

# BAPTIST DISTINCTIONS

By

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## THE BIBLE

We accept it as it is -- the Word of God. What it teaches is right, what it enjoins we must do, and what it prohibits we must not do. By this Bible all human conduct, creeds, and opinions are to be tried. God's word, like Himself, is eternal and unchangeable. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. *"...If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed,"* (Galatians 1:8-9). *"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, where of cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself"* (I Timothy 6:3-5).

For these principles, Baptists have been subjected to almost every conceivable form of torture and persecution.

The wise man said, "Buy the truth and sell it not." Our fathers have bought and presented these truths for us at a great price, the price of life and liberty, and for their sakes endured bitter and vile persecutions. They were transmitted and committed to us, and it will become us to barter for them for the praise of and popularity with its enemies.

The advocate of modern liberalism bids to sell principles he never possessed for a popularity he never deserved. Many are lavishly liberal with the things of God. No man can be more liberal than the Bible and be true to Christ. The less principles a man has, the more liberal he can be with truth and sacred things.

We believe the declaration of the risen Savior. *"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book"* (Revelation 22:18-19).

Hence, no human power or ecclesiastical authority can alter or change this divine revelation. Any substitution or change of doctrine, ordinance, government, or condition of salvation is not only sacrilege in them, but is dishonoring to God and ruinous to souls. **They cannot "add to" nor "take away."** Jesus Christ is the "head over all things to the church." "There is one lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy."

How dare anyone to acknowledge that the Word of God teaches or commands one thing and then say, "It matters not, something else will do just as well." will not the Master say, "And why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? He has said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). All who are true Baptists believe in the absolute, supreme, unchangeable authority of the inspired Scriptures.

## ATONEMENT

Baptists believe in the atonement made by Christ as the only basis of salvation, the only

means of reconciliation, and the only ground of justification. Man is by nature a sinner -- guilty, condemned, lost -- and but for the atonement made by Christ, helpless and hopeless. His atoning work not only covers our sin, but by His death He paid for all sin and therefore the believer is redeemed, removed from judgment of his personal sins, for the guilt of his sin, iniquity and transgression is removed.

God is holy, almighty, just, and will punish sin. God is almighty and able to punish sin. He cannot lie and has said that sin shall be punished; but God is also merciful, hence a willing all sufficient substitute is provided. Jesus "bore our sins in his own body." God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21). "*Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*" (I Timothy 2:6). "*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus*" (Romans 3:24-26). The law is not made void, but through faith we establish the law. Jesus kept, made honorable, magnified, and satisfied the law, becoming our accepted substitute. His righteousness is imputed to us by faith, and so we through Him have kept the law. He took the sinner's place. He bore their sins, met the penalty, and offers them a child's place; permitting the sinner, who trusts Him, to go free.

## SALVATION

What Baptists believe is not from denominational pride, much less bigotry, narrowness, or selfishness; but because it is the truth through which God has ordained to save men and women.

Any departure from truth is error which can only do harm, not good. We are not allowed to change "the truth of God into a lie," not even for popularity or convenience.

How could anyone suppose that Baptists would hold to a doctrine which has so much unpopularity with other denominations and the world, so uncongenial to depraved human nature from any selfishness or bigotry? Are we not human? Do we not love to be popular and please our fellow man? Ah!, but "*...we ought to obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29). It matters little what men think of us, but it is of infinite importance as to what God thinks of us.

Baptists believe that man is dead, depraved, blind, guilty, condemned, lost, and helpless; but for the grace of God in Christ Jesus, hopelessly so. "*...who were dead in trespasses and sins*" (Ephesians 2:1). "*...because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead*" (II Corinthians 5:14).

Depraved means wicked, corrupt, vitiated. No use to discuss total depravity as none other than total sinfulness or total wickedness. God said, "*...there is none righteous, no, not one*" (Romans 3:10). Paul, proving that all were alike under sin, in an unregenerate condition, says, "*...for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way...*" (Romans 3:9-12).

We do not mean that man is as bad as a demon or as bad as he can be. You may put a drop of gall into a glass of water and that water, all of it, is bitter, vitiated, corrupt and unfit for drink. Not as bitter as it could be made, but it is all bitter. So every man, all the man, is depraved, sinful and corrupt. "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...*" (Jeremiah 17:9). YOU may reiterate till the day of your death that you don't believe it, but the fact remains the same. God who knows the heart said it "*...unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled*" (Titus 1:15).

*"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not..."* (II Corinthians 4:4). *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (I Corinthians 2:14). *"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart"* (Ephesians 4:18) *"....and all the world may become guilty before God"* (Romans 3:19).

