

Biblical Truths for Our Faith!



Studies About Biblical, Baptist Distinctives

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Preface

Today's pragmatic approach to the ministry has caused Christians to rely more on methodologies than on the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of this viewpoint, Baptists also have not valued their heritage enough to explore in depth their roots or their beliefs which Baptists have practiced through the ages.

Over the years I have found ignorance among Baptists concerning our distinctives; some even count Baptists among the Protestants, believing their roots go back with the reformers into Rome. Present-day Baptists have little understanding that our spiritual forefathers were sanctified and denominated by certain distinctives that involved convictions concerning their knowledge of God and their faithfulness to the teachings of His Holy Word.

There continued to be individual and local churches who have held, and continue to hold in succession, *principles* for which Bible-believing Baptists are distinguished and which have been notable from the beginning of the New Testament Churches. These individuals and churches never yielded allegiance to or were identified with Rome or any other church/state hierarchy. Many, after suffering much, forfeited their lives for the principles set forth in this study, and especially for the Scriptures they held so dear. It is my desire that this presentation will greatly aid you in your work with the Lord.

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What Is A Baptist?

Introduction:

A young man began his ministry in a Methodist church in a certain small town, which also had a Baptist Church. A prominent family of the Baptist church had a falling out with the pastor and when a death occurred in the family, they asked the Methodist pastor to officiate at the funeral. He was not certain this would be the proper thing to do, so he wrote to his Bishop for instructions. He received the answer in a telegram as follows, "Bury all the Baptists you can."

The people called "Baptists" have not been the most popular church group. History shows they have suffered much opposition and persecution, even in the early days of our own country. I own a book entitled, "This Day in Baptist History" which contains a story for each day of the year dealing with persecution of Baptists in early America. In the light of these facts, we may well ask, "What is a Baptist? and "Why should I be a Baptist?"

How People Came to be Called "Baptists"

Baptists did not choose this name. It was given by their enemies. The name is derived from the ancient Anabaptist movement, which was in existence long before the Reformation period. The term "Anabaptist" mean to "rebaptize." These people refused to accept infant baptism or the baptism of unbelievers or unsaved people. Baptists believe the Scriptures teach "Believers' Baptism." When people were saved and sought to unite with Baptist Churches, they were required to be baptized by immersion, as clearly taught in the Bible. This brought down the wrath of the churches that practiced infant baptism, and resulted in the Anabaptists being grossly misrepresented and often bitterly persecuted. Many even died for their stand. This is the origin of the modern name "Baptist."

Why Baptists Are Not Protestants

Ordinarily, people were put into one of three religious groups. If you were not a Jew or a Roman Catholic, then automatically people think of you as a Protestant. Thus, Baptists are usually called "Protestants."

The term "Protestant" came into use as a result of the protest and appeal made by certain Lutherans and reformed church leaders before the Second Diet of Speieer, in 1529. The purpose of this Roman Catholic Council was to devise a means of checking the progress of Lutherans and others who were not cooperating with the Pope. The protest of these church leaders before this Council was a defensive measure designed to protect them from the decisions of this Council. The noted church historian, Philip Schaaf, makes the following statement: "From this protest, and appeal, the Lutherans were called Protestants." (History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII, p. 692. The same fact is stated in the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, p. 495.)

These Lutheran leaders who appeared before this Council were speaking for themselves and not for Baptists. They hated and persecuted the Baptists as much as did

the Catholics. Of Baptists they wrote, *“All Anabaptists (Baptists) and rebaptized persons, male or female, of mature age, shall be judged and brought from natural life to death, by fire, or sword, or otherwise, as may befit the persons, without preceding trial or spiritual judges.”* Since the Baptists did not share in this protest, they cannot be properly called, “Protestants.”

Historically, Baptists are not Protestants. Protestants date from the sixteenth century. They are the Lutherans, the Reformed, and others who were once Roman Catholics and left the Roman Church as did Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli. Many other groups have branched off of these over the years so there are many different Protestant churches today. Baptists never were in the Roman Church. They did not begin their existence at the time of the Reformation, but hundreds of years prior to it.

It has been claimed that there was only one religious group, the Roman Catholic Church, until the time of Martin Luther. History refutes this view. In every age of Church history, there have been groups that have held to the same doctrines that Baptists hold today. There were the Montanists (150 A. D.) the Novations (240 A. D.) the Donatists (350 A. D.) the Paulicians (650 A. D.) the Albigenses (1,022 A. D.) and the Waldensians (1,170 A. D.).

This coincides with the testimony of Cardinal Hosius, a Roman Catholic prelate who was commissioned by Pope Paul IV to work for the suppression of non-Catholic groups. He said, *“Were it not that the Baptists have been grievously tormented and cut off with the knife during the past 1,200 years, they would have swarmed in greater numbers than all the reformers.”* (Letters Apud Opera. pp. 112, 113). Note that this Catholic scholar has spoken of the vicious persecution Baptists have endured, that he clearly distinguishes them from the Reformers, and that he dates them 1,200 years before the Protestant Reformation. It is also evident that Baptists are not Protestants because they were fiercely persecuted by the Protestant Reformers and their followers. These things can easily be proven by historical records of many sorts.

What the Name Has Come to Mean

Baptists have sought to pattern their beliefs and practices after the pattern of the New Testament churches. We hold to this day that the Bible is our only rule of faith and practice. Any Baptist church that does not hold to this has left the historical position of Baptists.

Seeking to follow this pattern, our beliefs have involved certain distinctives that cause us to differ from others who have based doctrine and practice upon human tradition and the voice of the church in addition to the Scriptures. We believe all should know what these distinctives are, and urge all men to investigate what the Bible truly says. There are some churches today which hold to these distinctives who do not have the name Baptist in the name of their church, such as a good many Bible Churches, some which are members of the I. F. C. A. (Independent Fundamental Churches of America)

The doctrines to which we hold include the following:

1. The Bible is the only source of knowledge of God, and is our sole authority (Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 8:20).

2. Christ is our great High Priest, and every born again believer is a priest (I Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:22-28; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5,6).
3. The independence and autonomy of the local church (Matthew 18:17; Acts 1:15-26; 6:2-5; 15:2-4, 22).
4. A regenerate, immersed membership (only members who are born again Christians) Acts 2:47; I Peter 1:5; I Thessalonians 1:1-10).
5. Believer's baptism, by immersion (Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 3:26-28; Acts 8:30-39)
6. Salvation by grace, through faith alone (Ephesians 2:2-10; Romans 4:1-8; I John 5:9-13).
7. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, two symbolic ordinances, not sacraments (Romans 6:3-11; I Corinthians 11:23-32).
8. Separation of church and state (Acts 5:29; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:13, 21).

These distinctives make it impossible for Baptists to be a part of the popular present-day ecumenical movement, which has as its goal the forming of a one world church, a church based on organizational unity, rather than unity based upon the doctrines of the Bible. That is why Bible-believing Baptists cannot be a part of the National Council of Churches, or similar organizations, but must maintain a position of separation from modernism, and all the other newer isms, in order to be true to the Word of God.

The Bible, The Source of Knowledge and Truth

Introduction:

What do we mean by Baptist or Bible Distinctives? This is an important question. What we mean is "Those principles laid down in the Bible," which true Baptists have always believed. We mean. . . these distinctives are those principles that are found in the Bible and made us different than most other denominations. We do not mean, just a doctrinal statement as such, but basic Bible beliefs which made Baptists and those who are baptistic, to be different. They are doctrinal Bible beliefs which we did not originate but are taught in the New Testament. Why are some people Baptists? Why did many lay down their lives for the sake of what they believed? Why do we believe what we do?

Historically, among Baptists, the Bible alone has been at the center of our worship. Baptists believe that the Bible is the center of our worship, and of our personal lives. We do not need aids to worship, liturgy, or other manmade means to bring about a worship experience. the preaching of the Word of God is central to all we believe. (I Corinthians 1:18-24; 2:1-4)

Thus we believe that the Bible is God revealing Himself to man. It is He translating His thoughts and conveying them thus in the vehicle of the very words as inspired by the Holy Spirit. (II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:20,21; Jeremiah 1:9) The Bible is the miracle Book, the infallible Book, and the ultimate source of truth about God. When we listen to the Word of God preached and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to our lives in this process, we can have true worship as we bow before Him in humble reverence and obedience.

Revelation In Nature Is Insufficient

God has spoken through nature -- Psalm 19:1-6 The revelation of God in nature is insufficient because it does not go far enough to bring man into a personal relationship with God, it cannot bring many to conviction and conversion. Only salvation through the blood of Christ can do that (Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 2:13).

