

What We Believe Doctrinal Statement

The members of Jacksonville Bible Church are committed to handling the Scriptures accurately. The affirmations that follow explain the doctrines that lay at the core of our fellowship. They also provide a framework for all of our teaching and serve as an anchor to protect from theological drift and error.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

We believe the Bible is God's completed, written revelation. Thus, the sixty-six books of the Bible, given to us by the Holy Spirit, constitute the plenary (inspired equally and completely in all parts) Word of God (2 Pet 1:20-21; Rev 22:19).

We believe that the Bible is the written and objective revelation of God (1 Thess 2:13; 1 Cor 2:13), verbally inspired in every word (2 Tim 3:16), inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God-breathed. The Bible is the final rule, our ultimate authority, and is sufficient for all matters pertaining to our faith and practice (Matt 5:18; John 17:17; Heb 4:12).

We believe God, the Holy Spirit, superintended the human authors so that through their individual personalities and writing styles, they composed and recorded God's Word (2 Pet 1:20-21). This process was without error in the whole and in all parts (Matt 5:18; 2 Tim 3:16).

We believe only one true interpretation exists for any passage in Scripture. Many applications may exist, but the meaning is singular and fixed. This meaning can be ascertained through careful study of a passage's grammar and historical context.¹

We believe the Scriptures interpreted in their natural, literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations or administrations, economies that define human responsibility in successive ages. A dispensation is not a way of salvation but a divinely ordered stewardship by which God directs people according to His purpose. These periods are marked in Scripture by some change in God's method of dealing with humankind, or a portion of humankind, in respect of the two questions of sin and of human responsibility. Each dispensational age may be regarded as a new test of obedience for humanity and each ends in judgment—because of humanity's utter disobedience (John 1:17; 1 Cor 9:17; 2 Cor 3:9--18; Gal 3:17-25; Eph 1:10, 3:2-10; Col 1:24, 25; Heb 7:19; Rev 20:2-6).

We believe salvation is always by grace alone through faith alone,

regardless of the dispensation in which the believer may have lived. God's purpose of salvation by grace alone through faith alone has always been based upon the substitutionary atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross (Eph 2:8-10; Heb 11:6; 1 Pet 1:10-12).

II. THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

We believe in the one true and living God (Deut 6:4; Isa 45:5-7). He is an infinite and eternal spirit who is holy (John 4:24; Lev 19:2). God is perfect in His attributes and ways, and exists as one being in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14). Each member of the Trinity has the same nature, attributes, essence, and perfections.

THE FATHER

We believe God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and accomplishes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Ps 145:8-9; 1 Cor 8:6). He rules the universe with absolute power, being sovereign over creation, providence, and redemption (Ps 103:19; Rom 11:36).

We believe the Father has decreed for his own glory all that comes to pass (Eph 1:11), yet He is not the author or approver of sin (Hab 1:13; James 1:13). The Father has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Eph 1:4-6). Through the finished work of Jesus Christ, He has provided salvation and adopts those who would come to Him as His own (John 1:12; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:5).

THE SON

We believe Jesus Christ, the eternal Son and second person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes of the Father. He is equal with the Father, of the same substance, and eternal (John 10:30; 14:9). He created all things according to the will of the Father (John 1:3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:2).

We believe that Jesus Christ became man without ceasing to be God. He accepted all the characteristics of humanity and became the God-man, fully God and fully man (John 1:1, 14; Phil 2:5-8; Col 2:9).

We believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life (Isa 7:14; Matt 1:23, 25; Lk 1:25-35) and voluntarily shed His blood on the cross as the perfect sacrifice for sin. His sacrifice was a vicarious (on our behalf), substitutionary (in our place), propitiatory

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(satisfying the righteous wrath of God), and redemptive work (John 10:15; Rom 3:24-25, 5:8; 1 Pet 2:24). The repentant sinner is saved from God's wrath only due to this sacrifice (1 Pet 2:24, 3:18).

We believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is both literal and physical. It is proof that the Father accepted the atoning sacrifice of His Son and guarantees the future resurrection of believers (John 5:26-27, 14:19; Rom 1:4, 4:25, 6:5-10; 1 Cor 15:20-21).

We believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, ascended, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. He now mediates as advocate and high priest between the Father and believers (Matt 28:6; Lk 24:38-39; Acts 2:30-31; Rom 4:23, 8:34; Heb 7:25, 9:24; 1 John 2:1). As mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), Christ is the Head of the church (Eph 1:22, 5:23; Col 1:18).

