husband good all the days of her life (v. 12)
- She is hardworking and efficient (vv. 13, 18, 19, 24)
- She is good at housekeeping (vv. 15, 16, 21, 24, 27)
- She is kind and tender (v. 20)
- She has wisdom (v. 26)
- She fears God (v. 30)

All wives are exhorted to be virtuous wives.

6. Women should not emphasize on outward adorning. Rather, they should adorn themselves with sobriety and inner virtues (1 Tim 2:9–11; 1 Pet 3:3–5).
7. A depraved woman is like rottenness in the bones of her husband (Prov 12:4; 21:9; Judg 16:15–21)
8. Modern feminists are often critical of the biblical view of women and wives. However, one must always keep humility and love in mind. A husband and wife relationship is built on love, not authority.



Relationship Between Parents and Children

A. The Responsibility of Parents

The family is the seedbed of religious education. Parents should educate their children in the faith.

1. Teach your children to fear God (Gen 18:19; Ps 71:18; 78:3–8)
 - a. David charged Solomon to fear God and to walk in his ways (1 Kgs 2:1–4)
 - b. Cornelius guided his entire household to fear God (Acts 10:1–2)
 - c. Noah, Joshua, and many others worshipped God with their entire household (Gen 7:1; Josh 24:15; 2 Pet 2:5)
2. Bring your children up in the Lord (Eph 6:4)
 - a. Children are a heritage from the Lord (Ps 127:3). They will inherit the grace of life from their parents (cf. 1 Pet 3:7)

- b. Parents should have loving concern for their children, educating them rather than provoking them (Col 3:21; cf. Mt 19:13–14; Mic 2:9)
 - c. Parents are required to teach their children the Scriptures from childhood, and to build them upon the foundation of faith (2 Tim 3:15; cf. Deut 6:6–7; Prov 22:6; 2 Tim 1:5). Joseph and Daniel had a firm foundation of faith from childhood and thereby became upright men (cf. Gen 37:2, 28; 39:9; Dan 1:4, 8)
3. Correct children when they are wrong
- a. Eli did not chastise his two sons, and they died because of their transgressions (1 Sam 2:12–25, 29–34)
 - b. Job’s loving concern for his children’s spiritual welfare was shown in that, after his children’s feasts, Job would send and sanctify them—offering burnt offerings for them in fear that they may have sinned and cursed God (Job 1:5)
 - c. “Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart” (Prov 29:17)
4. Pray for your children at all times (1 Chr 29:19; Lk 23:28)

The ultimate goal of raising your children is to make them sanctified vessels that will live for the Lord. You should raise them to contribute to mankind and to glorify God (cf. 1 Sam 1:28; Rom 12:1; 14:7–8; 1 Cor 6:20; 2 Tim 2:21)

B. Filial Obligation

1. Children should honor their parents (Ex 20:12). Children are obligated to respect their parents, since they lovingly bore them, nourished them and educated them. Children should therefore love, respect, honor, and care for their parents (1 Tim 5:4).
2. A main concern for children should be to honor their parents
 - a. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord, i.e. as long as it is not contrary to God’s word. Children need not obey their parents if they are told to forsake God or do evil
 - b. Children should accept their parent’s instructions (Prov 13:1; 15:5; Heb 12:7–9)
 - c. Children should not mistreat or fail their parents (Prov 19:26)

- d. Children should not despise their parents (Prov 15:5; 23:22). As a king, Solomon respected and honored his mother very much (1 Kgs 2:19).
 - e. Children should not curse their parents (Lev 20:9; Mt 15:4)
3. Children should provide for their parents when they are able to
 - a. Ruth provided for Naomi, her mother-in-law, by gleaning grain in their poverty (Ruth 2:2)
 - b. The Lord Jesus tells us not to leave our parents comfortless, in spite of the offerings we have to make to God (Mk 7:10–12)
 - c. Before his death on the cross, Jesus provided for his mother by entrusting her to John (Jn 19:26–27)
 4. Children should bring their parents to the Lord, in order to share together in the heavenly blessing (cf. Mk 5:19; Acts 16:31; Rom 9:1–3)
 5. Contempt for one’s parents is a curse (Deut 27:16)
 - a. “If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness” (Prov 20:20; cf. Prov 30:17)
 - b. Absalom usurped his father’s kingship, and he tried to kill David during the revolt. As a result of violating the Fifth Commandment, Absalom himself was pierced to death (2 Sam 15:13–14; 18:9–15).
 6. Blessed are those who honor and provide for their parents (Ex 20:12; Eph 6:2–3)
 - a. Joseph, an obedient son, was eager to know whether his father was in good health when he met his brothers in Egypt (Gen 43:27–28). Although Joseph occupied a high position, he did not forget to send for his father, a rustic shepherd, to reunite with him and to provide for him (Gen 46:29–30).
 - b. Ruth honored and provided for her mother-in-law, a poor and lowly widow (Ruth 1:16–17; 2:2–17–18; 3:11). God blessed her and guided her to marry a prosperous and kind-hearted man named Boaz (Ruth 2:1; 4:13). King David was three generations from Ruth in Ruth’s lineage (Ruth 4:17; cf. 2 Sam 15:1–5).

