

Beliefs and Doctrines of the New Testament Church

The True Teachings and Doctrines of Jesus Christ and His Apostles as Revealed in the Holy Bible

The apostolic New Testament Church, also known as the Primitive Church of God, believed and practiced the true teachings and doctrines of Jesus Christ and His chosen apostles as revealed in the Holy Bible—The Old Testament and the New Testament. The New Testament Church of God has never ceased to exist, though it has always been a scattered “little flock,” despised and hated by the world and its great religious organizations. The New Testament records many of the persecutions that the true believers of Jesus Christ suffered during the time of the apostles at the hands of the unbelieving Jews and Romans. Later, after the death of the apostle John in 98-100 AD, a great apostate, counterfeit Christian church arose, 100 AD-325 AD. It continued to persecute the brethren of the true Church of God.

Beginning in the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine, under orders from the emperor and the apostate Church leaders—its bishops and later popes—the civil government of the Roman Empire persecuted, killed and drove the true Christians beyond the bounds of the Empire. The histories written about the scattered brethren of God’s true Church, preserved by Romish and Orthodox historians, refer to them as heretics, because they steadfastly rejected the usurped ecclesiastical authority of the Roman Church and refused to believe or accept its false paganized teachings and doctrines. Rather, they have always submitted to the authority of God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Word of God, believing and practicing the true doctrines and teachings of the Bible.

The following doctrinal statements are the biblical teachings and doctrines of the true Church of God from the Old and New Testaments, which are the same scriptural teachings and doctrines that the apostles of Jesus Christ taught the primitive Church of God and wrote in the New Testament. Today, the Christian Biblical Church of God derives all its teachings and doctrines from the Scriptures, as did the early New Testament Church of God. These statements are designed to give a brief summary of each doctrinal belief and are not intended to be exhaustive treatises. The scriptural references, which follow each statement, are by no means a complete listing of the many Scriptures that support these doctrines.

I. The Nature of God

The God Family

God—the Hebrew word is *Elohim*, a plural noun inherently meaning more than one—is a holy Family of intelligent Beings, composed of spirit. The God Family is eternal and all-powerful. The God Family is perfect in love, purpose and character. The God Family is Lawgiver, Creator and Sustainer of all substance and life, and upholds and controls the universe. The Scriptures reveal that the God Family created mankind “after Our image and after Our likeness.” Therefore, God is the reality of the “image and likeness” from which man was created. The God Family presently consists of God the Father and God the Son. These two members of the God Family have the same form, or “image and likeness,” which They have given to human beings, though They are composed of spirit. One of Their purposes is to increase the God Family. According to this plan and purpose, They will share Their

eternal spiritual existence and Their vast creation with those human beings who will be born again by the resurrection from death into the God Family, thereby inheriting Their magnificent love, glory and power as sons and daughters of God throughout eternity.

Scriptural References

Gen. 1:26	Eph. 3:9-21	I John 4:8
Dan. 7:9-10	Eph. 1:3-5, 9-10	Rev. 1:14-16
Col. 1:12-27	John 4:24	Psa. 19:1-7
Psa. 8:1-6	Isa. 40:12-28; 57:15	Rom. 1:20

God the Father

God the Father is the supreme, glorious, divine Spirit Being Who is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. God the Father accomplishes His will through the power of His Holy Spirit. God the Father, Who has all power and all authority, is love. He has perfect, holy character and is full of grace and mercy. God the Father is greater than His Son Jesus Christ but shares all that He has with His Son. God the Father sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to reveal the Father's love and grace and His magnificent plan for all mankind. God the Father directly calls each individual to salvation, grants repentance, and imparts the Holy Spirit as a begettal, so that the individual becomes a child of God the Father. God the Father Himself personally loves each one He calls and is directly involved in the life of each individual, continually imparting His love, grace, mercy and blessings so that he or she can develop His loving, perfect, righteous character. He personally hears and answers the prayers of all His begotten children.

Scriptural References

I John 4:8, 16	John 6:44	John 8:16-18
John 1:1-2, 17-18	John 14:28	Eph. 3:14-19
John 16:27	Heb. 1:1-2; 2:3-9	Eph. 4:4-6
Matt. 11:27	I Cor. 15:24-28	Rev. 21:22

God the Son, Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Prior to His human birth, the *Elohim* of the God Family, Who became the Son, eternally existed with the *Elohim* of the God Family Who became the Father. All things were created by God the Father through God the Son. The Son is revealed in the Old Testament as the Lord God and Lawgiver and in the New Testament as the Word of God. In order to become the Savior of all mankind, He willingly divested Himself of His position in the God Family, giving up His majesty, glory and power, to become a fleshly human being, born of the virgin Mary and begotten of God the Father, Who directed that He be named Jesus. His full New Covenant name is Jesus Christ of Nazareth. As a human being having sinful human flesh, He was subject to the same temptations as every human being, yet He never sinned. As the perfect Lamb of God, He gave Himself to be God the Father's special, unique sacrifice through the crucifixion as an atonement for the sins of all mankind. After being dead in the grave for three days and three nights, He was resurrected to eternal life through the power of God the Father, becoming the Firstborn from among the dead. He was again invested with the full divine nature and power of the God Family. He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father as mankind's High Priest, Advocate and Intercessor and Head of His Church. Jesus Christ will return to earth in the power and glory of His Father to establish the Kingdom and government of God on the earth. As King of kings and Lord of lords, He will rule the earth forever with His brothers and sisters, the children of God the Father. (See *Salvation, The Nature of Mankind* and *The Resurrections*.)

Scriptural References

John 1:1-3	Phil. 2:6-11	Eph. 1:6-23
Heb. 2:9-14	Heb. 4:14-16	Heb. 5:7-9
Rom. 8:3, 29	Rev. 1:5, 13-16	Rev. 5:9-10
Rom. 5:8	John 3:16	John 17:1-26
I John 2:1-2	Rev. 13:8	Col. 1:14-20

II. The Nature of Mankind

The *Elohim* of the God Family Who later became Jesus Christ personally created Adam and Eve with His own hands. He created them in the image and likeness of God, or *Elohim*, but a little lower than God. Human beings are made of flesh and blood and do not have inherent immortality. (See *Salvation*.) However, at creation God gave a spirit essence to the human brain called the “spirit of man.” This spiritual dimension in the human brain imparts reasoning power and intellect and gives human beings the capacity to think, speak, learn, write, plan, devise, create, build, control, teach, choose, worship, build character, and, experience every emotion. God made male and female with the capacity to express intimate, personal love for each other as husband and wife, and through this physical union, to create children after their own kind, producing families, clans, tribes and nations. Adam and Eve were created sinless but with a nature that was subject to temptation. God gave them freedom to choose between obedience and life, or disobedience and death. After they sinned by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God sentenced them to suffer the pain and sorrow of living with a sinful nature and finally to reap the penalty of death. This penalty of death was passed on to all mankind by the physical inheritance of sinful human nature. Human nature is inherently and naturally hostile to God and is not subject to His laws and commandments. From birth, human nature is a mixture of good and evil. When a person dies, his or her conscious thoughts cease. The body returns to the dust of the earth, and the spirit of man goes back to God. Only through God the Father's gracious and merciful plan of salvation through Jesus Christ is it possible for a person to be redeemed and saved from this sinful nature of death. God's ultimate purpose for each human being is complete reconciliation with God the Father through Jesus Christ so that he or she may enter into the Family of God as a literal son or daughter of God, sharing the same eternal existence as God. (See following entries: *The Holy Spirit*, *Salvation* and *The Resurrections*.)

