

# What Do Baptists Believe?

You may have heard the phrase, “*Ignorance is bliss.*” However as Christians we are to... *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. 1 Peter 3:15-17*

If someone were to ask you, “*What do Baptists believe,*” would you be able to answer them? In this little booklet, we will look at a brief outline on what is called the “*Baptist Distinctives.*” For practical and expedient purposes, we will use the acrostic, **BAPTIST**, in order to more readily define and remember each distinctive.

**B - Bible**, The only rule for faith and practice.

**A - Autonomy** of each local church.

**P - Priesthood** of the believer.

**T - Two** ordinances for the local church.

**I - Individual** soul liberty and responsibility.

**S - Separation**, ethical, ecclesiastical, and political.

**T - Two** officers of the local church.

Baptist distinctives are major fundamental beliefs and principles that have distinguished Baptists apart from any other religious body down through the centuries--hence the term: “Baptist distinctives.” These distinctives are not a creed or confession of faith.

Baptists have no set written body of beliefs or principles, per se, that are accepted universally among all Baptists. “A true Baptist does not think of the name Baptist in any sectarian sense as having some merit in itself but rather equates it with New Testament truth, with a New Testament position.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, for all practical purposes, the term “Baptist distinctives” can be used interchangeably with “New Testament distinctives.”

“In every age since Jesus and the apostles, there have been companies of believers, churches, who have substantially held to the principles of the New Testament as now proclaimed by the Baptists.”<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that the name Baptist came about in the 14th century with the persecution of the “Anabaptists” or “Re-baptizers.” This was a name given to them by proponents of the Roman Church. Since the Roman Church was predominant throughout Europe, infant Baptism was a common practice. Therefore when these New Testament believers began to immerse only those who had accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour, the “religious world” protested. The Roman

Church could not understand why these people were being baptized again. Therefore they were given the name, “Anabaptists.”

Even though the name “Baptist” did not emerge until the 14th century, groups, which practiced the same basic New Testament principles, can be traced back to the time of Christ.

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## **I. BIBLE - THE ONLY RULE FOR FAITH AND PRACTICE**

**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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*

The Bible is a (the) Divine Revelation given of God to man, and is the complete and infallible guide and standard of authority in all matters of religion and morals; whatever it teaches is to be believed, and what ever it commands is to be obeyed; whatever it commands is to be accepted as both right and useful; whatever it condemns is to be avoided as both wrong and hurtful; but what it neither commands nor teaches is not to be imposed on the conscience as of religious obligation.<sup>3</sup>

This distinctive is placed first as the foundation because without it all the other distinctives would fall. Baptists do not use any other book, teaching or creed as their authority. We believe that God's written Word is the only cornerstone by which those that are saved can firmly stand upon. It is a spiritual book that can only be understood by those with spiritual eyes, and the only way to obtain these spiritual eyes is through personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 2:9-16** *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. 10 But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. Baptists believe that **every** area of life needs to be subject to the written Word of God. The Bible is the only source for authority and that which is not authorized in God's Word is heresy. “Because the Bible has never been outgrown as the one standard, and cannot be creedified in brief; the Baptist holds the substitution of any authoritative creed as the first step in apostasy.” <sup>4</sup>*

**Mark 7:7-9** *Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

Let us be as the Bereans of old. . . “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” **Acts 17:11**

Many people question which version is the best. To answer that thoroughly, much paper and time would be needed. So, let me leave you with my thoughts on the subject. This author believes that the King James Version is the best translation. Now there are a number of reasons for this belief.

1. It has proven the test of time.
2. It is widely use.
3. The Greek and Hebrew Manuscripts from which it was translated have proven to be the best. ('Oldest' is not always 'best')
5. The vast number of similar extant manuscripts.
4. God has said He would preserve His Word, so we need to ask the question, “Where is it preserved?”

Unfortunately, we do not have the originals with us today, but the author believes the “Textus Receptus” is closely identical the original. Now since we do not have the originals, this may sound like 'circular reasoning'. But keep in mind that God said he would preserve His Word, Therefore we must accept it by faith. After a thorough studied of this subject with much interest, the author has concluded that the King James Version is the inerrant, infallible, preserved Word of God for English speaking people.

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## **II. AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

This distinctive means that every local New Testament church has the privilege to be in total control of itself. In the autonomous form of church government, the system of authority rests in an independent, indigenious, self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-governing local church. This Baptist distinctive distinguishes itself from two other forms of church government, the Episcopalian, and Presbyterian.