[IV]

Relationship with Siblings

A. Brethren Ought to Get Along Harmoniously (Ps 133:1)

1. Parents are happy when siblings get along in unity, harmony, and pleasantness (cf. Gen 27:41–42; 2 Sam 13:37)
2. The following are ways to keep unity and harmony among brethren:
 - a. Have no envy (Gen 37:11; Acts 7:9)
 - b. Have no resentment or hatred (Gen 37:4; Lev 19:17)
 - c. Be tolerant (Gen 13:8–9; 1 Cor 6:7–8)
 - d. Be forgiving (Gen 50:15–21; Col 3:13)

B. Brethren Give Help in Times of Need (Prov 17:17)

1. Lend to others what they need to survive (Deut 15:7–11)
2. “You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit” (Lev 25:35–37; Deut 23:19–20)
3. Extend a helping hand and take good care of your brethren in their sicknesses (Job 42:11; cf. Job 19:13; Mt 25:36)
4. Abraham risked his life to save Lot (Gen 14:13–16)
5. Failing to provide for one’s household is to deny the faith (1 Tim 5:8)

C. Spiritual Teachings of Levirate Marriage (Deut 25:5–10; cf. Mt 22:24)

1. In the Old Testament, Levirate marriage (i.e. the marrying of a dead brother’s widow to carry on the brother’s line) was a common practice in Israel. Today, the Christian church has no practice similar to Levirate marriage. However, Levirate marriage illustrates the loving obligation that exists among brethren (Gen 38:7–8).
2. Rahab begged the Israelite spies to take her and her relatives under their protection (Jos 2:12, 14; 6:23)
3. Paul, in order to have the names of his kinsmen written in heaven, was prepared to cut himself off from Christ. People often feel wonderful when their names are recorded, especially in ancient culture. Therefore, to give up one’s name was a loving sacrifice (Rom 9:3; cf. Rev 21:27; Lk 10:20).

[V]

A Christian's "Family" Life in the Larger Community

The Lord Jesus said, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it" (Lk 8:21).

Paul made a similar remark, "Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity" (1 Tim 5:1–2).

We must extend a universal and familial love to other believers and society (2 Pet 1:7).

- A. Job treated widows, orphans, and the poor like his own family (Job 31:16–22)
- B. The relationship between Paul and Timothy was like that of father and son (1 Tim 1:2, 4; 2 Tim 1:2; 1 Cor 4:17)
- C. Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction (Jas 1:27; 1 Tim 5:16; Deut 10:18; 27:19; Jer 49:11)
- D. Let brotherly love last forever (Heb 13:1; Mt 23:8; Rom 12:10; 1 Jn 4:20–21)

PART TWO: A CHRISTIAN'S SOCIAL LIFE

The Lord Jesus said to his disciples, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid" (Mt 5:13–14). The Lord never commanded the disciples to separate themselves from society like hermits. Rather, he told them to follow God's will in this evil world. Being the salt of the earth, Christians should season mankind with the knowledge and grace of God. Like salt, Christians preserve society from corruption through the example of their life and doctrines. As the light of the world, Christians should guide the world to walk on the path of brightness and salvation (Phil 2:14–16).

[VI]

Education

A Christian's principle in life is to glorify God and benefit mankind (1 Cor 6:20; 10:24; Rom 15:2).

The Church does not forbid believers from being educated in secular institutions. However, the Christian goal of a child's education should be remembered. Both children and parents should recognize that the goal of secular education is not to enhance one's social status, dignity, popularity, or wealth. Rather, children should apply what they learn in secular institutions for God's glory and work—preparing themselves to be acceptable vessels to God. Below are some examples of godly people who applied their education to God's work:

A. Moses Was Instructed in All the Wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22)

1. Moses had high social status and could easily have enjoyed courtly honor and pleasures in Egypt. Instead, Moses chose to suffer with his people and to deliver them out of their bondage (Heb 11:23–27; Acts 7:24).
2. God delivered Israel out of Egypt through Moses. In the wilderness, God gave the law to Israel through Moses—the “Mosaic” law. Thus, the Torah was first given to Moses, and then to God's people. Moses' Egyptian education was undoubtedly conducive to his leadership and writing of the law through God's guidance (cf. Jn 1:17; Acts 7:22).

B. Daniel Acquired the Learning and Language of the Chaldeans (Dan 1:3–5, 17)

1. From his childhood, Daniel had a strong faith and godly principles (Dan 1:8). Later, Daniel and his three friends were chosen to serve the king of Babylon because they were highly educated. God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, these four young students were ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in the king's kingdom (Dan 1:17–21).

