

## **Baptist Essentials – Why Are We Baptists?**

### *Lesson 10 | Baptist History*

It took us 9 full weeks to walk through all the main distinctions, or essentials, of the Baptist church. Hopefully within these last two months, I have been able to help you answer the question of – Why am I a Baptist? I'll tell you, I am not a Baptist because I was raised in a Baptist church, or because I was saved in a Baptist church, or because I was married in one. I am not a Baptist because I was called and ordained to the Gospel ministry as a pastor inside of a Baptist church. And I am certainly not a Baptist because I work at a Baptist church and I'm being required to say it. Beloved, I am a Baptist because the Scriptures do not allow me to be otherwise. If you can convince me otherwise, I will gladly submit to the Bible and change my belief. But, because of the Bible and the Bible alone, I must be in a Baptist church that teaches specific doctrine. I might could visit while on vacation or with a friend another church that isn't a Baptist church. I've done this before. While in Sanford, Florida ten years ago visiting family, I was able to go to St. Andrews Chapel, Dr. RC Spoul's church to hear him preach. Can I agree to everything? No. Could I even be a member there? No. And that's the point that I want us to ensure that we walk away with from this series—we must be consumed with the Scriptures and develop our theology from the Bible and the Bible alone. I have shown you why Baptists believe certain doctrines and I have done so from the Bible. Therefore, because I believe the Bible teaches that the Presbyterians have it wrong in a few areas, I cannot be a member of a Presbyterian church. Because I believe that the Pentecostal church has it wrong in multiple areas, I cannot be a member of a Pentecostal church. You see where I am going with this. I must be a member of a Baptist church because I have no other choice, the Scriptures do not allow me to. So I hope that I have helped you to see this as well.

Tonight, our objective is to not learn more as to why we are Baptists. We've already done that. Rather, our objective tonight is to learn how we got here. Tonight will be a history lesson, of sorts, that'll help us to trace our history back to its possible beginning. Last semester we completed a class on church history as we saw a broad view of the church as a whole. Tonight, we take the approach of being laser focused

and seeing only the strand of the Baptist church. Some of the things that I will say this evening, especially towards the beginning of our time, will sound very familiar if you were part of our Forerunners of the Faith class. But we will quickly jump right into the deep end to learn about our Baptist roots.

As we begin, you must understand that the Baptist church didn't just pop up with all of the different doctrines that we have mentioned, having them worked out to the T and operated correctly according to what I have taught you. It was a progression to get all the details and doctrine ironed out. The origins of the Baptist church really begin to the actual name of our denomination – Baptist. Our forefathers began to separate themselves from the mainstream church of the time because of both the mode and the meaning of baptism.

As we look back into history, we need to remember something that stands in stark contrast to our world today. When we think of baptism and the way that our church operates, it seems somewhat normal, right? When you hear of somebody getting baptized and going under the water, you don't really bat an eye to that. It's normal for us. But it has not been normal for the majority of the history of the church.

How many years has the church been in existence? Around 2,000 years, right? Remember, it started on the day of Pentecost. So from that point moving forward, the default baptism that took place inside of the church was that of baptizing new converts, or how we would understand it—believer's baptism. Notice that I didn't say baptism by immersion. The mode of baptism during this time wasn't nearly as important or even emphasized in comparison to that of the meaning of baptism. Therefore, during the first 400 years of the church, the mode of baptism consisted of full immersion and pouring. Unfortunately, unity among the churches didn't happen concerning the mode. Rather, there was more unity concerning the meaning of baptism and who it was to be completed upon. Baptism was to symbolize that of the death and new life of the person in Christ, it symbolizes their union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

With that in mind, if we could zoom out and look at the full landscape of all the different churches, we would find the same understanding but different modes found throughout different areas. A particular part of the world would baptize by

immersion why another part of the world would be influenced differently and might practice baptism by pouring. As more theology was developed in one part of the ancient world, it would be influenced by that doctrine and begin to practice it while maybe another part of the world wasn't as doctrinally sharp. You see what I am saying here. The bottom line is that the mode wasn't nearly as important as the meaning.