Scriptural References

Gen. 1:26-27	Psa. 8:3-6	Zech. 12:1
Gen. 2:7-25; 3:1-19	I Cor. 2:11	Ezek. 18:4, 20
Mark 7:21-22	Rom. 8:7-8	Heb. 9:27
Ecl. 3:19-21	I Cor. 15:21-22, 44-56	Rev. 21:7
I John 3:1-3	Phil. 3:21	

III. The Love of God

God's Love Toward Us

The love of God is revealed in that the God Family created mankind in Their image and Their likeness and gave them dominion over the entire earth, which They had bountifully created for them. God the Father's profound spiritual love is fully manifested to mankind through His overall plan as revealed in the New Testament in the life, death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. In His supreme love, God the Father offers every human being the

opportunity to be born into the God Family through the resurrection from death, becoming a literal child of God the Father, with the same form and spiritual composition as God the Father and God the Son. God's love and reconciliation is now extended to those He is calling and will be extended to all mankind according to His plan. God the Father's love is manifested toward those He has now called by His grace and mercy daily bestowed through Jesus Christ, His continuing intervention and blessings, and the care with which He chastens them.

Scriptural References

Deut. 4:37 John 3:16 Rom. 5:7-8
I John 3:1 Psa. 145:8 I John 4:8-10, 16
Heb. 12:6 John 16:27; 14:21 Eph. 2:4-10

Our Love Toward God

We love God because He first loved us. Our love for God is a result of God the Father's calling through the power of the Holy Spirit, which opens our minds to understand the greatness and goodness of God's love and the sinfulness of our own nature. God the Father leads us to genuine repentance and acceptance of the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We manifest our repentance and our faith in Jesus Christ by being baptized in water, symbolically burying the old self into the death of Jesus Christ and rising to walk in newness of life. Through the laying on of hands, the gift of the Holy Spirit is given to us as a spiritual begetting from God the Father, imparting the love of God into our hearts. The capacity to truly love God comes through His Spirit within us. We are individually to love God the Father and Jesus Christ with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, all our strength and all our being. Jesus said that anyone who does not love God more than all others is not worthy of Him. Our love and our complete devotion to God the Father and Jesus Christ are manifested by our willingness to live by every word of God and to keep all His commandments.

Scriptural References

I John 4:16-19; 5:2-3 Matt. 22:37-38 Eph. 5:1-2
Rom. 5:5 I John 2:5, 15 II John 6
John 14:15-24 Gal. 5:22 Psa. 97:10
Deut. 6:5 Deut. 13:3 Matt. 10:37-38

Our Love Toward Brethren

Christians are to have a special love for one another because God the Father and Jesus Christ have individually called and personally love each one. As the begotten children of God, with the Holy Spirit shed abroad into their hearts, all true Christians share a special fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. This fellowship is the foundation for the new commandment that Jesus gave to His disciples to "love one another as I have loved you." This true Christian love is a sign by which all people can recognize the followers of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural References

John 13:34-35 John 15:9-10 I John 3:16-17
I John 2:6-11; 5:1-2 I John 4:19-21 II John 4-6

IV. The Holy Bible

The Holy Bible is the Word of God. God directly inspired His chosen servants by the power of His Holy Spirit to record the Scriptures for all mankind. The Holy Bible consists of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language and preserved by the Masoretes, the Levites who were appointed by Ezra as the official guardians of the Old Testament. The New Testament was written and preserved in the *Koiné* Greek language by the original apostles of Jesus Christ. The apostle John completed the New Testament just before his death, writing the book of Revelation as the final book of the Bible. God has preserved the New Testament text through the Greek-speaking Church. Called the *Byzantine Text*, it was the official text of the Greek-speaking Church, after the days of the apostles, from 312-1453 AD. This text, also known as *The Stephens Text of 1550*, was used to translate the New Testament into English for the *King James Version* in 1611.

The Holy Bible contains vital spiritual knowledge revealed by God, which man cannot discover for himself. It also records the essential outline of history from the beginning of creation to Abraham, from Abraham to the birth of Jesus Christ, and from the birth of Jesus Christ to the end of the apostolic era in approximately 100 AD. The book of Revelation reveals major events prophesied to take place from the end of the apostolic era to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The Bible is the very foundation of knowledge, imparting understanding of salvation through Jesus Christ and showing mankind how to live God's way of life in both the letter and the spirit of His Law. True Christianity is based on the entire Word of God as it applies to the individual Christian and to the Church.

Scriptural References

II Tim. 3:16-17 II Pet. 1:20-21 Deut. 8:3
Psa. 111:7-10 Psa. 119 Psa. 12:6; 19:7-9
Prov. 30:5 Matt. 1:1-17, 4:4 Gal. 1:8-12
Eph. 2:19-20 Luke 4:4 Rev. 1:1-3; 22:18-19
John 6:63 II Tim. 1:9-14 I Cor. 14:37

V. The Laws and Commandments of God

The Nature of God's Laws

The laws and commandments of God as revealed in both the Old Testament and the New Testament are a holy and perfect set of principles based on the love of God. God's laws and commandments are designed to teach man how to love and worship God and how to love his neighbor. God has made known His laws and commandments to the world from the beginning and requires all mankind to keep them. The laws and commandments of God define what sin is, and where there is no law there is no sin. No one could be counted as a sinner, or under sin, if God did not require all the people of the world to keep His laws and commandments. The Scriptures show that God judges all nations according to their obedience or disobedience to His laws, bringing blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience or sin. Because of sin and wickedness in Noah's time, God destroyed the world with the Flood. The men of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because they were sinners before God. The Ninevites were a Gentile nation not in covenant with God, but God warned them through His prophet Jonah of His impending judgment for their sins. The inhabitants of the land of Canaan were expelled because of their religious and sexual sins. The people of Israel, God's chosen nation, also sinned grievously against God and were sent into captivity. Through sin and disobedience to God's laws and commandments, the whole world has become guilty before Him. Generation after generation has yielded to the sinfulness of human nature and has utterly failed to meet even the

minimum requirements of the letter of the Law.

