

BAPTIST Distinctives Overview

LESSON 1 - An introduction to the Baptist Distinctives - the doctrines that separate Baptists from other types of churches.

This can be modified for any age group, however this was intended for pre-teens (10-12 age range). There are seven letters here and the easiest way to teach this would be in 7 weeks covering a letter per week. It can be adapted to go a little longer than that and can be shortened to fit within a few weeks if required. This curriculum will be set up so that it will cover an 8 week period.

All scriptures will be from the King James Version by conviction.

Note: Some churches that call themselves Baptist may not align 100% with these doctrines, however Baptist historically - though they may have been called by other names - did hold to these doctrines.

BAPTIST Acrostic

Biblical Authority

Autonomy of the Local Church

Priesthood of the Believer

Two Ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Individual Soul Liberty and Accountability

Separation of Church and State

Two Offices In a Church – Bishop and Deacon

B is for **Biblical Authority**. Baptists have long believed that the Bible is the only rule for faith and practice and that those who claim to follow Christ should view the Bible as the basis for all authority. Throughout the centuries Baptists have held that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it has been preserved by the supernatural power of God, and that it is inerrant – that is without error – because the God who gave us the Bible is without error and completely perfect in every way.

A is for **Autonomy of the Local New Testament Church**. Historically, Baptists have never been part of a community outside of their own member walls. While all core beliefs of the Baptist doctrines must align to be true Baptists, the nuances of each autonomous body of believers are to be determined by those who are committed and brought in as members in that particular church – not other churches around them.

P is for **Priesthood of the Believer**. A priest is someone who speaks to God for a man or woman. The Bible clearly teaches that "...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" I Timothy 2:5. Because Jesus is God, and because Jesus is the only mediator between men and God, we do not need a man (other than Christ) to be our priest. The Bible also says that he has made us priests Rev 1:6. Baptists hold that every saved soul can come boldly to the throne of grace being made a priest toward God.

T is for **Two Ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper**. These two things Christ has given us a specific directive to do these. An Ordinance is something that God wants us to do after we have been born again and not before. These ordinances are only symbolic to help us follow God and they are not required for salvation.

I is for **Individual Soul Liberty and Accountability**. This means that each soul - man, woman, and child (after reaching the age of accountability) - is responsible for their own sin, and all of their choices. Also, we have (what is known as) free agency. This means that we are directly accountable to God and that we must determine what he wants us to do. He did not make us robots that must praise his name or worship him, we must freely choose to do so. The Bible says that Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess - this shows that every person will give and account of their own actions.

S is for **Separation of Church and State**. Baptists have been the object of much persecution by Roman Catholic, pagans, and protestants alike. Because of these, and because of the belief of Individual Soul Liberty - along with many other biblical reasons, Baptists hold that a secular state should not be in control (in anyway) of the church, nor should one sect of Christianity (even if that sect were Baptist) control and mandate the laws and morality of the subjects of a state (AKA a nation). The Church should influence through their morals and biblical teaching, but when the state decides to merge with the church it always ends in a bloody act of martyrdom.

T is for **Two Offices In a Church – Bishop and Deacon**. The Bible only records two offices in the church. A bishop - also called an Elder or a pastor - and a Deacon - which are both ministers or servants. The members of a church are brothers and sisters, and none is higher than another although there is a certain amount of authority and honor given to these two offices and there are requirements for the MEN who hold these offices.

This is an overview of some of the things that distinguish Baptists from other churches. It is not necessary to be a Baptist to be saved, however if one is following the Bible to determine how to live it should bring them to the same doctrines as listed above. It is sad to note that today, many Baptist churches are no longer holding to many of the things that make them distinct and are following the ways of the world. A possible reason for this is because they no longer stand on the accuracy and inerrancy of the Word of God. The Bible makes us Baptist.