As time went on, more erroneous theology began to develop and infiltrate the church. Error such as salvation being contingent upon being baptized. With that thought in mind, my gracious, we don't want our infants and young children to go to hell and be damned forever. So, good meaning Christians began to assume that if they just baptized their baby, they would have that salvation. Well, you can see how this would catch up and how appealing it is. Eventually, this is exactly what the State Church began to teach. What was the state church? The Roman Catholic Church. In the year 401AD at the 5<sup>th</sup> Council of Carthage, the State Church began teaching infant baptism. In 526AD with Emperor Justinian 1, made infant baptism compulsory and just three years later deemed rebaptism as a heresy that was punishable by death. While there was no law stating that you must be baptized as an infant, there were now laws in place for those who decided that infant baptism wasn't the meaning of baptism, shouldn't be practiced, and decided to rebaptize those who come to faith later in life and those laws condemned a person to death.

We spoke a little bit about these folks last week. I am talking about the Anabaptists. Ana meaning again or re, they were the rebaptizers. While this movement can be found throughout all of church history in little pockets here and there, they really began to gain traction during the Reformation.

In the 1500s, men like Martin Luther of Germany, John Calvin and Ulrich Zwingli both of Switzerland, and John Knox of Scotland, all were part of the movement that is known as the Reformation. They reformed the church from Rome and the Catholic movement. It was all on the basis of five solas and how we are given salvation.

The Reformation had nothing to do with Baptism. So why bring this up? Because it has so much to do with the state ran church. After the Reformation took place and

churches are beginning to reform, we must understand that Catholic churches didn't just shut down. What mostly happened is that those Catholic congregations just switched to a new type of church, one that was most prominent in their country. An old Catholic congregation could turn into a Lutheran church, or an Anglican church, or some other type of Reformed church. All were now operating according to the correct view of salvation, but all still operating with a paedobaptism theology. Not only that, these churches still operated with the state. Many were still state-run churches. If you didn't know, the Anglican church is the Church of England.

So, while there were small pockets far and few between before the Reformation, the Reformation allowed the Anabaptists to really begin to flourish. The Reformation gave the Anabaptists a mouthpiece. Side note, it's also during the Reformation where we have strong documentation of when Anabaptists were being brutally persecuted, many being drowned for their belief in baptism by immersion (if you like water the way you say you do, then let's hold you under it). The irony of that is that not all Anabaptists believed that immersion was the only mode of baptism to be practiced! Of course there had to be many who did, but not all. What the Anabaptists were more concerned with was the meaning of baptism and who it was supposed to be practiced on – believer's baptism. If a person was saved, despite being "baptized" as an infant, they would be baptized again.

So let's park here with the Anabaptists for a little bit and explore them. Many think that the Anabaptists are our forefathers. Many think that just because the Anabaptists have the name Baptists in their name means that they are our direct decedents. This is false. They are not our fathers nor our grandfathers. We might could say that the Anabaptists are cousins with Baptists. The direct decedents of the Anabaptists are the Swiss Brethren, or you might know their offshoots, the Mennonites and the Amish. Both of these forms of Christianity are out of the scope of our discussion for this evening. But, I will say that you'll know them best by their dress code and distancing themselves from modern technology and even the modern world, specifically speaking of the Amish. Both Mennonites and the Amish draw direct lines to the Anabaptists as their forefathers. The Anabaptists believed that you must be a pacifist, meaning you cannot do anything resulting in violence.

That implies that you cannot serve in the military and you cannot defend yourself. They believed that you must not work in the government of any kind and that you cannot take any sort of oaths. All of this on top of how they believed concerning baptism.

Let's ask the question—does that sound like anything that we believe as Baptists? Was that part of any thing that I have taught you for the last 9 weeks? The answer is no. Therefore, they cannot be our forefathers, they must be our cousins.

Therefore, who can we draw a line to and say that they are our forefathers? Beloved, the answer to that are the Puritans. We are direct decedents of the Puritans.

If you remember, the Puritans of the 1600s came to America seeking to purify the church, the church of what? The Church of England, the state ran church. The Puritans desired to have a pure church but knew that the church of their homeland wasn't pure. Therefore, they desired to reform it from the inside out.

Now, before we move forward, we must understand that not all Puritans were Baptist minded. Many of them were Congregationalists, which if you remember is the form of church government that the Baptist church holds to. Many of them held to a Paedobaptist view, which would lead many down the road to a Presbyterian view. Also, not all Puritans left England for America. In fact, the very first Baptist church that is documented was established in Holland in 1609 by English speaking Puritans who left the church of England because they believed that church membership belong exclusively to those who are born again and have been baptized. The pastor was John Smyth. An associate of his, Thomas Helwys, would eventually travel back to England and founded the first Baptist church there in England in the year 1612. As the Puritans were making their way to America and really sharpening their understanding of church life, Roger Williams of Providence Rhode Island, would start the first Baptist church in America in the year 1638. Do you know the name of that church? It was called—The First Baptist Church in America. What's fascinating is that this church is still in existence today and still have a service every single Sunday morning. You can look it up and even visit it. The pastor there now is the Reverend Dr. Jaime Washam.