The message of nature shows us that God exists, that God is an intelligent being and that He has all power to plan and carry out that plan. But it never reveals God's redemption for man, nor His high and holy purposes for mankind. While many people nearly worship nature (Romans 1:21-25), we must keep it in proper perspective.

God has spoken specifically by the Word of God -- Psalm 19:7-14. It is the Word of God He has promised to use. (Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:23). God has revealed Himself through the Scriptures. It is only by the study of the Bible that we can truly know Him (II Timothy 2:15; II Timothy 3:15-17).

God has spoken by His Son, the Living Word -- I John 1:1-3, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3) The written Word and the Incarnate Word (Jesus Christ) are as one (John 1:14-18), for the Bible is the only source book of the knowledge of Christ.

Human Experience Is Untrustworthy

Many people, both saved and unsaved, fall into the error that feelings and emotional experiences are to be sought after. They think they can know and

experience God on the basis of human emotional and aesthetic experiences. Such people sometimes leave out the Word of God as a source of truth and use experience as a basis of their doctrine and teaching. In this way, Satan can enter in and give experiences of an emotional nature totally contrary to what the Word of God teaches.

This is a very dangerous thing, for then what people believe is tied to their vacillating emotions and colored by their personal bias. These emotions and biases may be instigated by Satan and his demons. Many hold to the doctrine of speaking in tongues, visions, and dreams as a means to gain experiences with God.

There is no need for visions -- Colossians 2:18-23.

There is no need for new revelation -- Colossians 2:8; Rev. 22:18,19

There is no need for emotional experiences to try and gain new truth.

Doctrine is never based upon human experience in life, but upon the sure Word of God.

Human Reason Is Incapable

God's thoughts are higher than man's thoughts -- Isaiah 55:7-9

Unsaved man cannot think "right" -- I Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:17-18

Unsaved man's wisdom is faulty -- II Timothy 3:7; James 3:14; I Cor. 1:18-25

Paul never trusted human wisdom -- I Corinthians 2:1-5

Man has tended to deify reason, science, and education. In doing so they have rejected the divine revelation of the Bible. Faith is not an unreasonable thing. It is the highest logic to accept and believe the Bible.

How pitiful is the world that is deluded into the belief that human reason is sufficient for all things. Much of the doctrine of churches today is based upon nothing but human experience, tradition, whatever is culturally relevant or acceptable to the masses, rather than the "*thus saith the Lord.*" (Colossians 2:6-10)

The Word of God Is Truth

Some would say, "It isn't important whether or not you accept all the Bible or not. The important thing is that you have faith in Christ." That is nonsense. It is illogical, because if the Bible is not dependable as the very Word of God, then we cannot know God or truth and we cannot trust Him.

The greatest attack being waged today is the attack against the Word of God. Many who once believed the Bible as the infallible Word of God, now say that it is not necessarily trustworthy in every part. Then with the many different paraphrases available in our age one could well ask, "Which translation or paraphrase is the Bible anyway?" I find that many paraphrases available today make a mockery of the Scriptures. They are far afield from what the Word of God has to say, and make it into a plastic nose to say what man wants it to say. It is sad that some men write their books using perhaps upwards to 15 or 20 different so called Bibles, picking out whatever man has written that fits their idea and often their false teachings.

It is important that the very foundation for our lives is indeed the Word of God.

God says the Bible Is His Word -- II Tim. 3:16,17; Psa. 119:89

The Bible Proves It -- I Thessalonians 1:5; 2:13; Hebrews 4:12

We Accept It As God's Word -- Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 2:13

The Bible, the Only Rule for Faith and Practice

Introduction:

Every Church, every cult or “ism,” rests their faith or doctrine on something. They all look to something as their authority. This will vary, but all of them “rests” upon an authority which they think is right and sufficient.

- *Some look to a book written by man, either used to take the place of the Bible, or used as an addition to it (like the book of Mormon).*
- *Others turn to their founder, looking back for every decision and rule, such as Mohammedans, Buddhists and others.*
- *The Roman Catholics look to their popes, the cardinals and councils. They state that these are their basic authority. The decree of the pope rules, egardless of what the Bible may say, for the Church is the authority, not the Word of God.*
- *Still others look to emotional thrills (what feels good becomes their source of doctrine, or what feels right to them), the aesthetic appeal, or to personal experience, for what they experience is truth to them, regardless of what the Bible says. Some base their beliefs on what is culturally acceptable today, not what God says. Many base the content and methods in their worship services on what they feel is popular to the masses, or what man wants.*

But we take the Bible for our only rule for faith and practice. While men today generally tend to rebel against authority of any kind imposed on them, we can praise God that we have one absolute authoritative voice which we can follow with great faith. The Word of God, which we are to obey, is the divine dictate for our lives. A great many thinking people recognize the value of absolutes. In this day of relativism (that is, there are no absolutes) we can praise God for His Word which is the rule over us.

We Recognize the Bible As God’s Communication to Mankind

The Old Testament writers sensed they spoke for God. Think of it, the phrases affirming that they spoke from God are recorded in the Pentateuch 680 times, in the Historical books 418 times, in Isaiah and Jeremiah 670 times, in Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets 518 times. This means that almost countless times you can find the statement, “*The Word of the Lord came unto me,*” or other evidence that God was speaking.

Nearly 2,400 times the Old Testament writers lifted their voices to bring us assurance that they were instruments mightily used of God to record His message. Remember:

1. The Word of the Lord (the Law) is perfect. (Psalm 19:7)
2. The Work of God is perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4)
3. The Will of God is perfect. (Romans 12:2)

We Recognize the Bible As Our Only Authority

Let us consider this a bit further. Bible believers throughout history have held to the position, “*The Bible is our only basis for authority. It is God’s Word from heaven, and it excludes all other claims of authority.*” Many laid down their lives for this belief and truth.

The whole canon of Scripture is of God. All sixty-six books are absolute truth. John 17:17 says *“Thy Word is truth.”* We should not say we are searching for truth. We could comprehend (or understand the Bible better), but we have all the truth. (Isaiah 8:20)

The Bible is “a sure word.” It is a more sure word of prophecy (II Peter 1:19). God’s Word did not come through private interpretation, but it came from God as holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, wrote that which God desired. If that is not the case, then we have no Word of God. (See II Peter 1:20-21; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18)

We Recognize the Bible Was Written for the Churches, for Us Today

For the founding of the Church. We look and see in Matthew 16:18, the basis for the founding of the church. In Matthew 18, Christ gives us the discipline of the local church. The Book of Acts explains the establishment of the local church. Then all the Epistles were written in the framework of the local churches. (Read Romans 16:4, 5, 16; I Corinthians 1:2; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:2; Ephesians 3:21; Philippians 1:1; and Colossians 4:16.) Since the Bible was written as epistles to the churches, and about the churches, then Christians ought to rest upon no other authority than the Word of God for their faith and practice.

For the establishment of the church. Paul wrote to Timothy about the establishment of the church and the directive was given for the qualifications of a pastor, etc., (I Timothy 3:1-7; II Timothy 4:1-5) and deacons (Titus 1:5-9).

God, the Holy Spirit, also led Paul to give us some of the deep truths about the Church in the book of Ephesians (Ephesians 1:20-23; 2:19-22; 3:21. See also I Timothy 3:15.)

For the authority of the church. It is very evident that God gave us His Word as the only authority for the Church (II Timothy 3:16,17). And it is profitable for:

- doctrine -- I Timothy 4:13, 15, 16, 17
- reproof -- II Timothy 3:17; 4:2
- correction -- II Timothy 1:13; I Timothy 5:20
- instruction in righteousness -- II Timothy 2:1-6, 19-26

We have no founder but Christ (I Corinthians 3:11), no book but the Bible. We have no Lord but Christ, no commands from Him but through His Word. Satan has done all he can from the beginning of time to get people to belittle and ignore the Word of God as authoritative. He did that with Adam and Eve, and he has ever since (Genesis 3:1-13). Thus it is no surprise that he would lead men to look to almost anything besides the Word of God for their authority. Christ’s answer to Satan at the time of His temptation was the Word of God, and it is our answer today as well. (Matthew 4:4)

Conclusion:

The Christian can take the whole Bible (Authorized King James Version) in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds the true Word of God, handed down, without essential loss, from generation to generation throughout the centuries (Matthew 25:35; I Peter 1:25) We must take the Word of God as our only rule for faith and practice -- not the traditions of men, the ideas of men, or translations that are not true to the old manuscripts.

