

Distinctives of a Baptist Flock

What's in a name? How would you like to shop at a grocery store with no labels? Though labels can be deceiving, they do serve a valid purpose. We are a Baptist church and have been for almost fifty years. The purpose of this study is to understand what it means to be a Baptist.

When studying our distinctives, we must balance Luke 9:49, 50 with Luke 11:23.

Luke 9:49, 50 And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.

Luke 11:23 He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. There are those who are not "with us" who are for Christ, but there are also those who are not "with us" who are against Christ. We need discernment and grace from the Lord to know the difference and to act accordingly.

In these days of change, compromise, generics and ecumenism it is important to know what we stand for and why. While each church since the time of Christ has existed in a particular culture to which it ministered accordingly, The Living God and His Word do not change Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Ps. 119:89. "Meddle not with them that are given to change." -- Prov. 24:21 Once important things start to change in a church, there seems to be no end to what may be sacrificed at the altar of relevancy to the culture. If the distinctive label is lost it is far easier for the distinctive content to be lost.

Members of generic churches are not our enemies, nor are the members of churches of other denominations. There are godly Christians in generic churches and in some other denominations. Some of them are doing a better job at certain aspects of the Christian life than many Baptists. However, the strengths of other groups are no reason to copy their weaknesses. We must humbly retain our strengths and diligently work on our weaknesses.

Where are the Christians who will graciously but confidently say, "I'm a Baptist, and I'm a conservative on purpose, and here are the reasons. I'm informed, well-read, rational, stable, and I have a reason for the hope that lies within me. I'm not better than anyone else, but I have a wonderful Savior and I just can't wait to tell you about Him."

The Baptist distinctives do not comprise all that Baptists believe, nor are they all necessarily our most cherished doctrines. They are not the same as the "fundamentals of the faith." They are however a relatively short list that very quickly separates us from all others that would fall under the category of "Christian."

Your "denominational preference" should not be a matter of family tree or geographic convenience. How many of you are first generation Baptists? I hope you became Baptists because you saw that the teaching of Baptist churches lines up with God's Word. The rest of us need to know why our parents or grandparents became Baptists and why we should stay Baptist – because Baptist distinctives are based on the Bible.

Biblical Authority – the Bible is our sole authority for all matters of faith and practice.

Sole Authority

The Bible is the only authoritative source on salvation and Christian living.

“And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” -- 2Ti 3:15 -- 17

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” -- II Pet. 1:21, 22

“Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.” Ps. 119:142

“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.” -- Is. 40:8

Inspired = God-breathed II Tim. 3:16

Verbal = Every word is from God, not just the ideas behind the words.

Plenary = Full or complete. The entire Bible is God’s Word.

Infallible = unable to fail in accomplishing its purpose Is. 55:11

Inerrant = without error in its content Ps. 12:6

Preserved = protected by God. Ps. 119:89; Mat 5:18; Mat 24:35

Autonomy of the Local Church

Each local church answers directly to Christ not a human hierarchy. Rev. 2, 3

Each local church is responsible to discipline its members Matt 18:15-17; I Cor. 5:1-5, 12, 13; II Cor2:5-7

Each local church is responsible to appoint deacons Acts 6:1-7

Each local church is responsible to send out missionaries Acts 13:1-3; 14:26, 27

Priesthood of Believers

Each believer has direct access to God through Jesus Christ Heb 4:14-16; I Pet. 2:5, 9

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And *having* an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb 10:19-22

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; -- 1Ti 2:5

Two Ordinances

The Catholic and Protestant sacraments usually carry with them the idea of some saving merit or

“grace.” Baptist ordinances are symbolic reminders of Christ’s finished work.

Baptism This is one of our most distinguishing distinctives and is one more reason for retaining the name “Baptist.” Wedding ring

It is commanded Mat 28:19

It is for the saved.