Now we gladly believe that God has graciously made provision for the salvation of the irresponsible -- the infant and the mentally deficient; not because of what they have done, but only through His mercy and grace in Jesus Christ. No duties are enjoined upon the irresponsible, no commandments are given unto them, and no requirements are made of them. They are not subjects of Gospel addresses.

We believe every responsible soul which is unregenerate, impenitent and unbelieving is lost no matter how much we love them, nor how lovable they may be, and is condemned. *"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God"* (John 3:18). But listen to the good news, the blessed Gospel. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

We believe the Holy Scriptures teach that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel, and it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth except his own voluntary refusal to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, which refusal will subject him to an aggravated condemnation.

How is one saved? Baptists believe and teach it is wholly of grace. Spurgeon said, "Grace is the fountain and faith, the channel through which salvation flows to the soul." Paul said, *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"* (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation is obtained only by grace through faith in Christ.

We believe this is God's plan, therefore the only plan of salvation. God deserves all the glory and all the redeemed will gladly sing, *"Not unto us, o Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake"* (Psalm 115:1). And again, *"...for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by the blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"* (Revelation 5:9).

## REGENERATION

We believe that the Holy Scriptures teach that in order to be saved we must be regenerated, or born again. Regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind, and is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy spirit, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence is found in the holy fruits that we bring forth to the glory of God.

The necessity of regeneration is plainly set forth in the Savior's words, *"...Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). And again, *"...verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3). No human act or ecclesiastical provision can possibly be a substitute for it, neither can they produce it. They cannot unite the soul to the living head, cannot make it a child of God, an inheritor of the kingdom of Christ, and an heir of eternal life. Remember, the Savior said, *"Except ye be converted... Except a man be born again."*

It secures our voluntary obedience to God because we have been made partakers of the divine nature, being then new creatures and spiritually minded and having the spirit of Christ. *"For the love of Christ constraineth us..."* (II Corinthians 5:14). *"We love him because he first loved us"* (I John 4:19). Having apprehended that love and applied it to the need of our souls by faith, we joyfully seek to live well pleasing in His sight. *"For this is the love of God, that*

*we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” (I John 5:3). “...If a man love me, he will keep my words...” (John 14:23).*

Its evidence is seen in a godly walk and conversation; not loud profession, superior holiness, and claiming attainments beyond scriptural assurance. *“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Romans 6:22).*

## REPENTANCE

The theme of John the Baptist, *“... Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).* Jesus preached, *“...repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15).* It is said of the apostles, *“And they went out, and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12).*

Paul said to the Athenians, *“And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).* Jesus settles forever the question. *“...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).*

Most people who acknowledge the scriptures require repentance, but many seek to substitute something more palatable to the depraved human taste than the bitterness of scriptural repentance.

### Repentance involves:

**1. Consciousness of Guilt.** It is evident there could be no repentance without this. A man cannot be sorry for a guilt which he does not recognize. Man cannot be sorry for sin and turn from it, unless he is conscious of being a sinner.

**2. Sorrow for sin.** This sorrow is not repentance, but is an essential element in repentance, *“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of. ..” (II Corinthians 7:10).* This sorrow which is *“after a godly sort”* (while there is no merit in it) is acceptable to God, for *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, o God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:17).*

Consideration in the light of God's truth, will by the power of the Holy spirit produce conviction. If the soul is honest with God and self, conviction will lead to contrition; if contrition is real, it lays the soul in submissive humility at the Savior's feet for healing forgiveness.

**3. Turning from sin.** As sin dishonors God and destroys the soul, the contrite soul loathes and hates sin; and turning from it, God delivers the soul from the guilt and consequences of sin. Baptists believe this to be scriptural repentance.

The afflicting of the body by tortures, self-denial of such things as God has ordained to be received with thanksgiving, keeping a man-appointed lent, or observance of such things as are called *“doing penance”* cannot be a substitute in the eyes of Him who said, *“EXCEPT ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

## PERSEVERANCE OR PRESERVATION

We believe that the Holy scriptures teach that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their preserving attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Yes, Baptists believe that such as are real believers, *“being rooted and grounded in love, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith”* shall endure to the end. We think the

Scriptures abundantly prove this doctrine. (Colossians 2:6-7)

Unless this is true, we have no definition of the word "save." Its primary meaning is to make safe and all of its definitions conform with this idea.

Now, if a soul is saved, it is made safe by the divine infinite power of God. we might rest the case here, but as the proof of this doctrine is so ample, we are not content to pass it over as consequently someone fails to see the truth.

*"He that believeth on the son hath everlasting life..."* (John 3:36). *"... He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life..."* (John 5:24).

The scriptures declare positively that a personal faith in Jesus secures to the believer the gift of everlasting life. Now, I simply ask the question, "How long will it be till that life ends?" until it does end, the believing and trusting soul will not be subject to the penalty of eternal death.

