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THE BAPTIST BELIEF/DOCTRINE

Background

Christianity is the religion of people who believe in the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ. Most followers of Christianity, called Christians, are members of one of three major groups—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox or Protestant. These groups have different beliefs about Jesus and His teachings. But all consider Jesus central to their religion. Most Christians believe God sent Jesus into the world as the Savior. Christianity teaches that humanity can achieve salvation through Jesus Christ. The first followers of Jesus Christ were members of the Universal Catholic Church. Some of the practices and/or doctrines of this Church came under strict review by opponents of the Church. The Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church is the second largest Christian Church in the world. The Protestant Christian Church was the opposition group that partitioned the other Churches for significant practices and/or doctrinal reforms. This desire to reform the Christian Churches and thereby change Christianity grew stronger and stronger during the 1500's. The actual Reformation movement began in 1517 when Martin Luther, a German monk, criticized certain church practices. This reformation movement divided Western Christianity into Roman Catholics and Protestants. Some of the Protestant groups, including the Baptists, Quakers, and Mennonites, developed their own forms of worship. This article is designed to describe, in broad terms, some of the Baptist beliefs or Faith by focusing on what they believe and why they believe it.

The Baptist Belief/Doctrine

Why are we Baptists? If we were asked to defend our decision for being Baptist, what would we say? What if we were asked to formulate in our minds the reasons why we are Baptist? What would we say? Many folk are very adamant about why they are Baptist, but their passion often surpasses scriptural support. The problem arises, however, when we make being Baptist a badge of honor rather than a method of identification. We must remember that first and foremost, we are Christians—blood bought, eternally saved, Christ professing, grace given, mercy receiving, repentant sinners—who the Father in heaven has spared from the fiery pits of Hell! The fact that

we find our roots of faith in the same fertile soil as millions of others who have gone before us is a matter of God's sovereignty, nothing more! Those who have gone before us have been bloody martyrs, powerful prophets, fiery preachers, meek grandmothers, kindly gentlemen, and on and on. In order to understand the Baptist Belief/Doctrine we must first understand who **we are**, **what we are** and **what makes us different**.

Who we are? We are people that believe in the teaching and ministry of Jesus Christ.

What we are? We are blood bought, eternally saved, Christ professing, grace given, mercy receiving, repentant sinners.

What makes us different? What makes us different from other faith believers is the Baptist Distinctive. These distinctive are beliefs and practices that establish the unique character of the New Testament Faith, setting them apart as "Distinct" from any and all other faiths or systems of belief of religious thought.

These distinctive are easily remembered by using the following acrostic: (BRAPSISS).

1. Bible, the only rule of faith and practice, (Our spiritual Constitution & Bylaws).
2. Regenerate, immersed church membership, (Born again, led by the Holy Spirit).
3. Autonomy and independence of the Local Church, (Independent of Associations).
4. Priesthood of the believer, (Children of a high God; royalty).
5. Soul Liberty, (The right of believers to hold opinions different from other believers).
6. Immersion of believers and the Lord Supper; the only two ordinances.
7. Separation of Church and State, (Religious freedom).
8. Separation of ethical and ecclesiastical practices, (Moral and doctrinal freedom).

FUNDAMENTALS OF OUR FAITH

Statement of Faith

We believe that the Bible, consisting of Old and New Testaments, was verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit, and is the infallible and authoritative Word of God.

We believe that the one triune God exists eternally in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that Adam, created in the image of God, was tempted by Satan, the ruler of this world, and fell. Because of Adam's sin, all men have guilt imputed, are totally

depraved, and need to be regenerated by the Holy Spirit for Salvation.

We believe that Jesus Christ is God, was born of a virgin, baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan, crucified as the Lamb of God, rose again from the dead, and ascended to heaven, where He is presently exalted at the right hand of God the Father.

We believe that salvation consists of the remission of sins, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the gift of eternal life, received by faith alone, apart from works.

We believe that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent, and that it will be visible and personal.

We believe that the saved will be raised to everlasting life, and blessedness in heaven and that the unsaved will be raised to everlasting and conscious punishment.

We believe that the church, the body of Christ, consists only of those who are born again, who are baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ at the time of regeneration, for whom He now makes intercession in heaven and for whom He will come again.

We believe that Christ commanded the church to go into all nations and preach the gospel to every person, baptizing and teaching those who believe.

We believe that the New Testament Church has two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in that order.

The Christian baptism is the **immersion** of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of Life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony of the believer's faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Baptism is a church ordinance and is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. **(Acts2: 41-42). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers"**. The Lord's Supper, also called Communion or the Eucharist, is the second ordinance (or Sacrament) that Baptists believe Christ established and is therefore to be observed by churches until the end of time. Communion is based on the celebration of a Passover meal among Jesus and his disciples on the night before his betrayal and arrest (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-20).