A Regenerate Church Membership

Acts 2:36-47

Introduction:

Through the centuries, Bible believers (Baptists) have insisted that all who became members of the local church must be saved first (or born again, know they have been regenerated) first. This is not a distinctive of Baptist churches alone, but there are many groups or denominations who do not believe that one must be saved to become a member of their church.

This is still a burning issue today. Many say that times have changed and that in order for a church to exist today, financially and numerically, we must include all who are interested in the church. They would say that all "sympathetic" people should be allowed membership as well.

Most churches today receive people into their membership upon one or other of the following basis:

- *a request to join,*
- *confirmation or some instructional class,*
- *a mental assent to a belief in God or Christ,*
- *acceptance into the church, and then the church might seek to win them to Christ. In this situation salvation might come after church membership.*

God's Word sets forth a higher standard than those listed above. It states clearly that people are to be "saved" first. This order is very clear in Acts 2:41,42. "The Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved." As they were saved, they were united to the local church, not before.

When Paul wrote to the churches he was writing to the saints in Christ Jesus. A church full of lost people trying to do God's work -- lacking salvation, a changed life, an indwelling Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit are hardly fit subjects for membership in a local church.

Why do we believe people are to be saved before they are accepted into the membership of a church? Lets see what the Bible so clearly teaches:

The Church Is a "Called out" Assembly

The Greek word translated "Church" in the New Testament literally means "a called out assembly." It includes those who are called out of the world by Christ Himself. The local church is made up of people who are His. They must first be saved, have a new life in Christ, before they are a part of a local church.

Such people hear the gospel and trust in Christ. Having repented of their sins, they accept Christ as personal Savior and then are baptized and added to the church. (Acts 2:38, 41)

Such have first a citizenship in heaven -- Philippians 3:20-21. This means the saved are members of the family of heaven. The church is like a colony of heaven, representing God here on earth. It could not be made up of unsaved or some saved and

some lost and still represent God's plan and do His will.

Such individuals are saints (that is set apart), called-out ones -- I Cor. 1:2. Notice the church at Corinth was made up of sanctified people. The word means *"holy ones, or set apart ones,"* not because they are so holy in themselves, but because the saved are made righteous through salvation in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 5:21; I Peter 2:24). The church is not to be made up of a mixed multitude, partly unsaved living as enemies of God and partly born again saints of God (Romans 5:8-12).

The Church Is Like a Spiritual Body -- I Peter 2:5

The Bible sets forth a glorious picture of the Church as a spiritual house, as lively stones build upon a foundation, which is Christ. (I Cor. 3:11) This is a spiritual house made up of stones with life. If an unbeliever, one who is dead in trespasses and sins, was built into this house, would it stand? No, it would fall and fail; it would crumble. The Bible says *"A little leaven (sin) leaveneth the whole lump."* (I Cor. 5:6) Leaven in the Bible speaks of false doctrine, of false living, of sinful living, of wickedness and insincerity. So an unbeliever added to the local church would be like so much leaven. No good would come from the mixture of good and evil. They could hardly be put together as living stones.

I Peter 2:9 says of those who are saved that they are a *"chosen generation, a royal priesthood. . ."* who are born again (cf I Corinthians 15:50). All of this means the saved people are *"alive spiritually"* for they are *"new creatures"* in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). Only people who are alive in Christ have a right to be members of a local church for it here on planet earth to glorify Him and to fulfill His will.

The Church Has a Great Mission -- Matthew 28:19,20

One of the most precious blessings and privileges of the local church is to take the gospel message to the world (Romans 1:14-17). To bring the message of the gospel to others so they get saved, baptized, and organized into local churches in their own nation is a tremendous privilege. We are saved and called to get the gospel to the world (II Timothy 1:9; John 15:16). And then our goal is to disciple them so they become reproducers, taking the gospel message (II Corinthians 15:1-4) to their own people (Acts 1:8). This could never be carried out by carnal, unsaved members of a local church. The unsaved have no concept of their own need, let alone sacrificing to reach the world for Christ.

The Local Church Is a Wonderful Fellowship of Blood Bought People

Another precious blessing in the local church is the fellowship of its own people with one another and with the Lord. This can only be true when people are truly saved. The Bible asks, *"Can two walk together except they be agreed?"* (Amos 3:3). We are not to be unequally yoked with the unsaved, and fellowship with unsaved people is an impossibility (II Corinthians 6:14-18). Sometimes the saints have more in common than with blood relatives.

This fellowship is real and precious. John, the Apostle wrote *"... that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ"* (I John 1:3). One of the best attractions to the local church should be the love and fellowship in Christ among the saved. And a joyous church where there is a lot of love and sacrifice for one another has an impact on the unsaved. If a church is made up

many unsaved the character and personality of the church is totally different, made up of sheep and goats, of those who love the Lord and those who love their sin.

Conclusion:

When a person accepts Christ as personal Savior and gives proper evidence of really being saved, of having spiritual life, then that one should be Scripturally baptized, and brought into the membership of a local church.

The church is then to take these newborn Christians, whether young or old in years and nurture them as babes in Christ until they grow strong in the faith (I Peter 2:2; Colossians 1:27-29). The church is to help the weak, lift up the fallen, and bear the burdens of those who carry a heavy load (Galatians 6:1,2). Some people have the idea that one is to become a member of the church only if living up to some degree of a perfect life. This is not the pattern of the New Testament Church. The church at Corinth had many tremendous needs among its own. They were far from perfect, and Paul especially challenged them in I Corinthians 6:19, 20.

God's Holy Spirit leads people into a New Testament church because He is working to fitly join together these members into one body that edifies itself in love (Ephesians 4:16-17; 2:21). Each church ought to pray that God will send into its membership those who will strengthen the church life, people with talents and abilities that are needed, people who are generous in heart to give, people who have gifts of faith and prayer, and people with the right spirit. My experience is that as we win people to Christ, and we disciple them the Holy Spirit works in their lives so they can become those kinds of people.

The Greek word translated **Church** is in the New Testament about 114 times. About 100 times or so it is speaking of a local church, in a local place, doing God's work in God's way, for His glory, and by His power. This can only take place when people are truly saved. **There must be a regenerated church membership!**

The Priesthood of the Individual Believer and Soul Liberty

Introduction:

An important distinctive that is basic to all that Baptists (and Bible believers accept as Biblical doctrine) believe is the priesthood of the saved. By this we mean that each person is personally and individually responsible to God. Each person is able to come directly to God apart from the intervention of others.

God holds each person responsible, with no human go-between. Each saved person is himself, or herself, a priest unto God and has direct access into the very presence of God through Christ Jesus. Christ, as our Mediator, our High Priest, has made it possible for us to come directly into God's presence.

This eliminates all earthly priests who would serve as mediators. The whole principle of soul liberty is very vital, and it is easily noted that the world is divided over this issue. On one hand there are those of our Bible-believing Baptist conviction, and on the other hand are the many under Roman Catholic philosophy, and some who apply these concepts without really understanding the extent to which they are contradicting Scripture by their practice.

The communicants (or members) of many Protestant and Roman Catholic churches are not under the Word of God as the authority, but under the rule of a churchly system of popes or clergy or the church.

Soul Slavery

We believe that the thinking of the Christian should follow the teaching of the Word of God. Every thought is to be brought into obedience to Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). Christ is to be Lord. (Romans 14:9).

We understand that the new birth gives a new life (II Corinthians 5:17), and opens the door to a renewed mind (Romans 12:1,2). This means Christ is the Lord of the mind, of the heart, of the conscience, and of the very life of every saved person.

We do not accept the Roman system in its dogmatic, arrogant rule over the thinking and conscience of those faithful to the church. They are mentally enslaved to a man-made system. While we are free from the lordship of any man, we are under the complete Lordship of Christ. So we must be deeply concerned that no man, or group of men, come between us and God. Many verses teach these truths as we shall see.

Sole Responsibility to God

Important verses to read concerning our responsibility before God include: John 15:16; Acts 5:29; Romans 14:10-12; 15:5-7; II Corinthians 5:10)

Over the years men have tended to become like cattle herded about, and to lose individual responsibility and identity. Christianity is based upon the principle that the individual is very important in God's sight and stands as a free moral agent before God. It is "*whosoever will come*" will be saved. (Romans 10:9-13) Each person is

responsible for the choices he makes in life. No priest is in the place of forgiving sin, absolving people of their iniquity, etc. At the judgment, the unsaved will stand before God individually (Revelation 20:11-15). Matthew 7:13 and 11:28 and Joshua 24:15 indicate that a person has a personal choice to make.

