

# BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

Pastor Thomas D. Alexander

First Baptist Church  
Wellington, OH

## SESSION 9

### ECCLESIOLOGY:

### The Doctrine Of The Church

This doctrinal study was prepared by Pastor Tom Alexander for use in a Bible Doctrine Survey class at Berea Baptist Bible School in Berea, Ohio, and reflects his personal doctrinal beliefs.

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# BIBLE DOCTRINE SURVEY

*Pastor Tom Alexander*

## SESSION 9 - ECCLESIOLOGY: THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

### 1. FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

#### A. The Definitions Of The Word “Church”

1. The Greek word translated church - ekklēsia

\* This Greek word is a compound of the noun form of the verb “to call” and a prefix meaning “out from.”

\* A church is literally “called out ones,” or an assembly

2. Its New Testament usage

\* The word “church” is used about 118 times in various ways in the New Testament.

a. It was used of a group of citizens called together for an assembly - Acts 19:39

b. It was used in reference to a riotous mob - Acts 19:32, 41

c. It was used in reference to Israel - Acts 7:38

d. In the great majority of cases it is used of the New Testament church.

\* The church is seen as an assembly (gathering) of those who have been called out of the world unto Christ. (See 1B below for further distinctions.)

#### B. The Distinctions Within The Doctrine Of The Church

##### 1. The Universal Church

\* The universal church is sometimes referred to as the “invisible church.” This is probably not as good a title as “universal church.”

\* This term is used in this manner when it speaks of all true New Testament believers from Pentecost until the Rapture. Christ is the Head of this body (Col 1:18). Individual believers enter it at salvation through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (I Cor 12:13). Thus the universal church is presently made up of Christians on earth as well as Christians in Heaven.

\* This term is used synonymously with the terms “body of Christ” (I Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22-23; 4:12; 5:28-30; Col 1:24) and “bride of Christ” (Rev 21:9; Eph 5:32).

\* Scriptures that refer to the universal church: Mt 16:18; I Cor 10:32; 12:28; 15:9; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:22; 3:10; 5:23-32; Php 3:6; Col 1:18; Col 1:24; Heb 12:23

\* Note: There are some who deny the use of the term “church” in this sense. They believe that all New Testament references to the church refer to a local church. Some of the references above are difficult to interpret as referring exclusively to the local church!

## 2. The Local Church

- \* The majority of New Testament references deal with local churches - local assemblies or manifestations of the body of Christ. These references may be to one specific assembly or to a group of assemblies.
- \* It is important to note that local churches may have unregenerate members (those who may claim to be saved but are not). The universal church does not. It is composed of only true believers.
- \* Charles Ryrie's definition: "A local church is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to do God's will."  
(*A Survey of Bible Doctrine*, Moody Press, 1972, pg. 141)
- \* Paul Jackson's definition: "A local New Testament church is a body of believers immersed upon a credible confession of faith in Jesus Christ, having two officers (pastor and deacons), sovereign in polity, and banded together for work, worship, the observance of ordinances and the worldwide proclamation of the gospel."  
(*The Doctrine and Administration of the Church*, Regular Baptist Press, 1980, pg. 24)  
~ Note that this definition is a bit narrow, with strong Baptist overtones.
- \* Important elements of a definition:
  - ~ A church is made up of professing believers who have voluntarily banded together.
  - ~ A church is organized to be a church (with officers, a recognized membership, etc.).  
A simple Bible study or parachurch organization does not meet this requirement.
  - ~ A church has as its purpose the fulfillment of all of God's plan for the New Testament church. Most Bible studies or parachurch organizations focus on only a part of God's plan.

## C. The Existence Of The Church

### 1. Its Founding

- a. The church was still future during the life of Christ. He promised that he would build His church - Mt 16:18
  - \* The "rock" in this verse is either Christ Himself or Peter's confession (the truth) that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. The church is founded upon Christ, not Peter.
  - \* Note the future tense in Jesus' statement - The church did not yet exist; Jesus "will" build it in the future.
  - \* Note the ownership - Jesus called it "my church."
  - \* Note the permanence of the church - The gates of hell cannot prevail against it.
- b. The church is made up of those who have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ - I Cor 12:13
- c. This baptizing ministry began at Pentecost. Therefore, the church began at Pentecost - Acts 2

