

Doctrinal Statement

5.1 Revelation: God's Desire to Be Known and His Actions to Make it So

We believe that God communicated with people from the moment He created them in His image.¹ Though He has not revealed Himself exhaustively, He has allowed mankind to know enough about Him so that we can appreciate Him for who He is and what He has done.² His decision to make Himself known to mankind underscores the privilege that is ours – to know and enjoy our Creator.

Though God has revealed Himself and His truth by many means, His interaction with mankind is grouped into two categories. The first category, "General Revelation", is the result of God's choice to reveal Himself indirectly. Like a fingerprint that is left behind, the truth of His existence and attributes can be observed and understood without any specific words or events. For instance, we can observe the fact of God's existence, power, order, and goodness by looking carefully at the universe He created.³ In addition, the reality that people have been created with a conscience that informs them of right and wrong and causes them to feel goodness or guilt, helps us to know that God is a moral being.⁴ Finally, when considering the very course and events of history, one can wisely conclude that God superintends the events that take place in the universe He has created.⁵ All of this taken together helps people understand general truth about God. And while it is not enough to bring people into the personal, loving relationship that He requires, God can use this knowledge to encourage people to respond to Him more fully.

The second category of revelation is termed, "Special Revelation". This category encompasses several ways that God supernaturally gave a special message directly to specific people. God spoke to some individuals directly through prophecy, dreams, or visions. He gave specific instructions through His messengers whether they were humans or angels, often telling the recipients how to respond to God in light of that newly-received truth.⁶

God's greatest message came to the world in the person and work of the Lord Jesus who embodied the actual Truth of God because He was truly God in human flesh, the Living Word.⁷ He is worthy of our complete attention, especially in light of the fact that Jesus came to Earth so that mankind might have the opportunity to enter into a personal, loving relationship with God through His saving work.⁸

5.2 The Bible: The Written Word of God

We believe that the Bible is the result of God's desire to reveal Himself to mankind through the written Word.¹ We further believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible were written by a process of dual authorship in which the Holy Spirit superintended human writers so that through their individual personalities and styles, they composed and recorded God's words without error as they penned the original writings (Note: This process is referred to as "Inspiration").²

Consequently, the sixty-six books of the Bible are objectively true and are the complete, final written revelation given by God for this age.³ They are completely trustworthy in all matters of which they speak and are the Christian's final authority determining what should be believed and practiced in one's life (Note: This belief is known as verbal-plenary inspiration which means that every word of the Bible is true and that all of its statements are equally true.).

We believe that we are called to discover the meaning of God's Word, not determine it.⁴ When studying a passage of the Bible, it is very important that a careful and consistent approach to interpretation is used that gives special attention to the context, grammar, history, genre and culture connected to the text. All of this can only be done by the Christian community with the aid of the Holy Spirit, who sheds light on the text, enabling the reader to perceive its meaning and see the glory of Christ in the Word of God.

We believe that the Bible tells one grand, over-arching narrative in four parts:

Creation: The first part describes how a glorious God spoke everything into existence and then proclaimed it “very good”. It is notable that out of all that was created only humans were made in His image. Those bearing His image were to serve as His vice-regents on the Earth which was a literal paradise. During this time period, the Earth, the people, indeed, the entire universe was untouched by evil and characterized by peace, wholeness and well-being.

The Fall: Scripture then relates how sin corrupted the created order when the first humans decided to disobey God believing that their happiness and enjoyment of life was best experienced outside of the boundaries that God had established for them. God judged the humans for their rebellion and in so doing allowed the created order to be ravaged by the effects of their sin so that sickness, discontentment, injustice, immorality, abuse, suffering, tragedy, futility, chaos, loss, foolishness, and death became the norm.

Redemption: In the shadow and sorrow of The Fall, God announces that He is implementing a plan to ultimately reverse sin’s curse and Satan’s influence in His creation. God’s gracious and merciful nature is revealed as He promises to vanquish evil and makes provision for mankind to receive forgiveness. Because of God’s initiative anyone may be freed from the power and penalty of sin when they humbly respond to Him in sincere faith. The pinnacle of this saving work takes place when Jesus offers Himself as the sacrifice for mankind’s sin, the full payment for man’s sin-debt. By His death and resurrection, He inaugurates His kingdom and steadily brings the Earth’s inhabitants under His benevolent reign as King.

Consummation: Finally, the Bible shows God’s complete success in restoring the universe and all that it contains, permanently vanquishing Satan and all those who would stand with him. He creates a New Heaven and a New Earth and returns mankind to paradise. Mankind is once again in a relationship with God untainted by sin and unchallenged by sinful desires. It is notable that those who have been redeemed now experience life as it was intended to be in the beginning. They live in this permanent state and are completely satisfied forever.