We believe that Jesus Christ will receive the church to Himself at the rapture. After the tribulation Christ will return to the earth with His church and establish His kingdom on the earth (Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess 4:13-18; Rev 20). Jesus Christ is the coming King of kings, who will reign on the throne of David ruling over the entire earth (Isa 9:6; Lk 1:31-33). He is the final judge of all who fail to place their faith in Him as Lord and Savior (Matt 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine attributes of and proceeds from the Father and Son. He is equal with the Father and Son, and of the same substance (Matt 28:19; 1 Cor 12:4-6; 2 Cor 13:14; Heb 10:15-17). The Spirit possesses all the attributes of personality and deity. This includes intellect (1 Cor 2:10-13), emotions (Eph 4:30), will (1 Cor 12:11), and eternity (Heb 9:14). The Spirit is all-present (Psa. 139:7-10), all-knowing (Isa 40:13-14), all-powerful (Rom 15:13), and truthful (John 16:13).

We believe the Holy Spirit executes the will of God. He is instrumental in creation (Gen 1:2), the incarnation (Matt 1:18), written revelation (2 Pet 1:20-21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5-7). The Spirit convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-9), and He transforms believers into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18).

We believe the Holy Spirit inaugurated the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor 12:13; Eph 2:22). The Spirit baptizes all

believers into the Church (1 Cor 12:13). He indwells, sanctifies, seals, and empowers Christians for service (Rom 8:9; 2 Cor 3:6; Eph 1:13).

We believe each believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Spirit at the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of believers to be filled with (in submission to) Him (John 16:13; Rom 8:9; Eph 5:18; 1 John 2:20, 27). The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the church. He administers them not for His own glory, or for the glory of the believer, but for the glory of Christ. Gifts are designed to build up the church (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor 12:4-11; Eph 4:12).

We believe the gifts of tongues and miracles have ceased for this age. The Spirit gave these gifts in the beginning days of the church to authenticate the ministry of the apostles and their message (1 Cor 12:4-11, 13:8-10; 2 Cor 12:12; Eph 4:7-12; Heb 2:1-4). Tongues were also given as a sign of judgment to Israel (1 Cor 14:21-22; Isa 28:11-12).

III. THE DOCTRINE OF HUMANITY

We believe God created humans as male and female directly and immediately in His image and not by evolutionary process free from sin with intelligence, will, emotions, and moral responsibility to God (Gen 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9). Thus, to take the life of an image bearer through murder, abortion, euthanasia or other means not directly approved by God is sinful (Gen 9).

We believe humans were made to enjoy fellowship with their creator by walking in God's will and accomplishing God's purposes on earth (Isa 43:7; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11). However, due to the sin of Adam, men and women became sinners, and inherited the condemnation of Adam's sin. They incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death as a subject of God's wrath. Their nature became totally depraved in sin, and incapable of pleasing God. Part of the impact of sin is a struggle with God's design for marriage, gender and sexuality (Rom 1:18-32).

We believe marriage is ordained by God, and that the only Scriptural marriage is the covenantal joining of one natural born man and one natural born woman for life as a picture of the love between Christ and the Church (Gen 2:24; Rom 7:2; 1 Cor 7:10; Eph 5:22-23). The Bible does recognize grounds for divorce when the marriage covenant is broken, but divorce is never required (Matt 19:1-12; 1 Cor 7).

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We believe that God created His image bearers with two genders, male and female, and that these God given genders are good gifts (Gen 1:31). These genders are different and complimentary and are part of God's good design to serve Him, with leadership reserved for men in the home and in the church (Gen 1-3; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2-3). God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery, appearance or behavior (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:4-6). In addition, though some struggle with their gender as a result of the curse of sin, all are called to submit themselves to God's good design in faith and live according to the gender which matches their biology (Deut 22:5; Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9-10, 19-20, 11:14-15).

We believe that God established sexual pleasure to be enjoyed only within the context of marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any other form of sexual pleasure in thought or deed is a sinful perversion of God's gift (Gen 2:24; Gen 19:5, 13; Gen 26:8-9; Lev 18:1-30; Rom 1:26-29; I Cor 5:1; 6:9; I Thess 4:1-8; Heb 13:4).

