

“Essential Christian Doctrines”

By Bishop Henry B. Alexander

*Acts 2:42, Hebrews 6:1-2, Titus 2:1, Titus 2:7, I Tim. 1:3,
I Tim. 4:16, II Tim. 3:3, II Tim. 1:13*

Introduction

Acts 2:42 says that the early Church “continued steadfast in the apostles’ doctrine...” Never has doctrine been more important to the Body of Christ than it is today. Scripture warns us of the hurried pace of life in the end-times and also of the reality that many would begin to preach doctrines of men and of devils. Because of these things the Church today is woefully under-educated and lacking in doctrinal study and focus. Today’s churches often focus on “therapeutic” messages and bible studies that aim to empowerment and sustain church members, but not to ground them in the important doctrinal truths that are the basis of our faith in Christ.

This book is designed to give a practical, brief overview of the essential doctrines of our faith. When the reader has successfully completed a serious study she or he will know *what* we believe as biblically-sound Christians and *why* we believe it. This book addresses the general doctrines that are the consensus of the Christian community, but also firmly examines and establishes the specific Apostolic revelations that we have been privileged to receive. We will focus on the identity of Jesus Christ, that unique name of salvation, the necessity of speaking in tongues, the importance of biblically-correct water baptism and other “apostolic” doctrines. We will also offer a summary *overview* of eschatology, examining the variously believed eschatological scenarios and eliminating those that are unbiblical.

Below is the list of doctrines that we will examine in the course of this book.

- ***Doctrine of Repentance from Dead Works***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Before a person can become saved or be accepted by God she or he must become sincerely sorry for their former sinful life and determine to change behavior with the help of God. Only the Spirit of God can bring a person to that decision, and apart from repentance, no one can be saved.” (*Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Romans 2:4, Luke 13:5*)

- ***Doctrine of Faith Towards God***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Because God is a Spirit anyone who will be saved must believe in things that cannot be proved by the human senses. God requires us to accept all His Word and the Christian scriptures as true, and to operate on that basis.” (*Ephesians 2:8, Hebrews 11:1, Habakkuk 2:4, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 5:1*)

- ***Doctrine of Baptisms (the New Birth)***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “In order for a person to be saved they must experience a two-part baptism consisting of both water and Spirit. A person who accepts water baptism is forgiven of his sins, and a person who asks for the Holy Ghost in faith will be given it. That person, having repented has then been born into the Kingdom of God.” (*Mark 16:16, John 3:3-5, Hebrews 6:2, I Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27*)

- ***Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Lord has selected physical contact expressed by the laying on of hands in faith, accompanied by prayer as a method of bringing physical and spiritual benefit to those who are willing to believe him. Benefits may include healing, receiving of the Holy Ghost or the stirring up of spiritual gifts.” (*Mark 16:18, Acts 19:6, Luke 22:51, James 5:14*)

- ***Doctrine of Resurrection of the Dead***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Death is not the end of human existence: At a given point in the future, every person who has ever lived will come back to life to stand before God.” (*Rev. 20:13, John 5:25, Daniel 12:2*)

- ***Doctrine of Eternal Judgment***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Every human being will be evaluated as to the way in which they lived their life, and the degree to which they obeyed God according to their knowledge of God.” (*Romans 14:10, Hebrews 9:27, Daniel 7:10, Matthew 25:31-33, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Ecclesiastes 11:9*)

- ***Doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Eternal God who revealed himself as Yahweh to Israel in the Old Testament came into the world through the womb of Mary and lived in human form for some thirty-three years as the man Christ Jesus. Jesus Christ was and is God manifested in human flesh.” (*II Corinthians 5:19, I Timothy 3:16, Isaiah 7:14, John 1:14*)

- ***Doctrine of Reconciliation by the Blood of Jesus***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Jesus Christ was ‘the Lamb of God’ provided to be the sacrifice that humanity needed, apart from whose blood there is no way to be saved.” (*Hebrews 10:14, John 1:29, II Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:7, I John 2:2*)

- ***Doctrine of the Oneness of God***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “From Genesis to Revelation, the Word of God is emphatic about the fact that there is only One God. Although He has revealed Himself as Father in creation, Son in the redemption of mankind, and Holy Ghost as He indwells the believer, He is utterly and absolutely One God.” (*Deut. 6:4, Colossians 2:9, John 10:30, Isaiah 9:6-7, John 14:8, Isaiah 45:21-23*)