There is a push in most modern "churches" today to say that doctrines don't really matter all that much. Most ecumenical, new evangelical, charismatic type churches (that have infiltrated nearly every church in the world through their music, books, and other media)

usually teach that there are essential doctrines and non-essential doctrines. They preach inclusivity by stressing the "essentials" and overlooking great differences in non-essentials. Many churches have an extremely weak doctrinal statement that has their list of essentials. These usually say that they believe Jesus is "the son of God." They may even say that he is co-equal with the Father and Holy Spirit. They almost never expressly say that Jesus is God. They usually express a belief that the Bible was written by men under the inspiration of God/ the Holy spirit and that it is without error. However, they never state which version of the Bible they believe is without error and if you really wanted to know the truth, they don't believe the statement they just wrote. They use fancy words that they define in order to ease their conscience enough to agree to what is written down. Most of them believe that the Bible is without Error in the original autographs (basically the Leaf or animal skin that the biblical author actually wrote on). There are exactly zero of these known today; not even in our museums or libraries. This means that they don't have an absolute authority and so they have to be the ultimate judge of what is right and wrong.

These people do not necessarily know that they are false teachers (although it is doubtful all of them don't) but are merely deceived by Satan. It is not our intent here to tear down any individual (in particular) only to teach the true doctrine of the Bible and point out the false teachings of men.

Doctrines matter. This new age push is not new at all. Paul tells us that false teachers were already abounding in his day. Peter gives us a similar warning. Christ himself warns us and tells us that not everyone that calls him Lord will enter into the kingdom of God. As Baptists, we believe that Christ and church should be exclusive and the church body should promote unity in body, in doctrine, in worship,

1 Timothy 4-6 King James Version

4 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

² Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

³ Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

2 Peter 2 King James Version

2 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

Matthew 7:21-23 King James Version

²¹ Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

God wants us to know truth from the lie. He wants us to be holy people. That means that we need to be separate and different. It is true that some doctrines are not as "essential" as some other doctrines, but God wants us to be people concerned with truth. While a person can be saved by the "essential" doctrines of salvation, they can also suffer great consequences by not understanding the "un-essential" doctrine of temperance. It is true that a man can be saved and drink alcohol; it is also true that a man can ruin his life, destroy his family, be a stumbling block to people that would come to Christ, be chastened by God, and lose all kinds of heavenly rewards all in the name of (so called) Christian liberty.

Doctrines are important. If they are biblical, they should direct every aspect of our lives.

Lesson 2 - B is for Biblical Authority.

That those who claim to follow Christ should view the Bible as the basis for all authority. Throughout the centuries Baptists have held that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, it has been preserved by the supernatural power of God, and that it is inerrant – that is without error – because the God who gave us the Bible is without error and compliantly perfect in every way.

What this does not mean is that you have to be a KJV only-ist to be a Baptist. I consider myself to be KJV only, but there are some radical views out there to be aware of. I do not hold to the false doctrine of double inspiration taught by Dr. Peter Ruckman. The KJB translators did not correct the Greek and the KJB is not purer than the original language that the Bible was originally written in. I hold that the KJB was an accurate translation of the correct text. That may seem boring to some, but it is the only position I can prove. Even if you are not sure about the Bible issue you can still be a Bible believer. Before 1611 we had the perfect word of God. Before the Geneva Bible, we had the word of God, before the Tyndale Bible, we had the Word of God. It may not have always been readily available and not in English but Christians from the first century to today have always had God's perfect Word. There were certainly times when it was scarce to many, and it was extremely precious in those times, but it has never ceased to exist. You can be a Baptist and be confused about which Bible to use, but you must know that God has always kept his Words preserved for his.

A mark of a Baptist is that they have confidence in what the Bible tells them. If it says all of have sinned, they say that's right. If it says the earth does not move, they say that's right. If it says a snake talked, they say a snake talked. If it says a rock followed the children of Israel, they say ain't that something. They believe everything the Bible says. Sometimes it is hard, but they always try to see things the way the Bible shows them. The Bible becomes a filter in which we must view the world, and not the other way around. Without a Biblical world view we stop being biblical. We no longer are distinct from the rest of the world, and we can reason away the hard passages of the Bible that we don't like. This is the foundation for a Baptist's faith. Everything else hinges upon it.