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

We believe men and women are hopelessly alienated from God, dead in sin, and they can only be saved by the redemptive work of Christ (Gen 2:16-17, 3:1-19; John 3:36; Rom 3:23, 6:23; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:1-3; 1 Tim 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We believe salvation is made possible only because of the finished work of Christ. Repentant sinners can be saved from God's wrath only through faith in Jesus Christ, and the merit of His shed blood. It is not on the basis of any work they have done (John 1:12; Eph 1:7, 2:8-10; 1 Pet 1:18-19).

ELECTION

We believe God chose before the foundation of the world each one whom He would graciously save (Rom. 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-11; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10; 1 Pet 1:1-2). We also believe that God's sovereign choice does not negate the responsibility of each person to trust in Christ for salvation (Ezek 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; Rom 9:22-23; 2 Thess 2:10-12; Rev 22:17).

We do not believe that God chose to save some sinners due to any personal merit or action, or on the basis of foreseen faith. God elected whom He would save solely on the basis of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Pet 1:2). By electing some to salvation, we do not believe God elects others to damnation. We

believe that if the Father did not draw anyone to Christ, none would ever be saved (John 6:37, 44).

REGENERATION

We believe the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual life at the moment a person responds in faith to Jesus Christ (John 6:63; Eph 2:5; Titus 3:5). Regeneration is a supernatural work whereby the one who was dead in sin is made alive in Christ.

We believe regeneration is an internal change that shows itself outwardly in a life of good works (1 Cor 6:19-20; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:10). Regeneration begins the process of conforming a person to the image of Christ, a process that will be complete only when the believer is with the Lord in glory (2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:17; 2 Pet 1:4).

JUSTIFICATION

We believe God declares as righteous those whom He has called to salvation and regenerated to new life. Justification is a legal verdict, a declaration of fact (Rom 8:33). The Father does not overlook the believer's sins but accepts the substitution of the Son of God on their behalf. By faith, the believer's sin is imputed to or applied to Jesus Christ while the righteousness of Christ is applied to the believer (1 Cor 1:30; 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24; Col 2:14). By His death, they live.

We believe that Christ suffered once for sin, a past and completed act that is finished and will never be repeated (John 18:30; 1 Pet 3:18; Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). Thus, justification has no contingencies. We believe that the repentant sinner who has trusted in Christ is justified at the moment of salvation forevermore.

SANCTIFICATION

We believe that God sets every believer apart from the world as a saint unto Himself (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Thess 2:13; Heb 2:11). He seals His people with the Holy Spirit and keeps them secure in Him by His power forever (Rom 8:1; 1 Cor 1:8; Eph 1:13; 1 Pet 1:5). Having received Christ's righteousness, believers have been declared holy. Practically, however, they still sin.

We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers His people to grow in holy living, enabling them to become more like Christ in this life (John 17:19; Heb 2:11, 3:1; 1 Pet 1:2). They do not, however, grow to the point of sinless perfection (Phil 3:12). Every believer experiences a

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struggle in which their flesh is set against their new nature in Christ (Gal 5:16-23; Eph 4:22-24). While believers are therefore commanded to strive for holiness, their only hope for spiritual growth is through faith and dependence on the Holy Spirit's work through the Word (Acts 26:18; Heb 12:14; Jude 24, 25, Phil 2:12-13; John 17:17; Gal 5:22-23).

GLORIFICATION

We believe the ultimate goal of the redemption of the believer is their glorification (Rom 8:29-30). All believers, at the point of Christ's return, will receive a resurrected body (1 Cor 15:50-53). It is then that the image of God, which has been marred by sin, will be restored to its full glory (1 Cor 15:49; 1 John 3:2-3).

V. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

We believe the universal church is a spiritual family comprised of all believers of the New Testament age. All whom Christ has saved have been placed in fellowship with Him and with one another (1 Cor 1:9; 1 John 1:1-4). Christ is the head of the church (Eph 4:15; Col 1:18) and that He established the church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Thus, the church is completely distinct from Israel (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 10:32; Eph 5:32).