- ***Doctrine of The Return of Christ***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Lord Jesus Christ will physically return to catch away the church, living and dead, in an event commonly known as ‘the Rapture.’ When the saints are caught away, we will go to be in the presence of Jesus, never to be separated from Him again.” (*I Thessalonians 4:16-17, I Corinthians 15:51-52, John 14:2-3, Acts 1:11*)

- ***Doctrine of End-times***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “God has a specific plan for the way events in human history will end, involving – the Rapture of the Church, the Tribulation period, the Battle of Armageddon, the Millennial Kingdom, the Final Battle and the Great White Throne judgment.” (*Acts 3:20, 21, II Thessalonians 2:3-12, I Thessalonians 5:1-4, St. Matthew 24:1-14*)

- ***The Virgin Birth***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was morally pure and had no sexual activity or encounter with any man before the birth of Jesus: Jesus Christ was conceived

within Mary's womb by means of a supernatural miracle carried out by the Spirit of God." (*Isaiah 7:14, St. Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-37*)

- ***The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus Christ***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Jesus Christ rose bodily from the dead after His crucifixion. His resurrection was by no means a philosophical idea, not did He come back only as a spirit only without a corporeal body: He physically rose from the dead with the same human body that had been crucified several days earlier.” (*1 Corinth. 15:12-22, 1 John 4:2-3, John 20:26-29*)

- ***Doctrine of Salvation by Grace***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “All mankind can only be saved by the grace, that is the unmerited favor and kindness, of God. It is absolutely impossible that any human being could ever live a life so good, nor work so hard that he could deserve salvation or eternal life apart from the mercy and kindness of God as expressed through the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary.” (*Ephesians 2:8, Isaiah 64:4, Romans 7:18, Titus 3:4-6*)

- ***Doctrine of Gifts of the Spirit***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “When God gives the Holy Spirit to a believer, it is His practice to give the believer supernatural spiritual gifts and abilities for the purpose of using that person to build the Kingdom of God and achieve spiritual results.” (*Ephesians 4:10, 1 Corinthians 12:1, Romans 12:6-9*)

- ***Doctrine of the Church***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Church is made up of those who have chosen to become born again. It is a spiritual family separated from the unsaved world and brought into existence by the will of Jesus Christ. Its growth and development is continually His concern until the end of the Church Age.” (*St. Matthew 16:18, 1 Peter 2:5, Colossians 1:24, Ephesians 5:32*)

- ***Doctrine of the Supremacy of the Name of Jesus***

Statement of doctrinal – God has invested a special and unique power in the name of “Jesus Christ.” Appreciation and invocation of the name brings benefit and is effectual in the spirit realm, useful in spiritual warfare and powerful in prayer. Scripture identifies it as the only name that brings salvation to humanity. (*Acts 4:12, Philipians 2:9-10 Eph.1:21, Colossians 3:17*)

- ***Doctrine of New Testament Church Leadership***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “God has ordained that His Church should be governed by a five-fold sharing of authority through the offices of Apostle, Evangelist, Prophet, Pastor and Teacher. These offices are ordained to bring the church to full maturity.” (*Ephesians 4:11, Jeremiah 3:15, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1*)

- ***Doctrine of Sanctification***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Once a person is saved by the grace of God she or he is required by their love for God to continue to grow in godliness and in conformity to the character and nature of Christ Jesus. This discipling, transforming experience is known as the process of sanctification, the

aim of which is to bring the believer to a lifestyle in which they live in no known sin.” (II Cor. 7:1, I Peter 1:14-16, I Peter 5:10, I Thess. 4:3-4)

- ***Doctrine of Divine Inspiration of Scripture***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Word of God is perfect, was given by the Holy Ghost and contained no errors in the original *autographs* which the Spirit of God gave to the human writers. All information that we need for salvation is given to us in the sixty-six books of inspired scripture.” (Psalm 19:7-9, II Tim. 3:16, Psalm 119:89, II Peter 1:20, Rev. 22:18-19)

Chapter One

A. What is doctrine?

1. It is the set of beliefs that characterize a movement or belief system. It may be either spiritual or non-spiritual in its subject matter – allowing for communist doctrine, economic doctrines, political doctrines and others.
2. Christian doctrine is the set of beliefs that characterize and pertain to the Christian Faith and its concepts of God, Jesus Christ, salvation, human responsibilities and lifestyle, the significance of human life and the world around us, the meaning and goal of human history, etc.
 - a. Greek *didaskalia* means “the content and act of teaching the body of ideas that are to be used as the standard of *orthodoxy*.” (*Didache* is another word used to express the same idea.)
3. The opposite of sound doctrine are those ideas which are described in scripture as *heresy*.