2. After the completion of his education, Daniel was appointed to serve in the king's palace, and to preside over his affairs (cf. Dan 1:4). Later on, king Darius intended to make Daniel prime minister of the Persian kingdom due to Daniel's good character and excellent spirit (Dan 6:1–5). Daniel's adversaries contrived a new law in the hope of ensnaring him. Because of them, Daniel was cast into the lions' den; yet, God preserved Daniel's life—a miracle that caused Darius to glorify God.

Daniel, a learned and beloved man of God, glorified God among unbelievers. Through his high social status, Daniel managed to glorify God and to bring God's blessing to his countrymen (Dan 6:6–10, 16–18).

C. Paul, an Outstanding Student of Gamaliel, Was a Learned Pharisee

1. Gamaliel, a noted Pharisee, and teacher of the law, had a good reputation in the Jewish community (Acts 5:34–40). Later, under Gamaliel's direction, Paul became known as a learned man (cf. Acts 26:24).

Paul was a Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3:5) and a native of Tarsus, which ranked third as a learning center, surpassed at the time only by Athens and Alexandria.

Paul was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28) in an influential family; thus, Paul was exposed to Jewish, Hellenistic, and Roman knowledge and culture. Before his conversion, Paul's extensive learning made him proud and self-righteous (cf. Acts 9:1–2; 1 Cor 8:1).

2. After Paul's conversion to Christianity, he became a vessel of righteousness acceptable to the Lord. By God's grace, Paul vigorously proclaimed the gospel of Christ. The Lord Jesus revealed the hidden mystery of the word to Paul, and many of his epistles became part of the biblical canon (Rom 16:25; Gal 1:11–12; cf. Mt 13:52).

[VII]

Career

A. Work Honestly (Eph 4:28)

1. “All things are lawful,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up” (1 Cor 10:23). All jobs are equally important if they build people up physically and spiritually. Like members of a body, various career choices serve their respective functions in society. However, Christians should not engage in ungodly businesses such as gambling casinos, night clubs, brothels, and the like (cf. Deut 23:17–18; Tit 3:14).
2. Carpentry was considered a menial vocation in Jesus’ time; yet, God allowed his only Son to be born into a carpenter’s family (cf. Mt 13:55). Christians should respect those in “menial” vocations, e.g. janitors, cab drivers, and the like. People in “menial” jobs contribute no less to the overall social welfare than those in “higher” fields of occupation (cf. Lk 16:15; 1 Cor 12:22–23).

B. Slavery and Servitude from a Christian Perspective

1. “Were you a slave when called? Never mind” (1 Cor 7:21). As a servant, one should willingly submit himself to his master and work faithfully (Col 3:22–24). At the same time, Paul told masters to treat their servants reasonably and justly (Eph 6:9; Col 4:1).
2. Paul expected that slaves could free themselves, as shown in him saying, “But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity” (1 Cor 7:21). This statement does not show that Paul despised slavery, or that he supported it. Rather, Paul saw people as essentially equal when he said, “there is neither slave nor free, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28).

C. Work

1. The Bible says, “Six days you shall labor, and do all your work” (Ex 20:9).

Paul taught that if a church member was unwilling to work, he should not eat (2 Thess 3:10). The church should deal severely with busybodies who refuse to work (1 Thess 4:11; 2 Thess 3:8–14). Paul

himself made tents and worked hard to set a good example for all (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor 4:12; 1 Thess 2:9). Christians are correct in seeing the slothful and busybodies as shameful and sinful.

The rich should not follow the example of the rich man in Jesus' parable, since the rich man was lazy and feasted sumptuously everyday (Lk 16:19, 22, 25). Since life can be very easy and comfortable for the rich, the rich should serve the Lord with all their mind, strength, and soul (Rom 6:13; 12: 1).

[VIII]

Interpersonal Relationships

A. Be Trustworthy and Faithful

1. Be truthful to others (Zech 8:16; Eph 4:15; Prov 3:3)
2. Do not engage in fraud in your business (Deut 25:13–16; Prov 11:1; 21:6)
3. An officer should never accept bribes or participate in corrupt practices (Deut 16:19, Mic 7:3; cf. Dan 6:4, 22)
4. Do not breach a contract after you have accepted the contract terms, even if following through with the contract may not benefit you (cf. Ps 15:4; cf. Judg 11:30–40)
5. Abraham was chosen by God because he was found faithful (Neh 9:7–8)
6. God helps those who have a blameless heart toward him (2 Chr 16:9)
7. God's true people are honest (Jn 1:47)

B. Be Kind and Have Goodwill

1. Christians should never repay evil with evil, as Nabal did (1 Sam 25:21). The saying of an “eye for an eye” or a “tooth for a tooth” is not followed in the New Testament (Mt 5:38). Rather, Christians should overcome evil with good rather than allow hatred and resentment to overcome them (Rom 12:21). Christians should only show kindness and goodwill toward others, following the examples set by the Lord and Joseph (Gen 50:15–21; Lk 23:34; 1 Cor 13:4–9).

