

STATEMENT OF FAITH
GREAT COMMISSION BAPTIST CHURCH

BENNINGTON, VT

SEPTEMBER 2024

PREAMBLE

The Bible is the final authority for all matters of faith and practice for the individual Believer and for the Church. However, since the earliest days of the Church, congregations have summarized their beliefs on various topics relevant to the times in which they lived, based on Scripture. As Baptists we do not believe in creeds, which imply authority, but we do see the necessity to summarize core beliefs as a Statement of Faith and to update the statement on occasion, taking into account key topics of doctrinal concern faced in each generation. The Statement of Faith is authoritative only as it is reflective of Scripture. The following Statement of Faith serves as a basis for unity, a requirement and protection of membership, and a guide to the decisions and practices of the congregation.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Article I – The Bible

The Bible, consisting of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, was written by men who were “carried along by the Spirit of God.” All Scripture is God-breathed and is therefore properly understood as God’s Word. Since God cannot lie, the Bible is absolutely true and without mixture of error. The Scripture as given in the autographs is the verbally-inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient Word of God. The Bible is “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.” It is and will remain for eternity, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, confessions, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is the source and focus of divine revelation.

(Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; 32:4; Joshua 8:34; Psalm 19:7-10; 110:11, 89, 105, 140, 160; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; 24:35; Luke 21:33; 24:27, 44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff; 17:11; Romans 1:1-3; 15:4; 10:27; 16:25-26; Colossians 1:25; 2Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1Peter 1:25; 2Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 22:18-19)

Article II – The Godhead

A. The Trinity

There is one, and only one, living and true God. He exists as a Tri-unity, revealing Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being. God is self-existent, eternal, almighty, perfect, righteous, just, truthful, gracious, merciful, and loving. God is Spirit, therefore He is everywhere. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and unchanging. His knowledge is perfect and extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. He is the Creator of everything that exists. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

B. The Father

God the Father reigns supreme over all creation including His creatures and the flow of human history according to His own purpose and grace. All the attributes described above are properly assigned to the Father. While He is the Creator of all men and in that sense is fatherly in his attitude toward all men, He is specifically the Father of all those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

(Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff; 20:1ff; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3, 15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1Peter 1:17, 1John 5:7)

C. The Son

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who took on flesh by being born of a virgin after having been conceived by the Holy Spirit. Jesus took on human flesh with all its demands and necessities, fully identifying with mankind, yet without diminishing His divine nature. Thus, when He was born into this world, He remained 100% God, while becoming 100% man. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet He never sinned. He was perfectly obedient to the Father, yet He took upon Himself the sin of every person who has ever lived or who will ever live, dying as our substitute, suffering the wrath of God upon sin for us. He was buried, but three days later He defeated sin, death, and the grave by rising again bodily. After His resurrection He appeared to His followers in His glorified body, as the Person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended to Heaven in His glorified body where He ever lives to make intercession for those who trust in Him. He is the One Mediator between God and Man. He will return for His church in the rapture (The Blessed Hope), as well as to judge the world in power and glory, and to consummate His redemptive plan (The Second Coming). Through the Holy Spirit, He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord.

(Genesis 18:1ff; Psalm 2:7ff; 110:1ff; Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16, 27; 17:5, 27; 28:1-6, 19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:26; John 11:18, 29; 10:30, 38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20, 28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5, 20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3, 34, 10:4; 1Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8, 24-48; 2Corinthians 5:19-5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15, 24-28; 12:2; 1Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1John 1:7, 9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-15; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16)

D. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a Person. He is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He glorifies Jesus. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. He convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement to come. He calls people to the Savior, regenerates believers, and at the moment of

salvation baptizes believers into the Body of Christ. He indwells every believer and is the guarantee that God will bring every believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ, sealing the believer until the day of redemption. The Spirit is the divine teacher, illuminating believers to understand and apply the truth of the Bible in their lives. He comforts, corrects, and guides believers in their walk. As the believer walks in the Spirit and is continually filled with the Spirit, the Spirit empowers the believer to live the Christian life. He bestows spiritual gifts and empowers the individual believer and the Church as a whole to evangelize sinners, edify saints, and exalt the Savior. Believers are cautioned against grieving the Spirit, lying to the Spirit, and quenching the Spirit. Unbelievers are cautioned against resisting the Spirit, insulting the Spirit, and blaspheming the Spirit.

(Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalm 51:11; 139:7ff; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; 13:32; Mark 1:10, 12; Luke 1:35; 4:1, 18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:29; John 3:5-7; 4:24; 14:7, 16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4, 38; 4:31; 5:3-4; 6:3; 7:51, 55; 8:17, 39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11, 14-16, 26-27; 1Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11, 13; Galatians 4:6; 5:16-26; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1Thessalonians 5:19; 1Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8, 14; 10:29; 2Peter 1:20-21; 1John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.)

Article III – Creation

The account of creation, the fall, and early life on earth as recorded in Genesis 1-11 is a simple but factual presentation of actual, historical, events. The various original life forms (kinds), including mankind, were made by direct, supernatural, creative acts of God, not by “natural, physical process over millions of years.” While limited biological changes have occurred naturally within a kind (species) since creation, one kind (species) does not and has not changed over time into a different kind (species). The great flood of Genesis was an actual historical event, worldwide (global) in its extent, and catastrophic in its effect. At one stage during the flood, the waters covered the entire surface of the globe with no land surface being exposed anywhere—the flood of Noah is not to be understood as any form of local or regional flood. The Noachian flood was a significant geological event, and most fossiliferous sediments were deposited at that time. No apparent, perceived, or claimed evidence in any field of study, including science, history, and chronology, can be valid if it contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture obtained by the grammatical-historical interpretation. Of primary importance is the fact that evidence is always subject to interpretation by fallible people who do not possess all information.

(Genesis 1:1-2:25; 6:1-8:19; 30:37-42; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17; Numbers 23:19; 2Samuel 22:31; Psalm 18:30; Isaiah 46:9-10; 55:9; Romans 3:4; 1Corinthians 15:39; 2Timothy 3:16-17; 2Peter 3:5-7.)

Article IV – Mankind

A. Man’s Creation

Mankind is a special creation of God, made in the image and likeness of God. In the beginning mankind was innocent and endowed with freedom of choice by God. God created mankind as

male and female as the crowning glory of His creation. The special and unique creation of Adam from the dust of the earth and of Eve from Adam's rib was supernatural and immediate. Adam and Eve did not originate from any other pre-existing lifeform. There is only one race of mankind—the human race—Adam's race. As beings who bear the image of God, all humans have equal dignity and value regardless of age, intelligence, gender, physical ability, shade of skin tone, religion, ethnicity, or any other distinguishing characteristic. All human life is sacred, beginning at conception and continuing to natural death.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7, 21-23; 3:19-20; 9:6; 10:1, 32; Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17; Acts 17:26-28; 1Corinthians 11:8; 15:45-49.)

B. Gender

God created mankind with two, and only two, distinct genders: male and female. Each of these two distinct and complementary genders reflect the image of God. Gender and biological sex are equivalent and cannot be separated. A person's gender is determined at conception, coded in DNA, and cannot be changed. Rejection of one's biological sex or identifying oneself by the opposite sex is a sinful rejection of the way God made that person. These truths must be communicated with compassion, love, kindness, and respect, pointing everyone to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His offer of forgiveness, redemption, and restoration.

(Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7, 21-23; Matthew 19:4-6; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5; Mark 10:6-9; Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 3:28.)

C. Man's Fall

By his own free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan, man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence. Adam's sin caused his posterity to inherit a nature, and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as humans are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Mankind is unable to remedy this condition. Only the grace of God can bring mankind into His holy fellowship and enable mankind to fulfill the creative purpose of God.

(Genesis 3:6, 19; 4:4-8; Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:23, 5:12; 6:23; 8:20-22; 1Corinthians 15:20-21; Titus 3:3-6.)

D. Family, Marriage, & Sexuality

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, and/or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in a covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man

and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the leadership of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through a consistent lifestyle and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

God intends for sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and woman who are married to one another and has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of this marriage relationship. Any form of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, prostitution, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual conduct, sexual abuse, etc., is sinful and offensive to God.

(Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1Samuel 1:26-28; Psalm 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1Timothy 5:8, 14; 2Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1Peter 3:1-7.)

Article V – Salvation

Salvation is the free gift of God to whoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is only available because of the finished work and substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus. No other cause can bring salvation to any human being. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. When a person receives the gift of salvation he or she is eternally secure. Once a person is saved he or she can never be lost, as Christ's work for that person is complete and He is able to keep those given to Him. Such a person may and will sin, but will never become an apostate, and will surely and finally repent and come at last into eternal glory.