### 2. Its Completion

- \* The church will be complete when it is taken out of the world at the Rapture - I Th 4:13-18

### 3. The Church As A Mystery

- a. The Biblical definition of a “mystery” (Eph 3:3-5; Rom 16:25-26; Col 1:26)
  - \* A spiritual truth that is previously unknown, and could only be known now by direct revelation from God.
  - \* *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*: “In the N.T. it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a mystery implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed.”
- b. The church viewed as a mystery
  - (1) The mystery of Jews and Gentiles united in one body in Christ - Eph 3:3, 6
    - \* In the body of Christ, there are no distinctions based on race, social standing, or sex - Gal 3:27-28
  - (2) The mystery of the church as Christ’s bride - Eph 5:32
    - \* The husband / wife relationship pictures Christ’s relationship with the church.
  - (3) The mystery of Christ indwelling the church - Col 1:26-27
  - (4) The mystery of the translation of the church at the Rapture - I Cor 15:51-53
- c. Conclusion: The church was unknown (and unknowable) in the Old Testament. It is a “mystery” revealed in the New Testament. It could not be part of God’s prophetic program as prophesied in the Old Testament. It is distinct from Israel.

### 4. The Church As Distinct From Israel

- \* Israel and the church are distinct entities, with distinct programs and distinct futures (cf. I Cor 10:32). Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, lists 24 distinctions between Israel and the church in his *Systematic Theology*. A few of these distinctions are as follows (taken from a citation by J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1958, pp, 201-202):
- a. Israel’s head is Abraham; The church’s head is Christ.
  - b. Israel has earthly promises in the covenants; The church has heavenly promises in the gospel.
  - c. Physical birth produces a relationship to Israel; Spiritual birth produces a relationship to the church.
  - d. Israel is one nation; The church is composed of all nations.
  - e. Christ is Israel’s Messiah and King; He is the church’s Savior, Head, Bridegroom and Lord.
  - f. The Holy Spirit came upon some in Israel temporarily; He indwells all in the church permanently.

- g. The promise of Christ's return to Israel is in power and glory to judge and reign; The promise of His return for the church is to receive us unto Himself.
- h. Israel Is God's unfaithful wife; The church is Christ's bride.

## **5. The "Church Age"**

\* The Church Age is a parenthesis in God's program for Israel.

a. God's promises to Israel will yet be fulfilled

(1) God promised Abraham and David a land, a seed, an everlasting nation, a blessing, and a throne. These promises will be ultimately and literally fulfilled in the Millennium - Gen 12:1-3; 17:4-8; II Sam 7:12-16

(2) God's many Millennial promises to Israel will be literally fulfilled - Isa 2:1-4; Isa 60-61

b. God's program for Israel (Daniel's 70th week) will yet be fulfilled - Dan 9:24-27

c. God's program for the church was not revealed in the Old Testament (see C3 above)

\* The church forms a parenthesis in God's program for Israel and the unbelieving world (Dan 9:24-27). The Church Age was not seen in the Old Testament.

d. The parenthesis (the Church Age) must be closed before God can resume His program for Israel - Rom 11

\* God's program for Israel will be fulfilled. His program for the Church must be concluded prior to the resumption of His program for Israel.

## **D. The Ownership Of The Church**

### **1. The church belongs to God**

a. It is called the "church of God" (I Tim 3:5) and the "church of the living God" (I Tim 3:15). See also Ac 20:28; I Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; II Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13

b. It is called the "house of God" (I Tim 3:15).

\* The word "house" does not refer to a building in this context. It refers to a household or family (cf. I Tim 3:4, 5, 12)

\* The church is a spiritual household (I Pet 2:5) which is also called God's habitation or dwelling place in Eph 2:19-22.

### **2. The church belongs to Christ**

a. He founded it - Mt 16:18

b. He purchased it with His blood - Acts 20:28

c. He gave His life for it - Eph 5:25

d. He is its Head - Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18

## **E. The Importance Of The Church**

### **1. It is God's appointed institution for this age**

\* The church is the agency that God has appointed in this present age to be the vehicle through which He primarily works.

- \* Much of the New Testament was written about or to churches and church leaders!
- \* There are two other Biblical institutions: The home (Gen 2) and human government (Gen 9:4-6).