Why did God give us the Bible? He gave it to us for 4 reasons.

- For Doctrine -these are the teaching of the word of God. Things that will help us in our walk with God. We understand that his is a trinity because the Word tells us, we understand man - yea our own heart also is depraved because the Bible says so. We learn the principles of stewardship because of Christ's own teachings.
- For Reproof - these are the sharp disciplines we receive for walking contrary to the known Word of God in our life. God reproves us by allowing events to cause us to see his hand of

judgement on our life. We see he is not happy with our choices by the reproof, and we can get out from under his reproof by getting back into the Bible.

- For Correction - These are the tender mercies of God showing us where we have failed. The Word brings the correction so that we can get back on the right path and avoid destruction. Like a map tell the traveler he has taken a wrong turn and soon will end badly if a course is not corrected, so to God gives us his word to correct us.
- For instruction in righteousness - This might be the most glorious use of the Bible. the Bible tells us how to be made righteous. That is to be made right with God. It is a glorious thing to be made right with God. This starts with salvation, but it does not end there. God keeps leading us in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, and it is a glorious journey.

These four things have one goal at the end. That the man of God may be perfect - that is mature and complete in Christ - thoroughly furnished unto all good works. God Gave us his word because he wants us to become like him and we need to know about him to do that. If we allow the Word of God to speak and direct our steps we will be following the steps of Jesus. This will allow us to do good works, not for our glory but for his. If we refuse to walk after the truth of the Word of God then we are fighting against God's desire for our life. Even if we don't realize that we are rebelling against God we are if we neglect to walk in his Words.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 KJV

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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

God says that his word is not to be used for private interpretation. That means the plain reading of the Word of God is what he wants us to understand. Don't take that to mean that there is no depth in the Bible. It has been said the Bible is shallow enough for the simplest Babe to be safe, and deep enough that the most scholarly can drown. We must have the Holy Ghost to interpret the Word for us, but often times the meaning is so simple yet profound. We should not twist scripture to mean something it does not.

2 Peter 1:20 KJV

knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

God's Word is a lamp and a light. It guides us in the way we are to go. We must follow the glow that it puts off in order to be walking with our savior.

Psalms 119:105 KJV

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path.

How many times must the Bible proclaim that it is true for us to believe it. from beginning to end it is true and it will endure forever.

Psalm 119:160 KJV

Thy word is true from the beginning: And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

God's Words are pure words, and he has perfected them for us. there is no admixture of error in them. We can trust what they say.

Psalm 12:6 KJV

The words of the LORD are pure words: As silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Not only are his Words pure, they are our protection from the enemy. A shield if we will be trust them. A shield that is not trusted is a shield that is not used. We must allow God's word to lead, and we must learn to hide behind it. It will protect us if we weld it wisely.

Proverbs 30:5 KJV

Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

God's word has true power. By it the worlds were formed, and by his Word I have salvation. It will do that which God has ordained it to do. Nothing can stop it. Once the decree has left the lips of God it is as good as accomplished. God's Word has true power.

Isaiah 55:11 KJV

so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Time would fail us to go over the hundreds of Bible verses that instruct us to follow God's Word. The main thing that we must understand is that we need to follow it. God spoke his words in a miraculous way, he preserved his Word through his own strength - and it is kept perfect, and he has given his Word to us to follow. We must believe the Bible to be Baptist.