A. The Need for Salvation

Every person is in need of salvation because all have sinned and the wages of sin is death, separation from God.

B. The Provision of Salvation

The only provision for the forgiveness of sin is found in the substitutionary death of Jesus, who took upon Himself the sins of the world and suffered the wrath of God upon sin in our place, was buried, and rose again in His body defeating sin, death, and the grave.

C. The Requirement for Salvation

For Jesus' substitutionary sacrifice to be applied to one's life, the individual must turn from sin and from trusting in his or her own ability and trust Jesus alone for forgiveness of sin. At the moment one believes, he or she is born into the family of God and receives the assurance of an eternal inheritance with the Father.

D. The Three Aspects of Salvation

At the moment one turns from sin and trusts Jesus as Lord and Savior, God declares him or her righteous. This is often referred to as *Justification*. *Justification* is God's gracious and full acquittal based upon the declaration of God on behalf of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. *Justification* brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God, just as if he/she had never sinned, and just as if he/she had always done right.

Sanctification is the experience, beginning at the moment one is born again, whereby the believer is set apart for God's purposes and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her. The Holy Spirit empowers the believer to produce good works. These good works are a result of justification and the sanctifying work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. Good works are never the cause of salvation, but only the result of *sanctification*. Until the moment the believer dies or is raptured, the believer continues to live with two natures. The "old nature" struggles with the desire to sin. The "new nature" is redeemed and desires to live righteously. Growth in *sanctification* takes place as one yields to the Holy Spirit's work in his or her life and continues throughout the believer's life.

Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed. It is at the rapture of the Church that the believer's sanctification is complete, and he or she receives a *glorified* body that will never sin or even be tempted to sin again.

E. Living as a Member of God's Family

As a member of God's family, the believer should live in, but not of, the world. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. We are called to be active in the local church, serving the Lord faithfully to help the church fulfill its purpose on earth. We are to live in such a manner that does

not bring reproach on our Lord and Savior, and we are to live separate from religious apostasy, worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations.

(Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:8, 16; 17:6,12,17-18; 19:30; Acts 20:32; Romans 3:21-26; 4:20-25; 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 12:1-2; 14:13; 1Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; 6:10-18; Colossians 1:12-14; 2Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2Timothy 1:9, 12; 2:10,19; 3:1-5; Titus 3:4-7; Hebrews 6:9; 11:39-12:2; James 1:12, 2:17-18; ; 1Peter 1:2-5,13, 18-19; 2:4-10, 24; 2Peter 3:9; 1John 1:7-9; 2:15-17, 19; 3:2; 5:12; 2John 9-11.)

Article VI – The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. The church's biblical officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in various capacities in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament also speaks of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Thus, the church is an organism, not simply an organization.

A. Baptism & The Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. As the first step of obedience for a new believer, baptism is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby believers, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. Scripture warns of partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, therefore, the believer should examine their lives and confess any known sin prior to partaking. Since baptism is commanded as the first step of obedience for a new believer, baptism is a prerequisite for partaking of the Lord's Supper.

These two activities symbolize the cross, are prescribed to the Church by Christ, were practiced by the Apostles in the early church, and are ordinances for the church today. As ordinances of the church, they do not convey grace or any measure of salvation. Thus, they are not called sacraments. Rather, these two ordinances serve as an outward sign of an inward reality. Participation in these two ordinances serve as a testimony that one has trusted Jesus and been born again into God's forever family.

B. The Purpose of the Church

The purpose of the church is commanded in the Great Commission, described in Acts 2:40-47, and observed throughout the balance of the New Testament. The church exists to evangelize sinners, to edify saints, and to exalt the Savior.

C. Cooperation between Local Churches

Cooperation between local churches has been viewed as desirable since the earliest pages of the book of Acts. Christ's people may, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of fulfilling the Great Commission and accomplishing the Lord's work. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's work on earth. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

D. Religious Freedom

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. It is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience to civil government, which is ordained by God, in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

(Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; , Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:15-19, 26; 18:15-20; 22:1-10, 21; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff; John 8:36; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1-47; 4:19-20, 31-37; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 10:5-15; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-35; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 6:1-2; 13:1-7; 1Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Galatians 5:1,13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; 3:20; Colossians 1:18; 1Timothy 2:1-2, 9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; James 4:12; 1Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19; 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3.)