Samaritans Act 8:12

Ethiopian Eunuch Act 8:36, 37

Cornelius and other Gentiles Act 10:47, 48

Philippian jailor and family Act 16:30 - 33.

It is by immersion

baptizo = immerse, dip, sink

Jesus Mar 1:9. 10

Ethiopian Eunuch Act 8:39

It is symbolic, not meritorious Rom 6:4, 5; Eph. 2:8, 9

Dispensationalism	Covenant Theology
God loves Israel and the Church.	The Church replaces Israel.
Baptism has some similarities to circumcision.	Baptism replaces circumcision.
Baptize believers as a testimony	Baptize babies into the covenant
God is sovereign, but man has free-will.	Calvinism

Comments on Rom. 6:1-5

“‘Buried with Him’ alluded to the ancient manner of baptism by immersion.”

-- John Calvin, founder of Presbyterianism

“Among the ancients, they immersed the whole body in water. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

-- John Wesley, founder of Methodism

“Baptism is a Greek word, and may be translated immersion.” “I would have those who would be baptized to be altogether dipped into the water.”

-- Martin Luther, founder of Lutheranism

The Lord’s Supper

The Catholic and Lutheran doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation teach that the literal body and blood of Jesus are involved with the ingestion of the bread and cup. Baptists believe the bread and cup are symbols only.

It is commanded 1Co 11:25

It is for the saved & baptized I Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:27-33

It is symbolic, not meritorious Mat 26:26-28; I Cor. 11:26; Titus 3:5

It is an opportunity for introspection

It anticipates the second coming of the Lord

Individual Soul Liberty Rom. 14:5; II Cor. 5:11

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. -- Act 13:46

“Every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever has the liberty to choose what his conscience or soul decides is right in the religious realm.” – Anderson and Gower

Baptists believe in persuasion, not coercion.

Baptists have often received, but never given religious persecution. Religious Liberty.

As late as the 17th century a Baptist was martyred in England.

The doors of the first Baptist Church of Boston were nailed shut by the Puritan authorities in 1680.

Soul liberty is limited by the Scriptures, care for others, local church accountability, and others' liberty.

To be saved is to believe. A forced profession or baptism is not believing. Acts 8:37

Saved, Baptized Membership

Act 2:47 And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Act 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

Membership is not a political _____ for voting privileges, nor is it something into which one is born. Membership is not available just for the asking or by completing a class.

Membership is for those who have been saved and scripturally baptized.

Two Officers Phil. 1:1

Pastor/Elder/Bishop Acts 20:17-38; Titus 1:5, 7; I Pet. 5:2

These three terms refer to the same office and describe the major functions of the officer. He is to feed the flock (Pastor), guide and counsel with wisdom and maturity (elder), and oversee the flock (Bishop).

Deacon Acts 6:1-7; I Tim. 3:8-13

The word “Deacon” means servant or minister.

Mat 20:25 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

Mat 20:26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Mat 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

Mat 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

In God's seemingly paradoxical economy, the higher one's rank is, the more menial the service and vice versa.

The Deacons are to assist the Pastor in serving the flock so that he has sufficient time to feed the flock Acts 6:4. The oversight and ruling of the flock is the responsibility of the Pastor. Good Deacons make excellent advisors to the Pastor, but they are not to control the Pastor. Deacons

are ministers, not masters.

Separation of Church and State John 18:36; Rom. 13:1-7

Mat 22:21 Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Both the church and the state are ordained as institutions by God, but they were established for separate purposes and function best when operated independent of each other. Both institutions are limited by the source of their authority, God, and should operate in accordance with the principles of His Word. When either violates or contradicts God, they invalidate their authority

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The "establishment clause" prohibits the federal government from establishing a "religion" by sanctioning a state denomination.

The "free exercise clause" prohibits the federal government from prohibiting people from practicing their religious principles so long as they are otherwise lawful.

The First Amendment was not meant to keep God out of government, but to keep the government from controlling religion.

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