## **2. It is the pillar and ground of the truth - I Tim 3:15**

### **a. As the pillar it elevates God's truth**

- \* A "pillar" is "a column supporting the weight of a building" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary*). cf. the Ephesian Temple of Diana, with 127 pillars! The church supports and elevates God's truth before the world. The church lifts up proper doctrine in the face of false teaching (I Tim 1 & 4).

### **b. As the ground it defends God's truth**

- \* "Ground" could be translated "bulwark, support, prop." It is from the same root as "stedfast" (I Cor 15:58) and "settled" (Col 1:23). The church is the stay or buttress of God's truth, defending it from the world's opposition and Satan's attacks.

## **2. THE LOCAL CHURCH**

### **A. Its Purposes And Mission**

#### **1. The mission of the church is to fulfill the Great Commission - Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8**

- \* This involves winning the lost, identifying them with local churches, and discipline them in the truth.

#### **2. The purposes of the church can be summarized from Acts 2:41-47:**

##### **a. Worship - 2:41-42, 44, 46-47**

- \* Worship in Acts 2 involved the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's supper), public prayer, meeting together to worship, and praising God.

##### **b. Service - 2:44-45**

- \* They served one another and met each others' needs.
- \* Service in the church involves the use of spiritual gifts.

##### **c. Fellowship - 2:42, 44-46**

- \* They shared meals, met together "in one accord," spent time together, and had all things common (they cared for practical, physical needs).

##### **d. Instruction - 2:42**

- \* They focused on the "Apostles' doctrine" - the teaching of the Word of God.

##### **e. Evangelism - 2:41, 47**

- \* They preached the gospel, and souls were regularly being saved.

## B. Its Government

- \* There is a significant disagreement within Christianity as to the governmental structure of the local church. Major options are as follows:
  1. A national church - The head of state (king, etc.) is also the head of the official church of that country. (Example: Church of England)
  2. Hierarchical church government - There is a hierarchy of offices that ascend from the local church to some national or worldwide office. (Examples: Roman Catholic Church; Episcopalians)
  3. Federal church government - This system is sometimes called “elder rule.” The local church is governed by a representative body of elders. (Example: Presbyterians)
  4. Congregational church government - The local church governs itself through some democratic means. (Example: Baptists)
    - a. The congregation has a role of submission to spiritual leadership - Heb 13:17; I Thess 5:12-13; I Tim 5:17
    - b. The congregation has a role of congregational rule
      - \* The church, as a body, is to govern itself.
        - (1) Due to the priesthood of believers - I Pet 2:5, 9
          - \* All believers are New Testament Priests! We all have priestly functions and responsibilities! We all have a role to play in governing and directing the church!
        - (2) Under Christ’s headship - Eph 5:23-24
          - \* IMPORTANT CONCEPT: The congregation’s goal, in making decisions, is to discern what the mind of Christ is, and then to put it into practice. It should not be “majority rule,” but “Christ’s rule.” “What does Jesus want us to do? Let’s do it!”
        - (3) Practiced through the unity of the Spirit - I Cor 6:19; Php 1:27; 2:1-5
          - \* We are all indwelt by the same Holy Spirit. This one Holy Spirit should be leading those who are following Him in the same direction!
          - \* The goal in congregational rule, then, is Spirit-controlled unity, not a majority of one or two votes!

## C. Its Officers

- \* There are two Biblical offices: 1) Pastor / Elder / Bishop; and 2) Deacons - Php 1:1; I Tim 3
- \* Both of these offices have clearly-defined spiritual and character qualifications - I Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-10; Acts 6:1-7

### 1. Pastor / Elder / Bishop

#### a. Three Interchangeable Terms

- (1) Pastor - Shepherd - Gift For Office - Eph 4:11

- \* A Pastor is a Shepherd of a flock. In fact, this is the literal meaning of the word.

- \* This word, in its noun and verb form, is used 29 times in the New Testament. Eleven of these refer to literal shepherds with sheep. One time the word is used of furnishing physical food. Thirteen usages refer to Christ as a Shepherd caring for His sheep. Interestingly, 4 of these refer to Christ “ruling” in the Millennial Kingdom! The other 4 references refer to the Pastoral office. Only one of these is translated “Pastor.”
- \* As a shepherd, the Pastor is one who leads, feeds, guides and guards his sheep. Its emphasis is on HOW he ministers. He lovingly cares for his flock. The word emphasizes his gift for office.

