

WHAT LUTHERANS BELIEVE AND TEACH

Lutherans believe what the Holy Scriptures teach.

BIBLE

We believe and teach that the Holy Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is, in all its words, the inspired Word of God and consequently true and trustworthy; that it is the only source for the proclamation of the Gospel through which the Holy Spirit creates faith in Jesus Christ; and that it is so clear in its denunciation of sin and in its offer of salvation that any believer in Christ may read it and understand it.

References: 2. Peter 1: 21; 2 Timothy 3: 15-17; 1 Corinthians 2: 13; Galatians 1. 7-9; John 20: 31; 2 Peter 1: 19; Psalm 119: 105, 130.

GOD

Lutherans believe and teach that the knowledge of God which man has by nature is defective and insufficient for salvation; that sure and saving knowledge of God can be gained only from the Holy Scriptures in which God has clearly revealed Himself as the Holy Trinity, Father Son and Holy Spirit, three equal Persons in one Being; and that every other god worshipped by men is an idol.

References: Romans 1: 19-20; 2: 14-15, Deuteronomy 6: 4; Matthew 28: 19; John 5: 23; 1 Corinthians 8: 4-6.

MAN

Lutherans believe and teach that man was created by God in His own image; that this image of God, consisting in man's perfection and holiness, was lost when man fell into sin; and that through this Fall all men have become sinners, wholly depraved and helpless through any power of their own to save themselves from sin.

References: Genesis 2. 7; 3: 1-16; 1: 27; Genesis 1: 27; compared with Genesis 5: 3; Psalm 53: 3; Romans 5: 12; Psalm 143: 2; Isaiah 64: 6

SIN

Lutherans believe and teach that right and wrong can be determined only in relation to God's holy Law; that every thought, word, or deed contrary to His will is wrong and sin; that every sin, original or actual, is rebellion against God; that sin is the root of all misery in the world; and that every man because of sin is from birth subject to death and eternal damnation.

References: Ezekiel 18: 30, Romans 8: 7; 1 John 3: 4; Genesis 8: 21; Zechariah 8: 17, Romans 6: 23

GOSPEL

Lutherans believe and teach that God in His infinite love did not abandon men in their doom but resolved to save them through the sacrifice of His only Son; that the Gospel is the special revelation in which God offers to all men forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ; and that those who penitently embrace this Gospel of reconciliation through Christ are declared righteous before God and saved - not through their own merit, but for Christ's sake, by grace and through faith.

References: John 3: 16-17; 1 Timothy 2: 4; Romans 3: 22-24, 28; Ephesians 2: 8-10.

SAVIOUR

Lutherans believe and teach that Jesus Christ is the God-man; that as the Son of God He existed from eternity and is equal in every respect to the Father and the Holy Spirit; that as the Son of Man He was born of a Virgin Mother and perfectly sinless but in every respect a true man; that He fulfilled the Law of God for all men and then paid the penalty for the guilt of all men by His suffering and death on the Cross; that through this sacrifice the world was redeemed and reconciled to God; that by His descent into hell He showed His triumph over His enemies and by His resurrection from the dead was declared the all-sufficient Redeemer; and that He will return visibly to the earth on the Last Day to judge all men, living and dead.

References: John 1: 1; Matthew 1: 18-25; 1 Peter 2: 22; 2 Corinthians 5: 19; 1 John 2: 2; Colossians 2: 15; Romans 1: 14; Acts 10: 42

CONVERSION

Lutherans believe and teach that conversion is contrition and faith; that it is not merely moral reformation or the solemn resolution to improve one's life, but it is a complete change of heart, a spiritual rebirth of the sinner, a miraculous recreation effected by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel; and that in conversion God creates faith in the penitent heart.

References: Exodus 11: 19; Jeremiah 31: 18; John 1: 12-13; Romans 10: 17; Acts 11: 21.

FAITH

Lutherans believe and teach that the faith which saves is not merely intellectual assent to Scriptural propositions but is alone the penitent sinner's trust in God's forgiveness offered in Christ's name; that such faith is not an act of obedience

or a self-induced achievement of the human will but is entirely God's act of grace by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel; and that if a man has not this simple trust in Christ, he cannot be saved.