**The Episcopalian form** of church government places it's authority in a system of priests and bishops in an ascending scale. For example, in the Roman Church, the ultimate authority rests in the supreme pontiff, the pope.

**The Presbyterian form** of church government places it's authority in a representative group called preaching and ruling elders.

In this way delegated authority finds its final authority in the highest group. For this process of delegated authority rises in an ascending order from the local church

session to the presbytery to the state synod until it finally rests in the General Assembly which is natural. 5

**The Autonomous form** of church government is the only one of the three forms mentioned which is base upon Scriptural principles. The first scriptural principle is: the individual's ability to know the will of God. This will be further explained in the Baptist distinctive, the priesthood of the believer.

The second scriptural principle that local church autonomy is based is; the responsibility of each local church, as a whole, to carry out God's will based on the foundation that its members know God's will. In Matthew 18:15-17 we read where instruction is given to the church as a whole.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

Also in these verses:

*Acts 13:1-3* Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. 2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. 3 And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

**Acts 15:22-28** Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: 24 Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: 25 It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things...

Just as each New Testament church is not subject to other churches or religious groups, they also are not to be in subject to the state. In other words, the state should not impose any laws upon the church that would cause the church to violate Scriptural principles. **Matthew 22:17-21** *Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? 18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said,*

*Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? 19 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.*

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### **III. PRIESTHOOD OF THE BELIEVER**

This distinctive is founded upon the Scriptural principles that God is no respecter of persons. **Romans 2:11** *For there is no respect of persons with God.*

**Ephesians 6:9** *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

**Colossians 3:25** *But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.*

Unlike the Old Testament, where priestly functions were restricted to the tribe of Levi, the New Testament teaches that every believer is a priest before God. Therefore, each believer has the blessed privilege of going directly to God at any time, under any circumstance and bring his petition through Jesus Christ to God. Since the Bible teaches that each believer-priest is equal with one another, there is no need for divisional terms, titles or garb. For example, the Scripture does not give a pastor (or father, to use a catholic term) the authority to forgive sin. Each believer can act upon the promise in **I John 1:9**, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* We make this confession to God.

In 1 Peter 2:5,9 we read, *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. . . 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 term holy priesthood refers to New Testament believers. We are holy in the sense that our sins have been forgiven, **Hebrews 10:1-2** *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

**I John 1:7** *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

In the Old Testament only the high priest dared to enter the presence of God, and then only once a year! As New Testament believers we have access to God's presence at any time.

The term royal priesthood, also refers to New Testament believers. We are royal in the sense that we are called to be personal representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

**2 Corinthians 5:17-21** *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**Romans 8:16-17** The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. Therefore, as a believer-priest, we have a tremendous responsibility placed upon us, and that is; each believer has the privilege to think as he will and that each man is totally responsible to God. The Bible teaches that no person, institution, organization or convention has the authority to tell a person what to believe.

Along with this complete total freedom comes the accountability of such a privilege. Remember, our responsibility is to God alone and no one else! A believer may put himself under the authority of something else (such as a church) but he is still responsible to God for the freedom given him by Christ.

**John 8:32** *And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

**Galatians 5:13** *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

**2 Corinthians 5:10-21** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. 12 For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart. 13 For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. 16 Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in*

*Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

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#### **IV. TWO ORDINANCES: BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

The Scriptures teach that the Lord prescribed immersion and the Lord's Supper to be carried on as ordinances by the New Testament church.

As Bible believing Baptists find themselves in disagreement with other churches in relation to the topic of baptism, it would be helpful to summarize the New Testament position with the following four maxims:

1. Only believers are to be baptized. This excludes anyone who is an unbeliever (even babies, who neither believe nor disbelieve). Cf. Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:14-16. **Acts 8:36-37** *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

2. Baptism is to be by immersion rather than by pouring or sprinkling. There are two main arguments for immersion. (1) The English word baptize has been transliteration of the Greek word baptizein. In order to render a proper translation we have to use the word immerse. (2) There are many passages that support the immersion translation. **Matthew 3:16** *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water:...*

**Acts 8:37-38** *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.*

3. Baptism is not a step to salvation but it is a testimony that one has already received Christ Jesus as Savior. Baptism is a beautiful picture of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. **Romans 6:4-5** *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:*

**Colossians 2:12** *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Once again, every believer who has been immersed has pictured the death (dying to self-righteousness and giving in to Christ's righteousness), burial (going completely under the water), and the resurrection (coming up out of the water).*

4. Believer's baptism by immersion is a requisite to church membership. Throughout the book of Acts we find the order of salvation, baptism, and church membership. **Acts 2:41** *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* Cf. Matt. 16:25-33; Acts 8:37-28.

