

# Baptists and Baptism

Differences matter, especially amongst Christian denominations. Today, we'll take a closer look at one of our defining beliefs (so defining that it gave us our name), Baptism.

- I. The Importance of Baptist Beliefs
  - A. "As borrowing took place on a large scale with respect to hymns, forms of worship, leadership, and scholarship, Baptists have experienced many perplexities in the maintaining of their own witness." - Robert G. Torbet in *A History of the Baptists*
  - B. Distinctive Baptist Beliefs
    1. Biblical Authority - II Timothy 3:16-17; I Peter 1:23-25
    2. Autonomy of the Local Church - Revelation 1:11,20
    3. Priesthood of the Believer - I Timothy 2:5; I Peter 2:5,9
    4. Two Ordinances - Baptism and Lord's Supper - Acts 8:36-37; I Corinthians 11:23-31
    5. Individual Soul Liberty - Matthew 16:27; 2 Peter 3:9
    6. Separation of Church and State - Acts 5:29; Romans 13
    7. Two Officers - Pastor and Deacon - I Timothy 3:2-13
    8. Salvation by Grace through Faith - John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9
- II. How are we Baptized?
  - A. Our stance on Baptism defined us so much that gave us our name.
    1. Baptist is a shortened form of Anabaptist, which means "re-baptizer"
  - B. The proper, scriptural method for Baptism is by immersion in water
    1. The root word of Baptism is *baptizo*, meaning "to dip, immerse, or submerge"
    2. Acts 8:38-39
    3. Also note that baptism is symbolic of burial - Romans 6:4
- III. Why are we Baptized?
  - A. WE ARE NOT BAPTIZED TO BE SAVED! We are baptized *because* we are saved!
    1. Salvation is only through faith in Christ - Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 10:9 & 13, Acts 16:30-31
  - B. We are baptized as a public profession of our faith and as a testimony of our salvation.
  - C. We do so in accordance to Christ's own command - Matthew 28:19-20
- IV. Who do we Baptize?
  - A. People who have made a profession of faith in Christ, often called "Believer's Baptism".
  - B. Acts 8:38-39, 10:44-48
  - C. Note - we do not baptize infants!
- V. Who Baptizes?
  - A. Men under the authority of the local church
    1. Apostles and disciples - Acts 2:41
    2. Philip - Acts 8:36-38

3. Paul - I Corinthians 1:13-16

VI. What does Baptism do?

- A. It is a public testimony of our salvation
- B. It identifies us with Christ - Romans 6.
- C. It is required for church membership.

## The Church

# What is a Church?

We will begin our study of the Church with a general overview of what a church is. Once we have laid this groundwork, we will move on to topics such as the church's members, government, practices, etc. If time allows, we will take a look at the issue of when the church actually started.

### I. Defining *Church*

#### A. Etymologically

##### 1. Greek - *ekklesia*

a) Strong's Concordance defines it thus: "...a *calling out*, that is, (concretely) a popular *meeting*, especially a religious *congregation* (Jewish *synagogue*, or Christian community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both): - assembly, church."

b) ... or more simply: "a called-out assembly."

##### 2. *Ekklesia* appears 117 times in the Greek New Testament.

a) It is translated "church" all but three times.

b) These three times are in which refer to assembly of people

##### 3. A further breakdown shows it refers to:

a) a particular congregation - 101 times

b) Israel - 1 time (Acts 7:38)

c) an assembly - 3 times (Acts 19:32,39,41)

(1) These three occurrences of *ekklesia* are translated "assembly"

d) the institution or subject of the church - 11 times

e) NOTE - "churches" is used in Acts 19:37 in reference to pagan temples at Ephesus, but this is translated from a different Greek word.

(1) I'm sure everyone would have noticed if I had not addressed this.