Lesson 3 - A is for **Autonomy of the Local New Testament Church.**

While the early churches were not called Baptist Churches, they were simply established meetings of born-again baptized believers who were assembled together out of a mutual love for God and a commitment to his Word. We could look through the book of acts to see that churches in the first century were completely different than modern so-called churches today. They met in public areas or in homes. They were getting together to have tea and ice cream but were truly focused on worshipping God and serving one another. It wasn't a social gathering. Church was a meeting of likeminded men and women to learn, worship, obey, serve and give their life to God. It wasn't about feelings or emotions. The songs they sang they believed. It wasn't a place to stroke an ego or to get man's applause. Church was an assembly. That is what the word means.

This assembly, in order to be a biblical church has qualifications. I have heard many people miss use the verse Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This does not say where two or three are there is a church. No, only that God is with them in their prayers. The immediate context is prayer. Now, It does not take many to make an assembly - two or three is plenty, but there are more qualifications for a biblical church than just an assembly of three people. They must be gathered in his name, not for any other purpose. We can look at the seven Churches of revelation and determine good things for a church and bad things for a church, but they are still a church. A biblical church must have the Word of God as its authority, and therefore it should hold to all of these Baptist essentials and many more. Therefore, while churches in the early centuries would not have called themselves Baptist, Biblical churches in those days would hold to all of these Baptist Distinctives and many more important doctrines.

The second distinctive that we will examine is the Autonomy of a Local Church. Autonomy means self-governed. It is not under the authority of a larger church, or a central Bishop. The local assembly decides to follow the Bible as Christ as their leader, and they will give an account for what they do and teach. We see this played out in the first few chapters of the book of Revelation. These churches are assembled in a community, and they decide if they want to build a meeting house, they choose what time they meet and where. They decide when to send out missionaries or any decision it falls on the church. Not a board of directors, not an association, not a pope, not a state or state representative. They are autonomous. They answer to Christ alone.

Ephesians 5:23-27 KJV

²³Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

²⁴Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

One day, Christ will return for his bride. He will unify all the born again and assemble us together before the throne. All the saved, both Jew and gentile, Greek and barbarian, man, woman and child who are truly saved will be assembled together and collectively we will be the Church of God and the Bride of Christ. Until that day we must assemble as churches throughout the world as if we were the complete body of Christ in many ways. That is not to say we cannot fellowship with other churches that are likeminded or even other believers in our areas, but churches are not universal. They are local assemblies. We represent the whole, but we are not all that are saved. But a local church should not be under the authority of anyone other than Christ.

Revelation 1: 11 & 20 KJV

¹¹ Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

²⁰ 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.

Christ recognizes these Churches as distinct bodies, not part of the whole. They are autonomous and as is apparent in chapter 2 and 3, these churches are distinct from each other. They have their own strengths and weaknesses, and they answer to Christ directly. They have power to make their own choices, not forced upon them by an outsider. John is simply conveying a message. He has influence over these churches, but he is not their Lord. He is simply conveying a warning. Even the apostles didn't have the right to control churches from a distance. They taught the Word of God, but they were simply God's messengers. Peter - nor Paul ruled from a throne of power over churches that they started. They simply influenced them by teaching the Word. Just as each member of a church has bodily autonomy, the Church body has autonomy to follow God as they are lead. They must follow the Word of God, but even if they do not - they will personally give account for that to Christ.

Lesson 4 - P is for Priesthood of the Believer

A priest is someone who speaks to God for a man or woman. They usually offer sacrifices to the god that they serve on behalf of another person. They have usually dedicated their life in this type of service. Practically every religion that I can think of has a type of priest - a holy man who brings a petition to a god on the behalf of another person. The Bible clearly teaches that "...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;" 1 Timothy 2:5. Because Jesus is God, and because Jesus is the only mediator between men and God, we do not need a man (other than Christ) to be our priest. The Bible also says that he has made us priests. First century Christians and Baptists today declare that we are made priests before God, and we need no other man to approach God other than Jesus who is our high priest. The veil that kept back the priests from entering into the Holy of Holies was rent in two as Christ's body was rent for us. He gave us access to the Father by his death, burial, and resurrection. We can enter in boldly - Hebrews declares - into the presence of God because we are made heirs of God by Christ's death.