(2) Elder - Maturity & Character - Dignity Of Office - Acts 14:23

- \* The concept of the Elder was of Jewish origin. There had been elders in Israel for centuries.
- \* This term is probably the most debated of the three. Some see it as a separate office. Others would include both Deacons & Pastors as Elders. The historic Baptist position is that Elder is another title for Pastor.
- \* The word, in its various forms, is used 71 times in the New Testament. It is never used of Christ. It is the word presbuteros, from which we get our English word “Presbyterian.” It can refer to a person who is older than another. It is used in the New Testament of the Jewish Elders (leaders among the Jews). It is used of a group of 24 Elders in Heaven, worshiping God the Father and Jesus Christ in Revelation 4 & 5. It is used about 20 times in relation to church leaders.
- ~ NOTE: The context must decide which usage is in view!
- \* This title focuses on the character, maturity, wisdom and experience of the Pastor. It emphasizes the dignity of the office. It stresses WHO the Pastor is. He has the character and maturity necessary to lead.

(3) Bishop - Overseer - Duties Of Office - Php 1:1

- \* This Greek term is used 13 times in various forms in the New Testament. Its meaning is “overseer” - One who has the responsibility of overseeing the actions or activities of another. It could be translated “superintendent” or “supervisor.” It is the word episcopos, from which we get our English “Episcopalian.” This term is used once of Christ. In I Pet 2:25 He is called the Shepherd (“Pastor”) and Bishop of our souls. It is used a total of 8 times of church leaders.
- \* This term emphasizes the duties of the office. The Pastor is to be involved in “overseeing” the work of the church. It is WHAT he does.

b. Scriptural Support - Why do we say all three refer to one office?

(1) Acts 20:17, 28 - All three terms are used of the same group of men.

- \* *Acts 20:17, 28* And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the **elders** of the church. . . . 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you **overseers [bishops]**, to **feed [pastor]** the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.



(2) I Pet 5:1-2 - All three terms are used of the same group of men.

\* *I Pet 5:1-2* The **elders** which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 **Feed [Pastor]** the flock of God which is among you, taking the **oversight [bishop] thereof**, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

(3) Titus 1:5-7 - The terms Elder and Bishop are used interchangeably.

\* *Titus 1:5-7* For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain **elders** in every city, as I had appointed thee: 6 If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. 7 For a **bishop** must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre;

(4) I Tim 3; 5:17 - Paul lists only two offices in I Timothy 3 (bishop and deacon), yet he refers to elders in I Timothy 5. Therefore, we must conclude that the term “elder” is synonymous with either the bishop or deacon!

(5) Php 1:1 - Bishops and Deacons are mentioned as leaders in the church. If there was another office of Elder or Pastor, why was it not mentioned?

## 2. Deacons

a. The meaning of the term

\* This word, in its various forms, is translated “minister, ministry, to minister” or “servant, to serve.” It has the root meaning of “one who executes the commands of another,” like a servant of a king. It was the word that secular Greek used of a table waiter. It is used a total of 102 times in the New Testament in its various forms.

~ Secular: It is used of waiting tables and servings guests. It is used of general service to others, including governmental service.

~ Spiritual: It is used of Paul and Apollos as ministers of Christ. It is used by Paul of his co-workers as servants of Christ. It is used of Christ Himself as He ministered. (Note: Christ is the highest example of “deaconing”!) It is used of the spiritual gift of ministering.

~ Church Office: The Greek word is diakonos. There are a total of only 5 times that it is transliterated as the office of deacon in a local church.

\* D. Edmond Hiebert - “The basic meaning of the term is a ‘servant.’ When a person refers to someone appointed as a ‘deacon’ in a local church, the concept of a servant is united with that office. A deacon then is one who is placed in an official position for a ministry of service to benefit others. . . . Unlike the word for slave (doulos) diakonos implies the thought of voluntary service. . . . Thus basically the word ‘deacon’ denotes one who voluntarily serves others, prompted by a loving desire to benefit those served. . . . The basic concept underlying the word ‘deacon’ is that of a voluntary, love-prompted service for the benefit of others.” (*Bib Sac*, Vol. 140, No. 558, 1983)

b. Their Distinction From Bishops - Php 1:1; I Tim 3

c. Prototype “Deacons” - Acts 6:1-7

- \* The title “deacon” is not given to these men, but forms of the word are used 3 times.
- \* These men served the church and the Apostles by caring for the distribution of aid to the widows. This allowed the Apostles to devote their time to prayer and the Word.