B. What does doctrine do?

1. It defines “*orthodoxy*” and maintains a necessary unity of beliefs among adherents of a given belief system.
2. Once certain key issues for unity are established, it *identifies* who is truly and fully a part of the subject group of doctrinal adherents. By definition it also identifies who is *outside* the group.
3. Doctrine is a rallying point of belief, providing a fixed system of thought that prevents *drift* over time and protects against excessive liberty of opinion and deviation from the centrally important ideas of a belief system. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

C. What does scripture tell us about doctrine?

1. “Hold fast the form of sound words” (II Timothy 1:13)
2. “you have fully know my doctrine...” (II Timothy 3:10)
3. “Till I come give attendance to reading, to doctrine...” (I Timothy 4:13)
4. “Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine...” (I Timothy 4:16)
5. “Whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God...” (II John 9)
6. “Speak the things which become sound doctrine...” (Titus 2:1)
7. “...able by sound doctrine to ...convince the gainsayers” (Titus 1:9)
8. Damnable heresies (II Peter 2:1), doctrines of devils (I Tim. 4:1), doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2:14), doctrine of the Nicolaitanes (Rev. 2:15), etc...

D. How significant is doctrine in the Christian world today?

1. Most of mainstream Christianity and most mega-churches have no idea how critically important doctrine is to the body of Christ and to the Lord.
2. There is a *customer service* orientation among many churches today which takes the church's attention away from what believers really *need* to an emphasis on what they *want* and on the issues that *drive the masses* of people to your church: It is somewhat comparable to a child telling a parent what they want to eat. This "itching ears" phenomenon was prophesied in II Timothy 4:2-5.
3. Those who are not sound see doctrine as nearly irrelevant and somewhat divisive: They feel that *sincerity* is a sufficient quality to make any Christian beliefs or ideas acceptable to God.
4. Lack of focus on doctrine and its importance is a predicted characteristic of "last days" church life (as stated in II Timothy 3:5).

E. The APOSTLE'S DOCTRINE (see Acts 2:42) is the bedrock standard of Christian truth for the Church today.

1. Simon Peter's sermon in Acts 2, which is the first sermon delivered at the first "church service" in Christian history, must be studied carefully. The most Foundational Christian ideas are recorded in Acts 2 and are identified in scripture by the phrase "the apostles doctrine." The ideas Peter sets forth in this initial Christian service and sermon are the standard to which all sound Christian teachers must adhere regarding all the topics addressed. Anything else is "another gospel" and must be steadfastly rejected. (Galatians 1:6-9) (*See Attachment A)

F. A Partial list essential doctrines we will study in the course of the semester

- 1. Doctrines of Theology**
 - a. Who is God?
 - b. Characteristics and attributes of God
- 2. Doctrines of Cosmology**
 - a. Origin of the world and all things
- 3. Doctrines of Christology**
 - a. Who is Jesus Christ
 - b. The divinity of Christ Jesus
 - c. Jesus' work as the Son of God
- 4. Doctrines of Soteriology**
 - a. The atonement at Calvary
 - b. How mankind may be reconciled to
 - c. The process of "re-birth"
 - d. Sanctification and perseverance of the saints

5. **Doctrines of Ecclesiology**

- a. What is the Church
- b. Gifts of the Spirit
- c. The mission of the church
- d. Biblically-established offices of the church

6. **Doctrines of Eschatology**

- a. The “beginning of sorrows”
- b. The Glorious Appearing of Christ and the translation of the saints
- c. The Tribulation and its key figures
- d. Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ
- e. The millennial Kingdom
- f. The Last Battle
- g. The Great White Throne Judgment
- h. The new heavens and new earth

Chapter Two

“Understanding the APOSTLES’ DOCTRINE”

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship,
and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)*

Scripture tells us that the church is “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” At Pentecost we see a foundation laid by Peter, the apostle with the keys to the kingdom of God (St. Matthew 16:17). Luke makes it clear that the original church continued to preach and teach what the apostles had established as a foundation in the second chapter of Acts.

In the Old Testament Moses was commanded to make every according to a divinely given pattern. In the New Testament, the apostles revealed God’s patterns for the church - and all men of sincerity are absolutely obligated to build in conformity to and reverence for that pattern once given, the faith once delivered. The moment any deviation from the pattern is detected we are compelled by conscience and by the Spirit of God to *stop, reverse* our course and get *back* into conformity with the apostolic pattern of things!

What is the Apostles’ Doctrine?