The very elements of individual responsibility are important parts of our holy, Biblical, Christian faith. The whole concept of obedience (Romans 1:4; 10:16), of receiving Christ as Savior (John 1:12), is at the very heart of salvation and the teaching of the Word of God. This eliminates the intrusion of any man, any religious group or order, and gives each one the full responsibility for what is between his soul and his maker. The word sacrament is not a scriptural term. It is a great error which is under God's condemnation that a mere man (priest or a clergy) can absolve sin, or remove someone's sin from them in a so-called sacrament of penitence.

God is the Lord of the conscience, and no man dare meddle in this area without being judged of God. We are under the one "*authority--the Word of God,*" and its application to our individual lives. Our obligation is to obey the Word of God alone.

One Mediator and High Priest--Christ: I Timothy 2:5

Throughout history, Baptists have accepted that there is but one Mediator. This immediately eliminates all claims of the power of Mary, or of any other person who has been sainted by the Catholic church, or any priest, or even a pope to mediate between men and God. No preacher, pope, priest or clergyman (or woman) has any special "*mediatorial*" power to bring people to God, or bring about some special work in the heart. That is the work of God, of the Holy Spirit in the inner life (Phil. 2:13).

As Mediator, Christ is the Great High Priest for all who are saved (Hebrews 7:25-27). And as such --

1. He makes intercession for us -- Hebrews 7:25; 4:14-16.
2. He makes the way clear to approach God -- Hebrews 10:19-22.
3. He is the Advocate before the throne whenever we sin -- I John 2:1-2.
4. He has an unchanging priesthood before the throne in our behalf -- Hebrews 7:22-24; John 14:6.

No mention is made of an earthly order of priests in the New Testament. No mention is made in Scripture that Mary is the "*mother of God*" or that she has ability to plead for us with Christ or with the heavenly Father, or that we need her as our "*go-between*" as taught by the Roman Catholic church.

The whole book of Hebrews refutes any idea that we are to look to men. Christ as our High Priest has made the way clear so we can come boldly to the throne of grace for He is the provider of a new and living way through His blood. He has also replaced the old order of the mediatorial priesthood of the Old Testament as it was for the Jews of the Old Testament era.

The Believer As a Priest Unto God -- I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5,6

While the Word of God is very clear that we have only one Advocate, Mediator, and High Priest, it is also clear that each saved person is, in a sense, himself, a priest unto God. This gives him these special rights and privileges:

1. Direct access into God's presence personally, without man's help or intervention -- Hebrews 4:14-16; John 14:13-14; Hebrews 10:19-22.

2. Direct access to the Word of God with the personal right and privilege to ask the Holy Spirit to teach him -- John 5:39; Acts 17:11; John 14:26.
3. Immediate forgiveness and cleansing of sin upon our confession, without any mediatorial aid from another -- I John 1:6-10; Isaiah 59:1-3; I Timothy 2:1-8.

We do not have to go to a "*consecrated*" person, such as a priest or clergy, for Biblical understanding or interpretation, or to have sins forgiven, or to go to some "*sacred*" place to be able to pray. No mere man can do any of these things for us. But as priests unto God, we have those rights for ourselves, made possible through the blood of Christ in a new and living way (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Conclusion:

When we are saved, we have full responsibility to serve God. As believer-priests we have the responsibility of a prayer life, of offering up praise and thanksgiving, or doing good works as His child, and or worship (Hebrews 10:25; 13:15; John 14:13-14; I Peter 2:9). We are called upon to sacrifice our bodies unto the Lord. (Romans 6:13; 12:1-2) the Old Testament priest has sacrifices to bring to God in their behalf and the behalf of the people. We also have something to bring to the altar of sacrifice -- it is our own lives.

Baptists have historically espoused religious freedom. If you were to read the book, "*This Day In Baptist History,*" you would discover that many thousands of Baptist believers laid down their lives, were hunted, hounded and killed, imprisoned or wounded because of their belief and practice of soul liberty. They believed in soul liberty for all people -- but paid a great price. for this truth. In many of the colonies people endeavored to bring into being a state church (much like the church of England) with control over the people in which there was much false doctrine being taught and practiced. Baptism of infants was one of the great issues. While we must urge men to "*do right,*" each person is still responsible to a holy God as an individual.

The Autonomy and Place of the Local Church

Introduction:

The New Testament teaching concerning the church is a very vital issue and truth. If we are in error in what we believe about the local church, we will also be in error in many other areas of Biblical truth.

What we mean by autonomy of the local church is each local church is a self-governing body and cannot be part of another body. Churches of an area may fellowship with each other, working together to accomplish various ministries like camp, sending missionaries, etc. But while cooperating with others, each church remains a self-governing entity in itself. This means the local church is to govern its own affairs under God. There is no instance in Scripture where one church among the many we read about was under the direction or control of another. We have no hierarchy of a clergy class over the local church. Each local church is independent, sovereign, and autonomous as it carries on its work and conducts its own ministry and work for the Lord.

This type of church government or organization is usually called “congregational” or “democratic,” which is, in a sense, a true designation. But the best term would be a “theocracy,” God’s rule over the local church by His Word and the power and direction of His will.

The Place of the Local Church

God puts a great importance on the local church and we know this because the word translated “church” in the New Testament is found 114 times and over 100 times refers to a local church. We must understand God’s will for the local church so that we may do God’s will in God’s way.

Here is a good definition of the church: “The local New Testament church is a body of baptized (immersed) believers with Scriptural officers (pastors and deacons) gathering in one place, organized to carry out the ordinances, (baptism and the Lord’s Supper), to worship, to teach the Word of God for the building up of the saved and to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth for the salvation of the lost.”

The New Testament church, then is an autonomous body separated unto the Lord, separated from the state, and all other organizations, and holding only Christ as its head, with the Word of God as its only rule of faith and practice.

1. For the ministry of evangelism -- Acts 1:8, 8:1, 4
2. For standing for the truth -- I Timothy 3:15- 17; Jude 1-4
3. To be a center of Bible teaching -- Acts 20:28-32
3. For the fellowship of the saints -- I Corinthians 1:2, 9; Acts 2:41-47

The Purpose of God’s Leadership -- Colossians 1:14-19

The New Testament clearly teaches that a local New Testament church is to govern its own affairs under Christ. We find no church or group of men from one church ever controlled by another church in the Biblical accounts.

Since each church is a sovereign, independent organization to carry on its own business and conduct its own affairs, it must be a spiritual church. A “*theocracy*” (Christ as head of the church) requires the highest level of spiritual life. Each member must seek to know the will of God. The church, in voting or decision making, must be led of the Holy Spirit. Selfish interest must give way to the will of God sought. When a church thus functions, the voice of the people reveals the will of God and becomes the leadership of God through the people. This demands a very close walk with the Lord, a surrender to the teaching of the Word of God, yielded wills to God’s will, and a humble seeking of God’s purposes and design. (see Colossians 1:9-11; Ephesians 3:21; 2:21-22; 4:11-24; 1:15-23.)

The supernatural operation of God’s guidance through His people becomes the wonderful testimony of being of “*one mind*” (Philippians 2:1-4; Romans 12:16; Philippians 1:27). In this manner the church in reality becomes a “*theocracy.*” God’s will is discovered or known through the democratic meeting. In this way the local church is autonomous, with no higher power than God and His Word over it. There must be a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, the ways of God, and the pattern for the church as found in the New Testament. (see Philippians 2:13)

The Place of the Individual Believer In the Church

The health of the church, the power of the church, and the victory of the church depend upon each saved person understanding his or her position in the church. The very autonomy of the local church is based upon two very important New Testament principles:

The competency of the individual to know the will of God--I Cor. 1:5, 15
Since we can and must know the will of God for our individual lives, we can know together the will of God for the work of the church.

1. The Word is our authority. -- II Timothy 3:15-17; 2:15
2. We are responsible to obey God and walk in His will -- Acts 5:29; Romans 8:14
3. The Holy Spirit promises to teach us and lead us into all truth. -- John 14:26; 16:13-14
4. All believers are equal before God. -- Galatians 3:28
5. All are to live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. -- Ephesians 5:18; Acts 6:3
6. The will of God must be accepted as the will of the majority, or the consensus of the majority -- Acts 15:1-32

The local church as an autonomous body operates in three spheres: The church is not subject to, nor part of any other organization within its own constituency. It is composed of members (Acts 2:41) not organizations. Thus the couple’s class or the men’s brotherhood, or some other group, does not run the church. Groups within the church may exist for fellowship or service, but they are not to influence the direction of a church, or the church will cease to be autonomous. The local church is not subject to any ecclesiastical or political power from without. This means that it has no conventions or denominational organization to which it is subject, nor is it subject to the state, or the state to the church.