In practicing these four maxims, Baptists not only preserve purity in their local churches, but they honor the Lord Jesus Christ by respecting completely His 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: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...*

The second ordinance given to the church is the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (notice that it's not a breakfast, or lunch). Just as baptism symbolizes spiritual birth in being raised to walk in newness of life, the Lord's Supper symbolizes the nourishment and support of that new life by union with Christ in His death. **1 Corinthians 11:24** *And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

The Lord's Supper is only to be taken by obedient Christians. That means any Christian who has been immersed, is a member of a New Testament church, and who has searched his own heart to make sure all known sin is confessed. **1 Corinthians 11:28-31** *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*

**Matthew 5:23-24** *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

It is clear to see that the Lord wants all that are saved to be obedient, If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love, John 15:10. Baptists believe that in order to be obedient, a saved person must be baptized by immersion, a member of a New Testament church and observe the Lord's Supper.

Baptists do not believe in the Roman Catholic view of "transubstantiation" which claims that the Catholic priests "transform" the bread and cup into the literal body and blood of Christ.

Baptists do not believe in the Lutherans view of "consubstantiation" which claims the "real presence" of the Lord in a "special way."

The Baptist position concerning the Lord's Supper is that it is a memorial table that pictures the body and blood of Jesus and serves only as a reminder of His death, burial, and resurrection for us. **1 Corinthians 11:25-26** *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood:*



*this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*

These ordinances are not “options” that can be ignored. If we want to be obedient to the Lord then we must be baptized by immersion, members of a New Testament church, and examining ourselves by partaking of the Lord's Supper.

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## **V. INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY**

This distinctive is based upon the belief that every man is accountable to the teachings of God's Word in all religious matter; both in judgment and decision. Baptists believe that each man has the privilege to think as he will and that he is totally responsible to God.

This distinctive teaches that no person, institution, organization or convention has the authority to tell a person what to believe. But keep in mind that along with complete and total freedom comes the responsibility of such a privilege. That responsibility is to God and God alone. *Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men... Acts 5:29.*

Someday as believers, we will answer to God for our actions, *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad...2 Corinthians 5:10.*  
**1 Corinthians 3:11-15** *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*

God has also commanded that we not be a stumbling block to others. Our lifestyle does affect others.

**1 Corinthians 8:9** *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

**1 Corinthians 10:29-33** *Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the [profit] of many, that they may be saved.*

**Galatians 5:1** *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

**Galatians 5:13** *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty*

*for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

**1 Peter 2:16** *As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

Yes, the believer has freedom in Christ, but what an awesome responsibility he has knowing that someday he will give an account to God as to how he used his soul liberty in regards to salvation, to the scriptures, to his daily life and in every area of life.

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## **VI. SEPARATION**

Under this distinctive we will look at three forms of separation:

1. Ethical separation.
2. Ecclesiastical separation.
3. Political separation.

### ***Ethical or Personal Separation***

The first realm of separation to which Baptists adhere is ethical or personal. Each individual believer is to be separated from the world, and unto Christ, **1**

**Thessalonians 1:9** *For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;*

**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. 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.*

**Galatians 2:20** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

**Galatians 6:14** *But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.*

**2 Corinthians 6:14-17** *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. . .*

**2 Timothy 3:5** *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

We must also separated ourselves from compromise:

**3 John 11** Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen 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.

**2 Thessalonians 3:14-15** And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

**Matthew 18:17** And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

**Romans 16:17** Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

**1 Corinthians 5:11** But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

**1 Timothy 6:5** Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

**1 Thessalonians 5:14** Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

Even though these verses are self explanatory, unfortunately they are conveniently overlooked in fundamental Baptist circles today. As New Testament believers this separation puts restrictions on marriage, close friends, clothes, hair standards, places of attendance, dance, music, theater, TV, alcoholic beverages, etc.

### ***Ecclesiastical Separation***

The second realm of separation to which Baptists adhere is ecclesiastical. We are to separate from apostasy. Just as our Lord has His churches, Satan, the imitator, has his false churches.

