

Baptist Essentials – Why Are We Baptists?

Lesson 9 | Separation

Well, we made it! We have walked through each letter of our acrostic that highlights our Biblical beliefs that makes us who we are. We have examined 7 different doctrines that are essential to the Baptist tradition that sets us apart of other denominations and religions. Let's quickly look back at each one to see how we got here.

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, which 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.

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. It was here where we 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 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 intercessor, like that of 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. This one is in many ways blended into the Priesthood of Believers. While they are similar, that are distinct from each other and it would be an error to lump them together. 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.

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 discussed that while there are situations where a person hasn't been Biblically baptized, such situations could be ignorance, a misunderstanding of what actually takes place at said baptism, or even being baptized in an unbiblical way (such as not being immersed under the water or being baptized in only the name of Jesus), most situations are found where the person is just being disobedient. Therefore, if that is the case, disobedience towards baptism, that person cannot become a member.

Last week, we learned about the T which 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 and how the word itself doesn't allow for anything else to actually take place. But we also really worked through an apologetic of credobaptism, believer's baptism, in comparison of that of paedobaptism, that being infant baptism. 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.

Finally, tonight, we will examine the final letter of our acrostic before jump into a history class of the Baptists, Lord willing next week.

The second S stands for Separation – Separation of the individual from the world and separation of church and state.

We will be examining two different elements of separation and splitting our class into two portions, much like how we did last week with the ordinances. It'll be heavier on the backend this evening because I believe there is probably more confusion as to what exactly separation between church and state actually is.

Separation of the Individual from the World

With that said, let's start our time this evening by looking at the New Testament's teaching of being separated from the world. Turn with me to **1 John 2:15-17**.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

The question here is exactly what constitutes things in the world? That's a good question, right? Because I am sure that there would be a lot of disagreement between each of us here this evening where you'd say that this one thing doesn't really fall into the lines of the world while others would be hard-pressed to say it does.

So where do we draw that line? Turn your Bibles to **1 Peter 1:14-16**. These verses will help us begin to develop an answer.

¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

Peter tells us as obedient children, be holy. He makes the comparison to before becoming children, children of God of course is what he is referring to us as, before you were children you were ignorant. He said, don't conform yourselves to your

former lusts of when you lived in ignorance. And then he clarifies what being obedient looks like—being holy. What does holiness look like? Well, as Peter is quoting God from the book of Leviticus when God said to be holy as I am holy, Peter said you ought to be holy like God. What is God’s holiness like? Moral purity, uniqueness, majestic, we really could go on and on trying to describe God’s holiness because all of these answers are correct. But, in efforts of trying to help us this evening, how can we define holiness? **Holiness is total separation from sin.**

Now, if we are to be totally separated, let’s bring our minds back to 1 John 2 and love for the world. If we are commanded to be holy and to not observe our former lusts that defined our unregenerate state, if we are commanded to be holy and separated, how can we define what “the world” is? Douglas O’Donnell, a commentator who wrote a full commentary on 1-3 John¹, wrote something that I believe to be so helpful that it needs to be quoted in full. He said concerning what the world is, “

Therefore, "the world" in this passage does not mean the world in general; rather, it means the world that has abandoned its Creator and lives apart from his rule. It is the godless world that is totally "at variance with God" and his will.' It is the Babylon described in Revelation, "the sensual, materialistic pagan society that Christianity had to overcome." It is a group of people who are part of a system that is "organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values, and egotism." Quite simply, the world" means "worldliness," and quite sadly, it means "the typical kind of life that is being lived by the average person today."

In the book Worldliness, C. J. Mahaney defines the term worldliness as "a love for this fallen world." He clarifies: "It's loving the values and pursuits of the world that stand opposed to God. More specifically, it is to gratify and exalt oneself to the exclusion of God. It rejects God's rule and replaces it with our own." To that definition he adds self-evaluating questions, such as:

- Does outward prosperity appeal to you more than growth in godliness?

¹ Douglas Sean O’Donnell. 1-3 John. 68.

- Do you esteem and crave the approval of those around you?
- Do you go to great lengths to avoid looking foolish or being rejected for your Christian faith?
- Do you consider present and material results more important than eternal reward?
- Have you departed from God and adopted idols instead?

Beloved, do not love these things. This is the world—a love for the fallen values and pursuits that stand in opposition of God. Be separate from them! Even as the church collectively, we learn in Ephesians 5 that the Lord will return to retrieve His Bride that is spotless and without blemish. How does the church do that? From the separation of herself from moral impurity and doctrinal error. Separate!

This is a pretty easily understood concept. Obviously, we could go much deeper into this. But I think we should move on to separation of church and state.