What is a doctrine? The word doctrine comes from the Greek *didache*, which means important teachings, usually related to central principles of key ideas. Everyone would agree that in any field of study or learning, some ideas are more essential and fundamental than others. Therefore scripture allows liberty on some nonessential matters (see Romans 114) but requires strict adherence to other key concepts (John 8: 24)

What important doctrinal issues did Peter address in that first sermon? I feel there are at least ten important doctrines that are dealt with in either this first sermon of the first Altar Call given in this chapter.

Doctrine One – On the Holy Spirit Baptism - God’s promise–

-that it was prophesied by Old Testament prophets (Joel) (vs 16)

Doctrine Two – On the The Resurrection of Christ

-that Jesus was bodily resurrected from the dead, as prophesied by David (vs 24-32)

Doctrine Three – On Holy Spirit Baptism given by Jesus

-that Jesus is the one who gave them the Pentecostal Experience (The Holy Ghost) (vs 33)

Doctrine Four – On Jesus’ Divinity and Messiahship

-Jesus of Nazareth is assuredly both Israel’s God (Lord) and Israel’s Messiah (“Christ”) (vs 36)

Doctrine Five – On repentance, that everyone who want to be reconciled to God must repent

-it is the first of three related steps (vs 38)

Doctrine Six – On baptism, that everyone must be baptized, without exception

-clear unambiguous universal necessity (vs 38)

Doctrine Seven – On the authority of baptism, that Baptism is to be administered “in the name of Jesus Christ”

-this is a direct quote (the direct address to “you,” showing it to be a direct quote) (vs 38)

Doctrine Eight – On the meaning of baptism, that Baptism is done to remove sin, to bring spiritual cleansing

-it is described as *for* the remission of sins, not, as some wrongly seek to say, *because of* the remission of sins.(vs 38)

Doctrine Nine – On receiving the Holy Ghost, that the Holy Ghost can never be earned, but is freely given by God

-it is described as a *gift* (vs 38)

Doctrine Ten – On the universality of the Spirit’s availability, that the Holy Ghost is universally promised and relevant for every believer

-“you, your children, all” (vs 39)

Understanding Luke’s motive for writing the book of Acts (so that the Roman leader Theophilus could understand the characteristics of the early church) we then see vital importance of Luke’s summation of the essential teachings and doctrines of the Apostles as derived from Peter’s preaching on the Day of Pentecost. He is writing to show Theophilus the essential ideas of Christianity and summarizes those foundational ideas as follows -

1. The apostles taught that the baptism of the Holy Ghost was God’s promise to the Church
2. The Apostles taught the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
3. The apostles taught that the Holy Ghost was given by Jesus to the church
4. The Apostles taught that Jesus was God and that He was Israel’s Messiah
5. The Apostles taught that everyone must repent
6. The Apostles taught that every must be baptized in order to be saved
7. The Apostles taught that baptism was to be administered in the Name of Jesus Christ
8. The Apostles taught that baptism was for the *remission* of sins
9. The Apostles taught that the Holy Ghost was a gift from God
10. The Apostles taught that the Holy Ghost was a promise to all whom the Lord would call

Chapter Three

“The Doctrine of Eternal Judgment”

This is one of the basic doctrines of Christianity. It is listed as one of the six essential doctrines that are identified in Hebrews 6:1-2

1. **Repentance** from sin
2. **Faith** towards God
3. Doctrine of **baptisms**
4. Laying on of **hands**
5. ***Resurrection** of the dead
6. Eternal ***Judgment**

Here is our summary statement from our class outline concerning the issues of the resurrection and the judgment-

- ***Doctrine of Resurrection of the Dead***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Death is not the end of human existence: At a given point in the future, every person who has ever lived will come back to life to stand before God.”

(Rev. 20:13, John 5:25, Daniel 12:2)

This truth of the absolute universal resurrection of all who ever lived is contrasted to various false theories about the afterlife, such as –

Reincarnation – concept that man is reborn continually, learning new lessons during each incarnation and finally arriving at Nirvana or nothingness (after many lifetimes). Such things are commonly taught in Hinduism and Buddhism.

Annihilation-ism – a theory falsely taught by groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses and Seventh Day Adventists and others. It teaches that those who are not saved will simply be destroyed in a manner similar evaporation or combustion.

Obviously atheism contends that death and loss of consciousness is the end of existence – that only the material world is real.

- ***Doctrine of Eternal Judgment***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “Every human being will be evaluated as to the way in which they lived their life, and the degree to which they obeyed God according to their knowledge of God.”