Revelation 1 KJV

⁴ John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

⁵ And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

⁶ And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 2: 4-5&9 KJV

⁴ To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

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

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;

1 Timothy 2 KJV

⁵ For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

⁶ Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Romans 8 KJV

²⁶ Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

²⁷ And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

AND

³⁴ Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

We do not need to go to a priest for our prayers to be heard. We have the ear of God by Jesus Christ, and we have the spirit of God that indwells us - if we are born again - and is always praying for us. We have a direct line to God; we do not need a priest a bishop, a guru, an imam, or a so-called holy man to pray for us. If we are saved, we are priest before God, we have direct access to God. We cannot buy it, we cannot sell it, we can only believe it. The first century church knew this. They were not confessing their sins to a priest, they were not asking a priest to go to God for them. They prayed and God answered. It wasn't that they were special and now we need to go back to the old way. No that is completely against what the Bible teaches.

Lesson 5

T is for **Two Ordinances – Baptism and the Lord's Supper**. These two things Christ has given us a specific directive to do these.

There are many commands that Christ gave us to do and to not do, but there are only two ordinances. I am defining an ordinance as a type of order that was given that is in addition to the established doctrines. Webster's says "a prescribed usage, practice, or ceremony." We might could add more, but the early church had at least these two ordinances. An Ordinance is something that God

wants us to do after we have been born again and not before. These ordinances are only symbolic to help us follow God and they are not required for salvation.

The ordinance of baptism

Baptism is a symbolic act of obedience to show that the believer is following Christ and dying, been buried, and one day rising again. Emersion in a body of water is the mode. It is to be administered only to those who profess a belief in Christ, so not available to infants. This is not required for salvation, but it is a command that Christ gave us, he

said to go into all nations and teach them and baptized them in his name.

Matthew 3:13-17KJV

¹³ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

¹⁴ But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

¹⁵ And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

¹⁶ And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

¹⁷ And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Acts 8:26-40 KJV

³⁵ Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

³⁶ 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?

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ 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.

³⁹ And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the

eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Caesarea.

Romans 6:1-12 KJV

1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?

² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

⁴ 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.

⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection:

⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

⁸ Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him:

⁹ Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.

¹⁰ For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.

¹¹ Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper - sometimes also known as communion, but this is not the "Mass." this is a symbolic reenactment of the last supper where Christ fed his disciples. This is not Christ dying all over again for sins. Christ said this do in remembrance of me. The bread that was broken was symbolic of Christ's body that was given as the bread of life. The wine (a non-alcoholic juice) was given to

resemble the blood of Christ that was shed for our sins. These are symbols to remember the death of Christ and the sacrifice that he made for us.

Matthew 26 KJV

²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

²⁷ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many

for the remission of sins.

²⁹ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.

1 Corinthians 11:23-34KJV

²³ For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

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.

²⁵ 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.

²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

²⁷ Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

²⁹ For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

³⁰ For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

³² But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

³³ Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

³⁴ And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

I is for **Individual Soul Liberty and Accountability**. This means that each soul - man, woman, and child (after reaching the age of accountability) - is responsible for their own sin, and all of their choices. Also, we have (what is known as) free agency. This means that we are directly accountable to God and that we must determine what he wants us to do. He did not make us robots that must praise his name or worship him, we must freely choose to do so.

Most Calvinists (or reformed persons) will find fault with this idea of free agency, but the Bible

clearly teaches it, and it only makes logical sense. The Bible teaches that Adam and Eve had free agency in the garden of Eden, and they choose to disobey God. The Bible shows that Cain and Able had free agency; Able chose to honor God and Cain chose to honor himself. No one forced Seth's son Enos to call upon the name of the Lord, but he did so. Noah obeyed God when he told him to build an ark, which implies the ability to disobey like everyone else in his timeframe. We see the biblical narrative throughout the Bible either explicitly tells us that

people have free agency, or it is implied by simple logic. There are a few texts - that I believe are misunderstood by Calvinists - that could be taken to mean that man does not have the free will to choose salvation or damnation - this is thrust upon him by God, and the person has no say in the matter. This is - in my opinion - completely misrepresenting the character of God. However, this is not a refute of Calvinism so I will digress.

