

BAPTISTS

Bible - sole rule for faith and conduct.

The Bible is God's Word - our final authority for God's will and truth.. All believers are encouraged to study and apply it under the guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Autonomy of the local church.

Each Baptist congregation governs itself democratically without external human control. In pursuit of God's will, each member is encouraged to prayerfully exercise his/her influence and cast his/her vote. Self-governing Baptist churches voluntarily associate with churches of like faith for joint ministry and for fellowship.

Priesthood of all believers.

Through Christ, each person may approach God directly, without the aid of human priests. Each believer is to fulfill the priestly function of representing and presenting Christ to others. The church doesn't have a priesthood; it is a priesthood. Christian ministry belongs to every believer. (I Pt. 2:3-5; Rv. 1:5-6)

Two church ordinances.

An ordinance is a worship activity Christ ordered His church to practice. Ordinances are not sacraments, i.e. activities that of themselves channel grace or salvation to participants. Rather, ordinances are congregational activities designed by Christ to remind believers of essential gospel truths. It is the heart response of believers to these truths that prompts God's blessing.

The two ordinances are:

1. The Lord's Supper, to remember Jesus' death for our sins (Lk. 22).
2. Believer's Baptism (Mt. 28:19-20)
 - a) By immersion, to symbolize Jesus' death, burial and resurrection (Rm. 6).
 - b) Of believers only, as a testimony of personal faith.
 - c) Of free will only, as an expression of personal faith

Individual soul liberty.

God alone has the right to define proper belief and worship. Free will is necessary to saving faith; it cannot be coerced. Every person is accountable to God for his religious beliefs and practices, and has the right to worship God as his convictions and conscience dictate. (Gn. 1:26; Rm. 14:12)

Saved church membership.

Jesus is pre-existent God who became the Son of God through birth in Bethlehem. Because He lived a sinless life He was able to pay the price for our sin by dying on the cross. Those who confess their sinfulness and, in faith, accept that death for sin as substitute for the death they deserve, are forgiven by God, granted eternal life and given the constant presence of Christ through His indwelling Holy Spirit. Biblically, only those thus joined to Christ and baptized in testimony of that commitment are to be received as church members.

Two Scriptural church offices.

Pastors are administrative elders and shepherds of the flock. Deacons are his counselors and helpers. Both offices require high Scriptural qualifications. Other positions, boards and committees are created or dissolved as required.

Separation of church and state.

Religious groups should not control the state, nor should the state interfere with the ethical practice of religion within its borders. All individuals and groups may and should, however, contribute to the guidance and well being of their country through democratic process.