
"WHAT WE BELIEVE"

1. THE BIBLE IS INSPIRED

The scriptures of the entire Bible are verbally inspired of God. It was not just the ideas that were inspired; even the choice of words was inspired as the original writers were moved by God to write what He wanted them to say. We therefore believe that (1) the Scriptures are God's revelation of Himself to mankind, (2) they are infallible (never wrong), and (3) they are the divinely authoritative guide for our faith, belief, and manner of living (2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:23).

2. ONE TRUE GOD

There is one true God. He has revealed himself as having always existed without any outside cause or agent bringing Him into being (Isaiah 43:10). He is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1) and the One who redeems, saves, or rescues mankind from sin and its painful consequences (Isaiah 43:11). God has further revealed himself as a single Being (Deuteronomy 6:4) consisting of three interrelated persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19, Luke 3:22). This concept of one God or Being of three persons is called the Trinity.

3. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY GOD

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has always existed. He too is without beginning or end (Revelation 1:8). In order to complete His earthly sacrificial mission, He became human by being born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31, 35). He lived a perfect life, absolutely without sin (Hebrews 7:26; 1 Peter 2:22). While on earth He worked many miracles through the anointing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:22, 10:38). In order to restore fallen mankind, He died on the cross as a substitute for the sins of every person (1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He was raised from the dead by the supernatural power of God (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:39; 1 Corinthians 6:14, 15:4). Since His resurrection He has been exalted (honored), and is seated at the right hand of God (Acts 1:9, 11, 2:33; Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3).

4. THE FALL OF MANKIND

Mankind was created good and upright; for God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." However, mankind by willful choice, ignored God's instructions choosing to engage in what they knew was wrong and evil. As a result, mankind fell from innocence and goodness and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death, which is separation from God (Genesis 1:26-27, 2:17, 3:6; Romans 5:12-19).

5. THE SALVATION OF MANKIND

Salvation is deliverance from spiritual death and enslavement by sin. God provides salvation for all who believe and accept His free offer of forgiveness. Mankind's only hope of redemption from the fallen sinful state is through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son - blood that was shed as Jesus died on the cross (The account of the crucifixion of Jesus is recounted by four of His contemporaries: Matthew (Chapter 27), Mark (Chapter 15), Luke (Chapter 23), And John (Chapter 19).)

The Experience of Salvation. Salvation is received as a person (1) repents before God for his sins and sinful nature or inclinations, and (2) believes or has faith in the fact that the death and resurrection (supernatural restoration to life) of Jesus Christ removes and brings forgiveness for his sin. In response to placing faith in God's love and freely given salvation, one experiences the washing of regeneration (or spiritual rebirth), the renewing work of the Holy Spirit, and is declared righteous (right with God). Regeneration, renewal, and justification (justified, or made right with God) are words describing what happens at salvation. At the moment of salvation, a person becomes heir to God's promised hope of eternal or everlasting life (Luke 24:47; John 3:3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 2:8; Titus 2:11, 3:5-7).

The Evidences of Salvation. The inner evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Holy Spirit giving one the assurance that God has accepted him (Romans 8:16). The outward evidence, visible to others, is a life of righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24; Titus 2:12). In other words it is living a life totally committed and pleasing to God.

6. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Some churches use the term sacraments instead of ordinances. Sacraments, however, carries for many people the idea that a spiritual work takes place in a person when the sacrament is received or experienced. The Assemblies of God chooses to call water baptism and Holy Communion ordinances because they are religious practices ordained or established by Jesus himself. In fulfilling these spiritual duties Christians are reminded of an important work that has already taken place in the heart of the believer.

Baptism in Water. The ordinance of baptism by immersion in water (not sprinkling) is commanded in the Scriptures (Mark 16:16). All who repent and believe on Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord are to be so baptized. This act of baptism symbolically declares to everyone that the old sinful life and life-style of the baptized believer died with Christ at salvation and a new spiritual being has been raised with Christ (in His resurrection) to live a new life (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:47-48; Romans 6:4).

Holy Communion. The Lord's Supper or Communion, consisting of bread and the fruit of the vine (grape juice), is a memorial of Christ's suffering and death (I Corinthians 11:26). In eating and drinking the symbols of Christ's suffering and death, the believer expresses his awareness that through salvation he, (1) has been made right with God, and (2) shares the divine nature of eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4). The ordinance also looks forward to Christ's second coming (I Corinthians 11:26) for it is a reminder to proclaim the Lord's death "until He comes!"

7. THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The word "ghost" in the 16th-century King James Version of the Bible meant only what we today understand by the word "spirit". All believers are entitled to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and therefore should expect and earnestly seek the promise of the Father, according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Some references in the Bible speak of "the Holy Ghost and fire." Fire, an image commonly associated with the Holy Spirit, suggests the purging, cleansing action, and zeal of the Holy Spirit which continues the work of spiritual growth begun at salvation).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit was the normal experience of all believers in the early Christian church. With the experience comes the provision of power for victorious Christian living and productive service. It also provides believers with specific spiritual gifts for more effective ministry (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,8; I Corinthians 12: 1-31).