PURPOSE

We believe that by the power and enablement of God, the church exists to raise up disciples through the instrument of Scriptures to the glory God (Matt 28:18-20; Col 1:28; Eph 4:11-15). A disciple is a believer, who has responded by faith to the gospel (Acts 14:21), and is thus a follower of Christ. Central to God's glory through the church is the proclamation of His Word (2 Tim 4:2). We believe God's Spirit uses the Word to bring unbelievers to salvation (Rom 10:14-15) and to grow His people in Christlikeness (2 Tim 3:16-17). We believe every church ministry should align with the church's purpose for the sake of God's glory.

We believe the local church has a leadership structure comprised, under the headship of Christ, of elders and deacons (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). A plurality of elders share in the responsibility of leading the local church. Elders are shepherds, men who are qualified and can teach the Word in public and in private to the church family (1 Pet 5:1-5; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim 4:2). Elders are called to warn the church against error (Col 1:28; 2 Tim 3:16-17), are men

devoted to ministering the Word and to prayer (Acts 6:4), and to equip the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11,12; 2 Tim 2:1-2)

We believe deacons are servants in the church. All believers who are qualified to serve, should do so with the strength which God supplies (1 Pet 4:11; 1 Tim 3:8-13). Some, however, are selected by the elders to give attention to specific needs in the church (1 Tim 3:8-13).

DISTINCTIVES

We believe the church should be devoted to God's Word, fellowship, prayer, and the ordinances (Acts 2:42). The book of Acts also shows a strong focus upon evangelism (Acts 2:28, 3:19, 8:22).

We believe the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government, and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). It is scriptural for biblical churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. However, each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation as well as on all matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government -- under the authority of Christ and the Scriptures (Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 5:4-7,13; 1 Pet 5:1-4)

We believe that to fulfill its God-ordained mission, each believer, at the time of their conversion (according to God's sovereign will), is given at least one spiritual gift by the Holy Spirit, for the edification of the body. Each member should strive to develop and use their spiritual gift(s) in a way that will glorify God (Rom 12:3-8; Eph 4:8-13; 2 Tim 1:6; 1 Pet 4:10-11).

We believe these gifts are bestowed by the Lord in order to fulfill specific purposes in His program. We believe that when the purpose of any gift is fulfilled, that particular gift is terminated. Thus, we believe that speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, miracles, healing, gradually ceased with the ending of the Apostolic age and the completion of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor 12:11, 13:8-10 and 14-21, 22; 2 Tim 4:20; Acts 19:11-12; Heb 2:3,4; 2 Cor 12:12). (See Doctrine of Holy Spirit for more details)

We believe that God heals and works miracles today, but that He

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does so through the prayers of His saints and not through gifted individuals (James 5:13-18).

VI. ORDINANCES

BAPTISM

We believe that water baptism is a scriptural ordinance of the church during this age. Baptism, while not a requirement for salvation, is a public testimony by the recipient that they have personally trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. Baptism is the outward symbol of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is the inward work whereby each believer is inseparably joined to the body of Christ. For this reason, we do not practice infant baptism.

We believe that immersion in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is the biblical method which best typifies what takes place at conversion (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:41, 8:36-39, 9:18 and 18:8; Eph 4:5; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Cor 12:13; Rom 6:3, 4).

LORD'S SUPPER

We believe the Lord's Supper is a memorial testimony of the church, instituted by our Lord just before His betrayal, and to be observed by His children until His return as a sacred, symbolic, and scriptural means of remembering His death for our sins (1 Cor 11:23, 24).

VII. THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS

We believe angels are spirit beings created by God (Col 1:15-17). Two kinds of angels exist: holy and fallen.

HOLY ANGELS

We believe holy angels exist to serve the elect and to worship God (Lk 2:9-14; Heb 1:6, 7; Rev 5:11-14). They were created before (Job 38:7), and are exceedingly more powerful than human beings (2 Kings 19:35). The angelic host is innumerable (Jere 33:22), well ordered (Matt 26:53), and not to be worshipped (Rev 22:8-9).

FALLEN ANGELS

We believe the fallen angels are those who have rebelled against God. Satan, a fallen angel himself, leads this host in promoting spiritual darkness (Eph 6:12), deception (2 Cor 11:13-15), idolatry (Ps 106:37), false doctrine (1 Tim 4:1), and death (John 8:44).