Conclusion:

Basically, there are four kinds of church government.

1. There is the **papal**, which is practiced by the Roman Catholic church wherein the pope and cardinals, etc., make rulings that their local churches must submit to. New decrees become authoritative regardless of what the Bible might say.

2. There is the **episcopal** type of church government, which is a priestly aristocratic type of church government.

3. There is the **presbyterian**, which is a representative aristocratic type of government wherein a select few make the decisions for the whole.

4. And there is the **congregational** or democratic type, which we understand to be what the Bible teaches and was practiced. It allows God to have full control of the local church as the people seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This requires the church body to pray much, seeking divine guidance that they might truly know God's will for them. They are the ones who make up the local ministry and who are aware of what is taking place.

I am aware that not everyone will agree with some of the foregoing conclusions, and that is their right within the right of the priesthood of the believer.

With all of this in mind, it is extremely important that the pastor, deacons, and all laymen of the local church be a spiritual people. The leadership of the Holy Spirit is of paramount importance. It is extremely important the will of God be done in the local church.

The Church is Christ's body -- Colossians 1:12-29

The Church is Christ's bride -- Ephesians 5:22-32

The Church is His Workman -- I Corinthians 3:9-15

A Local Church being founded -- Acts 11:19-30

Founding of the Church at Thessalonica -- Acts 17:1-17

Missionaries founding (starting) Churches -- Acts 14:19-228

A Church in a house -- Philemon 1-25

A Baptized Church Membership

Introduction:

In the teaching of the Word of God there are at least four distinctives relative to baptism which sets Baptists (and other Bible believers) apart from others:

1. *Only believers are to be baptized (it is called believers-baptism) which excludes not only adult unbelievers, but also infants who can neither believe or disbelieve.*
2. *Baptism is to be by immersion rather than by sprinkling or by pouring.*
3. *Baptism is not a step in receiving Christ as Savior but a testimony that one already has received Christ.*
4. *Believer's baptism by immersion is a step in obedience necessary before uniting with a local church.*

While water baptism is recognized almost universally in "Christendom" as a part of the Christian system, we do differ from others in the points listed above. This difference is very important to understand and to recognize. And if it is not founded on the Word of God then it is wrong.

Now we will see what the Scripture says and will prove that we must practice what the Bible teaches.

What is Baptism?

Baptism by definition is the immersion of a regenerated (born again person, John 1:11-13) in water as a token of his fellowship and new life he has in Christ through Christ's death, burial and resurrection (I Cor. 15:1-4). Baptism is our identification with Christ. It does not save us, the water did not die for us, nor can it take away sin. It definitely should follow salvation. Therefore, baptism is not Bible baptism unless it comes after salvation (Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 16:33).

It must be clearly borne in mind that the baptism under discussion at this point is called Christian baptism or believer's baptism. This is to be distinguished from the baptism of John the Baptist. John came preaching a message which would prepare the way for Christ to rule over Israel (Matthew 3:1-12). He did not preach the Gospel as we know it today. The most convincing reason that John's baptism is not believer's baptism is that some who had only received the John's baptism have to be rebaptized. (Acts. 19:4,5) Our baptism is as an act of obedience to an express command. (Matt. 28:18-20)

1. Our Lord's baptism also was not believer's baptism.

The baptism of Christians today signifies the death and resurrection of Christ, whereby we are saved. It would make little sense to enact beforehand that which He was going to do in reality at the end of His ministry. Christ's baptism was unique. We could well ask, then why was He baptized? First, as an example for us, and 2) secondly as a manifestation that He is the Son of God. As the Father said, "*This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.*" When we are baptized, we enter into this ordinance because we have become children of God through salvation by Christ's death for us on the cross.

2. There are two basic ideas conveyed by the observance of baptism.
The first, is that it is a public confession. The story of the Ethiopian eunuch's

baptism is a case in point (Acts 8:26-40). After he had heard the message as it was expounded by Philip, he requested baptism (vv. 35,36). Although there is no information given as to how many were present at this baptism, it may still be considered as a confession of his belief in Christ to those who read the story of this man's conversion. **The confession made involved three things:**

a. *It was a confession about a sacrifice.* (v. 32). The only way the sin problem could be settled was through a death. Christ died for our sins, and His death is pictured as the convert is placed under the water.

b. *It is also a confession about sin.* Since all men are sinners, the judgment upon sin has passed upon all men. (Romans 5:12, 19; 6:23; 4:24-25) Christ's death takes away the penalty of sin.

c. *It is also a confession about salvation.* Baptism does not save, but a person is baptized because he is saved. It is a confession that he has trusted in Christ as his Savior (vs. 37).

Baptism is an outward sign of an inward change. It is an announcement to all who observe that a new life has been given on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross.

Second, baptism is a personal consecration. Too often, the fact of a public testimony being made is the only thing stressed when a new Christian is baptized. This is important, but it is equally important to stress that baptism declares this person has now been set apart. **This confession involves two things:**

a. *Baptism is an act of identification.* This is the basic meaning of all the forms of the word "baptism" mentioned in the Bible. In the case of believer's baptism it is an identification with Christ (Romans 6:3). Romans 6:3-5 does not refer primarily to water baptism, yet it cannot be disassociated from it. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is in view here, because the changes which are said to take place could never come about as a result of water baptism. But that which takes place when the believer is baptized into Christ's body may certainly be pictured by the ordinance of baptism. As we are wholly put into the water in the observance of water baptism, so the Holy Spirit wholly puts us into the family of God and into the results of Christ's death for us.

By immersion in water, the individual illustrates his death to the old way of life, and when he is raised, it points to the resurrection and impartation of a new life (v. 4). This new life is also an identification with other Christians. He now associates himself with God's people. This probably meant more in New Testament times than it does today. Then it even may have resulted in loss of home, family or life.

b. *As an act of consecration, baptism also points to a life of separation.* The world is being left behind, and now the believer is going to live for Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). The separation is abrupt and complete as the picture of death conveys this idea so vividly. How often believers forget that they are saying these things as they go under the baptismal waters. It should be understood that this act I am involved in means I have a new life in Christ. I am not my own, I am to live for Him. (Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2)

The Importance of Baptism

Christ was baptized as an example for us--Matthew 3:13-17 The Lord Jesus said He was baptized "to fulfill all righteousness." In other words He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness meaning He was doing the right thing the Father desired of Him, "And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were open unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon

him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Matthew 3:16,17). We also see Christ was immersed, as He came up out of the water. And we also need to understand the meaning of the word baptize.

The Word of God commands our being baptized. In the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, there were (and are) three things the disciples were to do if they were to fulfill God's will, and the commission given them. They were to go, and in the process of continually going, they were to win people to Christ (make disciples of them), then baptize them, then teach them to observe all things. Those who became disciples (were saved) were to be baptized. In Acts 2:38, the command to be baptized was given with the command to repent.

The early Church practiced baptism. We could ask the question, "*Did the disciples (apostles) obey the command?*" If we study the Book of Acts thoroughly we will have an answer to that question. Yes, they did! After the conversion of 3,000 on the day of Pentecost, they were baptized (Acts 2:38-41). We have records of people being baptized after receiving Christ as Savior in Acts 8:4, 8-13; 8:26-38; 9:18; and 10:44-48.

The teaching of the Word of God is very clear at this point. Every time we read in Scripture of someone being baptized it was always after the testimony of salvation in Christ's provision for this sin; it was after their confession of faith, or of belief in Christ as Savior. Whenever it took place the person involved knew what was taking place. There is no example of an infant being baptized in the New Testament. Any statement to the contrary is based only an inference, not fact.

It is for this reason that baptism is called believer's baptism. It is only for those who are saved, and only after a credible testimony of their trust in Christ as personal Savior. Infants are not capable of exercising such understanding or belief. The idea that infants should be baptized was one of the factors which introduced a change in the mode or method. In order to baptize young babies, another form, such as sprinkling, was thought to be more convenient.

As soon as a mistake is made concerning the significance of baptism, an error will be made in regard to the subjects of baptism. If baptism is necessary to one's salvation, then every effort will be made to include as many as possible, even infants. The Ethiopian eunuch (only one of many) made his profession of faith, (vs. 37) and then was baptized (vs. 38). This was true of anyone baptised as given in the accounts in Acts.