That first pastor, Roger Williams, was a pioneer for religious liberty, or what we have called Individual Soul Liberty. He believed that everybody was afforded the liberty to believe what they want and was once quoted as saying this, “Even Jews, Turks, Muslims, and heretics should have religious freedom.” He believed that people have the right to be wrong so that they can be persuaded to believe in the Gospel.

Beloved, are you beginning to see how all the different essentials that I have taught you are beginning to come together?

As more Baptist churches are being established, we begin to see a separation in the Baptist church. We begin to see a split concerning theology. Going back to that very first Baptist church in Holland in 1609, that was the start of the General Baptist Church. Making our way back to America, we find the first church of the split being established in 1638 and that church was called a Particular Baptist church.

If you had to shoot from the hip, Particular and General being our key words, what doctrine do you think the church was being split over? It was split over their understanding of the atonement—who did Jesus die for? Was that atonement, or the sacrifice in place of sinners, was it for the general population? Or, was it for a particular people, that being God’s chosen and elect people? So the two Baptist churches were split, the General Baptist being more Arminian while the Particular Baptist was Calvinistic.

With that in mind, let me quickly explain myself – An Arminian view of salvation is that Jesus died for every single person, satisfying God’s wrath on their behalf, and paying the penalty that they rightly earned. A Calvinistic view of salvation is that Jesus died only for the elect and satisfied God’s wrath on behalf of the elect and the elect alone, meaning that Jesus didn’t pay the penalty for those who won’t believe in Him making them pay the penalty for themselves.

So while the General Baptist movement had 30 years on their Particular Baptist brothers, the Particular Baptist church would begin to explode. The Particular Baptist church grew and would begin to really separate themselves from the General Baptists. In 1644, the church produced the 1644 London Baptist Confession of Faith. In this statement of faith, or confession, we find where they wrote specific

things that truly separated them from the Anabaptists, which is an easy mistake to make thinking that Anabaptists are actually Baptists, and that of the General Baptist church. During this time, the General Baptist church would begin to really walk off the deep end and begin to embrace doctrine that was heretical, doctrine concerning the atonement and the deity of Christ. Because of this, the General Baptist Church would eventually fizzle out.

In 1689, the Particular Baptists wrote another confession called the 1689 Second London Baptist Confession of Faith. This confession was incredibly detailed in their understanding of all aspects of faith and life.

Now a quick side note, you'll see on your handout a line coming from the Particular Baptist movement to a movement called Primitive Baptists and then to the establishment of Westboro Baptist Church. I would be hard pressed to say that folks in the Primitive Baptist church truly know the Gospel and have radically been changed by it. Primitive Baptists believe in the core doctrines of Calvinism, but take God's sovereignty beyond the limits of the Scriptures and says that God will save whom He will save without anybody having to preach the Gospel. Therefore, they won't share the Gospel and they won't engage in the work of the Great Commission. We call this Hyper Calvinism which is NOT a Biblical doctrine and antithetical to the Scriptures. Any true Calvinist would be hotly opposed to Hyper Calvinism.

But why bring up Westboro Baptist Church? You might be familiar with this Primitive Baptist church as they have often been in the news for their picketing of different events. You may have seen their signs that say obscene things that speaks of God hating homosexuals, and that's making the phrase acceptable to say inside of a church service. While there is much to say about God hating the sinner and having Scripture to back this up, and even having a hatred yourself for the sin and the sinner committing such blasphemy against our great God, it's another thing to demean people made in the image of God. I digress.

Moving along, the majority of Baptist life in America in the 1600s was overwhelmingly Calvinistic. Then we get into the 1700s. If you know your history, you'll know that something big happened in the first half of the 1700s. That being,

The Great Awakening. There was an incredibly large revival that God was doing in America during this time where sinners were being saved and saints were being sanctified.