We believe the fallen angels (i.e. demons) are active in our world today (Eph 6:10-18). Though possessing great powers and abilities their influence is severely limited by the power of God (Job 1:12; 2:6; Rom 8:38-39). For instance, demons cannot possess believers in Christ, for they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). They unwittingly serve God's purposes (Jud 9:23), and even tremble before Him (James 2:19). Furthermore, God has judged the angels who rebelled against Him, and they will be eternally punished (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6)

VIII. THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

We believe God's Word provides clarity concerning events pertaining to the end of time (this is known as the doctrine of eschatology). Studying eschatology gives believers hope (Titus 2:13), and encourages godly living (1 John 3:2-3). God's redemption of sinners, which was planned before the foundation of the world, culminates with Him and His people dwelling together forever (Rev 21:3-4).

THE RAPTURE AND TRIBULATION PERIOD

We believe the church will not suffer God's wrath (1 Thess 5:9). Thus, the Lord will come to rapture (or remove) His people out of this world, taking them with Him into heaven, prior to a period of worldwide tribulation (1 Cor 15:51-53; 1 Thess 4:17). Scripture describes this period as a time when God will pour out His wrath in judgment upon the world for seven years (Dan 12:1-2; 2 Thess 2:7-12; Rev 16; Dan 9:24-27).

THE SECOND COMING AND KINGDOM

We believe the Lord will return to Earth with His raptured church at the end of the tribulation period (Matt 24:27-31; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 2:7-12). Old Testament believers and all believers who were martyred during the tribulation, will be raised to life. These will join living saints, and entering with them into the kingdom, which will last 1000 years. The unsaved who are alive at the return of Christ will be judged (Dan 12:2-3; Rev 20:4-6). Satan will be bound in the abyss as the Millennial Kingdom begins, in order that he can no longer deceive the nations (Rev 20:1-3)..

We believe Israel will be restored to the land promised to them through God's covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:6-8) during the

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Millennial Kingdom, never to be removed again (Amos 9:15; Ezek 34:28). Jesus Christ will reign during this time from Jerusalem, seated on the throne of David (Isa 9:7), bringing blessing throughout the world (Isa 11:9; Micah 4:3; Rev 20:1-6). Peace, harmony, justice, and long life will characterize the Kingdom age (Isa 65:17-25; Ezek 36:33-38).

THE FINAL JUDGMENT AND ETERNITY TO COME

We believe Christ will bring His Millennial Kingdom to an end by releasing Satan from the abyss (Rev 20:7). Satan and his fallen angels will then once again deceive the nations of the earth, leading them in rebellion against the Lord. The rebels will be judged along with the devil and the fallen angels, who will be sentenced to eternal suffering (Rev 20:10). The souls of unbelievers who have died will be raised to be reunited with their bodies to receive the same judgment and sentence (Matt 25:41-46; 2 Thess 1:7-9; Jude 6, 7; Rev 20:11-15).

We believe the souls of the redeemed of all times are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord; where in conscious bliss they await resurrection, when soul and body are reunited and glorified to be forever with the Lord in His eternal kingdom (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23, 3:21; 1 Thess 4:16, 17; Rev 20:4-6).

IX. CREATION

We believe the triune God, by a free act and for His own glory, without the use of existing materials or secondary causes, brought into being - - immediately and instantaneously, by the Word of His mouth over a period of six literal days -- the whole visible and invisible universe (Gen 1:1-27; Exodus 20:8-11; Neh 9:6; Psa 104:25, 26; Is 40:21-31; John 1:1-5; Col 1:16,17).

X. BIBLICAL SEPARATION AND UNITY

We believe that all the redeemed are to live in such a manner as to seek to bring glory to their Savior and Lord and avoid all behaviors and associations which would compromise this aim. It is every believer's responsibility to endeavor to maintain the unity of the faith while separating from apostasy and false teaching (2 Tim 3:1-5; Rom 12:1, 2; 14:13; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1).

We believe the local church corporately may partner with other churches, missionaries, organizations and others to advance the cause of Christ and pursue unity in Christ's church. However, because of the danger of false teachers, every proposed alliance must be considered in the light of our commitment to the Gospel and sound doctrine. Therefore, we will not cooperate with or endorse any movement, organization, program, or missionary which is contrary to the Gospel or other core doctrines (Matt 18:15-17; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:7-11; 2 Cor 6:14-18; Eph 4:1-6; 2 Thess 3:11-14; 2 Tim 3:1-5; Titus 3:10; 2 John 9-11).

¹ This approach to interpretation of Scripture is a central feature of dispensationalism, which champions a normal, historical/grammatical hermeneutic.