**2 Corinthians 6:14-17** Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 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. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.

**Romans 16:17** Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

**2 John 10,11** If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

As New Testament believers, we can only have close fellowship with those of like faith and practice. This does not mean that we are to be hateful exclusivists who look down on all who are disobedient to God's Word. On the contrary, we are to love and show mercy to all mankind.

**2 Timothy 2:24-26** *And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.*

### ***Political Separation***

The third realm of separation to which Baptists adhere is Political. As Baptists we believe in a separation of church and state. Baptists believe that Christ taught in Mark 12:17 that there should be separation between the church and the state. *And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.*

Baptists believe that the state ought to stay out of the affairs of the church and vice versa, they not believe in a state church, state baptist, or state ordinances, when it comes to spiritual or religious matters. Even though we believe in the separation of the church and state, this should not construed as the elimination of God from the state as the A.C.L.U. is proposing. In order to avert the ruination of our nation, God must never leave the minds of the government.

As New Testament believers, we are to stay as far away from the world and its standards as possible. Likewise we to stay as close to Christ and His Word as possible. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, **Philippians 2:5.***

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## **VII. TWO OFFICERS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH**

This Baptist distinctive can be scripturally supported after careful reading of the New Testament. Philippians 1:1 says, *Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...* In order to properly understand these two offices, let's go to the Scripture.

### **1. THE PASTOR**

The pastor's qualifications are found in **1 Timothy 3:1-7** *This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up*

*with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Also in **Titus 1:5-13** For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; . . .*

Throughout the New Testament there are various titles for the pastor. They are:

1. **Pastor** or shepherd of the Flock; And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Ephesians 4:11 (Greek word = poimein).
2. **Bishop** or overseer of the working force; Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Philippians 1:1 (Greek word = episcopus).
3. **Elder** or leader in a business session; *And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. Acts 20:17* (Greek word = presbuteros).
4. **Preacher** - a self explanatory term; (Greek word = kerrusso; to be a herald, always with the suggestion of formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed). *Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not;) a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. 1 Timothy 2:7 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee... Titus 1:5*
5. **Teacher** - an instructor of the Word of God; *And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; Ephesians 4:11*
6. **Angel** and **Star** - a messenger of the Lord; *The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. Revelation 1:20*

These various New Testament titles reflect the diverse responsibilities of the "Pastor." The pastor is to LEAD, FEED, GUARD AND GUIDE the local church for one day he will give and account God for his ministry, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give

account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17

## **2. DEACON**

The qualifications for deacons are found in *1 Timothy 3:8-13* *Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

And also in *Act 6:1-4* *And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*

The function of a deacon is that of a servant or one who ministers. Deacons should not run the church nor should they dictate over the pastor. The Bible nowhere suggests that the deacon is to be a “watch-dog” over the Pastor to keep him in line. Therefore they are to serve the congregation under the leadership of the pastor.

### Conclusion

Although many churches call themselves Baptist, if they do not believe these distinctives, they are **not** a New Testament Baptist church. These distinctives separate Baptist from the rest of religious affiliations. Baptist believe that these distinctives should be practiced by all believers, because these distinctives are contained in the Word of God which is the sole authority of faith and practice.

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### Footnotes

1 Dr. Richard C. Weeks, Baptist Polity Class Notes, Maranatha Baptist Bible College.

2 John T. Christian, A History of the Baptist. (Texarkana: Bogard Press, 1922), p. 21

3 Edward T. Hiscox, The new directory for Baptist Churches. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1970), p. 11

4 Thomas Armitage, A History of the Baptists. (Watertown: Maranatha Baptist Press, reprint, 1976), p. 151.

5 William Kerr, Conservative Baptist Distinctives, (Portland, OR: Christianews Press, 1962), pp. 8-10

***Other good books about Baptist history:***

The Trail of Blood, by J.M. Carroll, printed by Bryan Station Baptist Church, 3175 Briar Hill Rd, Lexington, Kentucky 40516

Baptist Succession, A Hand-Book of Baptist History by D.B. Ray, reprinted by Church History Research & Archives, 220 Graystone Drive, Gallatin, Tennessee, 37066

A Concise History of Baptist by G.H. Orchard, Bogard Press, 4605 North State Line Ave., Texarkana, Texas 75503

I Will Build My Church: The Doctrine and History of Baptists by Thomas M. Strouse, Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press, 296 New Britain Ave, Newington, Connecticut 06111

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