Separation of Church and State

Looking back to my childhood, I remember many people, family, friends, church folk, talking about the lack of prayer in school and how it was a violation of church and state. Being an ignorant boy, I agreed. Beloved, having Christian prayer in public schools is a great thing! Now listen to me, having a state mandated and official time of Christian prayer in public schools is NOT a great thing. Why? Because it is a violation of the separation of church and state. (I feel there might be some tension after saying that. The temperature just got turned up a little.) I've got some explaining to do.

Before we jump into defining this, let's just examine a couple of examples of what a state ran church or religion looks like.

Are you familiar with Shari'a law? It's the Islamic law that Muslims are to adhere to. Now, there is a lot of leeway here to who exactly follows it, how conservatively it is to be read, and things like that. So while this will be somewhat of a blanket statement and somewhat of an overgeneralization, I am just trying to make a point.

Shari'a law means in Arabic "the way" or "the path to water." It is a code that Muslims are to live by that is a moralistic way of living, personal behavior, different

aspects of life, and it's all according to the Quran and the Hadith. You probably know some of the different rules – no pork (honestly, the bbq southern boy in my finds this to be most sad). When I was in Indonesia a year ago, Indonesia is the most Muslim populated country in the world by the way, there was no options for pork. The peperoni pizza at Pizza Hut was served with beef peperoni. No options because pork wasn't allowed. No alcohol is on the list, specific dress codes where the men must be covered from knee to waist. Ladies, on the other hand, have a much more strict dress code to where they must be covered on all of their body except their face and their hands, while those who are the most conservative cover their face with the exception of their eyes.

There are currently just under 50 different countries, most located in the middle east while the others are just outside of that particular area, that practice Shari'a law. From my understanding, there are some of them blend more liberal understandings of it, some practice with just the Muslims in the country, but there are around 14 or so different countries that practice full on Shari'a law. Countries such as Pakistan, Egypt, Iran, Sudan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Qatar. These countries operate in a way where Shari'a law is interpreted into the governmental law. These countries have absolutely no separation from church and state, or we would say there is no separation between mosque and state. If you steal, your hand is cut off. If you commit adultery, you get stoned. If a woman gets too close to a man that isn't her husband or a family member, she receives public lashings. This is the state mandated religion and you must adhere to it.

Islam is a bit farfetched for us this evening because we don't live in a Middle Eastern country. I don't than any of you probably know more than 5 Muslims. Let's maybe think of something that's a little more practical for us this evening. Let's think of our own religion and the deviations that happened.

If you remember our time in our church history class, you'd remember that the first few hundred years of the church, Christians were persecuted immensely. It was in the year 313 when the Emperor Constantine made some type of profession of faith and made Christianity legal. Before then, in Rome, it was illegal to be a Christian but

Constantine changed all of that. Great news, right?! Moving forward, the next emperor, Emperor Theodosius, in the year 380 made Christianity the state religion. At first glance, we would say, man that's great! See how far Christianity is coming along! There are strong consequences for having a state ran church.

In my study for infant baptism last week, I came across some information from MacArthur² about the lack of separation of church and state concerning infant baptism that I think will be very helpful for us this evening.

After Christianity was made the state religion, slowly but surely there came about severe church laws that were woven into the fabric of the government and the law. Church and states was a giant two headed monster, it was one monolithic supremacy. If you lived in a country or state where it was Catholic, you were, by virtue, a Catholic, due to your infant baptism. So if you were in a Catholic country, you were not only under the civil code from a social standpoint but you were under the civil code from a religious standpoint.

If you go back to the year 391, you read the following order from the emperors – “Whoever forsakes the holy faith and desecrates the holy baptism through heretical superstition shall be excluded from human society. We would also banish such person to far distant places if we did not deem it a more severe punishment to make him dwell among men without having the pleasure of fellowship with them. But he shall never regain his former legal capacity, nor can he at any time make amends for his crime by repentance, nor hide the same under invented evasions and excuses because those who profaned the faith which they placed in God and as traitors to divine mysteries associate with the unbelieving, cannot be justified by tissues of lies. For one comes indeed to the help of the fallen and erring but to the infamous who profane the holy baptism, no improvement can procure mitigation as in the case of other offenses.”

Here's what this means – if you go the route of believer's baptism, or if you go against infant baptism in any way, you'll be excluded from human society, you may give not judicial evidence, there is no defense that you can make. You were done.

² <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-369/is-infant-baptism-biblical>

A law of the emperors Honorius and Theodosius II in the year 413 says, "If any person is convicted of having undertaken the rebaptism of a member of the Catholic Church, the one who has committed this shameful crime, together with the one (provided he is of accountable age) who has allowed himself to be baptized, shall be punished with death without mercy."

Good Lord willing, next week we will walk through the history of the Baptists. But until then, let me give you a little taste. There was a group of Christians that were called the Anabaptists, which meant "rebaptizers." These folks believed strongly that infant baptism meant nothing, so they would preach the Gospel and when somebody got saved, despite being "baptized" as an infant, they would baptize them again but Biblically, but full immersion.

