

### Pt 3 Why We Are Baptist, The Distinctives

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 09-12-2018

We continue this week with Part 3 of Why We Are Baptist. Last week we traced our Baptist heritage all the way back to Jesus and his Disciples. We established the fact that the same doctrine that they believed and followed is the same doctrine that we as Baptists today follow. We also saw that the early 1<sup>st</sup> Century Churches held to the same doctrinal beliefs and therefore we can state that the Baptist faith in which we practice can be traced back to them.

We also established the fact last week, that Baptists did not originate from the Reformation and Protests against the Roman Catholic Church because we never belonged to the Roman Catholic church, and therefore our denomination is not considered Protestant.

Listen, I am not so naïve to believe that Jesus was a Baptist. Jesus practiced Judaism while on earth. He kept every bit of the Law. In fact, Jesus himself addressed this:

#### **Matthew 5:17-20**

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

However, to state that Jesus laid the framework and doctrine for what would become the Baptist Church most certainly is true.

In our first message in this series I gave you a list of 8 Baptist Distinctives:

There is an acrostic of 8 Baptist Distinctives that we often use to describe our core beliefs. Sometimes there are variances in what each letter stands for.

The 8 Distinctives that I gave you in the first message were the ones that we were taught by Professor Robert Dalton at Crown College in my class on Baptist Distinctives and History of the Church. They are spelled out in the Baptist acrostic:

- 1) Believer's Baptism by immersion only
- 2) Authority and Inerrancy of the Bible
- 3) Priesthood of the Believer and Polemics
- 4) Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- 5) Independence of the Local Church
- 6) Saved Church membership and Soul Liberty
- 7) Two Officers: Pastor and Deacon
- 8) Separation; Church and State, Personal, Ecclesiastical

Those are all excellent, however, there is another acrostic which is used by a lot of Baptists that I actually like a little better. It basically says the same things but worded a little differently.

- 1) Biblical Authority
- 2) Autonomy of the local Church
- 3) Priesthood of the Believer
- 4) Two Ordinances – Baptism and Lord's Supper
- 5) Individual Soul Liberty
- 6) Saved and Baptized Church Membership
- 7) Two Officers – Pastor and Deacons
- 8) Separation of Church and State, Personal, and Ecclesiastical

I think it is important for us to understand what these distinctives mean and why we adhere to these distinctions as a Baptist Church and where we get this from in Scripture.

1. **Biblical Authority** – A simple explanation of this is we believe that the Word of God is perfect and sufficient to be the sole authority of our faith and practice. In fact, that is exactly what we have stated in our Church By-Laws.

The Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 2:13** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

And **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: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

So, we operate our Church based solely upon the Word of God, and we believe that to be the Authorized King James Version of the Bible. It's the only Bible needed for English speaking people.

So, our Church does not operate on what some man thinks or believes, it doesn't operate on what some outside governing body believes (which we will talk more about when we talk about the Autonomy of the local Church) and our Church does not operate on what current society believes. Our Church operates the same way it has for the past 2,000 years – upon the Word of God – The Bible.

The Roman Catholic Church operates on things outside of the Bible. The place their Catechism above the Word of God. They place the word of the Pope above the Word of God; therefore, they do not believe in the Authority of The Scriptures.

Not only is the Church operated solely upon the Word of God, but our own personal lives as Christians are operated solely upon the Word of God. The Bible is what we use for how we live our lives, how we treat other people, how we choose our political leaders – may I stop there for just a second and say something?

I'm not going to preach bipartisan politics but when there are two candidates running for an office, we as Christians must cast our vote for the candidate that most closely reflects the teachings of the Word of God. If one candidate is for abortion and the other opposes abortion, we must vote for the one that opposes abortion. If one candidate is for same-sex marriage and the other isn't, we must vote for the one who isn't. You may not personally like the person running for office but if what they stand for lines up with the Word of God more than the other candidate, then we must choose the right thing.

2. **Autonomy of the local Church** – Autonomy means; Independent, self-sufficient, self-governing. It means that we do not answer to some outside group or association for how we operate our Church.

I explained to you in **Part 1** why we are considered an **Independent Fundamental Missionary Baptist Church**. This past June 3, we celebrated 9-years of Independence from the Southern Baptist Convention and Midland Association of Baptists.

Many Churches are at the mercy of outside decision makers. Can you imagine going to Church one day and your Pastor has been replaced by some other Pastor that you know absolutely nothing about and you did not have any say in the matter? The United Methodist Church members do not have any say so in who their pastor is. They may come in one Sunday and there be a brand-new pastor behind the pulpit. They've operated that way since they were founded in the 1700's by John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield.