**D. Its Ordinances**

1. Definition - “. . . those outward rites which Christ has appointed to be administered in his church as visible signs of the saving truth of the gospel. They are signs, in that they vividly express this truth and confirm it to the believer.” (A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 930)
2. Distinction - An ordinance is NOT a “Sacrament.” A sacrament generally includes the idea of actually conveying grace through the ordinance. The sacrament is supposed to be a channel of God’s grace. There is no saving power in true Bible ordinances. (Compare the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.)

3. Their Identity

a. Baptists include only two:

- (1) Baptism
- (2) The Lord’s Supper, or Communion

b. Some groups include:

(1) Foot Washing - John 13:1-17

- (a) It is not practiced in Acts.
- (b) It is not taught further in the epistles.
- (c) Christ’s purpose was to teach humble service - not to initiate another ordinance.

(2) Marriage

\* It was instituted in Genesis, long before the church.

\* Note: The Roman Catholic Church actually has seven Sacraments: Ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance, baptism, the Eucharist.

4. BAPTISM

a. Its Significance

(1) Baptism was commanded by Christ - Matt 28:19-20

(2) Baptism follows the example of Christ - Matt 3:13-15

\* Be aware of the distinctions between the different baptisms (washings) in Scripture.

- ~ There were many Old Testament washings.
- ~ John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance for Israel to prepare for the coming Messiah.
- ~ Jesus’ baptism was His anointing prior to His public ministry.
- ~ Christian baptism differs from all of these (see below).

- (3) Baptism is a one-time public declaration of identity with Christ - Rom 6:3-6; Col 2:12
    - \* Note that these passages actually deal with the baptism of the Holy Spirit whereby we are placed into the body of Christ. Water baptism is a reflection of that spiritual baptism.
    - (a) Baptism is a picture of Christ's death, burial and resurrection.
    - (b) Baptism is a testimony of our faith in Christ, and our identity with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
    - (c) Baptism pictures the believer's death to sin and new life in Christ.
    - (d) Baptism pictures the believer's hope of resurrection.
  - (4) Baptism precedes church membership in the New Testament - Acts 2:41
- b. Its Subjects
- (1) Baptism is only for those who have trusted Christ as their personal Savior. It has nothing to do with salvation itself. Belief always precedes baptism. - Mt 28:19-20; Acts 8:36-38; Acts 16:30-33
  - (2) Infant baptism is nowhere taught or practiced in the New Testament.
    - \* Baptism is for believers only; babies cannot believe. The purpose of baptism is to make a public testimony of faith in Christ; babies cannot make such a testimony.
    - \* Infant baptism began due to a sacramental view of baptism. Baptizing an infant is seen as a means of salvation.
- c. Its Mode - Why Do We Believe In Immersion?
- (1) The Greek word translated "to baptize" is baptizo, meaning "to immerse, to dip, to submerge." Our Bible translators transliterated it into English, instead of translating it.
  - (2) The Greek language has words for "pour" and "sprinkle," but these are never used of baptism.
  - (3) The normal usage of "into" and "out of" the water indicate immersion - Mt 3:16; Acts 8:38-39
  - (4) Immersion best pictures death, burial and resurrection - Rom 6:3-6
5. THE LORD'S SUPPER, OR COMMUNION
- a. Its Significance
- (1) The Lord's Supper was commanded by Christ - Lk 22:19; I Cor 11:23
  - (2) The Lord's Supper is a repeated public remembrance of the Lord's death - I Cor 11:23-34
    - (a) It is a remembrance of Christ Himself - 11:24-25
    - (b) It is a remembrance of Christ's death - 11:24-26
      - \* The bread pictures His body
      - \* The cup pictures His shed blood

