

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

INTRODUCTION

What makes a Baptist a Baptist? Why are you a Baptist? What distinguishes a Baptist from other religions or denominations?

George W. Truett, famed pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, declared a century ago: *“Every Baptist ought to know why he is a Baptist, and to know it from the specific commands of God’s Word. Not to have such knowledge is for our churches to be harmed in every way.”*

Now those things which distinguish us from other Churches and denominations are referred to as **“The Baptist Distinctives.”** As we will see, **The Baptist Distinctives** are those principles laid down in God’s Word by which a Church ought to operate.

Now understand that this is not to be confused with a Church’s doctrinal statement. There are other Churches that may hold to many of the same doctrines that we do, but when it comes to the basic principles upon which our lives and our Churches are governed, we do find some real distinctives.

Baptist Distinctives then are those principles that are found in the Bible and have made us different from the other Churches and/or denominations.

The first of these distinctives is **THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE:** More clearly, **“THE BIBLE IS OUR FINAL AUTHORITY”** or we could say it this way **“THE BIBLE IS THE ONLY RULE FOR OUR FAITH AND PRACTICE.”**

Every church, cult, and "-ism" that there is rests for their rule for faith and practice upon something or someone:

- 1. They may rest upon a book or books written by a man or a woman that are used to take the place of the Bible, or used to explain the Bible, or used in addition to the Bible.**
Mormons – The Book of Mormon, Doctrines and Covenants, The Pearl of Great Price.

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

Jehovah’s Witnesses – Reasoning from the Scriptures; Insight on the Scriptures, Mankind’s Search for God, etc., etc.

Seventh Day Adventist – Writings of Ellen G. White

- 2. They may rest upon their founder or successor to the founder, to whom they look for every decision and rule.**

Mormon – Joseph Smith, Jr. (1830-1844) – Thomas S. Monson

Jehovah’s Witnesses – Charles Taze Russell (1870-1916) – Don Adams

- 3. They may rest upon a hierarchy of authority in their Churches such as the Popes, cardinals, councils in the Catholic Church.**
- 4. They may rest upon reason, or science, and or even convenience.**
- 5. They may rest upon personal experience, emotional thrills and aesthetic appeal.**

However, BAPTISTS through the centuries, have insisted that the Bible is the sole ultimate written authority for Christian faith and practice.

They have resisted those who claimed otherwise, including popes, kings, bishops, pastors and teachers. Both religious and secular powers have persecuted Baptists for this commitment to the authority of the Bible.

A TRUE BAPTIST looks to the Bible alone as the ONLY rule for faith and practice! Why? Because:

- I. BECAUSE OF THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE BIBLE.**
Basically, we consider the Bible as authoritative for faith and practice because of its very nature.

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

The Divine nature of the Bible is the basis of its authority. No other writing compares to the Bible. The Bible stands alone among all other writings in that it is uniquely from God and about God and His plan and purpose for the ages!

For much of our history, we Baptists have simply accepted the authority of the Bible based on belief in its divine nature. Scriptures have been and are still quoted to validate Baptist beliefs and practices without much effort to "prove" the Divine nature of the Bible.

We emphasize that the Bible is the sole written authority for Christian faith and practice and we deny that other writings such as creeds, confessions of faith, traditions, the teachings of theologians and the statements by founders of denominations have such authority.

Now understand that though we may gain insight from and express appreciation for some of those sort of things, we refuse to accept them as authoritative!

Some accuse us of worshiping the Bible because of our extraordinary high regard for the Bible as authoritative. But we do not worship the Bible; we worship the God of the Bible as ultimate authority. The Bible is authoritative for us because it is from God and about God.

That is one reason why we often refer to the Bible as our sole written authority. God is our ultimate authority. The Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture so that it is a "*perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter.*" As such, the Bible is recognized by us as the Divine written revelation of God.

Now of course Jesus Christ is the most complete revelation of God.