5.3 The Trinity: God’s unique existence and nature

We believe there is only one true God,¹ one in essence, eternally existent in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,² equal in divine nature and attributes, united in purpose and work, and equally worthy of worship, trust, and obedience.³ All things come from the Father through the Son by the Holy Spirit.

Though the word “trinity” does not occur in the Bible, it is used to refer to what the Bible clearly teaches about God’s essential nature. The Bible states that there is only one true God and that the Father is God, Jesus is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Consequently, we believe that God is one in essence and three in person.

The first part of the Bible, known as the Old Testament, contains passages that imply the idea of the plurality of God⁴—that God possesses something greater than a singular nature. The second part of the Bible, known as the New Testament tells even more, revealing each member of the Godhead. Indeed, even the baptismal formula speaks of the one name by which a person may be baptized; the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.⁵

God describes Himself as the holy, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, everywhere-present, perfect, unchangeable Creator who is Spirit, separate from all creation yet involved in it and sustaining it by the power of His Word. He desires that people not simply acknowledge Him, but that they know and enjoy Him as the compassionate, gracious, loving, generous, trustworthy, wise, true, just, good, patient God that He is. And though He is willing to forgive sin, He is the perfect Judge who does not leave the guilty unpunished.⁶

5.4 God The Father

We believe that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, decrees and works all things according to His own purpose and for His own glory.¹ The Father is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption.² He continually sustains, directs and governs all creatures and events³ without authoring or approving of sin or minimizing human responsibility.⁴

The Father has graciously chosen the elect from all eternity,⁵ saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ,⁶ and relates to His children personally as their Father.⁷

5.5 God The Son

We believe that God the Son, the second member of the Trinity, creates everything and takes pleasure in it since it exists for Him.¹ He has always existed, enjoying perfect harmony with God the Father and God the Spirit.² He occasionally appeared on Earth as the Angel of the Lord before coming to the Earth through the miracle of the virgin birth as the long-awaited Messiah.³

In obedience to the Father, Jesus voluntarily gave up the use of His divine privileges and lived in humility among men,⁴ without ever sinning, but experiencing all of the trials and temptations that are common to humans,⁵ thus fulfilling the righteous demands of the Law of God.⁶

According to the plan of God, Jesus announced the kingdom⁷ and the Lord's expectations of those who would live in harmony with the King.⁸ His divine identity was confirmed at least twice: once during His baptism when the Father spoke of His pleasure in Christ,⁹ and again when His appearance was literally transformed revealing His glory.¹⁰ His message was confirmed with signs, wonders, and miracles and though He was received by some people, He was ultimately rejected by the overwhelming majority of the very people He came to save.¹¹

Falsely accused, He was condemned to a shameful death upon a cross after being scourged, beaten, mocked, spit upon, and stripped naked. Yet, despite all of the evil done against Him, He chose to lay down His life as a sacrifice for sins and a substitute for all. After having experienced the tremendous agony of becoming sin for us and experiencing the rejection of the Father, He gave up His spirit and breathed His last.¹² The manner of His death and the many details that surrounded it fulfilled dozens of prophecies recorded hundreds of years before His birth.

He was taken down from the cross and buried in a borrowed tomb.¹³ Three days and nights later the tomb was found to be empty as Jesus took up His life again, and visited His disciples in His resurrected body.¹⁴ His resurrection from the dead was proof that His sacrificial death was acceptable to the Father, atoning for sin and satisfying His divine wrath.

Over the next forty days He was seen and heard by over five hundred people who were still alive by the time of the writing of the Gospel of John.¹⁵ During this time He presented infallible proof of His identity as the Risen Lord and reminded them about the things that pertained to the kingdom of God.¹⁶

After this, Christ met with His disciples for the last time on Mount Olivet, reminded them of His authority, commanded them to make disciples of all the nations, blessed them, promised them power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them, and then went to the Father, being taken up from their sight.¹⁷

Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father having finished the work of redemption.¹⁸ He presently intercedes for His disciples and serves as the only mediator between God and all humanity.¹⁹ He is the Head of the Church, the coming King, and the final Judge of both believers and unbelievers.²⁰

5.6 God The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the eternal third person of the Trinity, not only worked in creation,¹ accomplished the incarnation,² and superintended the writing of Scripture,³ but that He works to accomplish salvation and continues to minister to all those He has made alive.⁴