- (c) It is a remembrance that is to be practiced repeatedly - 11:26
  - \* How frequently is not specified in Scripture.
- (d) It is a reminder of Christ's expected coming - 11:26
- (3) The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the local church - I Cor 11:20, 33
  - \* It is not Biblical to celebrate Communion apart from the authority of the local church (such as in a Bible study, Christian camp, school, etc.)
- (4) The Lord's Supper is strictly a memorial - Christ's physical body and blood are not present.
  - (a) The Catholic view (transubstantiation) teaches that the elements change into the actual body and blood of Christ.
  - (b) The Lutheran view (consubstantiation) teaches that the actual body and blood of Christ are present with the elements.
  - (c) These views are wrong:
    - \* Because they are sacramental, actually conferring grace on the participants.
    - \* Because they involve sacrificing Christ repeatedly, instead of once and for all - Heb 9:12; 10:10-12
- b. Its Participants
  - (1) It is for believers
    - \* Many teach that the Lord's Supper should be limited to baptized believers. This is a logical deduction that is not stated in a given verse. Baptism is the first step of obedience for a new believer. It pictures his union with Christ. The Lord's Supper pictures the ongoing, continual communion of the believer with Christ.
  - (2) It is for believers who are living in fellowship with Christ - I Cor 11:27-32
    - (a) The unworthy participant incurs guilt - 11:27-29
    - (b) The unworthy participant incurs chastisement - 11:30-32
    - (c) The believer is to examine and judge himself before participating - 11:28, 31

### 3. THE BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

#### A. What Do We Mean By "Baptist Distinctives"?

1. "Baptist Distinctives" are those teachings which distinguish Baptists from other groups.
  - a. Other churches agree with some or most of these distinctives, but only Baptists hold to them all.
  - b. These are historic Baptist beliefs. Some "Baptist" churches today do not agree with all of them.
2. "Baptist Distinctives" do not include all Bible doctrines or all truths that Baptists believe.
  - \* There are many Bible doctrines that Baptists hold in common with other groups. "Baptist Distinctives" are limited to those doctrines which distinguish Baptists from other groups.

## **B. Where Did These Distinctives Come From?**

1. Historically
  - a. Believers formed churches which tried to interpret the Bible literally and to practice what the Bible taught.
  - b. These churches came to be known as “Baptist” churches.
  - c. Over time, the Biblical beliefs which they held that were different from other groups came to be known as “Baptist Distinctives.”
2. Theologically - “Baptist Distinctives” are based on the Word of God. Baptists believe these distinctives most closely reflect what the Bible teaches.

## **C. What Are The Distinctives?**

### **1. Biblical Authority - II Tim 3:16-17; II Pet 1:3-4, 19-21**

- a. Definition - Baptists believe that the Bible is the sole and final authority over every area it covers: Our beliefs and our practices, as well as other areas on which the Bible speaks (science, history, etc.).
- b. The Importance of Biblical Authority
  - (1) Biblical authority is foundational. All other beliefs are derived from Scripture and assume it to be authoritative.
  - (2) Biblical authority is the basis of disagreement with other groups. Baptists accept the Scriptures as our authority, refusing to acknowledge “authorities” on which other groups may rely.
- c. Other “Authorities” Various Churches Accept
  - \* A man (Pope, founder, etc.)
  - \* A church council
  - \* Church traditions
  - \* Other “inspired” writings (Koran, Book of Mormon)
  - \* Writings of a founder or leader
  - \* Experiences or feelings

### **2. Autonomy Of The Local Church**

- a. Definition
  - \* The word “autonomy” comes from two Greek words meaning “self” and “law” (or “rule”).
  - \* The theological concept refers to the “self-rule” of the church. Each church is self-governing, responsible only to Christ, and does not answer to any outside hierarchial authority or structure.
- b. Scriptural support
  - (1) Mt. 18:15-17 - Each local church should solve its own problems. There is no higher “court of appeal” beyond the church.
  - (2) Acts 6:1-7 - The church was to choose its own officers.

(3) Acts 13:1-3; 14:26-27 - The local church sends missionaries (not a mission board or denomination). Missionaries are accountable to the local church.

(3) Rev 2-3 - Christ addressed each church and pastor individually. He did not send a letter to a church official to read in all the churches under his control.

### 3. Priesthood Of All Believers

a. Explanation - All New Testament believers are priests. Jesus Christ is our High Priest.

\* All believers are on the same spiritual level before God.

\* All believers have direct access to God through Jesus Christ. We do not have to go through a human mediator. No special group of people has more access to God or power before God than anyone else.

b. Scriptural support

(1) I Pet 2:5, 9 - Believers are called priests and are to offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

(2) Heb 4:14-16 - Believers are invited to come confidently to the throne of grace (God's very presence). We are invited to do what is the function of a priest. Since Jesus Christ is our High Priest, no human mediator is needed.

