



VISIO DEI

CHURCH

GOD

There is one, living, true God, who is the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver and Ruler of all things. He has in and of Himself all perfections, including holiness, and is infinite in them all. He is an all-knowing and all-powerful, intelligent, spiritual, and personal being. His perfect knowledge extends to all things past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

God has revealed Himself in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, His verbally inspired words. All Scripture is authoritative, infallible, and inerrant, and stands as the only sufficient standard for faith and life. God has also revealed Himself additionally in His creation, as well as finally and ultimately through His Son, who is the focus of divine revelation.

That true God eternally exists in three persons, the Trinity. God has always existed in community as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While there is diversity of role in the Godhead, there is unity in purpose. While there are distinct personal attributes, there is no division of nature, essence, or being.

God the Father reigns with providential care over all His creation, His creatures, and the flow of human history according to the purposes of His grace. All-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise, He purposed redemption through Jesus and by the Spirit. While God is Father in truth to those who become children by faith in Christ, He is fatherly in His attitude toward all humans.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. He took upon himself human nature with its demands and necessities, identifying Himself completely with humankind, yet without sin. Our Lord won our salvation by completely obeying and thereby fulfilling the divine law on our behalf, and accomplished our redemption by sacrificially dying on the cross as our substitute. He proved His victory over death and demonstrated our salvation through His literal, bodily resurrection from the dead. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our High Priest, He fulfills the ministry as our representative intercessor and advocate. We believe Jesus who came in humility will come once again in power and glory, visibly and bodily, judging at His return the living and the dead.

The Holy Spirit is an eternal, divine person who convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment and brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the redemption of Christ, effecting regeneration, baptizing all believers into the body of Christ, and indwelling, transforming, and sealing them unto the day of redemption. He inspired the Scriptures and illuminates believers in understanding God's revelation. He distributes spiritual gifts to all believers according to His sovereign good pleasure for the purpose of building up the body of Christ.

GOSPEL

The Lord God created all things in heaven and on earth and declared them good. He made human beings as the pinnacle of the creation, placing them in His place, under His rule, as His people to rule over His creation. He made Adam in His own image and likeness. Therefore, all humans of all races possess full dignity and are worthy of respect and Christian love.

However, through Adam's sin, the human race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God. Although humans are not utterly wicked, they are totally depraved and are of themselves utterly unable to remedy their lost condition. Sinners by nature, all human beings therefore choose to sin, due to the fall, and bring upon themselves the just wrath of God.

God, by His grace, sent His Son Jesus to earth to accomplish redemption. Christ lived the perfect life sinful, imperfect people could not live. He died the cruel death that fallen, rebellious sinners deserved. Jesus righted the wrongs of the first man, Adam, through His redemptive work. Salvation, then, is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. True salvation manifests itself in repentance over sin, living, abiding trust in and love for the Triune God, and sacrificial love for the people of God, the Church. At the point of faith, men and women are declared righteous and forgiven in God's sight. They are then transformed by God's Spirit progressively unto holiness until the final day when they are made perfect. The redeemed, once saved, are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever. Therefore, it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's word and His Spirit. Although genuine Christians will sin and stumble, God's preservation of His children manifests itself in persevering love for God and neighbor.

Jesus Christ will return one day to bring about the consummation of all things. While the kingdom of God has broken into the world through Christ's person and work, one day, He who came in humility will return in glory to reverse the fall, accomplishing complete and final redemption. Men and women alive at His return will go to either eternal, conscious torment or joy, based on their relationship with the Son and their resultant deeds. Those dead will be resurrected with the same ends. God will renew His creation, reconciling all things to Himself. The second Adam, Christ, will rule with His children, the church, over a new heavens and new earth for all eternity. God's people will once again be in God's place under God's rule, and such will be the case forever.

CHURCH

The church, which is the body and bride of Christ, is a spiritual organism made up of all born-again persons in all places at all times. Primarily, however, the Bible speaks of the local church, an assembly of believers covenanting together in community in a specific place at a specific time for worship and mission. The establishment and continuance of these local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures. Those churches exist to proclaim the gospel to each other and to the world, practice the ordinances of the church, and exercise church discipline. The local church is a self-governed, independent body, free of any external authority or control.

The ordinances of the local church are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the church's entry rite and is properly administered to believers through immersion and demonstrates that one has been united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and has been washed clean from sin through Him. The Lord's Supper is a continuing rite of God's people, where the bread and the fruit of the vine are consumed corporately, representing the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ, and celebrating His person and work and anticipated return.

The officers of the local church are elders, which biblically must be men, and deacons. Elders, also biblically known as overseers or pastors, teach and lead the people of God, having authority to govern the local church. Deacons serve the people of God, caring for, in particular, the physical needs of the flock, freeing up the elders to teach and pray.

The Lord has gifted all members to serve the local body of Christ. It is the responsibility and privilege of every believer to develop and minister according to the gift(s) and grace of God that is given to him or her.

MISSION

The church of Jesus Christ is called to be on mission for her Lord. Since the fall, the Lord has always been about seeking a people to return to Himself. He is a missionary God, and He has always sought a missionary people. Although Israel failed to be a blessing to all peoples of the earth, the Father will accomplish this through Christ and His church. As God the Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to seek and save the lost, so He also sends His new covenant people into the world to imitate that incarnation, proclaiming His gospel and making disciples of all nations in love. This is accomplished not simply by word, but also by deed, following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God calls us to be His church, standing set apart from society, reflecting the holiness of God. Those believers are called to cling to His historic gospel, without compromise, proclaiming Christ's person and work in all its fullness and glory. Yet this message is to be boldly taken in to the culture, as well. Certainly the cross will be an offense and stumbling block to many, but others will be drawn to Jesus and His gospel through missionaries, at home and abroad, contextualizing that message among diverse cultures and people groups. God's promise is that all the nations will be blessed through Jesus. Every tribe and tongue and nation will come to worship Christ through the grace of God and the mission of His church.