

Littleton Bible Chapel's Doctrinal Statement

Concerning the Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Scriptures (the completed canon of 66 Old and New Testament books) are the inerrant Word of God. We believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. By *verbal*, we mean that the original writers were guided by the Holy Spirit in the exact choice of words yet respecting and reflecting the personality, style and vocabulary of each writer. By the word *plenary*, we mean that this divine verbal inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the original manuscripts – historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic – so that every word is both infallible as to truth and final as to divine authority. (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21; John 10:35; 2 Peter 3:16; John 5:39)

We affirm the literal method of interpretation which gives to each word the same exact basic meaning it would have in normal, ordinary, customary usage, whether implied in writing, speaking or thinking. We believe that the greater part of the Bible makes sense when interpreted literally; that it is the only sane and safe check on the imaginations of man and that it grounds interpretation in fact. This approach does not blindly rule out figures of speech, symbolism, allegories and types, but if the nature of the sentence so demands, it readily yields to the second sense. Therefore, when the plain meaning of the Scriptures makes common sense, we would seek no other meaning but rather take every word in its primary, ordinary, literal, usual sense unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

The following two principles are prerequisites to a proper interpretation of the Scriptures. First, one must be born again and have an utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to guide and direct. Second, one must interpret according to the immediate context as well as according to the larger context, such as the scope or the design of the book itself, and then by comparing Scripture with Scripture. (John 16:7-14; 1 Corinthians 2:7-16)

Concerning God

We believe in one God who is a personal and eternal Spirit, perfect and unchangeable in all his attributes. This one God eternally exists in three persons, impossible of division but capable of distinction as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All have precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and are worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience. (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Psalm 90:12; Isaiah 45:56; Matthew 3:16-17; 16:16; 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:1-14; Luke 11:13, 22:70; John 10:30; 14:10-11, 16:17; Acts 5:3-4; Hebrews 1:1-3; Revelation 1:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

God the Father. We believe in God the Father as creator of heaven and earth, perfect in holiness, infinite in wisdom, and measureless in power. We marvel and rejoice that he concerns himself mercifully and lovingly in the affairs of mankind; that he hears and answers prayer and that he saves from sin, its power over our life, and from spiritual death. He also takes the fear out of physical death for all who come to him through faith in the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 34:6; 147:5; John 1:3; 3:36; 6:27; Romans 1:18-20; 6:1-13; 1 Corinthians 15:2-4; Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 1:5; 2:1-2; 4:8; Revelation 3:20; 19:6)

God the Son. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, God the Son. We believe that he was pre-existent and is eternal, that he was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary, and is fully God and fully man. His death on the cross was substitutionary and representative and a sufficient propitiation for the guilt of all men. He arose bodily from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father where he now carries on a ministry as advocate and intercessor for the saints. We believe in his imminent, personal and bodily return to the earth. (John 1:1, 14; Luke 1:30-35; John 1:29; 1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 3:25-26; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Hebrews 10:5-14; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 2:2; 1 Corinthians 15; Hebrews 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:9-10)

God the Holy Spirit. We believe in the deity and personality of God the Holy Spirit and that he is said to be eternally “proceeding” from the Father and the Son. We teach that the Holy Spirit was the agent in the revelation and the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the one who bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God’s written Word. The Holy Spirit performs the work of regeneration in the heart of believers, baptizing them into the body of Christ, sealing, indwelling and filling them. He also bestows spiritual gifts upon them, empowering them for works of service. (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Ephesians 4:30; John 15:26; 16:13-14; 16:7-8; Ephesians 1:13; 3:16; Genesis 1:2; 2 Peter 1:21; Acts 5:3-4; Titus 3:5; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 12; John 3:5-6; Ephesians 5:18)

Concerning Satan and Angels

Their Origin. The angels were all created by God as a great host of sinless spirit-beings, most of whom kept their first estates of holiness and presently worship God and serve his purposes. (Psalm 148:2-5; Matthew 26:53; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:14)

The Fall of Some. One of the angels, Lucifer, fell through the sin of pride, thereby becoming Satan, and influenced a large company of angels to follow him, who thereby became demons. (Isaiah 14:12-17; 1 Timothy 3:6; James 2:19; 2 Peter 2:4)

Satan’s Work. The work of Satan and the demons is the attempted subversion and supplanting of the work of God. By a subtle suggestion, Satan accomplished the moral fall of the progenitors of the human race, subjecting them and their posterity to his own power. (Genesis 3:1-7; Job 1:12; 2:6; Ezekiel 28:13-15; Zechariah 3:1-2; John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; Ephesians 2:2)

Satan continues as the enemy of God and the accuser of God’s people and persistently seeks to counterfeit the work of God and distort the truth of God. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11; 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:12, 16; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:10)

We believe that Satan was judged at the cross, and that at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years. After the thousand years, he will be loosed for a short season to deceive the nations into rebelling against Christ; at that time he will be defeated by God and “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone,” where he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. (John 12:31; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 20:1-3, 10)