Article VII – The Angelic Realm

A. Angels

While the Greek word *aggelos* may refer to either a human who serves as a special messenger of the Lord, or to a spiritual being (angel) that serves God in the spiritual realm, the most common usage is that of a spiritual being (angel) who serves as a messenger of God. All angelic beings are personal beings created by God for His glory. Angels serve God, can relate to God, can relate to one another, and can relate to human beings. However, angels are not created in the image of God and are not redeemable. In fact, Scripture states that the angels desire to look into the things of Salvation.

B. Satan & His Host

Satan, the devil, the serpent of old, the dragon, is a personal being and a fallen angel. He originally served God and had a direct connection to worship and glorifying the holiness of God. However, Satan fell through pride, a root of all sin. He is the author of sin and the tempter of Adam and Eve. When Satan fell he led one-third of the angelic realm to join him in rebellion against the Father. He currently has access to heaven where he accuses believers. He is the prince of the power of the air, a god of this age. He and his hosts will be defeated and suffer eternal punishing in the Lake of Fire.

(Genesis 3; Job 1:6-11; Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-15, 17; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:8-22, 26-38; John 20:11-13; Acts 5:17-21; 12:5-19; 2Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-20; Revelation 12:7-13; 20:2, 10.)

Article VIII – Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth, the dead will be raised, and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

A. The Rapture of the Church

The church will be taken up to be with the Lord at His coming in the clouds, commonly called the Rapture. At the moment of the Father's choosing, the Lord Himself will descend in the clouds with a shout, with the sounding of a trumpet, the dead in Christ will rise and receive a new body like unto Jesus' resurrection body, those believers who are alive and remain until this moment will be "caught up" to meet Him in the clouds, and they too will be transformed and receive an incorruptible body.

B. The Great Tribulation

The Great Tribulation, also known as the Tribulation, the Time of Jacob's Trouble, and Daniel's 70th Week, is a real event marked by seven years of tribulation like this world has never before seen. During this time Jesus will pour out His wrath upon the earth, on the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and all who follow Satan. As the Antichrist gains control, he will persecute anyone who does not yield allegiance to him demonstrated by receiving his mark.

C. The Second Coming and the Millennial Reign of Christ

At the conclusion of The Great Tribulation, Jesus will physically return to the earth to establish His earthly Kingdom, fulfilling his promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and the nation of Israel. He will rule with a rod of iron, and it will be a time of complete peace. The lion will lay down with the lamb. All who have placed their faith in Jesus will rule and reign with Him for 1,000 years. Satan will be bound for the entire millennium. At the conclusion of the millennium, Satan will be released for a short time allowing those who enter the millennium from the Great Tribulation and their descendants a real choice to follow Christ or participate in Satan's final rebellion. Satan will be fully and finally crushed and confined to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.

D. The Great White Throne Judgement

The dead small and great will stand before God and be judged for their works at the Great White Throne Judgement. This judgement is reserved for unbelievers, whose names are not found in the Book of Life. Because they chose not to trust Jesus, they will be judged according to their works and everyone not found in the Book of Life will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the devil where they will suffer eternal punishing for their rejection of Jesus Christ.

E. The Eternal State

The saved, who have trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior will spend eternity in the presence of the Lord, enjoying the New Heaven, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem. Believers will be a part of God's eternal Kingdom where there is no pain, no sorrow, no death, no sin, and no temptation to sin. The believer's eternal work will be joyous and best of all the believer will enjoy the presence of God for all eternity.

The unsaved, who have rejected Jesus as Lord and Savior will spend eternity separated from God forever in the Lake of Fire. This punishing is eternal, rather than temporary. The concept of annihilation is unbiblical and contrary to Jesus' own direct teaching. The most painful part of this

punishing is the reality of eternal separation from God. Recognizing the seriousness of the Lake of Fire should move the believer to compassion for the lost and motivate the believer to share the Gospel at every opportunity, calling on all to turn from sin and self to trust Jesus alone.

(Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; 65:17; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 5:28-29; 11:25-26; 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:1ff.; 2Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 1Timothy 6:14; 2Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2Peter 3:7ff.; 1John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 19:11-21; 20:1-22:13.)