The baptism in the Holy Spirit is separate from salvation, and follows the new birth experience (Acts 8:12-17, 10:44-46, 11:14-16, 15:7-9). With this baptism comes such experiences as an overflowing fullness of the Spirit (John 7:37-39; Acts 4:8), a deepened reverence for God (Acts 2:43; Hebrews 12:28), an intensified commitment to God and dedication to His work (Acts 2:42), and a more active love for Christ, for His Word, and for those who have not yet become believers (Mark 16:20).

8. THE INITIAL PHYSICAL EVIDENCE OF THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

The baptism of Christians in the Holy Spirit is accompanied by the initial physical sign of speaking in other tongues (unlearned languages) as the Spirit of God gives them audible expression (Acts 2:4). This form of speaking in tongues is basically the same as the gift of tongues (I Corinthians 12:4-10,28). The difference is the purpose and use. (The manifestation of tongues can be observed in the life of every

Spirit-filled believer at the initial infilling. The audible expression of tongues should also continue to function in the Spirit-filled believer's personal prayer life. However, the gift of tongues (sometimes called "messages in tongues") operates publicly, usually in congregational worship settings. This gift is followed by the gift of interpreting the tongues. Both are given to individuals within the church. Their purpose is for the spiritual benefit of the individual and the congregation.)

9. SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is an act of separating ourselves from evil and identifying with things that are good, upright, and morally pure. It is a process that takes place as Christians devote themselves to God (Romans 12:1,2; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:12). Scriptures teach that we are to be holy because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16); for "Without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). Living in holiness is possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A Christian is sanctified as he identifies with Christ, and accepts in faith His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection. Sanctification is a daily acknowledgment of our union with God through His Son Jesus. As this identification occurs it is only natural for the Christian to offer every portion of his life to the control of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:1-11,13, 8:1,2,13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 2:12,13; 1 Peter 1:5).

10. THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION

The Church as described in the Bible consists of all people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ as the only remedy for their sins. The Church includes all Christians and has no boundaries as to age, race, gender, or denomination. It is the body of Christ, the dwelling place of God through the Holy Spirit. Christ is the Head of the Church. He has made every provision for the fulfillment of "the church's" Great Commission (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). Each Christian is an integral part of that Church. The names of all true believers (those making up the Church) are written in heaven (Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:22; Hebrews 12:23).

God's purpose concerning mankind is: (1) to seek and to save people who are lost in sin (Luke 19:10), (2) to be worshipped by all mankind (Revelation 19:10, 22:9), and (3) to build a unified body of believers mature in faith and knowledge like His Son - Jesus (Ephesians 4:12). Therefore the priority reason for being a part of the Church is:

1. To be an agency of God for evangelizing the world (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).
2. To be a corporate or unified body in which many may worship God (1 Corinthians 12:13).
3. To be a channel of God's purpose to build a body of saints being perfected in the image of His Son (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:12).

In fulfilling this three-fold mission of the Church, members are taught and encouraged to be baptized in the Holy Spirit according to the New Testament pattern. Through this experience believers: evangelize in the power of the spirit with accompanying supernatural signs (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 4:29-31; Hebrews 2:3-4); worship God in an added dimension (1 Corinthians 2:10-16; 1 Corinthians 12-14); and respond to the full working of the Holy Spirit in expressing the fruit, gifts, and ministries as in New Testament times in order to build up the church, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:28, 14:12; Galatians 5:22-26; Ephesians 4:11-12; Colossians 1:29).

11. THE MINISTRY

Involvement in ministry in response to a divine call is scripturally ordained in the Bible. It is a provision of our Lord for the threefold purpose of leading the Church in: (1) evangelization of the world (Mark 16:15-20), (2) worship of God (John 4:23-24), and (3) building a body of believers conforming to the life of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,16).

12. DIVINE HEALING

Divine healing from God is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided in the Atonement (Christ's suffering and death for our reconciliation with God). Healing is a privilege of all believers (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17; James 5:14-16).

13. THE BLESSED HOPE

All Christians who have died will one day rise from their graves and will meet the Lord in the air. Christians who have not yet died will be raptured or caught up with them, to be with the Lord. Then Christians of all ages will live with God forever. The scriptural truth of the Lord's soon return is "the blessed hope" (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:13).

14. THE MILLENNIAL REIGN OF CHRIST

The second coming of Christ includes the rapture of all Christians, which is our blessed hope, followed by the visible return of Christ with His saints to reign on the earth for 1000 years (Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 24:27,30; Revelation 1:7, 19:11-14, 20:1-6). This millennial (1,000-year) reign will bring the salvation of Israel as a nation (Ezekiel 37:21-22; Zephaniah 3:19-20; Romans 11:26-27) and the establishment of universal peace (Psalm 72:3-8; Isaiah 11:6-9; Micah 4:3-4).

15. THE FINAL JUDGMENT

There will be a final judgment in which the wicked dead - those who have died without accepting Christ's salvation - will be raised and judged according to the way they lived. Anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life (the recorded list of people who received Christ's forgiveness), together with the devil and his angels, the beast and the false prophet, will be sent to everlasting punishment in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone (sulfur), which is the second death (Matthew 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Revelation 19:20, 20:11-15, 21:8).

16. THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

"According to God's promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness will dwell and reign forever" (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21,22).