Concerning Man

His Original Nature. Man was directly and immediately created in the image of God, free from sin. He was created an immortal being with a rational nature, high intelligence and moral responsibility to God. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; James 3:9)

His Original Purpose. He was originally created with the divine intention that he should glorify God, enjoy his fellowship and fulfill his will and purpose in the earth. (Genesis 1:26-30; Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11)

His Subsequent Sin. Man subsequently fell into sin by a voluntary act of personal disobedience to the revealed will of God. (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; 1 Timothy 2:13-14)

His Present Condition. As a consequence, man became subject to the wrath of God, inherently corrupt, and incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. Thus he is hopelessly lost apart from the salvation which is in the Lord Jesus Christ. The fall of man was an historical and non-repeatable act, the effects of which are transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ excepted. All people thus are sinners by divine pronouncement, nature, and deed, and thus face God's wrath and judgment. (John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 1:8; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:12-19; James 2:10)

Marriage and Family. We believe God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. Almost every good institution found in society is first found, in principle, in the family. Family is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Sin has deeply damaged marriage and the family. We believe that the divine power provided in salvation enables believers to restore and fulfill God's original intentions in creating marriage, rather than remake marriage as egalitarian, genderless, or as a same-sex union.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for life. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and his church and to provide for men and women the framework and boundaries for intimate companionship and sexual pleasure; the means for the procreation of the human race; and a relationship where each gender complements and completes the other for each other's holiness and maturity. (Matthew 19:6; Romans 7:2-3; Ephesians 5:23-24; Proverbs 18:22; 19:14; Hebrews 13:4)

The husband and the wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship reflects how God relates to his people. A husband is to love and lead his wife and family as Christ sacrificially loves and leads the church. His leadership should be clear, God-honoring and servant-like, and never passive or dominating. His wife is to submit herself of her own free will to his loving, servant-like leadership even as the church freely submits itself to Christ. No human submission is absolute, but is as appropriate in the Lord. Submission is given to husbands who seek to bless, to serve and to otherwise enrich according to scriptural principles. A wife has a God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to be his faithful helper in this life, managing the affairs of their household and nurturing the next generation. (Genesis 1:27; Ephesians 5:24-25, 33; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:18)

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children moral and spiritual values and to lead them, through their lifestyle combined with loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth and to obey and honor their parents. (Psalms 139:13, 16; Proverbs 1:8; 22:6, 15; Colossians 3:20)

Concerning Salvation

We believe salvation involves the redemption of the whole person and is offered freely to all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who by his death obtained eternal salvation for the believer. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ and his work. Salvation begins with divine regeneration and includes justification, sanctification and glorification. (John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; Romans 8:30; Ephesians 2:4-10)

Regeneration, or new birth, is a work of God whereby he makes believers alive toward him. It is a change of heart that evidences itself in a conviction of sin, repenting of unbelief and immorality, the restored ability to believe God and what he has done for the sinner in Christ. (John 1:13; 3:5-6; Ephesians 2:4-5)

Justification is God's gracious, full acquittal upon principles of his righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ and repent. Justification is not based on the believer's righteousness, but on Christ's righteousness attributed by God to him as an abiding gift. (Romans 3:24; Acts 13:38-39)

Sanctification is the life, beginning at regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes so that he might glorify God through a life of fellowship and service. Since sinful desires are never fully eradicated in this life the believer must always turn from his sin, confess it to God and humbly and diligently seek ways to make no further provision for sin. (Titus 2:11; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 2:10)

Glorification is the culmination of salvation, which includes the resurrection of the body and the perfecting of a believer's reason, emotions and will and is the final blessed and abiding state of the believer. (Romans 8:30; Revelation 20:6; 21:4)

Concerning the Church

Its Nature. We believe that all who place their faith in Christ are united together immediately by the Holy Spirit in one spiritual body, the church, of which Christ is the head. The church was prophesied by Christ, born on the day of Pentecost and will be completed at the coming of Christ for his own. In addition to the spiritual union and communion which extends to the entirety of the body of Christ, the members of this one spiritual body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies of believers. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 1:4-5; 2:46-47; 11:15; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:4-6; 5:25-27; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 10:25)

Its Mission. We believe the church has a three-fold mission:

Edification: The church is to build up, strengthen, and encourage believers in their faith through the teaching of the Word of God and mutual, loving care of each member for one another. (1 Corinthians 12:14; Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2)

Evangelism: The church is to be a light for God and the gospel in a dark world. The final command of Christ was for his followers to make disciples of all nations. The church thus has a worldwide mission to spread the gospel to all peoples and nations. (Matthew 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:3-6)

Worship: The church is a body of believer-priests worshiping and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. New Testament worship includes prayer, praise, the Lord's Supper, the sacrifices of finances for others, and the offering of our lives to Christ. (John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Hebrews 13:15-16; Revelation 5:13)