Their pastors or as they call them, "clergy" are appointed annually by a bishop, who has the responsibility for setting all the pastoral appointments in the conference in which their Church parish operates. – I would hate to be a Methodist Pastor, not knowing from year to year if I would be at the same Church and I would hate to be a member not knowing who my Pastor might be from year to year.

It's the same with the Roman Catholic Church. Their "Priests" are appointed by the Archdiocese over the parish the Churches are in. Some are appointed for a set amount of time while others are just told where to go until they decide to replace them with someone else.

What I want to ask is, where is God in all that? What about being God called to a Church? What about a congregation praying and seeking the Lord's will for a pastor? I'm glad that we don't have some outside group telling us who will be our pastor or who will be our Sunday school teachers or what programs we can or cannot support, which Bible we can use, which song books we can sing from. It is good to be Independent.

3. **Priesthood of the Believer** – What this simply means is that we do not believe in having to go through a human priest in order to have access to God. We believe when Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross that the role of the priest was no longer necessary that Jesus became our Great High Priest and He is our mediator so saved men and women are their own priest, we have direct access.

The Bible says in:

**1 Peter 2:5-9**

5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, **an holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

7 Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

9 But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The Old Testament Priests were men called by God to offer up sacrifices on behalf of the people. They were only a shadow of what was to come when Christ sacrificed himself on the cross. That is why the veil in the Temple was rent – there was no longer any office of Priests to be behind the veil, it was opened up to ALL believers.

Now WE are called to offer up sacrifices and praises to God, therefore, we are called "Kings and Priests," according to what the Apostle John says in **Revelation 1:6** **And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.**

After Jesus ascended the Bible says this: **Hebrews 10:12-14** **But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.**

The Bible also says in **1 Timothy 2:5** **For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;**

I'm glad the Bible says in **Hebrews 4:15-16** **For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.**

We as Baptists, do not believe in going to some man mysteriously hidden in a confessional box sitting behind a curtain while listening to men and women confess their sins through a piece of lattice. I call them the "Pope in a Box." They should have a little wind-up handle on the outside that you can turn until he shoots out the top of the box... I might go to confessional if they would do that! 😊 You all put me in a dunking booth a couple of years ago and I think some of you got too much enjoyment out of it!

4. **Two Ordinances** – You should know what those are by now. I've probably mentioned it a dozen times over the past year – **Baptism and The Lord's Supper.**

As far as **Baptism** is concerned, we need look no further than the Gospel of Matthew and Jesus giving the Great Commission: **Matthew 28:19-20** **Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

And there are many accounts showing that Baptism is the proper ordinance immediately following Salvation.

Then, the **Lord's Supper**. Some people refer to this as "**Communion**." I haven't ever really used that word, even though Paul does refer to it when he is writing to the Church at Corinth concerning when they take the Lord's Supper:

**1 Corinthians 10:16** **The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?**

But, most Baptist (unless they go to an uppity Baptist Church) say “**The Lord’s Supper.**” Paul also refers to it as that in **1 Corinthians 11:20**, and the Gospel of John also says that after Jesus and disciples ate: **Joh 13:4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.**

That is also why you will always hear me call the last meal of the day Supper and not Dinner. Dinner is the second meal of the day. Jesus and his disciples ate their meal in the evening and called it Supper. If it’s good enough for Jesus, it’s good enough for me!

We, as Baptist, usually have the little cracker and thimble sized cup of Welches’s grape juice when we have the Lord’s Supper. We consider this to be an ordinance, and we believe the bread and the wine are symbolic of the flesh and blood of Jesus, and it is not his literal flesh and blood.

However, the Roman Catholics consider it to be a sacrament. They claim that since Jesus says that the bread is his body and the cup is his blood, that he actually transformed the bread and wine into his actual flesh and blood. They call this **Transubstantiation**. They believe that once one of their priests blesses the bread and wine that it literally becomes the flesh and blood of Jesus but it still retains the look, smell, and taste of bread and wine. They do not call it the “**LORD’s Supper,**” they call it the “**Eucharist,**” or “**Mass.**”

But we are not here to learn why people are Catholic, we are studying “Why We Are Baptist.”

5. **Individual Soul-Liberty** – This simply means that everyone has the right to approach God and serve God—even to reject God—as a matter of individual choice. The choice to accept and live for Christ is completely up to you and not forced upon you and you do not force your beliefs on anyone else.

The Bible says in:

**Romans 14:5-8**

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.

7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.