While God has always required mankind to keep His laws and commandments in the letter of the Law, He desires that every human being learn to worship Him in the spirit of the Law. The full spiritual intent of God's laws is that each one learn to love God with all the heart, mind, soul, being and strength; and to love one's neighbor as oneself. The Scriptures reveal that obedience to God's laws in the spirit is a condition for receiving eternal life. Only through the gift of the Holy Spirit is this obedience made possible. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, each Christian can have the laws and commandments of God written in his or her heart and mind and can learn to walk daily in the spiritual obedience that God desires. The laws and commandments of God are not contrary to grace and faith but are truly established by faith.

Scriptural References

Gen. 3:11-13; 4:7-11 Gen. 6:5-13; 15:16 Lev. 18:5
Jer. 18:7-10 Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21 Prov. 4:4
Deut. 28:1-13 Deut. 4:1-13; 6:1-4 Gal. 3:11
Rom. 10:5 Rom. 3:9-22; 4:13-16 Rom. 2:11-13
Matt. 22:36-40 Psa. 19:1-7 Psa. 111:10
John 14:15-24 Psa. 119 I John 2:4-6
Matt. 4:4 Isa. 42:21 I John 3:4
Mat. 5:17-20 I John 5:2-3 II Tim. 3:16
Heb. 8:10-12; 10:16-22 Rev. 22:14 Rev. 12:17; 14:12

The Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments, spoken by God to Israel, are the foundation of all of God's laws. They have been in effect from the beginning of mankind, over 3,000 years before their pronouncement at Mt. Sinai. Their written form is the summation of the spiritual laws which function at all times, whether a person is aware of them or not. Obedience to these commandments brings blessings, and disobedience brings curses. The Ten Commandments teach us how to express love toward God and our fellowman. They must be obeyed as a condition for receiving eternal life.

Scriptural References

Ex. 20:1-17 Deut. 5:6-21 Deut. 30:15-20
Matt. 19:16-22 Rom. 7:7-14 Matt. 22:36-40
I John 3:22-24 Rom. 13:8-10 II John 6-10

The Weekly Sabbath

The weekly Sabbath, known as Saturday today, is the seventh day of the week. In the beginning, the Sabbath was created by God. He blessed and sanctified the seventh day at creation as a special day for rest and fellowship with Him. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation and was made for all mankind. It was the commanded day of weekly worship for 3,000 years before the Ten Commandments were given to Israel. The Fourth Commandment is a reminder to observe and to keep the Sabbath day holy.

As Lord God of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ created the Sabbath by resting on the very first seventh day and by blessing and sanctifying it. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ proclaimed that He is Lord of the Sabbath day.

During His ministry on earth, He reaffirmed the sacredness of the Sabbath and taught its proper observance. Jesus Christ Himself showed by example that it is right to do good on the Sabbath day, in addition to resting from one's physical labor and secular business. The apostles of Jesus Christ and the early New Testament Church observed the Sabbath and taught Gentile Christians to observe it.

The keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath is a special sign of the covenant between God and His people. God commands that it be observed from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday. During this holy time, Christians are commanded to rest from their labor and to assemble to worship God and to receive instruction from His Word. Observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is essential for salvation and for true fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Scriptural References

Gen. 2:1-3 Mark 2:27-28 Ex. 20:8-10
Ex. 31:13-17 Isa. 58:13-14 Isa. 56:1-7
Isa. 66:23 Ezek. 20:12, 20 Lev. 23:1-3
Luke 4:4 Acts 13:42-44 Acts 17:2
Acts 18:4, 11 Acts 19:8-10 Heb. 4:4-10

The Annual Feasts and Holy Days

The Scriptures teach that there are seven annual feasts and holy days, which were ordained by God to be observed as special commanded convocations. These feasts and holy days portray God's plan of salvation for mankind. The observance of these holy convocations is a sign between God and His people. God's annual feasts and holy days were observed by His people during Old Testament times. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ's entire ministry was centered around the spiritual meaning of these holy days. The New Testament apostolic Church faithfully observed these annual feasts and holy days. The Scriptures reveal that they will be observed by all mankind after the return of Jesus Christ.

As the holy days are annual Sabbath days, they may fall on any day of the week (except Pentecost, which always falls on a Sunday). When a holy day falls on a weekly Sabbath, the special observance of the annual holy day takes precedence. God's feasts and holy days are to be observed from sunset to sunset in accordance with the Calculated Hebrew Calendar as preserved by the Levitical Jews. The seven annual feasts and holy days are as follows:

Feast or Holy Day Commanded Scriptural Date of Observance

- 1) Passover 14th day of the first month*
- 2) Unleavened Bread (7 days) 15th through 21st days of the first month (the 15th & 21st are holy days)
- 3) Pentecost Counted annually**
- 4) Trumpets 1st day of the seventh month
- 5) Atonement 10th day of the seventh month
- 6) Tabernacles (7 days) 15th through 21st days of the seventh month (the 15th is a holy day)
- 7) Last Great Day 22nd day of the seventh month (a holy day)

*Not a holy day

**Fifty days are counted, beginning with the first day of the week during the Days of Unleavened Bread. The feast

is observed on the fiftieth day, which always falls on the first day of the week.

Scriptural References

Lev. 23 Ex. 23:14-17; 31:13 Ex. 12:1-20
John 7:37 Matt. 26:17-18 I Cor. 5:7-8
Acts 2:1 Acts 18:21 Acts 20:16
I Cor. 16:8 Zech. 14:16-19 Isa. 66:23

VI. Sin

Sin is the transgression of the holy laws and commandments of God, whether in the letter or the spirit of the Law. Therefore, sin is lawlessness or anti-law. Sin is also a defilement of one's conscience. When a person knows to do good and doesn't do it, it is sin. The ultimate penalty for sin is eternal death. Upon deep and sincere repentance toward God, one's sins will be forgiven by faith in the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the payment of those sins through the mercy of God the Father. The only unpardonable sin is persistent, knowledgeable and willful transgression of the commandments and laws of God. This sin cannot be forgiven because it is willful rejection of God's salvation, willful rejection of and blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God the Father, and despising the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as an unholy thing. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the sin of condemning the works of God the Father, accomplished through the power of His Holy Spirit, and attributing such works to Satan the devil. When a person has committed the unpardonable sin, his or her conscience is seared with a hot iron, and it is impossible to be convicted by the Holy Spirit and be led to repentance. God's judgment for the unpardonable sin is the second death, or eternal death, from which there is no resurrection.

Scriptural References

I John 3:4 Rom. 7:12-14 I John 1:5-2:2
Acts 2:38 Eph. 1:7 Eph. 1:7; 2:1-10
I John 5:17 Jas. 2:10-11; 4:12 Gal. 5:19-21
Rom. 6:23 Rom. 14:23 Acts 3:19
Matt. 12:31-32 Heb. 6:4-6 Gal. 1:8-9
Heb. 10:26-27 Rev. 20:14-15 Rev. 21:8

VII. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is not a person or a third member of a so-called trinity. The Holy Spirit is the power by which God the Father and God the Son accomplish Their will. The impregnation of the Holy Spirit from God the Father as a spiritual begetting is granted freely to each believer upon repentance of sins, baptism by immersion, and the laying on of hands. This begetting of the Holy Spirit is the earnest and assurance of the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is the power of God, which makes each begotten child of God a partaker of the divine nature and imparts the ability to develop the love of God. The fruits of the Holy Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and self-control. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit imparts the power to each individual to live in accordance with God's will and to overcome the temptations of human nature, the world, and Satan. As the spiritually begotten believer seeks to serve and obey God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit will lead him or her into all Truth that is contained in the Word of God and is essential for salvation.