Coming from the Father at the request of Jesus,⁵ He came to dwell with each believer to empower them to corporately accomplish the mission of being Christ's disciples and helping others to do the same.⁶ Thus, He initiated the Church⁷ and continues to incorporate believers into it at the moment of salvation.⁸ He gives spiritual gifts to every believer according to His will. These divinely-given abilities, desires, and talents should be used according to the Scriptures and are intended to benefit the Church and result in Christ's glory and honor.⁹ He indwells all believers after regenerating them and guarantees their salvation, helps them grow in holiness, and helps them choose good over evil. To our joy and God's glory, He empowers Christians to do God's will and transforms them to become more like their Savior, Jesus Christ.¹⁰

5.7 Angels

We believe that angels were created as personal spirits to worship and glorify God, serve Him, and minister to human beings at God's command.¹ While they are created by God and thus possess derived value, they are not above or equal to humans since they are not created in His image.² Although all angels were originally created holy by God, some followed the prideful lead of Satan and fell from their position.³ These demons cooperate with Satan and attempt to undermine the work of God through means of temptation, accusation, and deception.⁴

5.8 Humanity and Sin

We believe God created Adam and Eve and all humanity in His image with the intention that they glorify God, enjoy His fellowship, and fulfill His purpose.¹ Created with integrity and without sin, our first parents fell into sin by disobeying God.² As a result of their rebellion, humanity is corrupted and stands guilty before God. This guilt is compounded when each person's sinful thoughts, words, and deeds are considered by our Holy Lord. Consequently, every person is a sinner and stands guilty before our Creator, unable to do anything for themselves that will reconcile them to Him. All people come into this world as spiritual stillborns, separated from God and subject to His wrath.³ Though all people have dignity since they have been created in the image of God, they are inherently sinful and hopelessly lost apart from divine grace and salvation in Jesus Christ.⁴

5.9 Salvation

We believe that God has made a way to make sinful, guilty sinners holy and that this is accomplished by Jesus. After living a sinless life, He died on the cross as the perfect and final sacrifice for sin.¹ He bore the guilt of all humanity and fully experienced the wrath of the Father's justice as our Substitute.² Through His death and resurrection, many are redeemed from sin, reconciled to God,³ and adopted into the family of God.⁴ Those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit turn from their sins to place their trust and confidence in Him who promises that whoever trusts in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. Salvation is rightly described as being "by grace through faith" which means that God makes salvation possible because He is infinitely kind and receives everyone when they place their confidence in Him, not in themselves, their beliefs, or their actions. Ultimately, salvation takes place because of who God is and what He is like, not because of who humans are or what they are like.⁵ When a person turns to the Lord in faith they are said to be born again,⁶ a new creation in Christ Jesus.⁷ The Bible teaches that salvation is predicated upon a personal decision to turn from sin and trust in God's provision.⁸ When this happens, God forgives completely and guarantees a place with Him. Since God is the One who saves, no one can undo His saving work or cause Him to withdraw the gift of salvation that has been received. He places His Spirit within His followers to empower them to live a life that is worthy of His calling.⁹ Consequently, salvation should result in righteous living.¹⁰ All those who are saved will grow to become more like Christ in as much as they keep in step with the Spirit of God,¹¹ live in obedience to the Word of God, and take their place in the people of God.¹² They are kept by the power of God through faith and will persevere to the end, culminating in their glorification at Christ's coming.¹³

5.10 Concerning the Church

We believe that God has chosen to join all those who are born again to Himself and to each other in the Church, which is the Body of Christ.¹ With Christ as its Head,² the Church is to work according to the power of the Holy Spirit with love, unity, and purpose to carry out its task of making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that Christ has commanded them.³ The church is to honor Christ by remembering His sacrificial work during the Lord's Supper, eating the bread as a symbol of His broken body, and drinking the cup as a picture of His blood that was shed during His crucifixion.⁴ These two ordinances, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are to be administered to believers until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁵

All Christians living on Earth and in Heaven comprise the Church, often referred to as the Universal Church. As such it is known as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, a chosen generation, the people of God, a holy nation, the temple of the living God, and the Bride of Christ.⁶ It is called to love God completely, adopting a way of thinking and living that is in agreement with Christ's teachings and His saving mission.⁷

Local churches are individual families of believers around the globe, joined to worship God, witness the truth of the gospel, and do the work of ministry. As they share the truth about Jesus Christ, they have the joy of encouraging people to turn to Jesus and the opportunity of helping those who trust in Him grow in wisdom and holiness.⁸

5.11 Concerning Last Things

We believe that at death all humans undergo the temporary separation of their spirits (which live on in the afterlife) from their bodies which are subject to decay. The spirits of believers pass immediately into the presence of Christ and remain there in joyful fellowship awaiting the time when Christ will resurrect their bodies, changing them to make them fit for a future with Him. Unbelievers, in sharp contrast, experience conscious suffering for their sins, and remain in that state even after their bodies are resurrected.

