

## What We Believe

### ABOUT GOD

God is that Being of which no one or no thing greater can be conceived. God is superior or more perfect than all else. He is the Being in which all authority and truth resides. There is one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4). The one true God has revealed Himself as the eternal, self-existent One (Isaiah 43:10-13).

As the Eternal One, He has always existed and will always exist. To be self-existent means that His existence depends upon no one other than Himself. He came into existence by His own power and He remains in existence by His own power.

God is infinite and sovereign to the universe. To be infinite is to be exceedingly immense and inexhaustible without limits. To be sovereign is to be the greatest supreme authority.

God as the Father is **“creator.”** God, by His bountiful goodness, made us and everything on and around this sphere on which we live. He even created natural laws such as the law of gravity and the law of condensation and evaporation (Amos 5:8; 9:6, Isaiah 55:8-10, Psalms 137:7, Jeremiah 10:13; 51:16). As Elohim, we understand Him as a God who can do all that He wills to do.

Also, God has further revealed Himself in the principles of relationship and association (Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 3:22). God interacts with His creation and creatures.

For relationship, the Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son (John 10:38). For fellowship, the Son is with the Father and the Father is with the Son (John 1:1-2). For authority, the Father is not from the Son but the Son is from the Father (John 6:35-38). The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son for authority (John 14:26). Neither three work separately and independently of each other.

### ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Christ made extraordinary and world historical claims about Himself. His claims set Him apart from all other religious leaders. He claimed to be divine, to be one with the Father who sent Him (John 10:30).

God withheld some knowledge from the prophets and even the angels (1st Peter 1:10-12, Ephesians 3:5). The knowledge that He once withheld, He later revealed through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 3:1-6). God withheld the full revelation of Himself until the coming of Jesus Christ.

Within the Old Testament, God only partially revealed Himself. He anticipated His full revelation that was to come through Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must interpret God before the coming of Christ in lieu of everything we learn about God after the coming of Christ.

Through Jesus Christ, God provides the most comprehensive portrait of Himself. Jesus is the living logo of God (John 1:1-3, 14). The word “word” was translated from the Greek word **“logos.”** It has been transliterated into the English language as “logo.” A logo was a visible representation and demonstration of a concept. Jesus is the visible representation and demonstration of the concept of God. Jesus visibly represented and demonstrated the concept of God (John 14:6-11).

Jesus is the image icon of God (Colossians 1:15-20). The word “image” comes from the Greek word **“eikon.”** It has been translated into the English language as “icon.” An icon was a self-interpreting identity. Jesus is the self-interpreting identity of God. Jesus is the clearest identity picture of God (Hebrews 1:1-3).

## ABOUT SALVATION

The message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus brought the church into existence. An appropriate response of faith toward the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus brings a person into a forgiven state, saved, and into the church.

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, is an adequate response of faith. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus proves that He is the Christ, the Son of God (see Romans 1:1-4, Acts 17:30-31). Therefore, only those who believe can become forgiven of sins, saved, and members of the church (see John 8:24, Acts 4:1-4, 8:35-37).

Repenting of sin is an adequate response of faith. Repentance is the change of heart within a person (see Matthew 21:28-32). In repentance, you change your allegiance (see Acts 2:38, 17:30, 26:19-20). You remove your allegiance to your selfish self and pledge your allegiance to the Savior.

Becoming baptized is an adequate response of faith. Baptism is your response to the call of God (see 1 Peter 3:21). Near the beginning of his ministry, the apostle Peter preached about baptism. Near the end of his ministry, the apostle Peter wrote about baptism. Even now baptism saves. What is baptism?

First, we consider the dry side of baptism. It is a response of the mind, for it is an internal appeal toward God. The dry side is a response of the conscience. The conscience is a product of accepted teachings (see John 8:1-9, Leviticus 20:10). The dry side is a response of a *good* conscience. Within this context, a good conscience is a heart that trusts in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 3:21). The resurrection proves that Jesus is the Son of God (see Romans 1:4, Acts 17:31). Only those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus have a good conscience for baptism (see John 8:24, Acts 8:35-37). If your conscience is insufficiently taught, your conscience will be insufficiently developed. And if your conscience is incorrectly taught, then it will be incorrectly developed.