The doctrine of Individual Soul Liberty and accountability has

really two aspects: liberty before men and accountability to God.

Liberty before men is usually known as Christian liberty. This is the idea that we are at liberty to follow God the way we believe to be accurate. If a person believes in pedo-baptism and thence chooses to "baptize" their infants into a denomination, they are at liberty to do so. I cannot make a law forcing them to not do that. They should not be put to death for doing that. That may sound extreme to some that a person would be put to death over their views of Baptism, but it has

happened for thousands of years against the Baptists and those who hold to a similar doctrine. That is not to say I cannot speak out against pedo-baptism, nor that a church should allow a pedo-Baptist to join against their beliefs. We have liberty before men, but God is the judge of all things.

Galatians 5 King James Version

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 Corinthians 6 King James Version

¹² All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all

things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1 Peter 2 King James Version

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

Romans 14 King James Version

14 Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

² For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

³ Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

⁴ Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

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

⁶ He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he

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

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

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

⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

¹⁰ But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

¹¹ For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

¹³ Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

¹⁴ I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

¹⁵ But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.

¹⁶ Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

¹⁷ For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

¹⁸ For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men.

¹⁹ Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

²⁰ For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence.

²¹ It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

²² Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

²³ And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

The second part of this doctrine is the driving point we are all accountability before God.

Ezekiel 18 King James Version

²⁰ The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son:

the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

This doctrine is expressed so vividly in Ezekiel 18. one thing that needs to be understood is that of eternal security. A truly biblical position is neither Calvinistic nor Arminian. Chapter 18 is very obviously un-Calvinistic but could be used (improperly) to support working to keep one's salvation. Instead, it should be understood that when born again people (a Jew pre-exile or a gentile post-crucifixion) leave their

righteousness (or go off into sin) they will bear the physical consequences of that sin in this life by the chastening of God.

Because the Bible is the source for all doctrine, it should be the starting place for us to learn about specific doctrines. This is an Old Testament passage that expresses God's design of Individual Soul Liberty and Accountability. Each person is free to make their own decisions, and they alone are accountable for their deeds.

Romans 14 King James Version

¹¹ For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me,

and every tongue shall confess to God.

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

One day every individual - great or small, rich or poor, black or white, Jew or Greek will give an account to God for the deeds done in their bodies. Parents will not stand for children, and children will not stand for parents. I am responsible for my own actions before God. I may suffer at the hand of man for actions, rightfully or wrongly, but I will stand before God and give an account. Thankfully, Christ will intervene on my behalf when it

comes to salvation and tells the Father that I am washed in his blood and made righteous. But I will still be held accountable for what I did for Christ's sake.

One day, you will be before God. If you are not born-again God will cast you into Hell, and if you are saved God will let you enter into heaven. But Christian, God will still hold you accountable for what you did with Christ in your lifetime. Will you have jewels to present Christ or will your life be wasted on selfishness and worldliness.

sson 7

S is for **Separation of Church and State.**

Baptists have been the object of much persecution by Roman Catholic, pagans, and protestants alike. Because of these, and because of the believe of Individual Soul Liberty - along with many other biblical reasons, Historic Baptists hold that a secular state should not be in control (in anyway) of the church, nor should one sect of Christianity (even if that sect were Baptist) control and mandate the laws and morality of the subjects of a state

(AKA a nation). This is not separation of God and state, it is separation of church and state. For better or (often) worse, the state has influence over the church, and the church should have great impact over the state. The true born-again people, that belong to a church should be raising the standards around them. They should be the best parents, the best bosses, the best teachers, the most holy moral people in a nation, and this type of lifestyle should rub off on the people around them whether Christian or not. A great example of this is the

early days of the founding of America. Great men like Shubert, Obadiah Holmes, Isaac Backus, Roger Williams, John Clark, and many more like them had a great deal of influence on deists of their day. Unfortunately, the world around us has been growing in its influence over churches today. Look at the music, the dress, the attitude toward war etc.