2. Christians should never lack compassion for orphans, widows, the poor, the sick, and the troubled (1 Jn 3:17). Support the weak and supply them what they need (Jas 2:14–16). Do not be like the Levite and the priest in the parable of the good Samaritan, who pretended not to see the half-dead man lying on the road (Deut 22:1–4; Lk 10:30–32).
3. Charity is acceptable to God (Deut 15:7–8; Gal 2:10). The saints of old regarded philanthropy as a virtue and practiced it diligently. The philanthropists of old include Dorcas (Acts 9:36), Cornelius (Acts 10:2–3), and the repentant Zacchaeus (Lk 19:8).

C. Follow Justice

1. Do not discriminate against others (Jas 2:1)

We should not be partial to the poor (Lev 19:15). Neither should we respect the rich and despise the poor (Deut 1:17). “For the LORD sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart” (1 Sam 16:7; cf. Lk 16:15).

2. Be impartial in judgment (Prov 24:23–24).

“He who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him” (Prov 18:17). David first listened to Ziba and thus did injustice to Mephibosheth (2 Sam 16:1–4; 19:24–30).

Even if there are witnesses, we should be very careful in forming a judgment. By getting false witnesses against Naboth, Jezebel caused Naboth to be stoned to death (1 Kgs 21:8–14). The Jews crucified Jesus through false witness (Mt 26:59–62). Thus, we must exercise care not to judge another quickly based simply on superficial evidence. For example, Joseph was thrown in jail because Potiphar never investigated why Joseph’s garment was in his wife’s possession (Gen 39:11–20).

3. Fight for justice

Godly prophets of old were never broken by threats or the power of evil in their fight for justice. Rather, such prophets were often moved to denounce evil and social injustice; they would work hard to lead others in the paths of righteousness. Godly prophets include Daniel (Dan 4:27), Zechariah (2 Chr 24:20, 21), John the Baptist

(Mt 14:3–11), the Lord Jesus (Mt 23:13–39; 21:12–14; Lk 19:45–47; Jn 7:7), and many other biblical figures.

Practicing righteousness not only curtails injustice, but also encourages people to do good and be faithful workers. Rulers or leaders establish their position by being just in all their doings (Prov 16:12). A righteous nation is blessed by God, and righteousness delivers from death (Prov 11:4).

[IX]

Social Activities

A. Choose Friends with Care (1 Cor 15:33)

1. People not to associate with: the unbelieving, the unrighteous (2 Cor 6:14–18), the world (Jas 4:4), hotheads (Prov 22:24), gossip-mongers (Prov 20:19), outlaws (Prov 24:15), drunkards or gluttons (Prov 23:20)
2. Be on good terms with those of the same faith (Rom 12:10; 1 Pet 2:17), those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim 2:22), the wise (Prov 13:20), and above all, the Lord Jesus (Jn 15:14). God called Abraham his friend (2 Chr 20:7; Isa 41:8; Jas 2:23).
3. David and Jonathan had a beautiful friendship. Jonathan presented a generous gift to David as a token of his extraordinary kindness and enduring affection (1 Sam 18:1–4). He also took pains to pacify Saul and reconcile him to David (1 Sam 19:1–7). Jonathan took pleasure in the prospect of David's future kingship, even though the kingship was his by birthright (1 Sam 23:15–18). David tore his clothes, fasted, and lamented over Jonathan's death (2 Sam 1:11–12). To David, Jonathan's love was better than the love of women (2 Sam 1:26). After the death of Saul and Jonathan, David sought an opportunity to do good to Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son (2 Sam 9:1–8).

B. Do Not Drink Wine or Intoxicating Drink

1. Wine makes people sick (cf. Hos 7:5). A drunkard will come to poverty (Prov 23:21) and may even sell his children for a drink (Joel 3:3). Wine often causes arguments, strife (Prov 23:29), fornication (Gen

19:30–38), nakedness (Gen 9:21), death, or even national destruction (Dan 5:1–9, 25–31).

2. The Bible teaches that a minister in the sanctuary must not drink wine, lest he die (Lev 10:9–10; Ezek 44:21). Nazirites were consecrated to the Lord and would never drink wine or strong drink (Num 6:1–3; Judg 13:4, 7, 14). Prophets and kings should never drink wine or strong drink (Prov 31:4; Lk 1:15; 1 Cor 14:31; Rev 5:9–10). Today, believers must be consecrated to the Lord (Gal 3:27). No drunkards shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:10; Gal 5:21). The Bible says, “Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder” (Prov 23:31–32).