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

The Bible reveals Jesus Christ as the Lord of all. The Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Bible go hand in hand; they are not contradictory but rather they are complementary.

We believe that the Holy Spirit not only empowered persons to record truth about God but He also now enlightens or illumines believers to be able to interpret and apply the Bible.

A. **Consider The Unity Of The Bible.**

We can point to many evidences of the divine, authoritative nature of the Bible, not the least of which is the amazing unity of the Bible in spite of the fact that it was penned by some 40 or so different authors from different backgrounds over a 1600 year period that spans 60 generations!

Add to that the different places, different times, different moods, and the different languages—yet it is unique in its unity! Why? Because it is NOT the word of men, but the Word of God!

"The Bible is a book man could not have written if he would and would not have written if he could."

B. **Consider The Fulfilled Prophecies Of The Bible.**

The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies such as those relating to the birth, life, teachings, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus speak to the veracity of the Book!

C. **Consider The Timelessness Of The Bible.**

The continuing relevance of the Bible's message over centuries, the power of its message to transform lives and society!

D. **Consider The Claims Of The Bible.**

1. **All Scripture Is God Breathed. (2 Timothy 3:15-17)**

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

2 Peter 1:21—“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2. **All Scripture Is Eternal.**

Isaiah 40:8—“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”

Psalms 119:89—“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”

John 10:35—“...the scripture cannot be broken.”

3. **All Scripture Is Profitable. (2 Timothy 3:15-17)**

John 17:17—“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

Psalms 119:9—“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word....119:11—“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

We look to the Bible alone as our only rule for faith and practice:

BECAUSE OF THE DIVINE NATURE OF THE BIBLE!

II. **BECAUSE THE BIBLE IS OUR FINAL AUTHORITY!**

1 Timothy 3:14-15—“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: 15 But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

Acts 17:10-11—“And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

*11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**”*

2 Peter 3:1-2—“This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:”

*1 Corinthians 13:8-10—“Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. 9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. 10 **But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.**”*

A. **This Authority Exceeds That Of Human Reasoning!**

Isaiah 55:8-9—“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

B. **This Authority Exceeds That Of The Church! (Revelation 2:4-5, 14-16, 20, 3:1-3, 15-19)**

C. **This Authority Exceeds That Of Tradition! Matthew 15:1-9 (The Scribes and Pharisees)**

Colossians 2:8—“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

D. **This Authority Exceeds That Of Popes, Preachers, and Other Spiritual Leaders! (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:15-22)**

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

E. This Authority Exceeds That Of Governmental Authorities! (Acts 4:17-20; 5:17-18; 28-29)

F. This Authority Exceeds That Of Family Ties! (Deuteronomy 13:6-8; Luke 9:57-61)

Matthew 10:37—“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

G. This Authority Exceeds That Of Feelings, Dreams And Experiences.

Psalm 27:13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalm 42:5—“Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”

Psalm 77:1-14; Job 4:12-16, 42:7

III. THE BIBLE IS THE LAST WORD FOR THE CHURCH! Hebrews 2:1-4

Revelation 22:18-19—“ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.”

Deuteronomy 4:2—“Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.”

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

Proverbs 30:5-6—“Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

Joshua 1:8—“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

John 12:48-50—“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”

A. Satan Belittled God’s Word In The Temptation Of Eve.

Genesis 3:1—“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

B. Satan Used God’s Word Out Of Context In The Temptation Of Christ.

Matthew 4:6—“And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.”

BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#1 - THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1 THESSALONIANS 2:13; 2 TIMOTHY 3:15-17

- C. Christ Used The Word Of God To Resist Temptation.
(Matthew 4:4ff)**

Conclusion

If it was good enough for Jesus, then it is good enough for us!

THE BIBLE IS OUR FINAL AUTHORITY...IT IS THE ONLY RULE FOR
OUR FAITH AND PRACTICE!

*Hebrews 4:12—“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper
than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and
spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and
intentions of the heart.”*