(3) Heb 10:19-22 - Believers have confidence to enter the Holy Place, a privilege restricted to priests. We are able to draw near to God in full assurance of being accepted.

### 4. Two Ordinances

\* See notes on 2D above.

### 5. Individual Soul Liberty

a. Definition - Baptists believe in religious freedom.

\* "This is the belief that every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever, has the liberty to choose what his conscience or soul decides is best." (Donald K. Anderson, *The Biblical Distinctives of Baptists*, Adult Instructor, Vol. 32, No. 4, Regular Baptist Press, 1984, p. 61)

\* "Every man must give answer to God individually, and therefore no other man, and no church, can act as his conscience now. He has the responsibility to answer to God for the way in which he does so. He has, as a believer, the Holy Spirit to guide and enable him . . ." (Paul Jackson, *The Doctrine and Administration of the Church*, Regular Baptist Press, 1980, pg. 138)

b. Scriptural support

(1) Rom 14:5b, 10-12 - We must be fully persuaded of our beliefs in our own mind, because each of us will give account of ourselves directly to God.

(2) Acts 5:29 - ". . . We ought to obey God rather than men."

(3) Jn 14:26; I Jn 2:27 - The Holy Spirit is with us to teach us.

## **6. Saved, Baptized Church Membership**

- a. Definition - Baptists believe that church membership should be limited to those who make a clear profession of their faith in Jesus Christ and are Biblically baptized by immersion.
- b. Scriptural support - Acts 2:41, 47

## **7. Two Offices**

- \* See notes on 2C above.

## **8. Separation Of Church And State**

- a. Definition and explanation
  - (1) There should be no organic union between the church and the state. There is no “state church” and the church does not control the affairs of the state.
  - (2) The state, even if it does not have a state church, should not control the affairs of the church.
  - (3) Key Issue: The church and state operate in separate spheres which should not conflict. If the state oversteps its bounds, we have the freedom to obey God’s authority.
- b. Scriptural support
  - (1) Matt 22:21 - The earthly sphere (government) and the heavenly sphere are separate. Each has authority and is to be obeyed. The church is the visible form of God’s realm today.
  - (2) John 18:36 - Christ’s realm is separate from the earthly realm. When the state controls the church, it makes Christ’s realm a physical realm, which it must not be.
  - (3) Acts 5:29 - When the state makes a demand that conflicts with what Christ demands, we must obey God rather than the state.

## **4. CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **A. Church Discipline Recognizes God’s Discipline Of Believers - Heb 12:5-11**

1. Chastening is to be expected from God - 12:5
2. Chastening is evidence of God’s love - 12:6a
3. Chastening is evidence of God’s acceptance - 12:6b
4. Chastening is evidence of our sonship - 12:7-8
5. Chastening brings positive results - 12:9-11
  - a. A submissive spirit - 12:9
  - b. Inward holiness - 12:10
  - c. Outward righteousness - 12:11

### **B. Every Believer Is Expected To Discipline Himself**

1. Self-discipline is necessary for victory - I Cor 9:24-27

2. Self-discipline is necessary for worship - I Cor 11:28-34

### **C. Believers Must Practice Preventive Discipline**

1. We are responsible for our relationships - Mt 5:23-26; Lk 17:3-5
2. We are qualified to help others - Rom 15:14
3. We are responsible to help others - Heb 10:24-25; 12:12-17
4. We are to pray for those who sin - I Jn 5:16-17
5. We protect others when we get involved - Jas 5:19-20