(Romans 14:10, Hebrews 9:27, Daniel 7:10, Matthew 25:31-33, Ecclesiastes 12:14, Ecclesiastes 11:9)

Every person will be judged as to the way in which they lived. Those who have accepted the blood of Jesus and been born again will be justified and vindicated at the judgment seat because of the righteousness of Christ: Those who rejected Christ will be judged on the basis of their *own* behavior, and all will be found guilty and worthy of death. We further believe that those who never heard the gospel will be judged justly and kindly by Jesus Christ, because the scripture says “where there is no law there is no transgression.” (Romans 4:15): Each will receive a reward according to his conformity to his conscience and his conformity the degree of spiritual light he possessed.

Here’s how the after-life works

When one dies, if he is outside relationship with God he immediately goes to a place called Hades which has two compartments or two sides. A sinful person immediately goes to the terrible side of Hades and is immediately punished. He never loses consciousness and continues to be punished and in pain until he is called forward to the Judgment (recorded in Rev. 20). At the judgment he will be found guilty of his sins and sentenced to eternal damnation. Having been convicted and

sentenced he will then be taken to eternal hell (know as *Gehanna*) and will be left there in torment forever – separated from God, the saints and the angels.

When a righteous person dies she or he is immediately escorted into the presence of the Lord and the righteous dead who have preceded him. They are in a place called “Abraham’s Bosom,” where the righteous will fellowship and spend time in the presence of God until the RAPTURE of the Church. This part of *hades* is also known as “paradise.” At that time the righteous dead and the righteous living on the earth will all be caught up together to be with Jesus in the Heavenly City. By the time they go to heaven all the righteous dead will already have been judged at a place called the *Bema Seat* of Christ, where the righteous received a reward for the work they have done for Jesus in their lifetime. The righteous dead are not now in heaven: No human will be allowed to go to heaven until we all go up together.

After seven years I heaven all the righteous will return to earth to sit with Jesus at the judgment of the wicked on thrones of power and authority.

Definitions and Key Terms about the afterlife –

Hades – a place with two compartments, one for the righteous and one for the wicked.

Gehanna – Hebrew word meaning “a lake of fire” talking about hell
Bottomless Pit
Outer Darkness

Hell -

Tartarus – a place of imprisonment for wicked demons who fell with satan

Scriptures about the afterlife -

Chapter Four

Doctrines of Soteriology

Hebrews 6:1 speaks of the doctrines of repentance from dead works, faith towards God, and the doctrine of baptisms.” Below is our statement of doctrinal truth as listed in our initial class notes.

Doctrine of Baptisms (the New Birth)

Statement of doctrinal truth	In order for a person to be saved they must experience a two-part baptism consisting of both water and Spirit. A person who accepts water baptism is forgiven of his sins, and a person who asks for the Holy Ghost in faith will be given it. That person, having repented has then been born into the Kingdom of God. (Mark 16:16, John 3:3-5, Hebrews 6:2, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27)
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The term “soteriology” comes from two Greek terms, namely, soter meaning “savior” or “deliverer” and logos meaning “word,” “matter,” or “thing.” In Christian systematic theology it is used to refer to the study of the biblical doctrine of salvation. It often includes such topics as the nature and

extent of the atonement as well as the entire process of salvation, conceived as an eternal, divine plan designed to rescue lost and erring sinners and bring them back into eternal fellowship with God. Many regard it as the primary theme in Scripture with the glory of God as its goal.

A. Concepts of Salvation

1. Concept of the need for salvation
 - a. Because Adam's sin mankind must be reconciled to God. (
 - b. A Practical definition – "salvation" mean's deliverance from the practice and penalties of sin
 1. death, poverty, emotional suffering, physical sickness, relational conflict, etc.
2. The concept of salvation (Greek – *soterion*). Key theological words in salvation are
 - a. **Redemption** (i.e. a transaction of purchase, e.g. redeeming shoes from Nordstrom)
 - b. **Propitiation** (i.e. the cost of an item. The propitiation of shoes may be \$150.)
 - c. **Atonement** (i.e. reconciliation between God and humanity, or the act of making a reconnection or bringing a cessation of hostility.) This is the Old Testament concept of God's dealings with Israel's sins.
 - d. **Remission** (of sins) – (the removal or sins, an actual doing away or wiping away of sins.) This is the New Testament concept of absolute removal of sin because of a superior sacrifice.)

