

# The Baptist Distinctives

## **B stands for Biblical Authority**

1 Thessalonians 2:13: For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is the inspired Word of God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself. Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true. No other opinion whether it be from a person or a church or a creed or a confession of faith has the ability to cancel what the Bible says.

We are to recognize that the Bible is absolutely true and take that information and apply it to our lives. If we do not apply God's truth, there is no reason for us to acknowledge it's legitimacy in our lives.

## **A is for the Autonomy of the Local Church**

Colossians 1:18: And [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

The local church is an independent body accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church. All human authority for governing the local church resides within the local church itself. Thus the church is autonomous, or self-governing. No religious hierarchy outside of the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices. A Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests, but a

Baptist church cannot be connected as a “member” of any other body or denomination.

Because we are self-governing we should also have the ability to elect our own officers and leaders inside of the church without the outside control of anyone else.

Baptists also consider that only the local church has the power to discipline its members, and each assembly is responsible to maintain proper discipline.

## **P is for the Priesthood of the Believers**

1 Peter 2:5: You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:9: But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The “spiritual house” as we see here in 1 Peter 2:5, is made up of all believers in Christ. The temple in the Old Testament was always considered the physical building where God would come to in some way. But now we have the church, and the church is made up of living stones, that is the believers that make up the church. Peter is using a correlation of a physical building and a spiritual building to show an example of the difference. Believers are a holy priesthood, which means that instead of having to go to a priest at the temple like in Old Testament times, we now have access to God directly.

Since born-again believers have direct access to the throne of God without having to go through any other man, we also have the same right as ordained ministers to communicate with God, interpret Scripture, and minister in Christ’s name. This is not a privilege or a license to do anything we want with Scripture this is a matter of responsibility and about serving Christ in the manner that He has designed.

## **T is for Two Ordinances of the Church**

Matthew 28:19-20: [Jesus said] "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

1 Corinthians 11:23: For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

We practice believer’s baptism by immersion, which is the only acceptable mode for baptism because it alone preserves the picture of saving truth which is Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection as depicted in Romans 6:1-5. We believe that the Lord’s Supper is a symbolic ordinance, picturing Christ’s body broken for our sins and His blood shed for our redemption.

We believe that the Lord’s supper is the commemoration of His death until He comes and our continual fellowship with Him should be preceded by baptism and always by careful self-examination. One of the key aspects of the Lord’s Supper is the seriousness of our prepared hearts before Him. We should take great care of our thoughts and focus when we are partaking of the Lord’s Supper, laying our sins at Christ’s feet and renewing our relationship with Him is very serious business.

Neither of these ordinances can give us salvation, they are simply in place for us to identify with Christ and to help us remember His sacrifice for us. They also inspire us to look forward to His future return.

The name “Baptist” is taken from baptism. Because baptists put an emphasis on being immersed in water to show the picture of Jesus’ sacrifice their name is derived from this practice.

## **I is for Individual Soul Liberty**

Romans 14:12: So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

Every individual Christian has the liberty to believe, right or wrong, as his/her own conscience dictates. While we seek to persuade men to choose the right, a person

must not be forced into compliance, realizing that it is not always the larger group who hold the truth when, in fact, our heritage as Baptists has demonstrated the worth of every individual believer.

## **S is for Saved, Baptized, and Serving Members of the Church**

Acts 2:41: Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Acts 2:47: ...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Peter was given more liberty through Jesus to preach the truth and here in Acts, he did just that and the result was three thousand coming to Christ and being added to the church- these were actual full conversions- not those that got excited on a bunch of hype and joined in- these are 3000 people being changed through and through by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of God's Word.

Local church membership is restricted to individuals who give a believable testimony of personal faith in Christ and have publicly identified themselves with Him in believers baptism.

\*I want to clarify this statement "believable testimony". When someone comes to be baptized and subsequently become a member of the church, they will sit down with myself, as the Pastor, and the deacon and we will listen to their testimony. If their testimony is in accordance with Scripture then they are accepted. But if their testimony is focused on events or feelings then we would open God's Word and help them to better understand what the biblical teaching of salvation is all about.

When the members of a local church are believers, a oneness in Christ exists- because we are all part of Christ's body which means that we are all one family. Together we endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace from Ephesians 4:3.

Serving is also an important aspect in the church. Baptists do not believe that the pastor or laity of the church should be performing all of the ministry, but that the ministry of the church is to be carried out by every believer because we all have work that God has given us to fulfill our individual responsibilities. Specific spiritual gifts are given by God to each believer that they may be able to do that which the Lord has appointed for them as we are taught in Romans 12:3-8.

## **T is for Two Offices of the Church**

1 Timothy 3:1: This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.

1 Timothy 3:8: Likewise deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money.

The Bible mandates only two primary offices in the church - the pastor and the deacon. The four terms: "pastor," "elder," "bishop," or "overseer" all refer to the same office. The two offices of pastor and deacon exist within the local church, not as a hierarchy outside or over the local church.

In the early New Testament church there were elders that were separate from the primary pastor. These elders were still considered in the office of pastor but their responsibilities were different from the primary pastor.

Pastor and Deacon are the two primary authorities in the role of the church. The Pastor works as the overseer or the Shepherd of the flock and the Deacon works to help take care of the flock and manage all financial matters.

## **S is for Separation of Church and State**

Romans 13:1-3: Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but

to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

God established both the church and civil government, and He gave each it's own distinct sphere of operation. The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1-7 and the church's purpose in Matthew 28:19-20. Neither should control the other, nor should there be an alliance between the two. Christians in a free society can properly influence government toward righteousness, which is not the same as a denomination or group of churches controlling the government.

We believe that civil government is of divine origin (again, established by God) for the good order of human society; that leaders are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed except in things directly opposed to the Word of God. We believe in the absolute separation of church and state but also believe that the Christian citizen of a republic has the responsibility to exercise his influence for righteousness.

We exercise our influence for righteousness in how we vote. But there are other ways to exercise our influence and part of that is contacting our authorities and our government officials to voice our biblical based thoughts and worldview on different bills and legislation. We can also exercise our influence by where we spend our time and where we spend our money.

Romans 12:1-2: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Speaking of separation. Baptists have classically been separatists. They consider that Christians should be separate from sinful habits and tendencies. They assert that we must verbally oppose false teachers and deceiving doctrines. That we should be as far away from the worlds practices as we can- and that we should look back to Scripture for our answers instead of assuming our practices are accepted.