Besides addressing the deaths and destinies of individuals, the Scriptures teach that mankind has had the opportunity to know God in various periods of time (e.g. dispensations) and that human kind is now in the final stage of God's redemptive plan. This age, known as the church age, or age of the Spirit, will culminate when God takes His followers away from this Earth and allows its inhabitants to suffer through the tribulation, followed by the return of Christ in glory with the saints to the earth to destroy His enemies, initiate His one thousand year reign, and restore Israel as a nation in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. At the close of Messiah's millennial reign the devil, his demons, and the unbelieving dead will be judged and committed to everlasting punishment in Hell.

With sin entirely vanquished, God will create a New Heaven and New Earth. All His people will dwell eternally in His presence, giving worship and service to Him to whom belongs all glory, experiencing anew the paradise that God originally made available to the first humans.

The Scriptures speak of the events that shall come to pass in prophetic form, which by their very nature are difficult to interpret in advance of their historical fulfillment. Though the teaching position of First Baptist Church of Clare is the pretribulational, premillennial return of Christ, we realize that godly students of Scripture may interpret and apply the same prophetic texts differently and that this need not be a test for fellowship within our local church.

5.1 REVELATION, GOD'S DESIRE TO BE KNOWN AND HIS ACTIONS TO MAKE IT SO

1. Gen 1:27-28
2. Isa 42:5-8; Acts 17:24-31
3. Psa 19:1; Rom 1:20; Acts 14:16-17
4. Rom 2:14-16; 2 Cor 4:2
5. Acts 14:17; Acts 17:24-27
6. 1 Sam 3 – Samuel hears God's voice,
Gen 37 – Joseph's visions, Acts 16 & Gal 2:2 – Paul's visions,
Lk 1 – Zacharias' Angelic visit
7. Heb 1:1-2; Jn 1:1, 14; Jn 1:1-18
8. Mat 17:5; Jn 10:27; Jn 14:6-7; Heb 4:12

5.2 THE BIBLE, THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

1. 2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Cor 2:10-13
2. 2 Pet 1:20-21; 1 Th 2:13
3. Jn 10:35b; Jn 17:17; Psa 19:7-11
4. 2 Tim 2:15

5.3 THE TRINITY, GOD'S UNIQUE EXISTENCE AND NATURE

1. Isa 45:5-6; Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4; Eph 4:6
2. Isa 48:16; Mat 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14
3. Jn 1:1,18; Jn 4:24; Rom 8:16-17; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 4:30; Heb 1:3
4. Psa 45:6-7; Gen 1:26; Gen 3:22; 11:7; Isa 6:8
5. Mat 28:19 Baptism is in the "name", not "names" of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
6. God describes Himself as...
 - a. Infinite: 1 Ki 8:27; Acts 17:24; Psa 106:2
 - b. Holy: Psa 99:9; Prov 9:10; Isa 6:3; 1 Pet 1:15-16
 - c. Eternal: Psa 90:2; Rom 1:20
 - d. All-Knowing: Heb 4:13; Rom 11:33
 - e. All-Powerful: Psa 115:3; Rev 19:6
 - f. Everywhere-Present: Psa 139:7-10
 - g. Perfect: Deut 32:4
 - h. Unchanging: Jam 1:17; Heb 13:8
 - i. Creator: Isa 40:28; Rom 1:25; 1 Pet 4:19
 - j. Spirit: Jn 4:24
 - k. Sustainer of creation: Heb 1:3; Col 1:16-17
 - l. Know and enjoy Him: Psa 34:8; Psa 37:4
 - m. Compassionate: Exo 34:6; Deut 4:31
 - n. Gracious: Neh 9:31; Psa 111:4
 - o. Loving: 1 Jn 4:8; 1 Jn 4:16
 - p. Generous: Psa 84:11; 2 Cor 9:8; Jam 1:17
 - q. Trustworthy: Psa 37:3; Psa 115:9-11
 - r. Wise: 1 Cor 3:19-20; Isa 55:9
 - s. True: Jn 14:6; Dan 4:37; Heb 6:18
 - t. Just: Zec 9:9; Rom 3:26; 2 Th 1:6
 - u. Good: Mk 10:18; Psa 112:4; Psa 100:5
 - v. Patient: Psa 103:8; Neh 9:17; Psa 86:15
 - w. Redeemer: Job 19:25; Psa 19:14
 - x. Willing to forgive: Psa 25:18; Psa 32:5; Psa 79:9; Mat 6:12; Mk 2:7
 - y. Judge: Heb 12:23; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Rom 14:12; Rom 14:4
 - z. Does not leave the guilty unpunished: Exo 34:6-7; Nah 1:3