And of course, Paul, writing to the Philippians told them to “**work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.**” Phil. 2:12

Many religious denominations try to force their members to adhere to certain ideas and practices. For instance, when we studied the Jehovah’s Witnesses, we saw how their lives are ruled by the Watchtower Society and they are forbidden to do many things which have nothing to do with the Scriptures. It’s the same with all the other cult religions such as Mormons, and Scientologists.

6. **Saved and Baptized Church membership** – This one is pretty self-explanatory. To be a member of a Baptist Church you are to be saved and salvation is always to be followed up with believers Baptism.

I’ve said this over and over but the Church was designed for saved people, not lost people. The pattern in the New Testament for a person to be a member of the Church was that they got saved, and then they got Baptized.

Look at it in **Acts 2:41-47**

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

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

As we said last week, the word **Church** is from the Greek word **Ekklesia**, and it means “**a called-out assembly.**” While everyone that receives Christ as their Savior is a member of His **universal Church**, the Bible certainly places emphasis upon **the local New Testament Church**.

A good definition that Pastor Clarence Sexton often repeated during my Crown College days was this: “**The New Testament church is a local assembly of baptized believers who have voluntarily joined themselves together to carry out the Great Commission.**”

7. **Two offices, Pastor and Deacons** – Those are the only two Biblical offices that are mentioned in the Bible - Pastor and Deacons.

Paul writing to the Church at Philippi greets them with the following:

**Philippians 1:1** Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

The word “**Bishop**” properly means “**an overseer,**” but it is used in the same sense as we say the word “**Pastor.**” The definition of Pastor is **Shepherd**. It is **one who watches over the flock**.

**Pastor:** The qualifications for a Pastor/Bishop are given in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-16** where they are also referred to as “**Elders.**”

Peter also refers to them as Elders in: **1 Peter 5:1-4**

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over *God’s* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

At this Church, I am the Pastor that God has called to shepherd the flock. Since you are people and not sheep, the intention is for me to be your **Spiritual overseer**.

I'm not going to lead you to a fresh mountain brook to get a drink or physically grab you by the neck with a Shepherds hook – but am responsible for watching over this local assembly. My job first and foremost is to care for you Spiritually, and that is by teaching and preaching the Word of God.

**Deacons:** The qualifications for a deacon are in **1 Timothy 3:8-13** and **Acts 6:3**. At this Church, Bro. O.C., Bro. Frank, and Bro. Scott are the deacons. Just as implied in the Scriptures, their job is to see that the administration of the Church is ran well, that those in need are taken care of, especially the widows and the orphans, and they assist the Pastor in the ministry.

While there may be other positions that we have in a Baptist church such as; Sunday School Teachers, Song leaders, Clerks, Treasures, Trustees and such, only Pastors and Deacons are Scriptural offices.

**8. Separation of Church and State, Personal, and Ecclesiastical** – On your card that I handed out I only have Separation of Church and State, however, there is also personal and ecclesiastical separation.

We read these verses last Sunday morning in the message but we see direct from Jesus an indication that there is a separation between the Church and the State, in this case, the Roman Government: **Matthew 22:19-21** **Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. 20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? 21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.**

But we are to obey the laws of the land unless the conflict with God's Word:

**1 Peter 2:13-17**

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

16 As free, and not using *your* liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

17 Honour all *men*. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

As you know, in AD 64 when Rome burned, the Emperor at the time, Nero, whom most believe was the one who had the fire started, blamed it on Christians. That is when heavy Christian persecution began by the Roman Empire. That is when you find Peter crucified and Paul beheaded. This persecution continued and Christianity was made illegal in the Roman Empire for the next 250 years until 313 AD when it was declared no longer illegal by the Roman Emperor, Constantine. Then, in 380 AD Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire although under the name of Catholicism – which means the universal church.

So, the Roman Catholics, do not believe in the separation of Church and State, that is why they have their own Vatican City where the Pope hangs out. Vatican City is in fact an independent country. It is more or less just the Roman Empire with the Pope as the Emperor.

But, we as Baptist believe in separation of Church and State. We do not believe the government should have the right to run or regulate our Church or dictate what we can or cannot do.

Likewise, we do not believe the Church should run the government, although we do desire for our government officials to be Christian and have morals.

Baptists also believe in **Personal and Ecclesiastical Separation**.

Of course, this is taught all through the Scriptures.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-18**

14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you,

18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

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

**2 Thessalonians 3:6** Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

So, for these reasons, you will find that we will not worship together with a Roman Catholic or a Mormon or Jehovah's Witness, or someone who practices Islam.

Hopefully you will remember our 8 Baptist Distinctives and appreciate the fact that our beliefs are all based upon Scripture – unlike a lot of so-called "faith groups."