Baptism takes place while the penitent believer is in water (see Acts 8:36-39). Baptism consists of taking the penitent believer to the water, and never bringing the water to the penitent believer. We should never attempt to reduce baptism to sprinkling and pouring of water. Some object to the necessity of being covered in water, but Jesus was sealed in His tomb (see Matthew 27:62-64, Romans 6:4). Some object to the necessity of water; yet, water is specifically mentioned (see Acts 8:36-39, 10:47, 1 Peter 3:20-21). God refused to heal Naaman until he went into the water (see 2 Kings 5:14).

When those who heard the gospel believed, repented, and became baptized, they were forgiven, saved, and became a member of the church. Even now, a faith response to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ allows one to become forgiven of sins, saved, and a Christian.

Why is there so much confusion on the subject of baptism? An intellectual exegesis of Scripture (bringing out of the text the ideas of the author) rather than an emotional exegesis of Scripture (bringing into the text the ideas of the reader) peels away most of the layers of confusion. The Holy Spirit could not come until after Jesus had risen from the dead and ascended to heaven (see John 16:7). Some forty (40) days after Jesus had risen from the dead, the Holy Spirit was yet to come (see Acts 1:1-8). The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit revealed the message of truth to those who wrote Scripture (see Ephesians 3:1-5, 2 Peter 1:21). The apostle Peter spoke the words of Acts 2:38 before Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote the words contained in their gospels. Being from regions beyond Jerusalem, most of those who heard the words of Acts 2:38 had not heard Jesus speak (see Acts 2:9-11). Even those who had heard Jesus speak failed to understand His message; therefore, they crucified Him (see Acts 3:17, 1 Corinthians 2:8).

Historically, the Jews offered sacrifices with an understanding that they would invoke the forgiveness (appeasement) of God. Even on Pentecost, they believed that they needed to respond in order to receive forgiveness of God. Subsequently, they asked, "What shall we do?" (See Acts 2:37). Peter had just preached a persuasive sermon designed to convince the audience that Jesus was the Christ and Lord (see Acts 2:36). Obviously, some who heard also believed, for their hearts were pricked (see Acts 2:37). Hearts are never pricked until belief comes. In addition to believing, they asked what to do. In other words, they were now asking, "After believing, what (else) shall we do?"

If they had been forgiven (saved) just by believing, Peter should have told them so. If they had been saved just by believing, Peter misled them by allowing them to believe that there was something they needed to do in order to be saved. In the past, they had killed and offered an animal in their effort to receive forgiveness of sins. Peter informed them that no longer would they have to kill a lamb. The lamb (Jesus) had already been slain. Now, they must repent and be baptized to embrace the death of Jesus. Only after Jesus had been raised from the dead did He make the connection or correlate baptism with salvation (see Mark 16:16). Therefore, Peter relates baptism to salvation (see Acts 2:38).

But what about Romans 10:9-10? Let's set the stage.

- Those to whom the apostle Paul addressed this letter were called and had become saints (see Romans 1:6-7).
- They had died to sin (see Romans 6:2).
- They had been baptized into Christ and His death (see Romans 6:3).
- They had been raised from the dead to walk in the newness of life (see Romans 6:4).
- They had become united with Jesus (see Romans 6:5).
- Their old self had been crucified with Christ (see Romans 6:6).
- They had obeyed from the heart the doctrinal teachings (see Romans 6:17).
- They had been freed from sin (see Romans 6:18).
- They had become servants of righteousness (see Romans 6:18).
- Jews from Rome had been in Jerusalem on Pentecost (see Acts 2:10). It is likely they were baptized at that time. Therefore, the apostle Paul said to the believers—those who had already been baptized—"Confess and believe."