The natural man (I Cor. 2: 14) will endeavor to make himself acceptable by being baptized or by participating in the Lord's Supper. He will enter into many religious acts while not trusting the blood of Christ. (see Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 16:30, 31)

The Mode of Baptism

It is proper at this point to share plainly about the mode of baptism. The Scriptural method is immersion. This is demonstrated by the meaning of baptism. Since it signifies the death and resurrection of Christ by which we are saved, no other mode except immersion will be sufficient. In addition, the Greek verb which is translated by the English word "*baptize*" means to "***dip or immerse.***" There is little argument today among Bible students concerning the fact that immersion was the only form practiced in the early church. And anyone who is serious about knowing truth and following the truth of God's Word can know without equivocation or doubt, for the Scriptures are very clear, and the meaning of the Greek word baptize can be

fully know.

It will interest you to know that **John Calvin**, founder of the Reformed Churches wrote: *"The very word baptize signifies to immerse, and it is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church."* This is said honestly while infant baptism by sprinkling was still practiced. What is right, to obey God or disobey? And there is much more to this than mere personal choice.

The Reformed scholar, **Philip Schaff**, said, *"... the illustrations of baptism used in the New Testament (Romans 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12; I Corinthians 10:2; I Peter 3:20, 21) are all in favor of immersion rather than sprinkling as is freely admitted by the best exegetes whether Catholic, Protestant, English or German."* (Or the best at interpreting the Word of God all agree the mode is immersion.)

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)

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 give 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.

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.

A Separated Church

Introduction:

The New Testament clearly teaches that the local church ought to be made up of a separated people. In contrast to this, many churches neither teach separation, nor make any attempt to screen the people who come to unite with the church. In fact since many churches no longer teach the need of being born again, (John 3:1-7), they cannot comprehend the importance of separation. It is impossible for a person to be "separated" without first being saved. To be separated from the world, sinful living, and allowing the flesh to control is something foreign to them.

Every denomination and each local church that does not teach separation as the Bible teaches it, is really practicing "continuing in sin that grace may abound." (Rom. 6:1) And even that may not make sense to them.

There are four distinct areas of separation which must not only be taught, but also practiced.

Separated From False Doctrine

If we are not separated from false doctrine, we will "*be carried about with every wind of doctrine*" (Ephesians 4:14). It is important that we be nourished up in sound doctrine (See II Timothy 4:2,3; I Timothy 4:16), so we can take "*heed unto ourselves and unto the doctrine.*"

Consider the following:

Isaiah 5:20 says, "*Woe unto them who call evil good and good, evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness.*"

I Kings 18:21 says, ". . . *how long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him, but if Baal, then follow him. . .*"

John 7:43 tells us "*So there was a division among the people because of Him.*" That is true today. False doctrine manifests itself in people not believing the truth about Christ. (Cf I John 4:1-3)

In Romans 16:17, 18 God warns us to "*Mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. . .*"

Then in Jude, he stated he wanted to write about the common salvation but God burdened him to write about apostasy and the need of contending for the faith.

Separation from the World

To be truly separated from the world would include its teachings, ideals, ideologies, wickedness and godlessness. We are to be separated from the world and its standards, for the world "*lieth in the lap of the god of this world*" which is Satan (Ephesians 2:1-3; II Corinthians 4:4; I John 5:19). It is not the material world that is sinful; it is the system of the world, which is under Satan's control.

Psalm 1:1 says, "*Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*" In I John 2:15-17 God strongly commands us to "*love not the world, nor the things in the world.*" For all that is the world is summed up in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

The chief portion of Scripture on separation is found in II Corinthians 6:14-18. Here God clearly states that there is:

1. no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness,
2. no communion between light and darkness,
3. no concord between Christ and Satan,
4. no part of a believer with an unbeliever, and
5. no agreement of the temple of God with idols.

God says clearly that the saved are to “*come out from among them*” and be separate. this is because the saved are temples of God; He dwells in them, and walks in them.

Paul stated that he considered himself “*crucified unto the world, and world unto him*” (Galatians 6:14). Paul taught, as led by the Holy Spirit, that we are to be transformed by the renewing of the mind, not being conformed to this world. (see Romans 12:1,2.)

Separation Unto Christ and His Church

In contrast to separation from the world, we are to be separated **unto** Christ. We must make Him Lord of our lives, and serve Him with all our hearts. (see Romans 14:9; 6:13)

Titus 2:14 says, “*Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people (a people of His own), zealous of good works.*”

I Corinthians 10:31 says, “*Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”

In Colossians 1:10 we read, “*That he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. . .*” And in Philippians 4:7-14, we are taught that we are to be willing to count all things but loss for Christ. Our chief aim after we are saved is to gain in Christ all that is to be ours. Paul was willing to set aside everything for one chief goal in life. He wanted to be fully controlled and owned by Christ. He lived a life of separation unto Christ.

Separation from the world, sin, and habits that defile and keep the saved from serving the Lord is not preached in most churches today. Historically, Baptist have preached the “*whole counsel of God*” and have been concerned about holy living. (see I Peter 1:15, 16)

Separation of Church and State

Some would teach the state is to govern the church, to control, tax, and have full control and give direction to churches. This is done in some countries in Europe. Still other groups teach the church is the highest authority and that it is to govern the state. They would go on to say the church should have the power to govern the private affairs of lives and family decisions in many areas of their lives. This is not the biblical view. (Constantine began to mix the church and state and started the domination that Roman Catholicism has in many lands today.)

There are three institutions which God started: The family or home (Genesis 2:18-24; the local church (Matthew 16:18) and human government. Governments are ordained of God. They are to make and enforce laws, etc. (Romans 13:1-7). Each one of these institutions is to be independent of the other and are to function for the glory of God, stabilizing and sanctifying society. Whenever the state seeks to give direction to the church contrary to the teaching of the Word of God and the expressed will of God, those who make up the church must reject those commands, etc. (Acts chapters 3, 4). There were those who desired a state church in the early years of the founding of our nation and they would have brought continued control of the state over people’s

spiritual lives had they been able to do so. Many Baptists especially suffered at this point, imprisoned, beaten, put into stocks, etc., for their stand for the priesthood of the believer and the right of a free conscience before God.

Historically then, Baptists have held a distinct view in this matter. Though it has sometimes meant martyrdom, they have stood for the complete separation of church and state. Yet the church should have impact upon the home and government. But this influence comes from 1) preaching the Word of God, 2) winning souls to Christ and a changed life, 3) and the work of God being done through His own in the world.

Conclusions

It is extremely important that every saved person be separated unto Christ. A separated church, living unto Christ as Lord, will have the power of the Holy Spirit upon its ministry and the blessing of God in its every work. But it necessitates every saved person living a separated life from the world, sin and its control, seeking to honor and glorify God in all things.

- A Church bought with a price -- I Corinthians 6:9-20
- A Church that is God's alone -- Ephesians 2:13-22
- A Church that is holy -- I Peter 1:13-23
- A Church that is sound in doctrine -- I Timothy 4:1-16
- A Church standing for the right -- I Timothy 6:3-19
- A Church that makes Christ Lord -- Romans 14:7-14
- A Church that hates falsehood -- Jude 3:25

The Lord's Supper and Discipline

Introduction:

There is a tremendous amount of division in the Christian world over the matter of the Lord's Supper. This rift is so great that the very character of the supper itself differs with these views.

Historically, Bible-believing Baptists have held a distinctive view (along with some others) based upon the Word of God. There are basically four views held among churches today.

Consider these:

- Transubstantiation: *This is held by the Roman Catholic Church. It teaches that when the priest prays over the elements, the bread and wine, a miracle is performed and the elements become the actual body and blood of Christ. Thus in the mass they teach that Christ is crucified afresh in an unbloody sacrifice. This is taught to be a sacrament, giving saving grace.*
- Con-substantiation: *This teaching says that when the priest prays, Christ comes with His real presence into the elements. The elements become a channel through which grace is conferred, making them a true sacrament. This is held by Lutherans and Episcopalians for the most part.*
- Mystical Presence: *This is the teaching that the elements are a sign of the death of Christ and constitute in some mystical way a means of grace, bringing unusual blessing in the observances of the Lord's Supper. This view is held by many Presbyterians, Reformed, Methodists, and others.*
- Biblical Teaching: *Baptists and other Bible-believing people believe that the elements are only symbolical of Christ's broken body and shed blood. They do not constitute a sacrament (or a special means of grace), and are but a memorial only. The elements are a picture of what Christ did for us on the Cross -- His body broken, His blood shed for sin.*

One of the sad things about this is that for many denominations the Church is the authority and not the Word of God. And for them tradition and dogma from certain ruling elders, popes, etc., has become the authority rather than the clear teaching of Scripture.