C. Entertainment

1. Dancing

Dancing may stimulate one’s sexual desire and disinhibit one’s self-control, which may in turn lead to sin. In order to avoid fornication and lust, Christians should refrain from dancing with sexual interests in mind. Rather, Christians are exhorted to keep a pure and peaceful heart (cf. Mt 5:27–30; 1 Cor 7:1; 2 Tim 2:22).

2. Gambling

Gambling is a form of greed and laziness. Gambling often causes the gambler to regret, sorrow, and may even lead to crime. Gambling often leads to bad habits, such as heavy drinking and prostitution, which in turn destroys one’s family life.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s” (Ex 20:17). “For the love of money is the root of all evils” (1 Tim 6:10). The above illustrate the evils of gambling. Christians should not gamble since it brings very little benefit and often angers God.

3. Movies and Dramas

- a. If movies, television, and dramas are properly used as educational mediums, they can benefit society and one’s individual character.

But nowadays, human hearts are prone to evil. The commercial world often takes advantage of naive audiences in order to make money—producing wayward, seductive, and corrupt movies. Under these circumstances, believers should follow Paul’s example of avoiding what is “lawful” for the sake of others (1 Cor 8:13).

- b. The Bible says, “Thou who art of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on wrong” (Hab 1:13). The saints of old prayed to God thus: “Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; and give me life in thy ways” (Ps 119:37; Isa 33:15). The sins of both Eve and David were caused by the lust of the eyes (Gen 3:6; 2 Sam 11:2–8). The lust of the eyes does not come from God, so, like Job, we should make a covenant with our eyes. All pornographic and obscene magazines, books, or photographs should be avoided. We should not listen to or sing ungodly songs or buy non-beneficial music (Job 31:1; 1 Jn 2:15–16).

4. Attire

Women should dress modestly. The Bible says that “women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly attire” (1 Tim 2:9–10; 1 Pet 3:3). “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment” (Deut 22:5). “But let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious” (1 Pet 3:4–5). Women should emphasize simplicity, serenity and neatness in their appearance. Women should not overdress or wear heavy makeup in order to tempt or attract undue attention (cf. Lk 16:19, 25; Rev 17:3–5). Women should always remember that inner beauty, virtues, and high spirituality are God’s delight; thus, modest attire is most appropriate.

[X]

Christians and Country

A nation is formed to provide security and welfare for the people.

A nation's statutes and regulations are usually founded on justice, love, and moral judgments. The Bible clearly states that Christians should perform their proper obligations to their country.

A. Christians should subject themselves to the political institution

“Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right” (1 Pet 2:13–15; Rom 13:1–5; Tit 3:1).

B. Christians should pay all appropriate taxes

“For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay all of them their dues, taxes to whom taxes are due, revenue to whom revenue is due, respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due” (Rom 13:6–7). The Lord Jesus also said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mt 22:20, 21; cf. Mt 17:24–27).

C. Honor the leaders of your country, the governors, and all in authority, and make supplications, prayers, and intercessions for them (1 Tim 2:1–3; 1 Pet 2:17)

D. In cases where a country’s government goes against God’s will, Christians should abide by God’s higher standard and obey God.

If a ruler becomes a dictator, going against God’s principles and suppressing basic human rights (e.g. freedom of religion or evangelism), then Christians should courageously uphold God’s principles and commandments. Daniel, Daniel’s three friends, apostle Peter, and apostle John all remained loyal to the Lord in spite of threats and persecution (Dan 3:1–18; 6:4–10; Acts 4:18–20; 5:29).

- E. Even though the country has its judicial system, the Bible does not permit Christians to bring each other to court. This is not to belittle the authority of the courts. Rather, Christians should remember the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ when they have disputes with other members. Christians should willingly yield and submit to the church's judgment. We must learn to forgive and love one another, as well as practice the principles of God's kingdom—to manifest love in a darkened world (Mt 18:21–35; 1 Cor 9:1–8; 13:4–8; Col 3:13).

20. SECOND COMING

Jesus' second coming is a Christian's greatest hope and expectation (Tit 2:13; Phil 3:20–21; 2 Tim 4:8).



Biblical Grounds for the Lord's Second Coming

A. Old Testament Prophecies

1. “Before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth” (Ps 96:13)
“Then the LORD your God will come, and all the holy ones with him” (Zech 14:5–6).
2. “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the stormwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire” (Isa 66:15)
3. The following are additional references: Deuteronomy 33:2; Psalms 50:3; 98:9; Isaiah 35:4; 40:10; Daniel 7:13–14; Malachi 3:1–2.

B. The Lord Jesus' Promise

1. “For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father” (Mt 16:27; Mk 8:38; Lk 9:26)
2. “And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also” (Jn 14:2–3)
3. A detailed description of the Lord's second coming is given in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and 21.