Scriptural References

Gen. 1:2 Acts 2:38 John 14:16, 26

Rom. 8:9-14 I Cor. 2:9-10 Acts 8:15-17; 19:6
Gal. 5:22-23 II Tim. 1:6-7 Eph. 1:13-14
II Cor. 1:21-22 Isa. 55:1-3 John 7:37-39
I John 3:9-11 I John 4:4-8 II Pet. 1:1-11

VIII. The Grace of God

Grace is the free and undeserved gift of God the Father through Jesus Christ. The grace of God is the greatest expression of God the Father's love and all-encompassing mercy. Grace is more than the forgiveness of sins. To be under grace means to be continually receiving God's divine love, favor, blessing, gracious care, help, goodwill, benefits, gifts and goodness. God the Father is the source from which grace comes to the believer. The ONLY MEANS by which grace is granted to the believer is through the birth, life, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice of God the Father. The believer enters the grace of God through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his or her sins. God the Father grants His grace to each believer upon repentance of sins and baptism by immersion, which is the outward manifestation of repentance. Through grace, the believer's sins are forgiven and the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to him or her.

Grace establishes a new spiritual relationship between the believer and God the Father and Jesus Christ. Through the unearned and unmerited gift of grace, the believer is not only chosen, called, forgiven and accepted by God the Father through His Beloved but is also begotten with the Holy Spirit, making him or her a child of God and an heir of eternal life. From this point, the spiritually begotten believer begins a new life under grace. Grace does not grant a license to practice sin by ignoring or rejecting the commandments of God. Only those who keep His commandments can abide in His love and remain under His grace. Every believer who receives the grace of God has a personal obligation to God the Father and Jesus Christ to forsake his or her old, sinful thoughts and practices and to live a new life, daily growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. For every believer who lives under grace, Jesus Christ acts as Redeemer, High Priest and Advocate. If the believer commits a sin, He intercedes to propitiate the Father and to obtain His mercy and grace. The grace of God, which comes through Jesus Christ, keeps the repentant believer in a continual state of blamelessness and sinlessness.

Scriptural References

Eph. 2:4-10, 4:7 I John 3:6-8 Rom. 5:1-11, 15-18
Rom. 3:22-25; 2:4 Gal. 2:20 Rom. 4:1-13
Psa. 103:2-4 Gal. 1:15 Gal. 5:1-4
Isa. 55:6-7 Jude 4, 21 Gen. 6:8
II Tim. 1:9 I Cor. 15:10 Rom. 11:5-6
Eph. 1:3-9 Eph. 3:1-21 I Pet. 5:10

IX. Repentance

Repentance is complete remorse and sorrow for one's sins, which are the transgressions of the laws and commandments of God. Repentance is the first step in the sinner's reconciliation with God the Father and Jesus Christ. True repentance begins when God the Father opens a person's mind to understand that he or she is a sinner against God the Father, and that his or her own sins had a part in crucifying Jesus Christ. The graciousness of God the Father leads each sinner to repentance. Repentance moves each one to confess his or her sins to God the Father and to ask forgiveness, remission and pardon for those sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. True, deep, godly repentance will produce a profound change in a person's mind and attitude, called conversion, which will

result in a continuing desire to live by every Word of God. The truly repentant person will turn from evil thoughts and ungodly practices and will seek to conform his or her life to the will of God as revealed in the Holy Bible and as led by the Holy Spirit. Confession and repentance of sins is an ongoing process in a Christian's spiritual growth toward the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Scriptural References

Rom. 2:4 Acts 2:37-38 Luke 24:47
II Cor. 5:17 Rom. 8:5-9 II Cor. 7:9-11
Acts 3:19 Jer. 17:5-9 Mark 1:15
Luke 13:3, 5 II Tim. 2:25 Psa. 51
Acts 11:18 I John 1:6-2:2 John 6:44-45

X. Water Baptism

Upon genuine, godly repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as personal Savior, the believer must be baptized by complete immersion in water for the remission of his or her sins. Water baptism symbolizes the death and burial of each repentant believer—a spiritual conjoining into the death of Jesus Christ. Through this baptismal death, the believer becomes a partaker of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, and His blood is applied as full payment for his or her sins. Rising up out of the water is symbolic of being conjoined into the resurrection of Jesus Christ. When the believer comes up out of the watery grave of baptism, he or she rises to newness of life. In order to become a new person, each baptized believer must be begotten with the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. The believer is then led by the Holy Spirit to walk in loving obedience to God the Father and faith in Jesus Christ.

Scriptural References

Acts 2:38 Matt. 3:13-16 Matt. 28:19-20
Col. 2:12 Acts 8:12-17 Rom. 6:3-13

XI. Justification

Justification is freely granted to the called and repentant believer by God the Father through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Justification takes place when the believer's sins are removed by the blood of Jesus Christ and he or she is put into right standing with God the Father. In order to receive God's gift of justification, a person must repent toward God, believe in the sacrifice and blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and be baptized by immersion. The believer is then cleansed from sin and is without condemnation, placing him or her in right standing with God the Father. This state of justification is called the "gift of righteousness" because God the Father freely imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the believer.

Scriptural References

Rom. 2:13 Rom. 4:5-8, 24-25 Rom. 5:1-10, 17-21
Rom. 3:24-31 I Cor. 6:11 Rom. 8:28-30

XII. Righteousness

The Righteousness of the Law

God is both Creator and Lawgiver. When God created mankind, He also established righteous laws that govern man's relationship with Him and with his fellowman. The laws of God draw a clear line between actions that are good and righteous in God's eyes as opposed to acts that are evil and sinful. Without God's laws, there would be no sin. The Scriptures declare that "where there is no law there is no sin...for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." The Biblical record of the sins of Adam and Eve, and the nations that descended from them, makes it clear that God's laws have been obligatory upon mankind from the beginning.

In Old Testament times, a man or woman who kept the commandments of God, fulfilling His requirements in the letter of the Law, was counted righteous before God. This type of righteousness, which was earned by doing the works of the law, brought many physical and material blessings from God—health and prosperity, deliverance from enemies, peace and long life. When God covenanted with Israel, He proclaimed through Moses that those who kept His laws and commandments "shall live in them" because they would be spared the punishment and curses that were appointed for lawbreakers—including death by capital punishment.

