

Cary Church of Christ

What We Believe

THE NATURE OF GOD

There is one God whose nature is shared by three persons, the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are what have been commonly called the Godhead or the Trinity. We see all three persons present at the baptism of Jesus. The Father is speaking from heaven, the Holy Spirit is descending in the form of a dove, and Jesus is in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 3:21-22; Mark 1:9-11). While there are three persons in the Godhead, they are the singular nature of God. They do not differ in anyway because they are each perfect and therefore are unified in that perfection. The Bible shows their authority in salvation by having baptism to be by the divine authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).

The Father loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die so that through obedient faith we should be saved.

The Father determined and sent Jesus Christ to earth to be the sacrifice for the sins of all mankind (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:10). The Father, through love, wanted to show man mercy. Yet, the Father's justness demanded that someone pay the price for our sins. That payment was death (Romans 6:23).

Salvation is only found in Jesus Christ through His life, death, and resurrection.

Jesus laid aside His divine attributes, left heaven, and came to this earth as a man in every way (John 1:1,14; Philippians 2:5-11). He did this to be the Lamb provided by God to take away our sins through the willing sacrifice of His sinless life (John 1: 29,36; Mark 10:45; John 10:17-18; 1 John 2:1-2). Three days after His death on the cross, Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday morning (Matthew 28:1-6). The resurrection of Jesus Christ provides us the proof that He can raise us from the dead to live with Him in heaven (John 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15). His death saves us, His resurrection makes that salvation meaningful, and His life shows us how to live ours (1 Peter 2:21-24). All of these truths make Jesus the only way, only truth, only life, and the only way to be redeemed to the Father (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5-6). Jesus Christ is the undeserved gift of grace that no man could accomplish with works (John 1:17; 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9)

The Holy Spirit works through His revealing of all truth by the inspiration of the scriptures.

The Holy Spirit delivered the truth only once to mankind (Jude 3). The Holy Spirit, through the inspiration of the scriptures, has given us a word-for-word revelation of God's holy truth found in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). This revelation of truth ceased at the end of the first century with the

cessation of miraculous gifts after the death of the apostles (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). The Holy Spirit today, changes lives and saves us through the truth that He has given to us (Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 1:22-23). This truth enables us to have faith that is required for salvation and to be pleasing to God (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:6). This salvation through truth is the promise that is to us, to our children, and to all who are afar off, as many as our Lord God will call (Acts 2:39). The Holy Spirit no longer gives information directly to an individual by revelation, but leads us today through the revealed truth that is found in the Bible.

God does not operate miraculously today in our world.

Miracles were for the purpose of confirming the message of God to men (John 20:30-31). These acts that took place outside the natural laws of the universe were done to demonstrate that God was behind a message and it was not just some man's effort. With the perfect truth of God's word entirely delivered and confirmed through inspiration by the Holy Spirit, miracles are no longer needed. Paul called them childish things to be done away with the arrival of the truth (1 Corinthians 13:8-11).

THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST FOR SALVATION

There is only one truth from God.

The New Testament is the inspired truth that must be followed without addition or subtraction for an individual to be saved today (Revelation 22:18-19; Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6). This one truth can be known by man and must be obeyed in this life (John 14:6; Ephesians 4:4-6). This would make it impossible for there to be many different religious groups that are right in the eyes of God. Any belief that does not conform to the New Testament cannot save.

A person must have faith in God that is based on the pattern set forth in the truth in order to be saved.

Faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith is more than just an acknowledgement of God. Saving faith must come from a knowledge of and obedience to the truth of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This kind of faith in Jesus Christ is a work that one must have in their life to be pleasing to God (John 6:28-29). When one has faith in Jesus Christ, they are given the right to become children of God by moving forward in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus (John 1:12).

A person must repent of their sinful ways in order to receive the forgiveness of sins.