What The Lord's Supper Really Is:

(Luke 22:14-29; Matthew 26:20-25; I Corinthians 11:23-26)

You need to consider the verses above for what they say. . . not for what others read into them. The Lord's Supper is a **holy reminder** of what Christ did in His vicarious death. (I Corinthians 15:1-4; II Cor. 5:21; Rev. 1:5; I Peter 2:24) Clearly in the institution of the Lord's Supper, our Lord established an *object lesson* to ever keep before us the price He paid to bring us salvation. And it looks forward to His coming as we do this until the Lord comes again.

The picture of the bread -- I Timothy 2:5,6. The bread pictures the body broken for us (I Peter 2:24). The Lord's Supper pictures the body given for us even as He took bread (as He took a body) broke it and gave it to the disciples. He gave up His body to pay for our sins, no one could take it from Him. (John 10:17,18; I Peter 2:24; I Cor. 5:21) He voluntarily laid down His life for us. The prophecy of His body being broken for us

was given in Isaiah 53:5, 6.

The meaning of the shed blood -- Hebrews 9:20-28. His blood was poured out as the offering for covering and removing sin. Salvation is only through the blood of Christ (Hebrew 9:22; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:4-14). The blood avails for every need. Just as He took a body prepared for Him to pay for sin, so He shed His blood for us (Revelation 1:5; 7:14).

When people teach some of the views held as given in the introduction above, they are making much more of the Lord's Supper than Christ did. If it was to be a sacrament, a special means of grace or special favor with God, Christ would have said so, and such would have been taught in I Corinthians chapter 11. Much would have been made of it if that was His will. God does not hide His doctrine and teaching in obscure ways or leave it open for speculation or manipulation.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church gives the church special power over their people, and builds in the minds of their masses the idea that the Church has a power Christ did not give to any church. The seven sacraments taught by the Roman Catholic Church are a man-made means or a methodology (or concocted by man) of caring for man's sin from the cradle to the grave, the last sacrament being purgatory. Their teachings are a mixture of heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity, and this is stated in their own publications.

Those Who Have a Right To Partake

Bible believing Baptist accept the fact that this is an "*ordinance*" given to the local church to carry out. It was not given to the clergy, nor to individual believers. The Scriptural order is clearly set forth in Acts 4:41, 42. One wonders why people teach so many things not set forth in Scripture. They were saved, then baptized and then observed the Lord's Supper.

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper was given to people who were saved and to be carried out by the local church (I Corinthians 1:2; 11:23). The saved were to examine themselves, and after considering their walk with the Lord and their fellow believers, then eat of the bread and drink of that cup (I Corinthians 11:28).

It is clear also from Scripture that not everyone should partake (I Cor. 11:27-32). To do so unworthily is to become guilty of the blood and body of the Lord. This brings judgment. Because of partaking in an unworthy manner some in that day had been chastened of the Lord. Paul said some among them were in physical weakness, sick and some had died due to their sin (cf. I John 5:16). It is a serious thing to partake of the Lord's Supper when a person is not saved, or when there is known unconfessed sin in the life. (Prov. 28:13)

God urges us to judge ourselves lest we be judged and chastened by the Lord (I Cor. 11:30-32) We had better repent of our sins and do right.

It is generally accepted that a person who is saved, and has not obeyed His Lord in baptism (believer's baptism) is a disobedient Christian until he does so, and should not come to the Lord's Supper until he has obeyed the Lord in scriptural baptism. Baptism is that which is to take place first after salvation. (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 4:41,42)

Before we come to the Lord's Supper we should have everything right between us and the Lord, and between us and others. Our relationships must be right. We must judge sin in our lives (I Corinthians 10:16; Matthew 5:23,24).

Some Purposes of the Lord's Supper

To remember His death -- I Corinthians 11:24-26. The Lord's Supper pictures His redemptive work and how our soul was purchased by His atoning work on the cross (I Peter 1:18, 19). this is a memorial only; a remembrance of what Christ did for us.

To remind us that He is coming again -- I Corinthians 11:26. This vital truth must always be kept in mind. The church should seek to have every member present at the Lord's Supper. We do it "til He comes."

To give a time of sober self-examination -- I Corinthians 11:27-32) It is a serious time. Much heart-searching should be done before coming to the Lord's table. Sin, bitterness, malice, and all sins of omission and commission are to be confessed and put away. (Prov. 28;13)

The Lord's Supper compels us to look at Christ; at His death and His return. It causes us to look at ourselves, to pray, to search our soul (Psa. 139: 23,24) and to be ready to meet Christ (I John 3:1-2).

How often did they partake of the Lord's Supper? The Scriptural directive is that when you partake each individual is to examine himself, or herself. It does not state anywhere in Scripture how often we are to commemorate the Lord's Supper. Churches vary as to how often they commemorate the Lord's table.

What the Word Teaches About Discipline

Discipline is taught in the Word of God. It is closely connected with the Lord's Supper. We are to walk in "self-discipline" and also there is to be church discipline when needed. Church discipline is the local church taking action toward one of its members who refuses to discipline himself and continues in gross sin and error.

Discipline is important. It preserves the testimony of the church and purity of its life. It may take the form of excommunication from the Lord's Supper, or even complete dismissal from the local church. **What is the purpose of discipline?**

- **To reclaim those fallen into sin** (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19, 20).
- **To purify; to bring usefulness to the church** (Rev. 2:2-7; 3:2-4; I Cor. 5:6).
- **To prevent sin in others** (I Timothy 5:20; 6:3-5).
- **To uphold the sacredness of the church covenant.**
- **To face the self-discipline of doing good** (Titus 2:14,15; 3:8, 14).
- **To correct a disorderly walk** (I Timothy 5:13; II Thess. 3:6-12).
- **To correct a disregard for church authority** (Matt. 18:17; I Thess. 5:12,13).

Salvation By Grace Alone

Introduction:

For centuries there has been a great gulf between those who believe and preach salvation by grace alone, and those who mingle works with the message of the cross. Many teach that one is saved by the cross plus something you do. They insist that baptism is also involved, and washes away your sins; or that you are kept saved by the works you do. Or in some other way they deny salvation by grace alone. Man's efforts or fulfilling of something that he is to do is also involved.

Theses two conflicting ideologies have been in conflict almost from the beginning of the Christian era, or New Testament times. There are the Judizers (or those in Paul's day who insisted on certain Old Testament laws, who demand certain works in salvation, and those who believed in free grace alone. The introduction of Judaism into the gospel is an altering of the gospel until it is not the same. Paul called it another gospel, which was not another, for it was not good news. This was dealt with by the apostle Paul in Galatians. (see Gal. 1:6-9; 2:16, 21)

This insidious error has continued to grow and is as great a problem today as ever. The doctrine of salvation by grace alone is indeed a Baptist Distinctive, and is very vital to us. We stand firmly upon salvation that is wholly of God, and this teaching sets apart from many denominations in Christendom.

Salvation Is Entirely of God

It is not of God plus our works. No, salvation is only of God. (see Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; John 14:6) When you add baptism as a means of forgiveness, then you have added works, and salvation is no longer of God alone. Such teaching is the same as saying Christ's death, burial and resurrection are not sufficient to care for sin, that something else is the good news. (see I Cor. 15:1-4) Man is depraved, and can do nothing to save himself, or to remove his sin. (Rom. 5:6, 8-10; Eph. 2:1-3) If there are works we can do to save ourselves or keep ourselves saved, then His work on the cross was incomplete and insufficient. That is a slap in God's face, and in reality a rejection of what Christ has done as being less than enough for mankind's sin problem. If salvation is by works plus faith, or faith plus works, then all that God declares concerning salvation by grace alone is not true. This makes God a liar.

1. Jonah 2:9 says, "*Salvation is of the Lord.*" When the Roman Catholics add sacraments (they teach there are seven of them) such as baptism as a means for forgiveness, then salvation to them is not of God alone. John 3:15-17 are the words of Christ to Nicodemus in which Christ declares that God sent His Son, He initiated salvation. . . God planned it and provided it.

Titus 3:5 teaches us that the Holy Spirit must work in the life and bring about the work of regeneration. Ephesians 2:1, 4, 5 tells us that salvation is God's mercy toward mankind. It is His great love and quickening (making alive) that makes salvation possible.

2. Salvation is not of man. Ephesians 2:1 emphasizes that man is “*dead in trespasses and sins.*” Romans 5:6 tells us man is “*without strength.*” Jeremiah 17:9 says man’s heart is “*deceitful and desperately wicked.*” Mankind is unable to seek God, unable to do good. (see Romans 3:9-18) God must do it. Away with the idea taught in many churches that all you need to do is “*Just do the best you can, be good, be confirmed, baptized, and join the church, and all will be right with God.*” Or they teach a mental assent about Christ is sufficient.