5.4 GOD THE FATHER

1. Isa 45:5-6
2. Chron 6:32-33; Psa 23:3; Psa 79:9; Rom 8:28
2. Psa 95; Deut 14:2; Gal 4:4-6
3. Psa 146:9; Eph 1:11; Psa 8:6; Ecc 3:11
4. Gal 6:7; Jam 1:13
5. Eph 1:3-5; Jn 17:9
6. Rom 10:13; Psa 13:5; Jn 14:6
7. Rom 8:15; Mat 5:16; Mat 6:9

5.5 GOD THE SON

1. Col 1:13-22; Jn 1:1-12
2. Mic 5:2; Isa 9:6; Jn 8:58; 17:5
3. Exo 3:2,4
4. Phil 2:5-10
9. Mat 3:17
10. Mat 17:5
11. Acts 2:22-23; Jn 1:11
12. Mk 14:53-15:37
13. Mk 15:43-45
14. Mat 12:40; Mk 8:31; Jn 2:19-21
15. Jn 20:11-17; Mt 28:9-10; Lk 24:36-43; Jn 20:26-29; 1 Cor 15:6
16. Jn 20:28-30
17. Mat 28:16-20
18. Eph 1:20-21; Heb 8
19. Rom 8:34; 1 Tim 2:3-6
20. Eph 5:23; Rev 17:14; Rev 19:16; Mat 7:21-23; Acts 10:42; Rom 2:16
5. Heb 4:14,15
6. Gal 4:4; Mt 5:17; Rom 8:2,3
7. Mat 4:17
8. Mat 5-7

5.6 GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Gen 1:2; Psa 104:30; Job 33:4
2. Mt 1:18-20
3. 2 Pet 1:20-21
4. Jn 16:8-11; Titus 3:5; Jn 3:3-7; 1 Cor 6:19; Eph 5:18-20; Eph 4:30; Gal 5:16-23; Jn 7:37-39
5. Jn 14:16-17
6. Acts 1:8
7. 1 Cor 12:13; Acts 2:1-21
8. 1 Cor 12:4-6
9. Rom 8
10. Gal 5:22-23; 2 Cor 3:18

5.7 ANGELS

1. Job 38:6-7; Isa 6:1-3; Gen 3:22-24; Heb 1:14; Lk 1:16-33; Lk 2:13; Mat 2:13; Mat 4:11; Lk 22:43; Mat 28:2,6
2. Gen 1:26-28; Heb 2:3-13, 16
3. Eze 28:11-15; Isa 14:12-20; Gen 3:14-15; Eph 6:11-12; Mat 25:41
4. 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:10; Jn 8:44

5.8 HUMANITY AND SIN

1. Gen 1:26, 28; 2:15
2. Gen 3:1-19
3. Psa 51:5; Jer 17:9; Rom 6:23; Eph 2:1,3; Heb 4:15
4. Rom 3:23 Rom 3:10-19; Jn 6:35; Jn 14:6; 1 Jn 1:8

5.9 SALVATION

1. Jn 5:24
2. Rom 5:8,9; 3,24; 8:1-4
3. 2 Cor 5:19
4. Rom 8:15
5. Eph 2:8,9
6. Jn 3:3,6-7
7. 2 Cor 5:17-21
8. Rom 10:9,10
9. Jn. 5:24; 10:28-29; Eph 5:17-21
10. 1 Jn 2:2,3
11. Eph 5:17-21; 2 Pet 1:3-10
12. Col 3:16
13. 2 Cor 3:18

5.10 CONCERNING THE CHURCH

1. 1 Cor 1:2
2. Eph 1:22-23
3. Acts 2:42; II Tim 3:16; Acts 2:43-47; 2:41; 8:38; 10:47;18:8
4. 1 Cor 11:24,25
5. 1 Cor 11:26
6. Rev 19:9; Eph 1:22-23
7. Mat 28:19-20
8. Acts 2:41-47

5.11 CONCERNING LAST THINGS

1. Heb 9:27; 2 Cor 5:8
2. Lk 16:22-26
3. Heb 1:2;
4. 1 Thes 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15: 51-57
5. Rev 3:10; 6:17
6. Rev 19:11-16; 20:1-5; 20:11-15
7. Rev 21:1-5; 2 Pet 3:7-10