B. God's part in Salvation

1. God, for his own reasons, decided that man's sinfulness could only be dealt with by the shedding of blood and by loss of life! True to his promise to Adam, sin must always produce death – by God in His kindness solved the problem by providing the Universal Blood Sacrifice that His righteousness required, through the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary. (Genesis 22 "The Lord will provide himself a lamb...")
2. Salvation was God's idea, done God's way in God's time. Calvary makes salvation possible for any human being who will take advantage of God's gracious offer.

C. Man's part in Salvation

1. The universal and timeless ingredient that makes salvation possible is, and always has been FAITH! At all times mankind could only ever be saved by faith, in both the Old and New Covenants (see Hebrews 11).
2. In New Testament times man must believe in the blood shed at Calvary and access the benefits of the atonement by entering into a covenant with God through willing rebirth. (John 3:3-8). Because faith requires action (James 2) man must volitionally embrace the new covenant as an act of free will by being born of water and spirit as declared in the teaching of Jesus Christ and the preaching of Simon Peter and the apostles. (Acts 2:38, Acts 8:16, Acts 19:5-6, Acts 10:44-46)

D. A Correct Doctrine of Baptisms

1. Throughout the Body of Christ there is widespread error and many misconceptions about the meaning and nature of baptism. Below are several key biblically-based statements of truth

about the role of baptism in salvation.

- a. Principle One – Baptism is absolutely necessary and must be received by each and every person who is to be a part of the New Covenant. (John 3:5, Galatians _____)
- b. Principle Two – Within the Body of Christ there is one, common and correct baptism (Ephesians 4:6) but it contains two separate and distinct parts, being
 1. baptism with **water** (for the remission of sins)
 2. baptism in the **Holy Ghost**, *Holy Spirit* (for empowering and for the power of new life)
- c. Principle Three – Water baptism was historically administered solely and exclusively in the Name of Jesus Christ by the Apostles and those who God used to establish the early church. (*Acts 2:38, Acts 4:12, Acts 19:5, Col. 3:17,
- d. Principle Four – It was the standards, common and universal means of entrance into the church. No instances of a verbal “Sinners’ prayer” are demonstrated at any point in the historical record. (Reference the entire book of Acts of the Apostles)
- e. Principle Five – Water Baptism was specifically identified as being “for the remission of sins,” not an outward sign of an inner change or in any way optional or discretionary for those who wanted to join the Body. (I Peter 3:21, Acts 22:16)
- f. Principle Six – Baptism appears to have been for adults who were capable of understanding sins (Acts 2:38 – “*repent*”) and to have been by immersion, as inferred in the instance of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8).

E. Historical-Theological perspective of Salvation

1. **Calvinism Versus Arminianism** - Historically there has been a protracted discussion of the origin of man’s salvation, centered in the question of God’s sovereignty and man’s “free will.” The classical opposing camps and ideologies have been as Arminianism versus Calvinism. Calvinism postulates that man is saved by divine predestination and emphasizes the sovereignty of God: It focuses on the concept of election, that God simply causes a person to be saved because of eternal decisions made before the foundation of the world. In such cases man has no part to play in his own salvation. John Calvin was the chief proponent of this soteriological paradigm. The Five Points of Calvinism are usually summarized in the acronym T.U.L.I.P., meaning
 1. The Total Depravity of man, (T)
 2. Unconditional eternal security, (U)
 3. Limited Atonement, (L)
 4. the Irresistible grace of God, and (I)
 5. the Perseverance of the saints (P)

Conversely Arminianism (not Armenianism, as in a race of people, but Arminianism as in a man, Arminius) proposes that all mankind may freely choose to be saved or lost based upon their human volition, and that God simply affirms the decision that man makes in the matter. Each side has a body of scripture which they rightly or wrongfully interpret to

support their view.

2. Between the two schools of thought, the *obviously* correct view is the Arminian position which *rightly* says that “whosoever will” may freely come to the Lord and receive salvation. Still it is important to know that contrary views exist in the Body of Christ.

G. Examining the biblical/historical record of the early church

1. It is absolutely necessary that we examine the book of Acts closely and recognize it as the historical document that shows us the customs and practices of the early Christian Church before its later corruptions and heresies emerged. It stands to reason, since we “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” that the practices and procedures that we can identify in the Early Church may safely be practiced and replicated by the Church today.