### **D. The Church Must Practice Corrective Discipline**

1. Biblical motivations and goals:
  - a. Obedience to Christ and God's Word - Mt 18:15-23; I Cor 5; Gal 6:1-2; II Thess 3:6
  - b. Love for the erring brother - Heb 12:6; Rev 3:19; I Jn 5:16; II Cor 2:6-8
  - c. The restoration of the erring brother - Gal 6:1-2; I Cor 5:5; II Cor 2:7; I Jn 5:16-17
  - d. To maintain purity within the church - I Cor 5:6-8; I Tim 1:3-4; 5:19-22 Rom 16:17-18; II Jn 1:10-11
  - e. To protect unity and peace within the church - Titus 3:10-11; I Cor 1:10-11; Php 4:2-3
2. Situations that call for church discipline:
  - a. Serious doctrinal error - Rom 16:17-18; I Tim 1:3-20; Titus 1:10-14; II Jn 9-11
  - b. A spirit of divisiveness - I Cor 3:1-4; 11:17-19; Titus 3:10-11
  - c. A refusal to deal with significant sin - Mt 18:15-17; Eph 5:11-12; I Cor 5; II Thess 3:6-15
3. The discipline process:
  - a. The process that results in formal discipline - Mt 18:15-20
    - (1) The Situation: A trespass occurs - 18:15a
    - (2) The Process:
      - (a) Confront him personally and privately - 18:15b
      - (b) Confront him with one or two witnesses - 18:16 (cf. Deut 19:15; I Tim 5:19)
      - (c) Confront him before the church - 18:17a
      - (d) Treat him as an unbeliever - 18:17b
    - (3) Some Explanations:
      - (a) Remember, the goal is to see the offender restored - not to punish him.
      - (b) The process will stop and restoration will begin at whatever point the offender repents.
      - (c) The hearts of those involved in the discipline process must be right - Gal 6:1
      - (d) Confidentiality is crucial. Only those involved in each step should be made aware of the situation. This is not a time for gossip!



## b. The process of implementing formal discipline - I Cor 5

## (1) Hold a public meeting - 5:4

- \* There should be a sorrowful spirit on the part of the entire congregation - 5:2

- \* The facts should be clear - 5:1, 3

- \* The action should be based on the authority of Christ - 5:3

## (2) Discipline the erring brother or sister - 5:5

- (a) Commit him to Satan's domain, the world - 5:5; cf. I Tim 1:20

- (b) Remove spiritual protection, allowing Satan to chasten him physically - 5:5

- \* Remember the goals - to bring repentance (5:5) and to keep the church pure (5:6)

- (c) Sever fellowship - 5:9, 11, 13

- \* Treat him as an unbeliever - Mt 18:17

- ~ He is acting as a lost person! He is showing no response to the authority of the church, or to its Head, Jesus Christ.

- \* Conclusions: He should have no part in church leadership or ministry. He should be formally removed from the church membership role. He should be excluded from "eating" with the body. This may refer to the Lord's supper, or potentially to times of fellowship.

- \* Continue to try to win him to Christ (bring about his repentance and restoration)

## c. Must all steps be followed in all cases?

## (1) Private sins should follow the complete process of Mt 18

- \* Exception: When the law requires otherwise (child abuse) or when the offender may harm himself or others.

## (2) Public sins may need to be dealt with publicly, skipping the first steps - I Cor 5

## d. The goal of restoration

## (1) Restoration is the personal goal of all church discipline - Gal 6:1

- (2) Restoration involves returning a person to a state of useful involvement within the fellowship of the church - Gal 6:1

- (3) Restoration involves forgiveness - Lk 17:3-5; II Cor 2:7

- (4) Restoration involves reconciliation - Mt 5:23-24; Mt 18:15

- (5) Restoration involves confirming our love - II Cor 2:8

- (6) Restoration to full fellowship should be immediate - II Cor 2:5-11

- (7) Restoration to positions of service or leadership may take time.

- \* Qualifications for the position must be met.

- \* There may be a need for counseling to help the person deal with the sin and its causes.

(8) Restoration can begin at any point during the discipline process.

\* It begins whenever the offender repents - Lk 17:3-5; II Cor 2:5-11

## **5. ECCLESIASTICAL SEPARATION**

**A. God Commands His Church To Be Separate From Unbelievers - II Cor 6:14-7:1**

**B. God Commands His Church To Avoid False Teachers**

1. Those who teach false doctrine - Rom 16:17-18
2. Those who promote ungodliness - I Tim 6:3-5
3. Those who deny Christ - II Jn 7-11
4. Those who pervert the gospel - Gal 1:6-9
5. Those who promote false religions - II Tim 3:1-9

**C. God Commands His Church To Deal With Christians Who Teach False Doctrine**

1. Those who teach error must be stopped - 1 Tim 1:3-4
2. Those who are stubbornly divisive must be rejected - Titus 3:9-11
3. Those who live disorderly lives must be avoided - II Thess 3:6, 14-15