The word here translated "everlasting" is used in forty-three places in the New Testament to qualify life or secure the duration of the believer's life. It is the same word the Savior used to describe the duration of the punishment of the wicked and the happiness of the saved (Matthew 25:46). It is the same word used to describe the character of God's existence in Romans 16:26; to describe the duration of the glory of Christ in II Timothy 2:10; and to describe the duration of Christ's kingdom in II Peter 1:11. We receive the same quality of life Christ has went we are saved -- eternal life!

Then just so long as God is, so long as the kingdom and glory of Christ endures, will the true believer be safe and his spiritual life and happiness endure.

## BAPTISM

Baptist believe that baptism is immersion in water in the name of the Trinity, of a believer upon profession of faith, by one duly authorized by a church of Jesus Christ to perform such a service.

All denominations admit this to be scriptural baptism, yet some may claim it is not the only baptism. Others claim the act may be pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. Many believe that irresponsible infants are proper subjects to receive baptism, and some even claim that it is necessary to salvation.

There is no doubt about the immersion of a believer being scriptural baptism. All denominations accept and acknowledge it, and there is of necessity great doubt about anything else being baptism. Then, why be in doubt when you can be sure you are right? Baptists never doubt the scripturalness of their baptism.

I could give you the names of more than forty Greek lexicons, all of which gives us the primary meaning of the word "baptism" as "to dip, to immerse;" and no standard lexicon gives any definition to the word which is really at variance with this accepted meaning. Not any of them list sprinkle or pour as a meaning of the word. Besides, if you substitute sprinkle or pour in any of the passages and attempt to read it, you will find it will not fit. Take Mark 1:5 -- *"and were all sprinkled of him in the river of Jordan"* or *"were all poured of him in the river of Jordan."* But it is correct to say *"were all immersed or dipped of him in the river of Jordan."*

The Greek is a very precise language, having a word for every shade of meaning so much so that often nice shades of meaning in Greek cannot be clearly expressed in English. In Greek there are distinct words for sprinkle and pour, but they are never used in a single passage where baptism is mentioned. The Greek language has, like all others, undergone many changes; but the Greeks today, knowing the meaning of their own language, adhere strictly to

immersion for baptism. Even the Presbyterian missionaries in Athens today are compelled to practice immersion even upon infants, as the Greek church has always done.

Leading scholars of all denominations have frankly acknowledged that the scriptural and apostolic baptism was immersion. Dean Stanley, one of the most prominent of the Episcopal clergy of England, said: *"For the first thirteen centuries, the almost universal practice of baptism was that of which we read in the New Testament, and which is the very meaning of the word 'baptized,' that those who were baptized were plunged, submerged, immersed into the water. The change from immersion to sprinkling has set aside the larger part of the apostolic language regarding baptism, and has altered the very meaning of the word."* He frankly acknowledges that in the days of Christ and the apostles, the word did not mean "to sprinkle," but "to immerse."

**John Calvin (Presbyterian church founder)** said: *"The very word 'baptize' itself, signifies 'to immerse' and it is certain that immersion was observed by the ancient church."* Commenting on the baptism of the eunuch, he says: *"Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients, for they immersed the whole body in water."*

**John Wesley (Methodism founder)** referring to Romans 6:4, said: *"We are buried with him,"* alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion.

**Martin Luther said:** *"For to baptize in Greek is to dip and baptizing is dipping. Being moved by this reason, I would have those who are to be baptized to be altogether dipped into the water, as the word doth express and as the mystery doth signify."* (works, Wittemb. Ed., vol. 2, p. 79)

**Cardinal Gibbons, Roman Catholic, said:** *"For several centuries after the establishment of Christianity, baptism was usually conferred by immersion; but since the twelfth century, the practice of baptizing by affusion has prevailed in the Catholic church as this manner is attended with less inconvenience than baptism by immersion."* (Faith of our Fathers, p. 275)

**Britannica Encyclopedia states:** (Baptism, vol. 3, p. 351) "The usual mode of performing the ceremony was by immersion... sprinkling, by leaving it to the choice of the officiating minister." We could multiply such testimony from those who practice sprinkling but space forbids. If any honestly believe that Christ did ordain sprinkling for baptism (though certainly in that case it would never have been called baptism), then their convictions are respected, but when they admit Jesus was immersed and commanded His followers to follow His example and yet say, I prefer to do something else; it looks to me like willful disobedience.