What about Ephesians 2:8, which states, "For by grace you have been saved through faith?" The Ephesians had heard the message of truth (see Ephesians 1:13a). They had believed the message of truth (see Ephesians 1:13b). They had been baptized (see Acts 19:1-5). In Acts 8:30-32, the eunuch did not understand what he was reading from Isaiah chapter 53. Philip began at Isaiah 53:7, the scripture the eunuch was reading, and preached Jesus to him (see Acts 8:35).

- How could Philip preach Jesus when the name Jesus is not once stated in Isaiah chapter 53?
- How could Philip demand that the eunuch believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God when believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is never stated in Isaiah chapter 53?
- How could Philip introduce the subject of baptism while preaching Jesus from Isaiah chapter 53, when baptism is not stated in Isaiah chapter 53?
- How did Philip understand Isaiah chapter 53 when the eunuch did not?

The answers to all four questions are the same. Philip had a Holy Spirit-led post-resurrection understanding of the Old Testament (see Acts 6:5) and the eunuch did not. God more fully revealed His will to the apostles and prophets (see Ephesians 3:5). Philip had heard the message from the apostles in Jerusalem (see Acts 6:1-5). There are some things that had not been understood before, but came to be understood only after the resurrection of Jesus.

Because Philip had a Holy Spirit-led post-resurrection understanding of the Old Testament, God enlightened him to understand things more fully than others understood. God enlightened His apostles and prophets to understand the Old Testament. When we read the New Testament, we gain insight into the inspired minds of the apostles and prophets (see Ephesians 3:5). Jesus recognized that men needed a post-resurrection understanding of the Old Testament scriptures. Therefore, He opened their minds to understand them (see Luke 24:44-47). God opened Lydia's mind to understand (see Acts 16:14); her understanding led her to be baptized (see Acts 16:15). The Corinthians had been baptized (see Acts 18:8). Earlier, Paul alluded to their baptism (see 1 Corinthians 6:8-11). He even reminded them of the role of baptism in the deliverance of the Israelites (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Where does the Old Testament teach the purpose of baptism? It does not; it just illustrates it. The lamb's blood became available for the Israelites (see Exodus 12:21-28), yet the Israelites were not free from bondage until they passed through the sea (see Exodus 14:26-29). God saved Israel on the day that they passed through the water (see Exodus 14:30). The Holy Spirit's inspired commentary called that experience a baptism:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Scripture does provide a roadmap toward the salvation that is found only in Christ Jesus. We can ascertain the will of God through reading Scripture. Obedience to this guidance results in the best possible life on earth, as well as positions us for the best possible life beyond this earth.

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

God is holy. Because of sin, each of us became unholy. God could not and cannot ignore the sin that made us unholy. The apostle Paul described our problem like this, "...you were dead in your trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). He described God's remedy for our problem like this, "*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved*), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:4-9).

Because of His love for us, God sent His son, Christ Jesus, to pay the penalty for sin. What a wonderful expression of love! Because of the blood of Jesus, God is willing to forgive sin. We do need the forgiving grace of God. But how do I accept the forgiving grace of God?

It is evident that the Ephesians, to whom God addressed the previously mentioned scriptures, had accepted the grace of God. What did they do?

The Ephesians had heard and believed the gospel, "*In Him, you also, after **listening to** the message of truth, **the gospel** of your salvation – having also **believed**, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise*" (Ephesians 1:13)

The apostle Paul, the writer of the letter to the Ephesians, had actually been their teacher. He was the one who led them to the point of salvation. Luke, the writer of the book of Acts, records the series of events leading to the salvation of those who lived in Ephesus. After they had heard and believed, they were baptized, "*When they heard this, **they were baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 19:5).

Indeed, the Ephesians had been saved by grace through faith, "For by grace you have been saved through faith ..." (Ephesians 2:8). For the Ephesians to be saved by grace through faith, they needed to hear, believe, and be baptized. For you to be saved by grace through faith you, too, need to hear about Jesus becoming the sacrifice for your sin. Believe that He did, indeed, die for you, and become baptized in response to your faith.

What must I do to be saved is a most necessary question in all the earth. Many different and differing answers often are given; but how do the scriptures answer this question?