Its Organization and Relationships

We believe in the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self-government to administering order, discipline, and worship according to Holy Scriptures. We affirm that it is biblical for true, believing churches to cooperate with each other for gospel outreach and united prayer for the community. (Acts 14:23; 20:28, 32; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

We teach it is the local church's divine responsibility to exercise discipline, as prescribed in the New Testament, of any member living in unrepentant sin. (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13)

Offices

We teach that there are two biblically designated offices in the church serving under Christ: elders and deacons. At Littleton Bible Chapel, the elders are the pastors of the church (also called *bishops*, *overseers*, or *shepherds* in the Scriptures). Some of the elders serve in a full-time capacity and others are self-supporting pastor-elders. There is no one pastor called the senior pastor. Only Christ is acknowledged as senior Pastor of the church. The elders jointly teach, lead and protect the church under Christ, the chief Shepherd. The elders are also responsible for initiating and directing church discipline. The church is to submit to their God-given leadership. Their leadership should be distinguished as pastoral, shared, male, qualified and servant-like. (1 Peter 5:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17)

The deacons are the servants of the church. Their ministry is to provide official, responsible care for the physical welfare of needy members of the church and thus relieve the pastor-elders so that they can give priority time and attention to teaching the Word and prayer. (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Corinthians 14:40; 1 Corinthians 5; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-12)

Spiritual Gifts. We believe that every member of the body of Christ has been given at least one spiritual gift according to the sovereign will of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are given in order to serve others, build up the body of Christ, promote unity and advance the gospel worldwide. (Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Acts 2; 1 Peter 4:11; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 2:1-4)

Gender Roles. We believe that all believers in Jesus Christ, whether male or female, are full members of the body of Christ enjoying complete equality in personhood, dignity and worth. We teach that both men and women should use their spiritual gifts to their fullest potential. (Galatians 3:28)

We also affirm that God created men and women differently to fulfill distinct gender roles, and that these differences are to be understood and enjoyed. In the formal gathering of the entire local church, women should not teach or exercise authority over men, but men should lead the church's public worship in prayer and ministry of the Word. Since the biblical order is male headship in the home, the local church family should do all in its power to consistently support and display this pattern in both its official and unofficial meetings. Women with teaching or evangelistic gifts have many opportunities available for teaching other women or children. (1 Timothy 2:8, 11-15; 1 Corinthians 14:33-36)

Baptism. We believe that water baptism is commanded by Christ for those who have believed in him, and that immersion was practiced and taught by the New Testament church. Water baptism is not regenerative, but is an outward sign and confession of identification with the Lord Jesus Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-4, 6; Colossians 2:12; Ephesians 2:4-6; Acts 2:38-41; 10:48; 1 Peter 3:21)

The Lord's Supper. We believe the Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the Lord's body, which was broken for us, and of his blood that was shed for our sins. There are two requirements that should be met before a person partakes of the supper. First, a person should be born again. Second, a Christian should examine himself or herself to determine if he or she is in fellowship with the Lord. We believe it is the Lord's table and as such is open to all believers. Not only is the Lord's Supper a memorial of what Christ has done on the cross, but it also shows our faith in that past work and faith in his anticipated return. (Luke 22:19, 22; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-30)

Concerning Last Things

The Intermediate State. At death the spirits of believers pass immediately into the presence of Christ and there remain in joyful fellowship. The soul is then united with a resurrected body at the Rapture. The souls of the unsaved at death descend immediately into Hades. Here they remain until the second resurrection when both body and soul are cast into eternal damnation. (Luke 16:22-23; 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23)

The Rapture of the Church. The next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the personal, bodily coming of Jesus Christ in the air to receive to himself those who have died in Christ and all those who are alive at his coming. At that exact moment, every believer will be transformed into his image. This event is the blessed hope set before believers in Scripture and we are encouraged to be constantly looking for it. During this time with Christ, two significant events occur; believers will be judged according to their works and will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb. (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; Revelation 19:7-10)

The Tribulation Period. After the removal of believers from the earth, the wrath of God will be poured out upon the unbelieving world. This period will last for seven years and will be climaxed by the return of Christ in glory to the earth, at which time the Old Testament and tribulation saints will also be raised. This is known as the first resurrection. Satan and his angels will be bound for a thousand years. (Daniel 9:27; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:15-31; 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 6; 19:11-21; 20:2)

The Millennium. After the seven-year tribulation period and the judgment of Christ upon the earth, Christ will establish his earthly messianic kingdom in which he will reign with his saints over Israel and all the nations of the earth for one thousand years. After this thousand-year period, Satan will be loosed from the abyss and lead a worldwide, final rebellion against Christ. At this point he will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Isaiah 11:1-16; 65:17-25; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Revelation 20:1-10)

The Eternal State. Finally, the unsaved dead will be raised and judged and committed to eternal punishment. This is the second resurrection and the Great White Throne Judgment. The saved will enter the new heavens and the new earth to live with Christ eternally. Having fulfilled his redemptive and kingdom missions as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God the Father that the triune God may reign forever with his people. (Mark 9:43-48; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-4; 22:5, 11)