Repentance is the mental decision to change from a sinful way of life to a life dedicated to live as Christ lived and taught. If one believes that Jesus is whom He claims in the New Testament, the only response in keeping with such a belief

is to repent in order to live according to His way. All who will not repent will perish spiritually (Luke 13:3,5). After that decision we must remain in it and live in a way that demonstrates our repentance (Matthew 3:8; Romans 6:2).

A person must confess that they believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in order to be saved.

The Christian life is a life dedicating to proclaiming Jesus Christ. Our path to salvation must include the confession of Jesus as the Son of God at its beginning (Matthew 10:32; 16:13-19; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37). That acknowledgement and statement of that belief demonstrates that Christ is worthy to demand our lifelong devotion.

A person must be baptized in order to receive the forgiveness of their sins.

A person cannot be saved unless they have been baptized through their immersion in water for the purpose of receiving the forgiveness of sins in order to save their souls (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Baptism is the process by which a person is born again into the family of God by water and by the teachings of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). What a person believes the purpose of baptism is, will determine whether it is baptism into Christ through His Spirit inspired truth or baptism of no effect because it was based on error. Baptism is the dividing line between being lost and being saved through the forgiveness of our sins. The saving power of baptism is a work of God as we obey His will (Colossians 2:12; John 1:12-13).

A person must continue in diligent faithfulness throughout their lives in order to receive eternal life in heaven.

The Christian life that an individual determines to live in their initial repentance must be sustained throughout life. An individual can live in such a way as to fall from the salvation found in the grace of God (Galatians 5:4). The Christian life is to be lived faithful for all of life (Revelation 2:10). If a person ceases to obey the truth, the forgiveness of sins for that person will cease (Hebrews 10:26-31; 1 John 1:7). Such failure can be overcome by confessing our sins and repenting so that God may forgive our sins and bring us back into a right relationship with Him (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22).

THE LORD'S CHURCH

The Lord Jesus Christ built only one church.

Jesus Christ built one church upon His one truth in the New Testament (Matthew 16:18). Only one group is the church of our Lord. If two religious groups have different beliefs then both cannot be the church of Jesus Christ. The Lord's church is of one mind and one judgment based upon the word of God in the Bible (1 Corinthians 1:10). The one church is comprised of those people that have

obeyed the one truth of the New Testament (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4). All other churches besides the one church of Jesus are false and cannot save.

God must be worshipped sincerely from the heart and according to the revealed truth of the New Testament.

Jesus stated that true worshippers of God seek to worship Him with their heart and according to His truth (John 4:23-25). The following items would be included in true New Testament worship:

- We are to pray to God the Father through the sole mediation of Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:5; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25).
- We are to teach God's truth in order to build each other up in our faith (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-4).
- We are to partake of the Lord's memorial supper every first day of the week and only the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). We are to use unleavened bread and grape juice that has been blessed through thankfulness in prayer (1 Corinthians 11:23-27). The bread is a memorial of Christ's body and the grape juice is a memorial of Christ's blood.
- We are to cheerfully and bountifully give as we have been prospered by God to the Lord for His work through the church. This giving is to be done through the local congregation every Sunday (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7). One cannot replace this obligation with their own giving to that which they choose.
- We are to offer praise in song only from our hearts and lips to God and each other (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 13:15). Our singing is to also be something that can be understood and something that teaches us about the word of Christ (1 Corinthians 14:15). To add instruments or undefined sounds (i.e. clapping) to what is to be from the lips and heart only would violate the commands of God and therefore constitute sin and false worship. Such false worship will cause its participants to be lost.

Congregations of the Lord's church are to be autonomous – there is to be no earthly governing body over multiple congregations of the church.

Leadership in a congregation is given by the Holy Spirit to elders to oversee the flock that they are among (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1). There are no Biblical leadership positions beneath Christ that have authority over multiple congregations of the Lord.

Congregations of the Lord's church are to be organized according to the scriptures.

- Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1:22-23).
- Elders/Pastors/Bishops (all words for one office) are given authority to lead individual congregations of the Lord's church. Jesus is the chief shepherd over the elders or shepherds that have been appointed to oversee the Lord's flock (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28). The men that take the responsibility of being elders

must meet the Biblical qualifications for their lives (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11). All members in these congregations must submit to the rule of these men that the Holy Spirit appoints (Hebrews 13:17). Elders do not answer to the congregation, they answer to God alone.

- Deacons are men who are to have specific talents for specific tasks in the Lord's church (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:10). The authority of these men exists exclusively in the areas of work designated by the elders. These men are to meet the qualifications given in the Bible before taking on the office (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Women are not allowed to lead over a man in the worship service or any spiritual act.

A woman is not allowed to exercise authority over a man through teaching, praying, leading singing, or other facilitation of worship to God (i.e. serving in front of the congregation on the Lord's Supper) in the presence of a Christian man (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

CULTURAL & MORAL ISSUES

God created the universe and all that it contains in six 24-hour days.

The creation account recorded in the Bible states the creation of all things in the universe initially and for all time took place within 6 24-hour days by God (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11). This Biblical fact demonstrates that the theory of organic macroevolution and theistic evolutionary theories (i.e. Day-Age, Gap) are not true and should not be believed.

The Bible's teachings both explicit and implied would forbid the drinking of alcoholic beverages by Christians.

The drunkenness that comes from drinking alcohol is explicitly condemned in the Bible by stating that people who participate in such will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:21). It is clear that Timothy had been taught by Paul to abstain from all alcoholic drink and followed that command even to the point of not accepting it for medicinal purposes (1 Timothy 5:23). Non-medicinal alcohol has no redeeming qualities and is a detriment to the influence of any Christian and a devastating stumbling block that a person can put before others.

Christians should dress in a modest manner that would not demonstrate vain pride or easily solicit the lust of others.

Clothing that reveals areas of the body that naturally lead to sexual lust is a stumbling block for others and is a failure to claim godliness in one's life (1 Timothy 2:9-10; Matthew 5:28; 2 Samuel 11:2). The Bible's call for modesty also includes dressing in a vain manner so as indicate a focus on outward beauty instead of the inner beauty of holiness.

Sexual intercourse and all other sexual conduct/contact outside of the marriage relationship causes those involved to commit the sin of fornication.

The sin of fornication would include homosexuality, bestiality, and all sexual activity outside the marriage relationship. Sensual and lascivious activities such as provocative dancing, pornography, and immodest dress/behavior/speech will create lust within the hearts of individuals. That lust in the heart will by action give birth to the sin of fornication in the lives of those who practice such things (James 1:14-15). Continued and unrepentant participation in these things will cause a Christian to fall from grace and be lost (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Abortion is the murder of an unborn child.

At numerous times in the scriptures, God refers to children as persons while in the womb of their mother even from the moment of conception (Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 44:2,24; 49:1; Jeremiah 1:5). To willingly terminate the life of a child in the womb would be to shed the innocent blood of a person (Genesis 9:6; Proverbs 6:17).

Marriage can only exist between a man and woman as designed by God in the very beginning.

Since God created and facilitates the joining of marriage, there is no such thing as a “same sex” marriage (Genesis 2:23-24; Matthew 19:4-6).

A person can only remarry after a divorce if that person’s spouse committed fornication during the marriage before the divorce or their spouse has died.

Marriage was designed from the beginning with Adam and Eve as one man and one woman for all life (Matthew 19:4-6). Due to the hardness of men’s hearts against what is right, God provided an exception for the person whose spouse commits fornication with another while in the marriage relationship. This exception frees the spouse to divorce and to marry another (Matthew 19:9; Romans 7:2-4). Remarriage where there is not death or fornication in the marriage by one’s spouse will result in that marriage being an ongoing adulterous relationship (Matthew 5:32). The only option for a person who has been through a divorce where fornication has not been committed is to reconcile with that spouse or remain unmarried (Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:11).