These distinctive of faith and practice set us apart from other forms of religious thought. The Baptist Church took these distinctive and developed its own doctrinal principles and codified them into an undeniable set of beliefs that we call the Baptist Articles of Faith.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

I. THE SCRIPTURES

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us, and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

References: 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Romans 2:12

II. THE TRUE GOD

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe, infinite in holiness and all other perfections to whom we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. He is revealed to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

References: John 4:24; Psalms 147:5; Exodus 15:11

III. THE FALL OF MAN

We believe that man was created by the special act of God, as recorded in Genesis. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7). He was created in the state of holiness under the law of his Maker, but through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and in bondage to sin, are under condemnation, and as soon as he is capable of moral action, becomes an actual transgressor.

References: Genesis 1:27; Genesis 3:6, 24; Romans 5:19

IV. THE WAY OF SALVATION

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatory office of the Son of God, who by the Holy Spirit was born of the Virgin Mary and took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience and made atonement for our sins by His death. Being risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven, and uniting in his person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a compassionate and all sufficient Savior.

References: Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16; Philippians 2:6-7; Isaiah 42:2

V. JUSTIFICATION

We believe that justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of righteousness of all sinners who believe in Christ. This blessing is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but through the redemption that is in and through Jesus Christ. It brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other needed blessing.

References: John 1:16; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1-2

VI. THE FREENESS OF SALVATION

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the duty of all to accept them by penitent and obedient faith. Nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner except his own voluntary refusal to accept Jesus Christ as Teacher, Savior, and Lord.

References: Isaiah 55:1; Romans 16:25-26; John 5:40

VII. THE GRACE IN REGENERATION

We believe that regeneration or the new birth is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit, whereby we become partakers of the divine nature and a holy disposition is given, leading to the love and practice of righteousness. It is a work of God's free grace conditioned upon faith in Christ and made manifest by the fruit that we bring forth to the glory of God.

References: John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:8

VIII. REPENTANCE AND FAITH

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, and supplication of mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

References: Mark 1:15; John 16:8; Luke 18:13

IX. GOD'S PURPOSE OF GRACE

We believe that election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, sanctifies and saves sinners. It is perfectly consistent with the free agency of man and in no way interferes with the salvation of any individual. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility. It encourages the use of means in the highest degree.

References: 2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Exodus 33:18-19

X. SANCTIFICATION

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means, especially the Word of God, self-

examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

References: 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Proverbs 4:18; 1 John 2:29

XI. THE PERSERVERANCE OF SAINTS

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

References: John 8:17; 1 John 2:19; Romans 8:28

XII. THE HARMONY OF THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is a holy, just, and good; and that inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

References: Romans 3:31; Romans 7:12; Romans 8:2-4

XIII. A GOSPEL CHURCH

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gift, rights, and privileges invested in them by His word; that its only Scripture officers are bishops or pastors, and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the epistles of Timothy and Titus.

References: I Corinthians 1:1-13; Acts 2:41-42; Matthew 28:20

XIV. THE BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost; to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior with its effect in the death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a church relation; and to the Lord's Supper, in which the members of the church, by the sacred use of bread and wine are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ-preceded always by solemn self-examination.

References: Acts 8:36-39; Romans 6:4; Matthew 28:19

XV. THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations; by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

References: Acts 20:7; Exodus 20:8; Revelation 1:10

XVI. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of kings of the earth.

References: Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:29

XVII. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE WICKED

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Those only who are justified through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit are truly righteous in His sight. Those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and are under condemnation. This distinction between the righteous and the wicked holds in and after death, and will be made manifest at the judgment when final and everlasting awards are made to all men both in and after death.

References: Romans 1:17; Malachi 3:18; 1 John 2:29

XVIII. THE WORLD TO COME

We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven, and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be judged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven and hell, on principles of righteousness.

References: 1 Peter 4:7; Acts 24:15; Matthew 25:31-46

SUMMARY:

The above Articles of Faith describe in limited detail Baptist beliefs and commitments. They are derived from Baptist Doctrines taken from The Holy Bible as discerned and inspired by men of God. As Baptists, we are instructed to study to show ourselves approved unto God, thereby enabling us to rightly divide the word of truth. We should always look for ways to position ourselves to live so God can use us. Our Baptist Doctrine, under the direction, guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit, enables us to live lives that are pleasing to God. To know **who we are** we must know **what we are** and we can only know this by knowing **what we believe** and **why we believe it**. We must have a full appreciation of the Baptist Faith in order to be effective as we spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ from a Baptist perspective. Our policies and practices must be aligned with our doctrines and faith. This requires daily exhibition and expression of truthfulness, righteousness, and personal integrity on the part of all believers.

We ask God's blessings and inspiration as we continue to grow in faith and devotion during this Christian journey.

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