

## FOUNDATIONAL CHRISTIAN TRUTHS

There is one God, who reveals himself as three distinct Persons - Father, Son, and Spirit. The desire of the Triune God is to share one and the same Divine Nature and Life with persons who are not God. That includes humans, angels, and, if any, other persons in the universe who may be there.

God the Father is the Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. By his sovereign grace and mercy, he created the universe in order to establish the persons who would share his life in communion with the Son and the Spirit. This communion occurs through Jesus Christ and him alone. He is the one who brings us into the family of the Trinity.

Jesus Christ is the only-begotten Son of the Father and is both true God and true man. He was sent by the Father and conceived by the Spirit in the womb of the virgin, Mary, at a specific time in history. He preached the good news of reconciliation with God, suffered and died on a cross, was buried, descended into the very depths of Hell to take back from Satan the dominion over all creation that man had lost by his disobedience, arose again from death after three days by the power of God, and ascended to the right hand of God the Father. From there, he and the Spirit intercede for all those who believe in him and for all people. From there, he rules as Lord, King, and Head of his Body and of the Family of God, which is the Church.

Through his atoning death and resurrection, he restores to friendship with God all who commit themselves to him as Savior and Lord in faith and obedience. At the time the Father has already decided, he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. He will bring those who, by their free choice, accept and serve him into eternal life and communion with the Father and the Spirit. He will allow those, who by their free choice to not seek communion with God or to reject him, to remain separated from this communion forever. This is what is meant by judgment. This state or condition of eternal separation is called Hell. God sends no one to Hell; individuals are there by their own choice.

The Father and the Son send the Spirit as the first of God's gifts to the Church, that is, to those who believe in and accept Jesus Christ. He manifests himself as he wills through each member of the Church to build it up in love and unity and to empower and assist it to continue the saving work of Jesus Christ until he returns in glory.

Every human is born in a state or condition of separation from God because of the Original Sin of disobedience by our first parents and is, therefore, a sinner, both by nature and by choice. By his death on the cross, Jesus Christ bridged the gulf between man and God. He became the bridge over which persons can cross from death to life and thus be reconciled with the Father and reestablished in communion with God. Begotten in sin in our human nature, every person must be begotten from above by the Father through rebirth by the Spirit in baptism and through faith in and commitment to Jesus Christ. In this way, each person acknowledges and agrees with (confesses) his or her condition as a sinner, repents of his or her sins, accepts Christ as Savior, and receives his forgiveness.

He or she becomes a child of God, a "new creature", and a member of the Church, the community of faith. United to Jesus through faith and baptism, each person must continually commit himself or herself to remain in communion and fellowship with God by following Jesus at all costs through the power of the Spirit who lives in him or her.

Jesus Christ, before ascending into heaven, commanded the Apostles to go to all ethnic groups, to proclaim the Gospel and make them followers of Jesus Christ, to baptize them, and to teach them to obey the Father (Mark 16:15-16; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-48; John 17:18, 20, 21; Acts 1:8). There is, therefore, only one universal Church, one Family of God, established upon the Apostles and united through Jesus Christ with the Father and with each other by the Spirit. "God's household, which is the Church of the living God, (is) the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Church's twofold work is to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth and to be the ministering Body of Christ to each of its members and to those who do not yet know Jesus. In this way, it continues the work of Jesus Christ by preaching the gospel of repentance and reconciliation through Christ and by ministering in love and through the power and gifts of the Spirit to its members and to all people.

The Church's universal mission is thus born from the command of Jesus Christ and is fulfilled in the course of the centuries in the proclamation of the mystery of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son as the saving event for all humanity. Salvation comes to each person in no other way. By their faith, obedience, and holiness, members provide a prophetic witness to the presence of Christ in the world at every moment of history.

Sacred Scripture, both Old and New Testament, is the written revelation of God's nature, word, and will to all people. It is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed. Together with the oral tradition handed on by the Apostles (2 Thessalonians 2:15) and by their successors to whom they also passed on their authority, it provides a sure foundation of truth throughout history until Jesus comes again in glory at the end of time.