Out of this revival, around the end of the 1700s, we began to see Particular Baptists begin to fade into the background as new and American Indigenous churches would be born. Those who were already believers and inside of a Baptist church, they began to call themselves Regular Baptists. They called themselves that because they were already regular inside of the church, they were already there, they were normal, they were regular. But, those who were either saved OR was convinced by the Scriptures to leave the Presbyterian or some of type of church, they began to form a new church called the Separate Baptists.

Remember our timeline, we are currently around the end of the 1700s and into the early 1800s. It was during this time where predominantly black Baptist churches were in the early stages of being established. For a while, it was a rule that the pastor had to be a white man, for whatever reason, but eventually a predominately black church would be able to have their pastor to be a black man. As the black Baptist church grew, so did the need for some type of convention to begin to help local churches thrive. The first black convention was called the National Baptist Convention USA, established in 1895. Our of that convention would be born in 1961 the Progressive National Baptist Convention. Think critically, what was happening during this time in America? The Civil Rights Movement. And who was the biggest voice for that movement? The Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. MLK was a Baptist Pastor in two different churches, one in Montgomery AL and the other in Atlanta GA. Both of these churches are part of this convention. Side note, if you didn't already know, Martin Luther King Jr did incredible things for black folks in America during the times of the Civil Rights Movement. Unfortunately, Martin Luther King Jr was also a raging heretic, adulterer, and womanizer. I will not comment further on his sin because it is public record and disturbing, but I will comment on his heresy. MLK rejected the following—He rejected the virgin birth, Christ's physical resurrection, the trinity, the substitutionary atonement of Jesus, he denied the literal second coming, final judgment, and bodily resurrection of believers, and that all stemmed from his rejection of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures. I

would be more apt to say that MLK was not a Christian based upon what a Christian is according to the Scriptures. If you're curious, look this up later tonight.

Another side note, it was also around this time when we begin to see the boom in the nondenominational movement. I'll be honest with you, this one drives me to frustration. Why? Because the vast majority of nondenominational churches are Baptist churches that are ashamed to call themselves Baptist. I'll leave that there.

Moving on...

It's during this time after the Great Awakening when the Baptist church in America is really beginning to form and be fully established. Roots are being grown and they are growing deep. But we still are finding ourselves in the dark time period of this country and that was during the time period of slavery. Though the Baptist church had a lot of theological rights, there were also some theological wrongs. The theological rights were that of doctrine, standing on the truth of the Scriptures, believing that every man had the right to believe where their conscience led them, believing that the church is to be autonomous and not ran by the government, and they believed in mission work. Specifically, the Baptist church has historically always done missions very well. The Baptist church in America was desiring to send missionaries out all over the place. The Baptist church in the north wanted to send missionaries. The Baptist church in the south wanted to send missionaries out. But, during the early 1800s, there was something that really separated the two. Slaves.

In May of 1814, the Baptist church in America put together something called the General Convention of the Baptist Denomination in the United States for Foreign Missions. To shorted it, you'll see on your handout, it was called the Triennial Convention. It was here where all the Baptist churches in America was coming together in figuring out how to best utilize money to support the mission work that each church was engaging in.

As the convention would begin to send money to churches to send out missionaries, the Triennial Convention was preferring the northern states over the southern states. Why? Might you ask. Well, remember American history. Think of the Civil War. The Civil War really was about the south's desire for the expansion of slavery

and the north's desire to abolish slavery. Therefore, an overgeneralized statement would say that the churches in the north didn't members or missionaries who own slaves. The opposite was true about the south, Baptist churches in the south predominately had church members, pastor, and missionaries who owned slaves.

Therefore, with this in mind, churches in the south wasn't receiving any financial help from the convention. Not only that, the churches in the north were beginning to refuse any type of interaction with the churches in the south.

The south had only one choice – start something new. Start a new convention. So, they called themselves the Southern Baptist Convention. Yes, unfortunately, the convention that our church, First Baptist Church at Weston, is affiliated with, was created because of their desire to continue owning people for their own benefit. It was wicked. After several years, the convention would eventually and publicly repent of their actions. I'm sure how they could "repent" of doing something that happened 100 years earlier and you had nothing to do with it, nevertheless, the convention has expressed disgust over the fact that we were founded upon something like this.