Although the righteousness of the Law resulted in many blessings to the obedient, fulfilling the letter of the Law did not and could not earn eternal salvation. The promise of salvation and eternal life is God's free and undeserved gift and is offered only through the righteousness of faith. The required righteousness of the letter of the Law was a "schoolmaster" or tutor to reveal the sinfulness and weakness of human nature and to point to the need for a higher righteousness—the righteousness of faith.

Scriptural References

Gen. 3:11-13; 4:7-11 Gen. 6:5-13; 15:16 Lev. 18:5
Jer. 18:7-10 Ezek. 20:11, 13, 21 Prov. 4:4
Deut. 28:1-13 Deut. 4:1-13; 6:1-4 Gal. 3:11
Rom. 10:5 Rom. 3:9-22; 4:13-16 Rom. 2:11-13

The Righteousness of Faith

The righteousness of faith is the gift of righteousness, which the believer receives through the abundance of the Father's grace. It is called "the righteousness of faith" because only through the faith of Jesus Christ is it possible to partake of this righteousness. When a believer is justified by faith in Jesus Christ and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit as a begetting from God the Father, the Father imputes to the believer the very righteousness of Jesus Christ so that "grace might reign through righteousness into eternal life, through Jesus Christ." This imputed righteousness is the gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ and cannot be earned by doing works of law. The righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is imputed to the believer by God the Father, far exceeds the righteousness required by the letter of the Law. In His perfect righteousness, Jesus Christ not only observed the letter of the Law but also fulfilled every one of His Father's commandments in the full spirit of the Law. His spiritual obedience was so perfect, pure and wholehearted that He always did those things that pleased God the Father. This perfect righteousness was accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit, which He received without measure from the Father.

By His personal example and His teachings, Jesus magnified the laws and commandments of God and revealed the fullness of their intent and meaning. He showed that the spirit of the Law does not nullify the letter of the Law but requires a fuller, spiritual obedience. This spiritual obedience is beyond the capability of the natural mind and human will and can only be accomplished through Jesus Christ. The Scriptures reveal that when the believer is begotten with the Holy Spirit of God the Father, he or she begins to receive the very mind of Christ. With Christ's

mind, the believer is strengthened to live by every word of God in the full spirit of the Law, not just in the letter. With “Christ in you, the hope of glory,” the believer begins to have the laws and commandments of God written upon his or her mind. Thus the laws and commandments of God are established with their full, true spiritual meaning through grace and the gift of the righteousness of faith. This gift of spiritual righteousness, which God grants to the believer, gives him or her the power to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit unto eternal life. Through the righteousness of faith, the believer is truly fulfilling the Scripture, “The just shall live by faith.”

Scriptural References

Rom. 4:3-8, 13-24 Rom. 5:17-21 Rom. 3:20-31
Rom. 6:1-19 Gal. 2:20-21 Gal. 5:16, 18, 22-25
Col. 1:27-28 Rom. 7:6 Heb. 8:10
Heb. 10:16 Phil. 2:5, 13

XIII. Sanctification

Sanctification is the act of setting someone or something apart for a holy purpose and use. Christians are in a continuing state of sanctification after repentance, baptism by immersion, and the receiving of the Holy Spirit as a begetting from God the Father. In the Scriptures, Christians are referred to as “saints”, meaning those who have been made holy by the sanctification of God the Father.

Scriptural References

I Cor. 1:2 Eph. 5:25-27 II Thes. 2:13-14
I Cor. 6:11 Ex. 31:13; 40:9-13 Lev. 21:1, 8
Eph. 1:3-4 Jer. 1:5 John 17:15-19

XIV. The Baptism of the Spirit

The baptism of the Spirit is the act of receiving the Holy Spirit as a begetting from God the Father. This spiritual begetting is granted to each believer through the laying on of hands after baptism by full immersion in water. Upon receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, the believer becomes a begotten child of God the Father. The baptism of the Holy Spirit places the believer into the spiritual Church of God, the Body of Jesus Christ, of which all begotten children of God are members.

Scriptural References

Matt. 3:11 Acts 2:38 Acts 8:15
Acts 19:6 I Cor. 2:12 Rom. 8:9-16
I Pet. 1:3 I John 3:9, 24

XV. Faith

Faith is the knowledge of and active belief in the existence and power of the living God and His only begotten Son Jesus Christ. Faith is a gift from God and a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit as a begetting

from God the Father, true believers are granted the indwelling presence of Jesus Christ and the very faith of Jesus Christ. This faith is the actual spiritual substance of God's Holy Spirit, which gives the believer the assurance and the confidence that what God has promised, He will perform. The fruits of righteousness in the believer's life will continually manifest the true faith of Jesus Christ that is imparted by God to each believer. Faith is made perfect by doing the good works that God the Father has ordained through Jesus Christ. This active and living faith is absolutely essential for salvation through grace. Without good works, faith is dead. Without faith, good works are of no value in God's sight. Good works alone cannot bring salvation and eternal life. While true faith will produce good works in the believer's life, these good works do not earn salvation. The good works that are done through faith are not the cause but the result of God's gift of salvation to the believer.

Scriptural References

Heb. 11:1-6 Gal. 5:22 Gal. 2:20; 3:1-14
Eph. 2:4-10 Rom. 4:20-21 Jas. 2:14-22
I Pet. 1:1-9 Rom. 1:17 Phil. 1:6; 3:3-19
I Cor. 13:2 Tit. 1:16 Rev. 14:12
Luke 7:50 Matt. 8:1-13 Jas. 5:14-15

XVI. Salvation

Salvation is the gift of God the Father by His grace and is granted to the believer through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation cannot be earned by works of law, for there are conditions that must be met in order to receive the gift of salvation. God requires that one repent of sin, which is the transgression of His laws and commandments, and believe in His Son Jesus Christ, Whose blood paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the Author and Finisher of eternal salvation for all who believe on Him. Through the blood of Jesus Christ and the acceptance of His sacrifice, the believer is reconciled to God the Father, having his or her sins completely forgiven and forgotten. By the grace of God, the believer is saved from the penalty of sin, which is eternal death, and is granted the gift of eternal life through the begetting of the Holy Spirit from God the Father.

Salvation begins when God the Father opens a person's mind to spiritual understanding, which leads to repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior. After being baptized by full immersion in water, the believer is granted the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. The believer then begins a new life of obedience to God through faith, working out his or her own salvation by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and in harmony with God's Word. It is a lifelong process of spiritual growth. The Scriptures reveal that there are three distinct stages in the process of salvation: 1) The believer has been saved from past sins and from Satan the devil (Eph. 2:1-10). 2) The believer is then being saved as he or she continues in the Word of God—the Gospel—in loving obedience by faith (I Cor. 1:18; 15:2). 3) The believer will ultimately be saved at the resurrection (Rom. 7:24-25; I Cor. 15:12-57; I Tim. 3:14-16). The believer's salvation will not be completed until he or she is resurrected from the dead through the power of God and is born again as a spirit being into the Family of God. In God's time and plan, everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

Scriptural References

Eph. 2:4-10 Rom. 6:23 II Cor. 7:10
John 6:44-45 Rom. 2:4 Rom. 6:4-6
I Thes. 4:14-17 Heb. 11:6 I Cor. 15:42, 52
Acts 8:12, 15-17 Acts 11:18 I Tim. 2:4

Mark 16:16 Rom. 5:6-10 Rom. 4:21-25
Acts 19:5-6 Heb. 12:1-4 Rev. 20:6

XVII. Laying On of Hands

The laying on of hands is a special act performed by ordained elders in the churches of God while asking God the Father in prayer to confer a spiritual gift or blessing upon someone. The laying on of hands is required for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit following water baptism, for anointing the sick with oil for healing, for ordination of those selected for spiritual or physical service to the Church, for blessing little children, for a special blessing during a marriage ceremony, and for other special blessings.