3. Salvation is not of works. We are powerless to do the works man might expect. All have a sin nature and salvation is not of works, (Eph. 2:8,9), not by doing the law (Gal. 2:16), not of righteousness we have done (Titus 3:5). In John 6:28, 29 you read the following: “*Then said they unto Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent.*”

Anyone who indicates that man can do anything to save himself or merit salvation by good works or religious exercise of some kind is adding to the Word of God. He is denying salvation by grace alone and is trusting a different gospel. (see Galatians 1:6-9; I Corinthians 15:1-4)

Salvation Is By Grace Alone

“*For by grace are ye saved through faith. . .*” (Eph. 2:8). It is by the glorious provision through the rich, wonderful, unmerited grace of God that brought salvation to mankind. Grace means “*favor we do not deserve.*” It is also remembered as:

- G -- God’s (only of God)
- R -- Riches (eternal, heavenly)
- A -- At (or because of)
- C -- Christ’s (the Son’s payment)
- E -- Expense (extreme price of His death on the cross)

Romans 4:4 affirms that if salvation is by works, then it is not of grace. Romans 4:16 tells us that it is by faith alone, because of God’s grace.

It is a finished work by grace alone. Christ is the “*Author and Finisher*” of our salvation. “*It is finished*” was His cry on the cross (John 19:20). He paid for sin once for all. In Hebrews 9:26 we read: “*Once for all He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*” Yes, He took away the sin of the world and can save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25; John 1:29).

Salvation Is Not By Sacraments Or Man’s Doings

In many churches and denominations, leaders have developed a “*sacramental system*” which is contrary to the doctrine of grace. Here I am using the term “*sacrament*” as they do, meaning that which imparts or contributes to saving grace and favor with God. However we do not believe in or accept the sacramental system. This system teaches that salvation comes through something a person does. (see John 6:28, 29)

The Roman and Greek Catholic churches have seven sacraments; the Episcopalians have five; the Lutherans teach there are three. Now with the clamor to get back to

Rome, many Protestants are developing sacramental systems. The ecumenical movement has brought this about in recent decades. This is a terrible evil. It takes away from the finished work of Christ. It means that man is developing a plan for saving his own soul. But salvation is by the blood of Christ alone (Hebrews 9:22; I John 1:7). Salvation is a free gift of God, without any consideration of services rendered by man. It is only to be received for if it is not received by faith alone, it is rejected (Romans 6:23; John 3:17-18, 36)

Millions are trusting in a false hope. They cling to the frail thread of thinking they can please God by their own works, or by observance of some sacraments. No acts of obedience to Christ, or following Christ, imparts any saving grace. Works, obedience, etc., are a result of being saved by grace, not a means of salvation. (See Ephesians 2:8-10; II Cor. 5:17; Titus 2:11-14.) It is interesting that when one reads about sacraments in their writings it is not supported by Scripture, for it is the philosophies, and theology of men. It comes about because the Word of God is not the authority for faith and practice. No, instead what men says becomes the standard of truth they teach.

Some have the idea we are saved by grace and then kept saved by our own merits. They teach by having a certain standard of perfection we will keep ourselves saved. In the end their salvation depends on their works. But the Word of God teaches He is the One who saves and keeps us saved (I Peter 1:5; Hebrews 7:25). We have full forgiveness of all sins -- past, present, future. Christ purged our sins, hence there is no need of a purgatory. The Roman Catholic Church teaches only a partial forgiveness. This entirely negates salvation by grace alone. Some Protestant churches teach when a person receives Christ, only his past sins are forgiven. This view is also contrary to the Word of God. Salvation is complete in Christ. It cannot be added to. It is a finished work, once for all. We are saved by grace and kept saved by grace alone! He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

Salvation Is By Faith, (Man's Part)

Faith means "taking God at His word." Faith means totally accepting, trusting, relying and depending upon God alone. We are justified by faith alone (Romans 5:1). Ephesians 2:8,9 tells us salvation is through faith. Acts 4:12 teaches us Christ is the only way. The word believe is used 98 times in the Book of John. By believing, by faith alone, we are saved (Acts 16:31; John 1:11-13; I John 5:9-13).

<p>The Lord, Our Savior -- The complete sacrifice -- Saved from the law -- Christ bore the curse of the law -- Salvation by faith and grace -- Faith pleases God -- The Gospel is complete --</p>	<p>John 3:1-18 Isaiah 53:1-12 Galatians 4:1-31 Galatians 3:1-29 Romans 4:1-25 Hebrews 11:1-40 Romans 1:16,17; I Cor. 15:1-4</p>
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Review of Baptist Distinctives

To aid in remembering the basic distinctives which we have looked at, try to associate each word with a corresponding letter of the name, Baptist.

B -- **Born-Again Membership.** The teaching that only born again people are to be members of a local church.

A -- **Authority of the Bible.** Christians should accept the Bible as the only authoritative guide and rule for faith and conduct.

P -- **Priesthood of the Believer and Soul Liberty.** Each believer is directly responsible to God. We are priest unto Him, with Christ as the only Mediator and High Priest. (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:5-6; I John 2:1,2)

T -- **Two Ordinances.** Baptism by immersion in water for believers only. The Lord's Supper as a memorial of Christ's death.

I -- **Independence of the Local Church.** Each local church is to be self-governing, self-propogating, and self-supporting.

S -- **Separation Unto God.** Separation personally from sin. Separation from all false doctrine and separation of church and state. We are to walk in complete yieldedness unto Christ alone.

T -- **The Security of the Believer.** Salvation by grace alone. We are made secure in Christ for salvation is all of God and not of works of men.

Review Questions

Chapters 1 - 3

1. Why do we say the Bible is our only rule for faith and practice? (Isaiah 8:20)
2. Peter spoke of a "more sure word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:19-21) What is this sure word? From whom did the Bible come? (II Timothy 2:15,16)
3. What does God say about His Word in the following? (Psa. 119:89; Hebrews 4:12; I Peter 1:25; Matthew 24:35; John 17:17)

Chapter 4

1. The word “church” means “called out ones.” Who adds to the church? (Acts 4:41-42, 47)
2. What does God call the saved in I Peter 2:9?
3. What are the saved, the church, like according to I Peter 2:5?
4. The church is a called-out assembly, having a great mission (Matt. 28:18-20) What is the mission of the church?
5. The church has a great fellowship. Who is that fellowship with? (I John 1:3)

Chapter 5

1. What does Revelation 1:5,6 say about the priesthood of the believer?
2. As priests, after being saved, what rights and responsibilities do we have now according to Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:19-24; and John 14:13, 14?
3. What great privilege do we have now according to I John 1:7, 9?
4. What are we encouraged to do according to John 5:39 and Acts 17:11?
5. What responsibilities do we have as priests before God? (Hebrews 13:15; I Peter 2:9; I Tim. 2:1,2)

Chapter 6

1. What is the ministry of the local church according to the following: (Acts 8:1,4; I Timothy 3:15; I Corinthians 1:2, 9)?
2. What do we know about the “head” of the church? (Colossians 1:14-19)

Chapter 7

1. What does baptism picture? (Romans 6:3-5)
a. _____ b. _____
c. _____
2. Who only should be baptized? (Acts 8:12)
3. Why should a person be baptized?
Matthew 28:18-20 _____
Matthew 3:13-17 _____
Acts 2:38-41 _____

Chapter 8

1. We are to be separated from false doctrine. What should we do to make this possible according to the following references? (II Timothy 2:15; I Timothy 4:13, 16)
2. What does God say about separation from the world in II Corinthians 6:14-18?
3. What does God want us to do according to I John 2:15-17?

Chapter 9

1. Name three purposes for the Lord's Supper.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
2. Circle the correct words about the Lord's Supper.

a remembrance	picture of the death, burial and resurrection
for only the saved	a memorial
for all church members	a holy reminder
for perfect people	an act of worship
a sacrament	a God-given duty

Chapter 10

1. Prove that salvation is only of God in the following references.

Acts 4:12 _____

John 3:17 _____

Titus 3:5 _____

Ephesians 2:8, 9 _____

Romans 4:4 _____

Galatians 2:16 _____
2. Prove that salvation is only by faith or believing "in" or "on" Christ alone.

John 3:36 _____

Acts 16:31 _____

John 1:12 _____

Romans 10:13 _____

Acts 4:12 _____