Chapter Five *The Doctrine of Laying on of Hands*

Hebrews 6 points to six primary principles of the doctrine of Christ –

Repentance from dead works,
Faith towards God
Doctrine of *Baptisms*
The laying on of hands
The *Resurrection* of the Dead
Eternal Judgment

Here is a summary statement on the meaning and significance of the doctrine of the laying on of hands -

• ***Doctrine of the Laying on of Hands***

Statement of doctrinal truth – “The Lord has selected physical contact expressed by the laying on of hands in faith, accompanied by prayer as a method of bringing physical and spiritual benefit to those who are willing to believe him. Benefits may include healing, receiving of the Holy Ghost or the stirring up of spiritual gifts.” (*Mark 16:18, Acts 19:6, Luke 22:51, James 5:14*)

The “laying on of hands” is perhaps the most *supernatural* and *miraculous* aspect of basic Christian doctrine. The notion of physical contact that conveys spiritual benefit is a greatly overlooked and undervalued aspect of Christian doctrine by many believers and ministries. It asserts that there is a spiritual dimensional release that results physical contact initiated by faith in God.

Scripture indicates that when an intercessor believes in the power of it, and when the recipient also believes there is a God-authorized response from the spirit realm into the physical realm.

The woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment in faith and a spiritual event/dynamic occurred, with any conscious agreement or effort on Jesus' part. (Matthew 14:36)

This doctrine lifts Christianity out of the philosophical, ideological realm and into the realm of power and performance! Without this doctrine and these assertions Christianity would be only an intellectual belief system like any other. The ideas of Christianity are powerful and true, but God recognizes that mankind is blessed and helped if he uses supernatural things to CONFIRM HIS WORD with signs and wonders (**READ MARK 16:20**). We sometimes need "signs following."

Scripture prophesied the coming of professors of religious faith who would have only a "...form of godliness, but denying the *power* thereof..." (II Timothy 3:5). And there are many Christian denominations today who believe in the ***Cessation Theory***, which postulates that all the miracles, signs, wonders and supernatural things died out with the death of the last of the twelve apostles, and that God no longer works miracles or does the *supernatural* today. Yet, the doctrine of the laying on of hands, right here listed as among the six most critical doctrines of Christianity, is an intensely supernatural doctrine.

In point of fact, it is impossible to preach the authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ without including heavy elements of the supernatural, especially since the very initial rebirth processes involve a *necessary* supernatural event for every believer – the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Holy Spirit baptism is God's supernatural part in the salvation of an individual and in his inclusion in the Christian church. The individual may in fact embrace a presumed REPENTANCE, and the minister or evangelist may minister the WATER BAPTISM (with the assumption of the remission of sins), but only God can administer the BAPTISM IN THE HOLY GHOST: The truly, undeniably supernatural part must come from God Himself, and without that ingredient a man or woman is still no yet born again. Hence supernatural is *birthed* in the supernatural. It cannot be removed from our doctrine.

Biblically, the laying on of hands was advocated and used for the following kinds of benefits –

- To *bless* the life of the individual receiving prayer
- To *consecrate* and individual to a sacred office or calling
- To promote physical *healing*
- To minister (not give) *the Holy Ghost* to those who are seeking it

Let's look at biblical examples of each use of the laying on of hands

A. Blessing

Genesis 48:17 – Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph
Matthew 19:13-15

B. Consecration

Moses laid hands on Joshua to consecrate him as his successor in Numbers 27:23. It effectually ministered *ruling authority* into his life.
Paul and Barnabas were sent out with the laying on of hands (Acts 13:3)
Paul ministered God's impartation of gifts to Timothy with the laying on of hands (II Timothy 1:6)

C. Physical Healing

Jesus healed by laying on of hands (Mark 6:5, Luke 13:13, Matthew 9:29)

Jesus prophesied that believers would minister healing this way (Mark 16:16)

- D. Ministry of Holy Ghost Baptism
 - Peter and John at Samaria (Acts 8:17)
 - Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:5-6)

What is to be the use of laying on of hands in the church today? How ought it to be done? What benefit will be derived, and what would be lost by neglecting this spiritual practice?

It is one of the “weapons of our warfare” spoken of in II Corinthians 4:10. Failure to take advantage of it would make us greatly accountable before God as negligent gospel workers. If the laying on of hands is not used then the supernatural aspects of the Kingdom will become increasingly unrecognized and underutilized: The church will become increasingly cerebral and less empowered in signs and wonders.

Many people have a hard time believing the ideas of the gospel for their own sake and are greatly benefited if they can see God perform some miraculous thing that builds their faith: This is true of both the saved and unsaved.

We need to train our ministers and workers to have great faith in the laying on of hands, to act expecting God to confirm his word in these things.

- A. People still need it for physical healing, working in conjunction with medical science for physical well-being
- B. People still need assistance in opening their spirits to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost
- C. Ministers and church workers still need the greatest possible authority and empowerment as they set out to do the work of the Lord.