References: James 2: 19; Isaiah 55: 6-7; Mark 1: 15; John 1: 12, 16; 1 Corinthians 12: 3; Romans 10: 17; Acts 16: 31; John 3: 36.

CHURCH

Lutherans believe and teach that the church is not an outward earthly organization, but the communion of saints, made up of all those, regardless of denomination, language, or colour, who in their hearts accept Jesus as their God and Saviour; that this Church, found wherever the Gospel of Christ is preached is known to God but invisible to men since it is impossible for men to determine which of those who profess Christianity have true faith in their hearts; and that no church-body can rightfully claim to be the 'only saving Church' outside of which there is no salvation.

Lutherans believe and teach that there is a visible Christian Church consisting of those who profess the Christian faith and use God's Word but among whom are hypocrites and teachers of unscriptural doctrine; and that it is the duty of every discerning believer to join that church-body which preaches the Bible fully and purely and to avoid spiritual fellowship with such who depart from the Divine Word.

References: John 18: 36; Ephesians 1: 22-23; Isaiah 55: 10-11; Luke 17: 20-21; 2 Timothy 2: 19; Matthew 13: 47-48; Matthew 15: 9; Romans 16: 17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 6, 14; 2 Corinthians 6: 14-18

MINISTRY

Lutherans believe and teach that the Christian ministry is an office ordained by God for the public ministry of His Word and Sacraments, not a special order like the Old Testament priesthood; that it is the call of the congregation and not the rite of ordination which makes a minister; that the dogma that ordination by 'apostolic succession' confers a special gift has not support in scriptures; that the New Testament terms 'bishop', 'elder', 'pastor' are descriptive of the one and the same office; and that the office of the public ministry must not be given to women.

References: Hebrews 10: 12, 14, 18; 1 Timothy 2: 5; Acts 6: 2; 1 Peter 2: 9; Titus 1: 5, 7; Acts 20: 17, 28; 1 Corinthians 14: 34; 1 Timothy 2: 11.

BAPTISM

Lutherans believe and teach that the Sacrament of Holy Baptism was ordained by Jesus Christ as a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit offers forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life; that through the Word of God in Baptism infants become children of God and adults are assured of their adoption through faith in Christ; and that Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring or immersing so long as water is applied in the name of the Triune God according to Christ's command.

References: Matthew 28: 19; Titus 3: 5; Mark 10: 14; Mark 7: 4 (cf. various meanings of the original 'baptize' here translated as 'wash'); Mark 16: 16; Acts 22: 16

LORD'S SUPPER

Lutherans believe and teach that in the other Sacrament, Holy Communion, the Lord Jesus Christ, according to His own plain Word, gives us His body and blood for the remission of sins; that the Lutheran belief, call the 'Real Presence', does not imply, either by transubstantiation or consubstantiation, any kind of change in the visible elements, that the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine, but by virtue of Jesus word of institution, this bread is the Body and this wine is His blood; that all who eat and drink at the Lord's Table receive His body and blood in and with the bread and wine, those who believe to the strengthening of their faith, those who reject to their condemnation; and that this Sacrament ought therefore to be withheld from those who are unable to examine themselves in the Christian faith.

References: Matthew 26: 26-28; Mark 14: 24; 1 Corinthians 11: 24-25, 26-28; Matthew 7: 6; 1 Corinthians 11: 29.

HEREAFTER

Lutherans believe and teach that on the Last Day the bodies of all people, separated from their souls in death, will be raised and reunited with their souls; that in the subsequent judgement of Christ, which will include all people, the determining factor will not be morality but faith in His atonement; that all believers will rise like Christ with glorified bodies to live with God forever in heaven, while all unbelievers will be sent to eternal punishment in hell.

References: John 5: 28-29; Acts 10: 42; 1 Corinthians 15: 51-52; Romans 8: 18; Matthew 10: 28; Isaiah 66: 24.

LUTHERAN WORSHIP

A simple liturgical service for the congregation

Worship is the act of God's people coming together into His Presence to ask for, to receive, and to thank Him for His grace. Since God communicated His saving grace through His Word and Sacraments, Lutheran worship centres in these means of grace. In the Lutheran view, any worship in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered is God-pleasing.