## Pledge of Allegiance

During His public ministry, John the Baptist endured intense interrogations. For the priests and Levites, He answered questions about His identity (John 1:19-23). But for the Pharisees, He answered questions about His ideology (John 1:24-27).

Throughout His public ministry, John the Baptist gained disciples (John 1:35, 4:1-2); but he introduced his disciples to Jesus (John 1:36). His disciples transferred their allegiance to Jesus (John 1:37).

As a child, you pledged your allegiance to your parents and their concept of Christianity. Allegiance to your parents and their concept of Christianity will sustain you only for a youthful while. To sustain you throughout your adult life, you must transfer your allegiance beyond your parents. Yes, you must transfer your allegiance to Jesus Himself. If you never transfer your allegiance beyond your parents and their concept of Christianity, you will eventually abandon your parents and their concept of Christianity.

Today, you must transfer your allegiance to Jesus. But, you ask, "What moves me to transfer my allegiance to Jesus?"

Jesus, the person, compels you to transfer your pledge of allegiance. He is the honored teacher, instructor, and tutor (John 1:38, 49, 3:1-2, 4:31). He is the anointed deliverer, messiah (John 1:41, 11:27).

Jesus, the privilege, compels you to transfer your pledge of allegiance. When you transfer your allegiance, you get to come into an intimate closeness with Jesus (1 John 1:38-39). One out of four has only one confidante. When you come, you also get to bring your relatives into an intimate closeness with Jesus (John 1:40-42).

Today, you must transfer your allegiance to Jesus. They transferred their allegiance from something that was good to something that was better. There was nothing wrong with JB (John the Baptist) but JC (Jesus Christ) was better. Allegiance to Jesus is a matter of urgent priority (John 1:41). Transferred allegiance is the mark of successful ministry (John 1:37, 42). **God wants you to transfer your allegiance today.**

## What About Membership

### Becoming a member of Graceview requires four things:

- (1) That you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and become baptized into Jesus Christ as your Savior.
- (2) That you accept the Bible to be the authoritative word of God.
- (3) That you will subscribe to and aggressively follow God's spiritual vision for Graceview – which, when stated, is: *To be relational, informational, and inspirational so that we can develop relationships, disburse information, and inspire others to serve to the glory and honor of God.*
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## What Kind of Church are we

What "denomination" or what kind of church is the Graceview Church of Christ? We are not a denomination. We are a fellowship of Christians who want to understand and do the will of God. We do limit ourselves by the word of God; therefore, we do not want to interpret the word through "tradition-tinted" ideologies. We are bound to no human-made creeds or traditions nor, do we defend denominational practices or institutions. Our Lord expects us to look beyond historical positions and ideas which conflict with scripture. Therefore, we always ask, "What do precepts, principles, and precedents of scripture say to the situation?"

We take our commitment to the building up of the body of Christ seriously. This demands that we constantly recognize the tremendous diversity of gifts, abilities and pertinent needs within our family of faith. Rather than expecting the members of our body to fit into a predetermined program, we tailor the ministry of the church to fit the needs of our living and growing church community.

The diverse ministries of Graceview will offer growing believers the refreshment of mutual edification, just as a healthy body requires both challenge and refreshment. Through dynamic small group interaction and programs geared to special segments of our fellowship, edification of the body of Christ is a vital part of the life of Graceview.

The Bible is more than a storybook or a textbook -- it is a Life Book! Whether instructing youth or adults, our Christian education leadership uses methods and materials that will convey the Bible in a relevant and understandable style.

Our learning-integrated Bible school program extends well beyond the classroom and encourages children toward Christ-likeness in all their relationships with their peers. The program provides a setting for students ranging from middle school through college-age to become prepared to make crucial life decisions. By learning from a Biblical perspective, hopefully the students will not be negatively influenced by their peers. Since they will be faced with pressure to conform to an artificial standard, it's imperative that students have a firm understanding of what is expected of them.

Our adult education opportunities will be "life changing." The classes will give parents, couples, family members and professionals the tools they need to live a victorious Christian life every day of the week.