Scriptural References

Acts 8:15-17 Acts 19:5-6 Jas. 5:14-15
Matt. 19:13-15 Mark 16:17-18 Acts 6:6; 13:3

XVIII. Healing

The Scriptures reveal that God sometimes allows sickness to afflict individuals for a special purpose. With this exception, the sickness that we suffer is the result of physical or spiritual sins. Divine healing is God's forgiveness of those sins. God the Father personally intervenes when He extends healing to those who call upon Him in times of sickness or injury. This divine intervention can be directed toward anyone at any time, as God wills, because Jesus Christ paid the price for healing from every sickness with the stripes of scourging that He received before His crucifixion. When God heals us, our sins are forgiven through the stripes of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Miracles of healing are often granted. The Scriptures teach that one who desires to be healed by God should call for the elders of the Church to anoint him or her with oil in the name of Jesus Christ and to pray for God's healing and intervention. Trusting God in faith for healing is a personal matter between each individual and God.

Scriptural References

Ex. 15:26 Psa. 103:2-3 Matt. 9:27-30
I Pet. 2:24 I Cor. 11:23-30 Matt. 8:1-17
Jas. 5:14-16 Isa. 53:4-5 Mark 16:15-18
II Cor. 12:7-10 John 9:1-11

XIX. The Church of God

The Spiritual Body of Christ

The Church of God is portrayed in the Bible as the spiritual Body of Jesus Christ. God the Father has appointed Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church in all things. The true Church of God is made up of all who have been called by God the Father, who have accepted His Son Jesus Christ as personal Savior, who have repented of their sins, who have been baptized by immersion, and who have received the Holy Spirit of God as a begetting from God the Father. These individuals are spiritual brethren and members of one Church—the spiritual Body of Jesus Christ—although they may be widely scattered throughout the world. It is by one and the same Spirit—the Holy Spirit of God the Father—that each one has been baptized into the Body of Jesus Christ. This spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father is the basis of all true Christian fellowship. Jesus described Himself to His disciples as “the true vine” and the Father as “the husbandman.” All true Christians are branches of the true Vine

and must remain attached to the Vine in order to grow spiritually.

While there is only one spiritual Body of Christ, its members are scattered in numerous local fellowships and individual ministries around the world. Since all members of the Body of Christ have the Spirit of God, God does not limit Himself to work through any single organization. Every group or ministry that is part of the Body of Christ will manifest the fruit of God's Holy Spirit, bear the name of God, and will be keeping His commandments as magnified by Jesus Christ. The primary function of the Church is to nurture the brethren of Jesus Christ with spiritual food from God's Word so that they may grow up into the fullness of the stature of Jesus Christ. The Church also has a commission from God to preach repentance and salvation through Jesus Christ in all the world and to preach the good news of the coming Kingdom and government of God in preparation for the return of Jesus Christ to rule on the earth.

Scriptural References

Eph. 1:22-23 John 21:15-17 Eph. 4:4-6, 11-16
Matt. 28:18-20 I Cor. 12:6-13 Acts 2:47
Matt. 24:14 Rom. 8:9, 28-29 John 15:1-8
Heb. 2:9-18 Rev. 1:12-20

The Ministry of the New Testament Church of God

The New Testament Church of God has a ministry patterned after the instructions of Jesus Christ as recorded in the New Testament. Those who serve in this ministry do not exalt themselves over their brethren by exercising authority or rank but strive to serve their brethren in humility and love. The ordained elders of the New Testament Church of God understand that they have been called by God to spiritual service to fulfill the needs of their brethren. An elder may serve as a minister, teacher, pastor, evangelist, or in other needed capacities. The function that each elder fulfills varies according to the measure of the gift of Jesus Christ. The qualifications for elders are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. His love of the brethren and of God the Father and Jesus Christ is evidence that God has called a man to be an elder. An ordained elder must maintain an attitude of true conversion and dedication to God the Father and Jesus Christ. He must have a deep desire to serve the brethren of God and the ability to teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The purpose of the ministry is to edify or build up the body of Christ. It is the responsibility of the ministry to teach and preserve the true doctrines of the Bible, to serve the spiritual needs of the brethren, and to provide leadership within the local congregations. Those who are ordained to evangelize also have a responsibility to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to unbelievers, to teach all who will listen, and to baptize in all nations.

Scriptural References

John 15:16 Matt. 20:20-28 Matt. 28:19-20
Tit. 1:5-9 I Tim. 3:1-7 I Pet. 5:1-10
John 21:15-17 Matt. 24:14 Eph. 4:11-13
John 13:14-16 Heb. 13:7, 17 Luke 22:24-26
Acts 13:3, 14:23 I Tim. 5:22 II Tim. 1:6-14
II Tim. 2:1-4, 14-26 II Tim. 3:14-4:4 Jer. 23:28

XX. Christian Financial Responsibility

Responsibility to Family

The Scriptures teach that Christians should be diligent to provide for their families. Any Christian who is able to work but makes no effort to support his or her family “is worse than an infidel”. Jesus Christ Himself taught that a Christian should first provide for his or her family before using personal income for other purposes, including offerings to God. Jesus condemned the Jews who gave offerings, or “corban,” to the Temple treasury while neglecting their needy parents. God does not want Christians to neglect the basic needs of their families in order to give tithes and offerings. Those Christians who have a limited income and are able only to meet their basic needs have no actual increase from which to tithe. God desires mercy and not sacrifice.

Scriptural References

I Tim. 5:4, 8, 16 Mark 7:10-13 Prov. 31:10-28
Prov. 27:23-27 Prov. 28:19

Responsibility to the Needy

Christians are commanded by Jesus Christ to support the poor and needy among them with compassion and understanding. A Christian attitude of true love and service should be the basis for all giving. God desires each one whom He has prospered to give cheerfully and willingly from the heart as he or she is able. Those who have an abundance but do not give because of a selfish attitude are guilty of covetousness and are sinning before God.