This is not the argument of Baptist. The argument is that there are to be two wholly separate entities. They one should never control the other. When a state controls the church has lost her true head,

Jesus Christ. When a church controls the state, you lose individual soul liberty. Heresy (disagreeing with the standing order) becomes a death sentence. The local church is an autonomous group of born-again believers who - largely solve their own problems and don't need a governing state to make laws. If the laws the State makes are biblical laws, they should not need to worry about members of the church not obeying them, since they would be anyway. The state is to govern the Lawless and the Christian is to

govern himself in Christ through the local church.

1 Corinthians 11:1-3

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

Ephesians 5:21-23 & 30-32 KJV

²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

²² Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

.....

For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Paul shows us here and other places that Christ is the head of the church, not a king, not a president, not a governor. We are to submit to Christ in a similar manner as wives are to obey their own husbands - I know not popular but biblical. This means that our first loyalty should be to Christ. If a person tries to usurp Christ's authority over his bride, we are to not allow that. Today, many have gone a-whoring after the god of this world - the "all-powerful" government to give them their marching orders. Churches are shutting down because a wicked

governor tells them too, or they are letting LGBTQ propaganda in because it is public policy. Many churches are afraid to speak out against the true evils of the governments around us because their coffers are being filled - either directly or indirectly - by a tyrannical state.

Matthew 22:20-22 KJV

And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

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.

When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.

Most people only get part of what Jesus said here. They see render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, but they stop there.

Jesus is saying that temporal things like money may belong to an earthly power who has set himself up, but all power belongs to God. He makes a distinction between money and souls. He is saying there are two opposing sides. He recognizes a separation between the State and the people

of God. We must render unto God
everything - everything is his.

T is for **Two Offices In a Church – Bishop and Deacon**. The Bible only records two offices in the church. A bishop - also called an Elder or a pastor - and a Deacon - which are both ministers or servants. The members of a church are brothers and sisters, and none is higher than another although there is a certain amount of authority and honor given to these two offices and there are requirements for the MEN who hold these offices. The Bible does not teach a hierarchy of priest who control a church. We do not believe in the office of a Pope, or an office of a cardinal.

A - The Office of a Bishop/Elder/Pastor

A bishop is not the head of a church; he is the under-shepherd. Bishop could be defined as overseer. These means he is more of a supervisor than a manager. He has responsibilities, but he is not the voice of God. We often call a bishop a pastor - which means shepherd. This is a good picture of what a Bishop should be. Daily caring for the needs of the sheep, feeding, watering, protecting, serving. A pastor is not a dictator, he does not have authority by force, but by influence. He must meet the requirements of a bishop and part of that requirement is to be apt to teach.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 KJV

¹ This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

⁴ One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

⁶ Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

⁷ Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil

B - The Office of a Deacon

A deacon is a servant; that is what the word means. All members of a church should be servants, but these are men who have met the specific requirements and are called out to be servant leaders. It should be every male member of the church to meet the requirements listed for a deacon, and every female member to meet the requirements for the wives.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 KJV

⁸ Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre;

⁹ Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.

¹⁰ And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

¹¹ Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things.

¹² Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

¹³ 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.

Too many times, churches are focused on one person, and are held up by a handful of people. This is not God's plan for the church. Christ - himself - is the head of the church, the pastor is supposed to be getting his direction straight from the Word of God and speaking for God. The deacons also are to be listening to the voice of God through the written word and the spoken word - they are to be the hands of the Lord for the church. The church membership is then supposed to be hearing from God through the written word, the spoken word and the lifestyles of the leadership to go out and the voice, hands and feet of Christ, to bring the message of Christ to the World.