Chapter Six *The Doctrine of Repentance from Dead Works*

Chapter Seven *The Doctrine of Faith Towards God*

- A. Definitions of the concept of “faith”**

“Faith” in the widest sense is assent to the truth or persuasion that a thing is true.
The primary element of faith is *trust*.

Faith is essentially a **decision** to believe something which would not normally be verifiable through the senses and uses of ordinary, common proof.

1. Greek - **pistuo** or **pistus**. It refers to acting and behaving with the assumption that something is true and accurate.

2. Some use Hebrews 11:1 as a definition of “faith,” – i.e. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This however is not a *definition* of faith though it points to the usefulness and significance of faith.

3. A practical, usable definition of “faith” might be, “A decision to behave on the assumption that God’s word is true, as if God absolutely and precisely meant all that He has said, and is to be trusted.”

a. In John 3:12-13 Jesus presents Himself as the ultimate authoritative witness who has revealed to us those things which we could in no possible way perceive for ourselves without his revelation. His assertion compels us to make a decision about His “testimony,” whether we are to place faith in it or not. ourselves, and which

b. The testimony of Jesus Christ stands in contrast to that of every other religious figure – Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, Zoroaster and all other lesser figures. We are Christians because we have chosen to believe and affirm the teachings and testimony of Jesus Christ.

B. “Faith towards God” is shown to be one of the principles of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1-2)

1. In this context the *faith* referred to has to do with trusting God for salvation. It deals with an individual’s decision to *believe* the Gospel presented and to *act* in response to the preached Word, because “faith without works is dead.” (James 2).

a. Saving faith includes –

1. his faith is faith *in the blood of Jesus*,
2. faith in the cross of Calvary,
3. faith in the love of God,
4. faith in the efficacy of water baptism and the validity of Spirit baptism.
5. Faith in the eschatological truth of the rapture, new creation, etc.

This is the faith that is to be distinguished from a different category of faith – which is the faith used to change and influence the circumstances of life by prayer. So we are talking about two different kinds of faith –

- i. Faith for Salvation, and
- ii. Faith to take Authority in the world around you.

C. Some essential truths about saving faith include the following statements

1. The most essential concept of the New Covenant (i.e. New Testament salvation) is that we are “JUSTIFIED BY FAITH...” (Romans 5:1), that we are made acceptable to God through our faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, and not by our own works or spiritual merit.

2. No one can come to SAVING FAITH except they are ministered to by a preacher – according to Romans 10:14-17
“so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

3. Hebrews 11:6 says that faith is absolutely necessary to be in an effective relationship with God.
“...without faith it is impossible to please God...”

4. Faith in the deity of Christ is absolutely essential for salvation (see John 8:24)
“...for if ye believe not that I am he ye shall die in your sins.”

5. Faith is the only way that man could ever grasp the basic concepts of spiritual, non-Intangible, non-material eternal realities. (II Corinthians 4:18)
“...the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

6. Faith has always been the way that man lived in relationship; with God –both under the Mosaic Law and before the Mosaic law – taking God at His Word concerning things about which man could have no knowledge without God’s divine initiative and revelation. (Heb. 11:2)
“For by it the elders obtained a good report.”

7. Faith alone, as a mental assent to truth does not save you – faith must be acted upon in order to be a “living” faith that is effectual. (James 2:17, 20, 26)

D. The DAILY USE OF FAITH - The other primary application of faith is for receiving the Kingdom, i.e. changing, controlling and managing the world we live in, demonstrating the power of God’s Kingdom and living an “abundant life” in this fallen world, because we exercise our God-given authority in prayer. This aspect of faith requires our active and intentional participation so that we can receive the full set of benefits that are available to those that are in covenant with Christ. It operates by a few basic assumptions -

1. That God has empowered the believer who will operate his life in faith
2. That God has given us promises which makes us rightfully entitled to a plethora of blessings and privileges
3. That Satan will seek to contest those blessings and will successfully rob us of them if we do not know our rights and fight for our blessing in active spiritual warfare through faith
4. That we must control and program our minds so that we are able to operate in the principles and truths of faith – by memorizing and meditating on the Word of God
5. That we must have a deep heart persuasion that God will perform his promises

6. That we must speak and behave on the basis of our faith – not out of fear, doubt, need or a sense of crisis.
7. That we must wait patiently for the promises of God to manifest, no matter how long the waiting period is.

There are many other truths relating to faith and its use in the life of the saints on a daily basis. New Testament writers speak of “...fighting the good fight of faith...” as a necessary part of the life of a child of God.