## BAPTISM/IMMERSION

(Illustration) A cultured lady who was reared a Catholic, made a profession of faith in Christ and the Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians were soliciting her to join their respective churches. I was a visitor at the home prior to her profession of conversion. When I phoned her after this event, I said, "I am not going to run after you to get you to join my church, but I have one request to make of you." she asked, "What is the request?" I replied, "Before you join any church, carefully and prayerfully read the New Testament with a view of learning your duty and then do whatever it requires." She answered, "I will do that." She did, and as a result, joined a Baptist church. One of her former solicitors said, "Well, I suppose you have done right tonight to join the Baptists, even if you did have to sacrifice a principle to go with them." She resented the imputation and said frankly, "I have made no sacrifice of principle. I joined a Baptist church after careful and prayerful investigation, because I believe them to teach and hold the doctrine and ordinances as taught by Christ and the apostles; fully persuaded that I was following the Divine teaching."

**Listed below is some of the evidence obtained from the Scriptures on baptism:**

*"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were*

*baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5-6).*

*"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water..." (Matthew 3:16).*

**Notation:** Did anyone ever see anything like that at a sprinkling or pouring? Do the babies or adults go up out of the water after they are sprinkled?

*"And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark 1:5).*

**Notation:** Here the statement is plain and positive, "in the river of Jordan." Literally, in the Jordan River.

*"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him" (Mark 1:9-10).*

**Conclusion:** Now, candidly, it must take a great deal of imagination to perceive anything but an immersion in that plain and simple statement. No one would ever suspect anything else, unless prejudicial training supplanted the plain teaching of the word. A great many people are thoroughly convinced that Jesus was immersed in the Jordan, but vainly excuse themselves from following the Master's example.

## BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Baptists believe that only penitent believers are scriptural subjects for baptism. Only those who have repented of their sins, saved by divine power, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, created anew in Christ Jesus, and converted to God are prepared to receive the ordinance. We think the design of baptism, the act and the symbolic representation all require the subject to be a child of God; dead to sin and alive unto God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The duty to be baptized rests solely upon the authoritative command of Christ. As no act can be scriptural baptism except that which Christ authorized, neither can there be a scriptural subject except such as the command embraces. *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19).*

## THE LORD' S SUPPER

Jesus appointed two simple ordinances in His church to be observed till the end of time. Baptism is a symbol of His burial and resurrection, (Romans 6:1-5) as the Lord's supper is commemorative of His death and suffering. Both set forth, in beautiful symbol, great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. Both ordinances were appointed, authorized, established, and belong only to His churches. Neither churches nor individuals have any right to change the form, the order, or design of these simple yet sublime ordinances.

Christ instituted the ordinance. *"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:26-28).* Paul, writing unto the church of God which is at Corinth, said, *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (I Corinthians 11:23 -26) .*

Baptists believe that baptism properly precedes the Lord's Supper. Jesus gave the example. He was baptized at the beginning of His ministry and instituted the Lord's supper just prior to His death.

The commission places baptism before communion, and faith before baptism. *“Go ye therefore, and teach (i.e., disciple) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...”* (Matthew 28 :19-20) . First, *“make disciples,” “baptize them, then observe all things commanded.”* The Lord's supper is one of the things commanded, and is to be observed after the believer has become a baptized disciple.

## CHURCH MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

### CHURCH ATTENDANCE

*“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

For Christians to be their best, they must be attending the services of the church. Through the teaching of the Bible, the church is satisfying the need of Christians. Note I Peter 2:1 *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings.”* Compare with I Corinthians 3:2, *“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.”* Here it is clearly seen that both children and adults need to be attending Bible Study -- Sunday School. Also, it is evident that babes in Christ (young converts) and mature Christians as well need the Sunday School ministry to grow thereby.

On Sunday morning, the church comes together for worship. There should be real joy in Christians for this opportunity.

David, while exiled from home, expresses the true heart feeling of an individual unable to continue his regular attendance to the House of the Lord in Psalm 42:1. *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, o God.”* Also, in Psalm 43:3-4, *“O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto the holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.”*

How much does God's House mean to each individual? Going to church (the appointed place of worship) is more than a duty or obligation, it is an anticipated privilege that should not be abused... the response of a grateful heart.

Sunday evening is the regular Church worship service. So many church members take the admonition of Hebrews 10:25 to be present for Sunday morning only. Church attendance on Sunday evenings is just as important as the Sunday morning services. The command of God is no less important for Sunday evening than Sunday morning. According to Scripture the early church often met daily to be taught. Wednesday evening finds the hearts of the church united in common prayer, which is a part of church membership cooperation.

If some providential hindrance should come to you, your loyalty to the preaching hours should come first. Sunday School is simply a teaching service, while the other hour is the worship service. Every member should feel his responsibility to attend special meetings such as Revivals, Bible Conferences, Missionary Conferences, and other special services as announced. These are opportunities for personal growth, ministry and preparation to be a reproducer for the Lord.