4. Jesus told many parables about his second coming. The following is a list of parables: the ten virgins (Mt 25:1–13); the talents (Mt 25:14–30); the shepherd’s separating of the sheep and goats (Mt 25:31–46); the servants waiting for their Lord (Lk 12:35–40) and the minas or pounds (Lk 19:12–27).
5. We should remember the revelation of Jesus Christ that was given to John after the Lord’s ascension. The message of the Lord’s second coming, a central theme of Revelation, points to the book’s eschatological relevance (Rev 1:7; 3:11; 16:15; 22:20).

C. The Testimonies of Angels and Apostles

1. Angels declared to the people, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:10–11)
2. Peter said, “Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory” (1 Pet 5:2–4)
3. John said, “Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 Jn 3:2)
4. Paul said, “But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20)
5. James said “Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord” (Jas 5:7–8)
6. “So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28)



The Prospect of the Lord's Second Coming

A. The Lord Will Come Again with Fire and Thousands of Angels

1. "It was of these also that Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam prophesied, saying, 'Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads'" (Jude 1:14)
2. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire (2 Thess 1:7–8)

B. The Saints Shall First Resurrect and Then Meet the Lord in the Air

"For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess 4:14–16).

C. We Shall Be Transformed and Caught Up to Meet the Lord in the Air

1. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:52)
2. "Then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess 4:17)

D. Mankind Shall See Him and All Tribes of the Earth Shall Mourn

1. "Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him" (Rev 1:7)
2. "Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt 24:30)



Consequences of the Lord's Second Coming

The purpose of Christ's second coming is to execute judgment on the world and to repay the good and evil. According to the Bible, Jesus' second coming will bring about several important consequences.

A. The Saints Will Enter the Heavenly Kingdom and Have Eternal Life

1. "Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'" (Mt 25:31–34)
2. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing" (2 Tim 4:7–8)
3. "And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet 5:4)

B. The Wicked Will Be Cast into Hell and Eternal Condemnation

1. "The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess 1:7–9)
2. "But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death" (Rev 21:7–8)
3. "Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Mt 25:41–46)

C. The Devil Will Be Cast into the Lake of Fire to Be Eternally Tortured

1. “And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:10)
2. “The eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt 25:41)

D. The Old World Will Pass Away and a New Heaven and New Earth Shall Come

1. “Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them” (Rev 20:11)
2. “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (Mt 24:35)
3. “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:10–13)

[IV]

Signs of the Lord’s Second Coming

The Lord Jesus said, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only” (Mt 24:36). The day of the Lord Jesus’ second coming is not known by man. However, from the many signs and events we observe, we know his coming is at hand.

A. The Present World

1. Iniquities and sins are prevailing

The destruction of Noah’s generation and the city of Sodom were due to grievous sins (Gen 6:11–13; 18:20). In the future, the world will be destroyed because of its violence and corruption.

- a. “But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of stress. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, fierce, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding the form of religion but denying the power of it. Avoid such people” (2 Tim 3:1–5)
 - b. “The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk; nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts” (Rev 9:20–21)
 - c. “Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities’” (Rev 18:4–5)
2. Knowledge is increasing
- a. “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Dan 12:4)
 - b. “And he said to me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near’” (Rev 22:10). This passage indicates that spiritual knowledge will increase during the end-time.
3. Nations dissolve and war with one another
- a. “As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan 2:43–44)

- b. “And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians, and they will fight, every man against his brother and every man against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom” (Isa 19:2)
 - c. “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs” (Mt 24:7–8)
4. Wars will be terrible
- a. “When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword” (Rev 6:3–4)
 - b. “I will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; I will put an end to the pride of the arrogant, and lay low the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make men more rare than fine gold, and mankind than the gold of Ophir” (Isa 13:11–12)
 - c. “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt 24:21–30)
5. Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes will increase in frequency
- a. “When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth” (Rev 6:7–8)
 - b. “There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven” (Lk 21:11)

- c. “Terror, and the pit, and the snare are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth! He who flees at the sound of the terror shall fall into the pit; and he who climbs out of the pit shall be caught in the snare. For the windows of heaven are opened, and the foundations of the earth tremble. The earth is utterly broken, the earth is rent asunder, the earth is violently shaken. The earth staggers like a drunken man, it sways like a hut; its transgression lies heavy upon it, and it falls, and will not rise again” (Isa 24:17–20)

B. The Spiritual World

- 1. The Holy Spirit, symbolized by the latter rain, has descended

According to God’s plan, the promised Holy Spirit is given in two periods. The Holy Spirit in the apostolic era and the Holy Spirit in the last days before the Lord’s coming are respectively symbolized by the former rain (the fall rain) and the latter rain (the spring rain):

- a. “Be glad, O sons of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD, your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before” (Joel 2:23; cf. Deut 11:14)
- b. “They do not say in their hearts, ‘Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain, and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest’” (Jer 5:24)
- c. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even upon the menservants and maidservants in those days, I will pour out my spirit.