Scriptural References

Acts 2:44-45 Acts 4:34-45 Psa. 41:1-3
Prov. 28:27 Prov. 19:17 Matt. 26:11
II Cor. 9:1-9 Gal. 2:10 Jas. 2:14-17

Responsibility to the Church

In today’s world, money is required to fulfill the commands of Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel, to feed the flock of God and to care for the needs of the Church. Therefore, Christians are directed by the Lord Jesus Christ to share their financial resources with those who serve in the ministry of God. Paul wrote, “Don’t you know that those who are laboring *in* the sacred things of the temple live *of the things* of the temple, *and* those who are ministering at the altar are partakers with the altar? In the same way also [Greek *houtoos*, likewise, in the same manner] **the Lord did command** [Greek *diatassoo*, to order, to direct, to command] that those who preach the gospel are to live of the gospel” (I Cor. 9:13-14).

Those who receive support from their brethren are accountable to God and to the brethren as to how these tithes and offerings are used. Any minister who merchandises the brethren by using intimidation, compulsion or fear in order to extract tithes and offerings from them will receive stern judgment from God.

God warns His servants against exploiting the poor of His flock and taking from the meager provisions of the needy. However, God honors and blesses the poor who give as they are able, no matter how small the amount, even as Jesus commended the poor and needy widow who gave her mite.

Scriptural References

I Cor. 9:1-14 Luke 21:1-4 Luke 19:12-17

Luke 16:10-13 Zech. 7:7-13 I Tim. 5:17-18

Luke 10:17 Matt. 24:45-51 Matt. 6:19-21

The Scriptural Principle of Tithing

God created the earth and all the resources of the earth from which physical wealth is derived. Although God owns all the resources of land and sea, He has given all these things to mankind to use and to enjoy. By using what God has created, mankind is able to grow food, raise animals, harvest the forests, mine the earth and fish the seas. Because God has given all these things to mankind, He requires that men acknowledge Him as the Almighty Provider and Sustainer. The Scriptures reveal that God instituted the principle of tithing in addition to freewill offerings as a perpetual way for mankind to honor Him. The Old Testament declares that tithes and offerings belong to God and are “holy unto the Lord.” Jesus reaffirmed this truth when He said, “Render ... unto God the things that are God’s.” The account of Abel’s offering in the book of Genesis makes it clear that this practice existed from the beginning of mankind and was not restricted to God’s covenant with Israel at Sinai.

Before the establishment of the Old Covenant, tithes and offerings to God were given to Melchizedek, the Priest of the Most High God. The book of Genesis records that Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek. Isaac and Jacob undoubtedly gave tithes and offerings to Melchizedek as well. When God established His covenant with Israel, the tithes and offerings were transferred to the Levitical priesthood. God said, “And behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel.” Under the Old Covenant, God required His people to give Him the firstfruits of their harvest and the firstborn of their livestock as well as a tenth of the increase they derived from their crops, livestock, mining precious minerals from the earth, and profit from merchandising.

God said through the prophet Malachi that the priests were violating God’s commands by offering polluted offerings and robbing God. Likewise, those who did not give the tithes and offerings to the Levites as God had commanded were robbing God.

Under the New Covenant, the priesthood of Melchizedek has replaced the Levitical priesthood, and the scriptural authority to receive the tithes and offerings of God has been transferred back to the order of Melchizedek. Jesus Christ, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, now holds the eternal office of High Priest of the order of Melchizedek. Christians today give their tithes and freewill offerings to support the work of Jesus Christ through His Church, or they are robbing God.

In following the scriptural principle of tithing, each Christian is individually responsible to determine his or her true increase. Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s,” thus revealing that taxes should be paid to “Caesar” (civil governments). Taxes are excluded in determining one’s increase. Also excluded are expenses related to one’s business or employment, which reduce actual net income. Christians whose incomes are so limited that their entire net income is required to meet basic living expenses have no true increase in God’s eyes on which to tithe. The giving of money is not required for salvation. However, if God has financially blessed a Christian, he or she should willingly give as led by the Holy Spirit. Each Christian should give from the heart in a willing attitude of love and service, according to the blessings that God has bestowed—both spiritually and physically. God has promised to bless those who tithe and give offerings with all sufficiency in all things.

Scriptural References

Gen. 1:26-28 Deut. 8:1-18 Gen. 4:3-7

Num. 18:1-29 Mal. 3:7-11 Heb. 7:1-10

I Sam. 2:12-17 Mal. 1:6-14 Mal. 2:1-10

XXI. The Gospel

The word Gospel means “good news.” The Gospel is the wonderful message of God’s plan of salvation for all mankind through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. The New Testament calls this message the Gospel of grace. The Gospel of grace is the good news that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and that through His blood all who repent and believe in Him may have their sins forgiven and may enter into the Family of God. The Gospel is also a message about the coming Kingdom of God on earth. It is the good news that when Jesus Christ returns to the earth, He will set up the Kingdom of God and the Government of God. He will rule all nations as King of kings and Lord of lords. The saints who are given immortality at the first resurrection will inherit the Kingdom with Jesus Christ and will rule and reign with Him as kings and priests. The Gospel must be preached to all nations as a witness before Jesus Christ returns to set up His Kingdom. Through the preaching of the Gospel, God is preparing saints for His Kingdom by calling those whom He chooses to repentance and conversion.

Scriptural References

Acts 20:24 John 3:16 I John 2:1-2
Mark 1:14-15 Matt. 24:14 Rom. 10:8-18
Mark 16:15-16 Matt. 28:19-20 Isa. 9:6-7
Acts 11:19-21 Rom. 8:16-17 I Cor. 15

XXII. The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is the Government of the Family of God. The Kingdom of God currently rules the universe. Although the Kingdom of God is not now ruling the earth, all those who have the Spirit of God are under the rule of God the Father through the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God will be reinstated on the earth at the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. At that time, the Millennium will begin and the immortal saints, as the sons of God, will rule as kings and priests with Jesus Christ in the Kingdom of God. After God the Father brings the New Jerusalem from heaven to the new earth, the Kingdom of God will rule the entire universe from the New Jerusalem for all eternity.

Scriptural References

Rev. 2:26 Dan. 2:44 Mic. 4:1-4
Rev. 3:12, 21 Heb. 11:13-16 I Cor. 15:50-54
Rev. 5:10 Isa. 11:1-10 Col. 1:13
Rev. 21 Isa. 66:22-23 John 3:3-7

XXIII. The Resurrections

The Bible reveals two distinct types of resurrection from the dead:

- 1) restoration to physical life as a fleshly human being, and
- 2) transformation to eternal life as an immortal spirit being.

The Scriptures record the resurrection of individual persons to physical life at various times by the will of God. In Old Testament times, a widow's son was restored to life through the prayer of Elijah the prophet. Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the dead is a well-known example from New Testament times. These were special acts of mercy by God which extended the physical life of the individuals. Those whom God resurrected in this manner were not given immortality, and all died again.