Now, the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest denomination in North America. But what happened to the northern states? Well, they would eventually form what was called the Northern Baptist Convention but would change their name to the American Baptist Church AND THEN would again change their name to Venture Church Network. This is where things get very interesting. The SBC, Southern Baptist Convention, has historically been very conservative in their understanding of the Scriptures. Obviously, if they were not or were to go over the edge, First Weston would dip out in a heartbeat. But historically, the SBC has always been theologically conservative. On the flipside, the Northern Baptist Convention, or the American Baptist, or the Venture Church Network, they are incredibly theologically liberal. They ordain ladies as pastors on the regular, they encourage homosexuality and gender fluidity within the churches. Fun fact, do you remember the first church in America in Rhode Island? The First Baptist Church in America? They are part of this family tree. The pastor—Revered Dr Jaime Washam, that's a lady. And she led that church to recently march in an LGBTQ rally in their city.

Beloved, just because the marquee says Baptist doesn't make it a true Baptist church. And that's where I want our minds to land this evening. We have traced our way through all of our history but we need to remember what doctrines we stand upon. So it would be wise for us to conclude our series with one last reminder of our Baptist Essentials. Remember, we used the acronym BAPTIST to help us to easily remember what we stand up.

B stood for Biblical Authority. We believe that the Bible is the final word that dictates what we believe and how we must behave. There is no other rung of the ladder, it is the Bible and the Bible alone. We don't look to church history, though it can be quite helpful to us, but looking to church history to see how we must believe is a fallacy that other denominations fall into. We believe the sole authority is the Bible. What the Bible says is relevant for today. It was relevant 2000 years ago and if the Lord tarries, it'll be relevant 2000 years from now.

The A stood for the Autonomy of the Church. We believe that the church is to be independent, or autonomous, from all authority. We do not report to the convention in a way so that we may gain their approval, we do not have the president of the convention telling us what to do or how we are to operate. No, rather we operate by how we believe the Bible tells us to. We are independent. The state doesn't have any say in how we are to believe nor in how we are to operate. We also established the most Biblical form of church government, that being congregationalism where the church governs herself and even leaves the final say in the hands of the faithful church member. The church is to be pastor elder led, not pastor elder ruled.

Next, we learned that the P stood of the Priesthood of the Believer. We believe that the Bible doesn't allow for a single person to mediate between me and God. Rather, I am my own priest. I come before the throne of grace in time of need and without that mediator, like that of a priest. Like a priest, I offer a sacrifice of praise for myself. I am a priest!

The first T that we learned was that we believe the Bible teaches that there are only Two Offices to be established within a local church, and those two offices are the office of pastor and the office of deacon. You learned about the qualifications of the

pastor and deacon, how each is to operate within their own defined way accord to their descriptions found within the New Testament, and you learned about the wisdom of why these men must be found within a plurality.

The I stood for Individual Soul Liberty. Soul liberty is just that, every single individual has the liberty to believe as they see the Bible dictates them to believe. They are to follow what their conscience allows for them to believe. If you remember, the most we sharpen our conscience with the Scriptures, the more Biblical our conscience will lead us. Remember the words of Roger Williams, “Even Jews, Turks, Muslims, and heretics should have religious freedom.” We believe that people have the right to be wrong so that they can be persuaded to believe in the Gospel.

Next, we learned about the first S in BAPTISTS. That S stood for Saved and Baptized Membership. We learned that the church is made up of only saved people and that is very important to really live out the autonomy of the church and congregationalism in specific. We do not believe that any unbeliever should be given membership to the church, hence why we work through a rigorous membership process here at the church. Alongside the person being saved, to be a member we believe that the person must also be baptized.

We learned that the second T stood for Two Ordinances. We learned about the difference between the words ordinance and sacrament, ordinance meaning a command and sacrament meaning a receiving of some type of grace. We spoke about the Biblical way of being baptized is that of being fully immersed under the water. We also learned about the Lord’s Supper and the different ways that it is understood and the importance of the word “is” in the phrase – This is My body.

And then lastly, we learned that the second S stood for separation. We spoke about how the Bible teaches us that the believer is to be separate from the world. We defined what the world means and how the believer must abstain from the love of it. We also spoke about how there must be separation of church and state. The state has no say so over the church in how they must believe and how they must operate. This is how the Puritans found themselves separating from the Church of England and starting new pure churches.

Beloved, I am a Baptist because I have no other choice. I am proud to be a Baptist. I realize that there are negative connotations with the word Baptist, I am no fool. But I realize more that the Baptist tradition is the most faithful to the Word of God, and beloved, that's my desire, to be fully adherent to what God has said. I pray that's your desire as well. Amen?