‘And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls’” (Joel 2:28–32)

2. The spiritual Israel is restored
 - a. “For I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land... A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances” (Ezek 36:24–27)
 - b. “The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isa 2:1–3)
 - c. “Then say to them, Thus says the LORD GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all sides, and bring them to their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms” (Ezek 37:21–22)
3. False religions prosper among unbelievers
 - a. “Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made. So man is humbled, and men are brought low—forgive them not!” (Isa 2:8–9)
 - b. “A drought upon her waters, that they may be dried up! For it is a land of images, and they are mad over idols” (Jer 50:38)
 - c. “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur issuing from their mouths. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound. The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did

not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk” (Rev 9:18–20)

4. False Christs and false prophets arise

- a.** “Take heed that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and they will lead many astray” (Mt 24:4–5)
- b.** “And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray... Then if any one says to you, ‘Lo, here is the Christ!’ or ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Mt 24:11, 23–24)
- c.** “Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed. It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men” (Rev 13:11–13)

5. The antichrist arises

- a.** “And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads... it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation” (Rev 13:1–7)
- b.** “And the king shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done. He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women; he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all” (Dan 11:36–37)
- c.** “Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is

revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God... and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved”
(2 Thess 2:3–10)

6. The gospel of the kingdom of God is preached all over the earth
 - a. “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come” (Mt 24:14)
 - b. “And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter. And I was told, ‘You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings’” (Rev 10:10–11)
 - c. “And I will grant my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.’ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth... And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them” (Rev 11:3–7)
7. The church will be greatly persecuted
 - a. “And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another” (Mt 24:10)
 - b. “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?’ Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been” (Rev 6:9–11)

- c. “And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:7–10)
8. The Bride prepares for the marriage of the Lamb
- a. “That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:26–27)
 - b. “Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure’—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (Rev 19:7–8)
 - c. “And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2)

[V]

The Church Should Prepare for the Lord’s Second Coming

After the Lord Jesus pointed out several eschatological signs in Matthew 24, he continued with three parables. These parables encourage us to get ready for Christ’s coming.

A. We Should Prepare Ourselves and Strive to Be Holy and Perfect

1. Always be filled with the Holy Spirit

- a. “For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps” (Mt 25:3, 4; cf. 1 Jn 2:27). Now we know that oil represents the Holy Spirit, so we must be filled with the Spirit.
 - b. “But you are not in the flesh, you are 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” (Rom 8:9)
 - c. “In him you also... were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:14)
2. Be the light of the world
- a. “And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out’” (Mt 25:8). We must be filled with the Holy Spirit to manifest God’s light.
 - b. “Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:15–16)
 - c. “Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14)
3. Be watchful and sober in waiting for the Lord, while patiently enduring till the end
- a. “As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, ‘Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him’” (Mt 25:5–6)
 - b. “But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man” (Lk 21:34–36)
 - c. “But he who endures to the end will be saved” (Mt 24:13)

B. Be Conscientious in Doing God's Work

1. Remember the divine commission
 - a. "For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away" (Mt 25:14–15)
 - b. "Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Rom 12:6–8)
 - c. "For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission" (1 Cor 9:16–17)
2. Diligently fulfill God's commission according to your ability
 - a. "He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more" (Mt 25:16–17)
 - b. "And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating. Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more" (Lk 12:47–48)
 - c. "The trees once went forth to anoint a king over them; and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.' But the olive tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my fatness, by which gods and men are honored, and go to sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the fig tree, 'Come you, and reign over us.' But the fig tree said to them, 'Shall I leave my sweetness and my good fruit, and go to sway over the trees?' And the trees said to the vine, 'Come you, and reign over us.' But the vine said to them, 'Shall I leave

my wine which cheers gods and men, and go to sway over the trees?” (Judg 9:8–13)

3. Never receive the Lord’s grace in vain
 - a. “But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master’s money... And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth” (Mt 25:18, 26–30)
 - b. “Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says, ‘At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation.’ Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:1–2)
 - c. “For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Est 4:14)

C. Love the Brethren in Truth

1. To love the brethren is to love God
 - a. “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’” (Mt 25:40)
 - b. “If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also” (1 Jn 4:20–21)
 - c. “He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honors him” (Prov 14:31)
2. Those who love God and others will be saved
 - a. “Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you

gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me” (Mt 25:34–36)

- b. “In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world” (1 Jn 4:17)
 - c. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love” (Gal 5:6)
3. Love your neighbor as yourself
- a. “For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal 5:14)
 - b. “Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law” (Rom 13:8–10)
 - c. “The end of all things is at hand; therefore keep sane and sober for your prayers. Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:7–8)

[VI]

Millennialism

The above sections concerning the coming of Christ are in accord with the revelation of the Bible and are not based on human reasoning or deduction. Other churches, which lack the guidance of the Holy Spirit, offer conflicting views that have strayed from the Bible. Below is a brief overview of such theological views:

A. The Second Coming of the Spirit Theory

Some millennial theorists assume that the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was the second coming of Christ. These theorists often do not believe Jesus Christ will come again in glory and power, with thousands of angels from heaven, to execute judgment on this world. Moreover, these theorists often do not believe in heaven and hell. Such Christians usually view the Bible in scientific and humanistic terms.