Jesus Christ was the first to be resurrected to immortality by the power of God the Father. To become a human being, Jesus divested Himself of His glory and power as the Lord God of the Old Testament. When He was resurrected, He was restored to His full glory, power and honor as God. Jesus Christ is called the Firstborn from among the dead because He is the first of multiple millions who will be resurrected to immortality. When Jesus Christ returns to the earth, all true Christians who have died will be raised to eternal life as immortal spirit beings. Those Christians who are alive at the return of Jesus Christ will be changed instantaneously from flesh to spirit. This transformation to spirit is the new birth, when the saints of God—both dead and living—are truly “born again” into the Family of God. All the saints will be composed of spirit, as God is composed of spirit, and will be full members of God's divine Family. They will rule with Jesus Christ as kings and priests on the earth. This resurrection is described in the Bible as the first resurrection.

After the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and His saints, there will be a resurrection to physical life of all who have died without having received the opportunity for salvation. During this second physical life, each person will have his or her first and only opportunity for salvation through Jesus Christ. Those who fully accept the salvation of God will enter into the Family of God as spirit beings. Those who reject salvation through Jesus Christ will be condemned to eternal death. They will be joined by all the incorrigible wicked who have died throughout history, who will also be resurrected to physical life. All who have refused to accept salvation and have knowingly and willfully committed the unpardonable sin—blasphemy against the Holy Spirit of God the Father—will be resurrected to receive the final judgment of God. Their sentence will be to die in the Lake of Fire. This death is the second and final death, from which there is no resurrection.

Scriptural References

I Ki. 17:17-24 John 11:20-44 Mark 5:35-42
I Cor. 15:3-4, 20-23 Rom. 1:4 Heb. 2:9-10
John 5:28-29 I Cor. 15:23, 35-55 Rev. 20:4-6
Matt. 27:52-53 Rev. 20:11-12 Ezek. 37:1-14
Rev. 20:11-15 II Pet. 3:10-12 Matt. 25:41-46

XXIV. Eternal Judgment

God is now judging every believer who has been called at this time. God's judgment of each individual begins when God opens his or her mind to understand God's way of life. With His love, grace and mercy, God gives each one who yields to His Holy Spirit the strength and the power to grow in love, faith and grace and to overcome human nature, the world and Satan the devil. God the Father holds each believer personally responsible to grow in the knowledge of His Word and in the spiritual stature and fullness of His Son Jesus Christ. If the believer loves God with all their heart and is living in faithful obedience to His Word, he or she will have the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed to him or her as the gift of God. The believer will then be judged as wholly righteous and blameless before God the Father. All who remain in this imputed righteousness of faith will be in the first resurrection and will receive eternal life at the return of Jesus Christ.

Those individuals through the ages who have had no opportunity for salvation during their lifetime will be restored to physical life in the second resurrection, which will take place after the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints. Everyone who is raised in the second resurrection will have the same opportunity for salvation as those who were in the first resurrection. Each one will be taught the way of salvation and will have the opportunity to repent and to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the remission of his or her sins. Each will be granted the same period of time to choose God's way of salvation. This period, called the Great White Throne Judgment, will apparently last for 100 years. During this time, all who learn to live in accordance with God's will, growing in grace and in the knowledge and character of Jesus Christ, will receive eternal life.

By the end of this period of judgment, all those who have chosen salvation will have entered into the Kingdom of God as spirit sons of God. At that time, all who have rejected their opportunity for salvation will be sentenced to the second death—their eternal judgment. All the incorrigible wicked from past ages who have committed the unpardonable sin, willfully rejecting the salvation of God, will be resurrected to physical life to join the living wicked in receiving the sentence of the second death as their eternal judgment. God will destroy all the incorrigible wicked at the same time in the Lake of Fire. This is the second death from which there is no resurrection.

Scriptural References

I Pet. 4:17 Mic. 4:1-4 Heb. 10:26-27
Rom. 2:16 Acts 10:42 Rev. 20:11-14
Rom. 14:10-12 II Pet. 2:9 Rev. 20:5-6
I Sam. 16:7 II Tim. 4:8 Ezek. 37:12-14

XXV. Baptism of Fire

The baptism of fire is not a baptism to be sought by spiritually begotten believers, as some teach, but a baptism that is reserved for the incorrigibly wicked. The Scriptures reveal that the baptism of fire is the eternal destruction of the wicked by immersion into the Lake of Fire and brimstone. Those who are cast into the Lake of Fire will not be tormented forever but will be burned up. This is the second and permanent death and God's final judgment for the unrepentant, who have committed the unpardonable sin by willfully rejecting His way of salvation through Jesus Christ. All who have hardened their hearts in their iniquities and their rebellion against God and who have committed the unpardonable sin by knowingly resisting and blaspheming the Holy Spirit, making it impossible for them to be led to repentance, are incorrigibly wicked and will be destroyed together in the Lake of Fire.

Scriptural References

Matt. 3:11-12 Rev. 20:14-15 Mal. 4:1-3
Matt. 12:31-32 Rev. 21:8

XXVI. Clean and Unclean Meats

As Creator, God has provided not only plants but also animals to be food for mankind. However, God did not create all animal flesh to be eaten by human beings. Because God desires mankind to sustain good health, He has revealed to mankind which animal flesh He has specifically created for food. This knowledge was made known from creation as shown in the account of Noah and the Flood. In Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, God clearly specified which meats are fit for human consumption and which are not. The classification of clean or unclean is easily identifiable by the characteristics that God created in the animals. Any warm-blooded mammal that has split

hooves and chews the cud is clean to eat. All other warm-blooded animals are unclean. Of the creatures that live in the waters, only fish with fins and scales are clean to eat; all others are unclean. Of the fowl, God forbids eating the flesh of fowl that are scavengers. All reptiles are unclean, as are all insects except locusts, grasshoppers and certain beetles.

Contrary to the belief of many professing Christians, the New Testament does not nullify God's laws of clean and unclean meats. The dispute between Jesus Christ and the Pharisees in Mark 7 was not about the eating of clean or unclean meats. Rather, it concerned His disciples eating food with unwashed hands. The vision that Peter saw which is recorded in Acts 10, was given to reveal that no human is to be called "common or unclean". It was not a divine authorization to change God's laws of clean and unclean meats.

The apostle Paul upheld the laws of clean and unclean meats as a requirement for Christians. He described the meats that Christians are permitted to eat as those "meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by the faithful, even *by* those who know the truth [the Word of God is Truth—John 17:17]" (I Tim. 4:3). Paul was clearly showing that some meats were created to be eaten, and others were not created to be eaten. Paul continued, "For every creature of God *that He designated for human consumption is good, and nothing to be refused, if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified [set apart] by the Word of God [as revealed in the Scriptures] and prayer*" (verse 4).

Scriptural References

Lev. 11:1-31 Deut. 14:3-20 Mark 7:1-16
Acts 10:1-28 I Tim. 4:3-5 Isa. 66:17
Gen. 7:2; 8:20

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NOTE: *A special thank you to Helmut Burger for translating the Beliefs' Booklet into Afrikaans for the South Africa brethren.*

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