This isn't our Baptist history class, why bring this up a week early? Because, what you need to know is that if you rebaptized anybody that was baptized as an infant, it was considered a capital offense. It was an offense against the state, it was an offense against the state church, and capital offenses come with hefty penalties. What was the penalty? Death. Anybody who violated this baptism law was punished by the government.

As a result of the execution, something else would follow: the confiscation of all possessions. Quoting from the writer Wormes, he wrote, "Originally, indeed, these severe laws of the civil code were not issued for the defense of infant baptism but were to secure the existence of the state church against rebaptism in any Christian circles." All of this wasn't even to protect their doctrine of infant baptism! It was to secure the existence of the church state! Violators would have their property of confiscated and were branded violators of the civil law. Many would be punished by death and the loss of all property.

Many saw that believer's baptism as disrupting the national church, posing a threat to national solidarity, and being a blasphemous heresy that would corrupt others and break the power of the nationalized church. All over Germany during the Reformation, rebaptizers were called devilish vermin and executed and many were calling for them to be beheaded. Many were drowned because of their belief that you must be fully under the water.

Wicked stuff, right? But this is what happens when you do not have separation between church and state. You have a state that makes the rules and says that if you believe differently than how the state interprets the Scriptures, then you are going to have a bad day. Not only was this something that happened throughout all of church history, but even up to the Puritans. Do you remember why they left England? Because of the state ran church.

There is so many more examples that I can give you but I think I may have made my point without even really getting into the meat of it.

Let's get to our definition—

Definition: Separation of Church and State has three main implications: 1) There should be no essential **union between religion and the government. 2) The government should not **interfere** with anything of the church concerning her beliefs, practices, and operations nor should the church **interfere** with the government in any of its policies. 3) Neither establishment should **control** the other.**

Let's look a few texts that'll help us to understand what's going on with this. I will put them under a few headings that'll help direct our thinking.

Biblical Basis for Separation of Church and State

1) Jesus **Advocated for Separation of Church and State**

Turn with me to **Matthew 22:15-22**

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk. ¹⁶ And they sent to Him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not ^[a] regard the person of men. ¹⁷ Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus ^[b] perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. ²⁰ And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?" ²¹ They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render ^[c] therefore to Caesar the things that

are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." ²² *When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way.*

Jesus said, there is the government, give to them what is theirs. He said, then there is God's, give what is His to Him. This implies that we are ordered, by Jesus Himself, to obey the state. But what if the state commands us to disobey God? What if the government puts into place a law that tells me that I must do something that God forbids or don't do something that God commands? What do I do?

Turn with me to **Acts 5:27-29**

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸ saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" ²⁹ But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

If the government tells me to obey their wicked laws that are contrary to God, we disobey. If the government tells me to obey their evil ways that would essentially cause me to sin, I disobey. Why? We ought to obey God rather than men. If the government is telling me to do something that isn't sinful, I obey. There's no if, ands, or buts about that.

2) Jesus Gave Power to the State

Turn to **John 19**

¹⁰ Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have ^[c]power to crucify You, and power to release You?" ¹¹ Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above.

The Lord has given the power to the authorities. If it weren't for God, they would have no power.

3) Jesus' Kingdom is Different

John 18:33-36

³³ Then Pilate entered the ^[h] Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” ³⁴ Jesus answered him, “Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?” ³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?” ³⁶ Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.”

Jesus’ kingdom is the heart of the Christian, not the state.

Jesus helped us to see that there must be a separation. Why? Because the two entities are different. The church is wildly different from the state and the state is wildly different than the church. Let’s examining that. If the church is to not get involved with the government and likewise the government is not to get involved with the church, Biblically speaking, what is the difference between the two? Great question!

Turn to **Romans 13:1-7**. Let’s read these verses here through the lens of the question—what is the purpose of the state?

13 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will ^[a]bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

The Purpose of the State

1) Punish Evil Behavior

2) **Protect** Those Who Do Good

Now let's ask the same question of the church. Turn with me to **Matthew 28:18-20**

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go ^[a]therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." ^[b]Amen.

The Purpose of the Church

- 1) **Make** Disciples
- 2) **Baptize** Disciples
- 3) **Teach** Disciples

Seeing these different purposes, how could they truly be one entity? The answer is that they cannot.

So, in conclusion this evening, let's bring our minds back to the very beginning of this evening. Should there be official state supported prayer in public school? Well, if we believe in separation of church and state, then no. Especially if you live in a Muslim controlled country where Shari'a law ruled, you would be required to pray 5 times a day. But where there is separation, there is no state control. Where there is no state control, you have a church that can freely operate according to her convictions. And that is exactly where we currently live. How much longer will that be? Who knows. For now, though, we live in a country where church and state are separated and that is a good thing. Amen?