B. The “Millennial Dawn” Doctrine

This “Millennial Dawn” theory maintains that Jesus Christ has already come. Charles Taze Russell, his followers, and the International Bible Students’ Association (a.k.a. Jehovah’s Witnesses) formed this theory.

According to Russell, the Lord’s second coming has already occurred and we are now in the millennium. Christ returned to the “upper air” during the second advent in 1874. Four years later, in the spring of 1878, all the holy apostles and the members of “the little flock” who had died were raised to meet the Lord. They are now floating about in the air. At that time, God also rejected the existing churches.

Pastor Russell announced that the consummation of all things would take place in 1914. He figured seven prophetic times of 360 years each, a total of 2520 years, from the removal of Zedekiah in 606 B.C. It was later suggested that as Ezekiel was dumb for a year, five months, and twenty-six days, a similar period after Russell’s death would witness the end. The final battle may take place anytime now, hence millions who are now living will never die (Elmer T. Clar, *The Small Sects in America*, Nashville, Tenn., 1949, pp. 45–47).

According to Jehovah Witnesses, the beginning of the end for Satan came when Christ took power in heaven as king in 1914. Christ’s first act was to cast Satan out of heaven, and this was followed by great troubles on earth. This will climax in God’s battle at Armageddon—where the complete destruction of the devil and his world will occur. This is the vindication of Jehovah’s name and the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ. Then all that breathe will praise Jehovah.

Christ is now in his second presence. He will always remain invisible to humans, but his presence is proved by world events since 1914, which fulfill all the predictions of Matthew 24.

C. Pre-millennialism

According to pre-millennialists, Christ’s second coming occurs before the millennium. Generally speaking, when social and moral conditions have reached the ultimate state of degradation, Christ will come again to take up his church. Christ’s taking up of his church is often called the “rapture.” There is no agreement among Christians as to when the rapture will take

place. Some say it is before the seven-year tribulation period, others say it occurs mid-tribulation, and still others say it occurs post-tribulation.

At any rate, a great tribulation comes upon the earth. During the tribulation, the antichrist will appear (some say to establish his capital at a miraculously restored Babylon). Some pre-millennialists say the world will be devastated. When tribulation comes, woe and confusion will abound. The Jews and some unbelievers will repent and accept Christ as their Savior. Suddenly Christ and the church (i.e. the saints) will descend again after the rapture, and in the midst of flames, they will shout at the sound of trumpets. Satan will be bound and consigned to the lower regions. All the hosts of evil will be destroyed. Christ will sit upon a temporal throne in Jerusalem and the millennial reign will begin. Jerusalem and its temple will be reconstructed. All nations will have to come up to Jerusalem year by year to worship the Lord. If the nations do not keep the yearly feast of Tabernacles, God will cause no rain to fall upon that nation. During the millennial kingdom, land will be redistributed, economic ills will be removed, corruption in human government eliminated, and sin restrained. Human life will be lengthened, nature will be restored completely and there will be no more earthquakes, storms, famines and pestilences. The spring and the fall rain will be restored to Palestine. Animals will revert to an Edenic state as God originally intended, and a little child will literally lead animals around, while lions and lambs peacefully coexist.

At the close of the millennium, Satan will be released to wage war upon Christ, the saints, and the beloved city. He will command a host of innumerable demons, yet they will ultimately be overthrown and burned with heavenly fire. Once again, Satan will be thrown into a pit of fire and will be eternally tormented. After this, the ungodly dead will be raised to be judged and sentenced to the eternal fires. Then the earth will be burned, and Christ and his saints will rise to heaven to inherit eternal bliss.

Some believe that immediately after the millennial reign, the earth will become a center of activity with the resurrection of the wicked, the return of the righteous from heaven, the setting up of the New Jerusalem on earth, and the final execution of judgment on the unrepentant. After that, the earth will be purified by fire and, at Christ's command, be transformed into the eternal home of the redeemed. "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped" (Isa 35:5)."

And death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:4). All sorrows will be over, and mankind’s brightest hopes will be realized. This will be “heaven on earth” for all who love the Lord Jesus.

D. Post-millennialism

Post-millennialists believe Christ will come after the millennium. They generally believe in an earthly kingdom brought about by the church’s efforts. Christ’s gospel will be spread all over the world. The millennium will be a period in which the good triumph over evil and righteousness prevails. The majority of humankind accepts Christ as Lord, and the world becomes a glorious place; thus, the church age reaches a “golden age.” And millennial conditions reach a global scale.

At the end of the millennium, the earth resumes the great activity of wickedness and iniquities. Thus, Christ comes again to complete the judgment of the living and the dead, as well as introduce the eternal state of heaven and hell.



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