B. J.M. Pendleton in his 1867 *Church Manual* defines a church as: "A church is a congregation of Christ's baptized disciples, acknowledging him as their Head, relying on His atoning sacrifice for justification before God, and depending on the Holy Spirit for sanctification, united in the belief of the gospel, agreeing to maintain its ordinances and obey its precepts, meeting together for worship, and cooperating for the extension of Christ's kingdom in the world."

### II. What the Church is Not

A. The Church is NOT made up of everyone who claims to be Christian in any shape or form

1. This would more properly be called "Christendom", because not everyone who claims to follow Christ is a true Believer - Matthew 7:21

B. The Church is NOT the saints of all eternity

1. The church definitely started during the ministry of Christ (Matthew 16:18), so that excludes Old Testament saints at least.

C. The Church is NOT invisible or intangible

1. The New Testament NEVER refers to the church in such a manner. Churches are presented and real and local.

- D. The Church is NOT universal
1. No “universal” church could be plural (Galatians 1:2), have leadership (James 5:14), meet in one locality (I Corinthians 16:19), be established multiple times (Acts 16:5), and so many other things that I will not belabor the point.
- III. When did the Church begin?
- A. NOTE - We may have to finish this up next time...
- B. The prevalent theory today is that the Church began at Pentecost in Acts 2.
- C. This theory is FALSE.
- D. Personally, I believe the church was supernaturally *empowered* at Pentecost but that it was already in existence.
- E. Reasons why the church already existed at Pentecost:
1. Christ said He would build it in Matthew 16:18.
  2. Christ assumes its existence in Matthew 18:17, or else he gives instructions that could not be followed for years or months to come.
  3. A large group of believers existed *before* Pentecost.
  4. The Apostles were chosen, trained, and organized *before* Pentecost. They were even commissioned and sent before Pentecost - Mathew 10:1-16
  5. No one was re-baptized at Pentecost. Believers such as the Apostles and others that had believed and been baptized by John (Acts 1:22), or by Christ or the Disciples.
  6. Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper for the church *before* Pentecost (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20)
  7. Christ gave the church its Great Commission *before* Pentecost (Matthew 28:19-20)
  8. The Disciples, 7 weeks before Pentecost, assembled together on the first day of the week received the gift of the Holy Spirit from Christ (John 20:19-23)
  9. In Acts 1 (before Pentecost), the believers are assembling (1:4), receiving further instructions (1:8), praying together (1:14), and electing leadership (1:15-26)
    - a) Note - According to Acts 1:15, the church at Jerusalem numbered about 120 *before* Pentecost.
  10. New believers at Pentecost were “added” to a church that already existed (Acts 2:41)
- F. The patented Matthew B. Gage view of the origin of the church using Ezekiel 37:
1. John the Baptist, as the forerunner and way-preparer, set the materials to build the church with - Dry Bones
  2. Christ built the church during His earthly ministry - Bones + Sinew and Flesh
  3. The Holy Spirit empowered the church at Pentecost - Breath of Life
  4. NOTE - I know its not perfect (that’s not what Ezekiel is talking about at all!) but I think this helps illustrate the facts very well.

## The Church

# The Structure of a Church

Now that we have established *what* a Church is, we will turn our attention to the organization of a Church. This is an area that great importance and where many denominations deviate from the Biblical model.

- I. Major Forms of Church Government
  - A. Episcopal
    1. Authority in this type of government rests in leaders (bishops, etc.) who have authority over local congregation
    2. Catholics and Methodists use forms of this
  - B. Presbyterian
    1. Authority in this type of government rests on a group of elders in a local congregation.
    2. Sometimes a groups of these elders will form larger governing bodies, sometimes called a Synod.
    3. Presbyterians (duh), Reformed, and many Bible churches follow this model.
  - C. Congregational
    1. Authority in this type of government rests on the will of the congregation, who are responsible for electing their own local leadership.
    2. Congregationalists (don't see them much any more) and Baptists follow this model.
  - D. Dictatorship
    1. Authority here rests solely on the leader of the church, and their will is law in the group.
    2. This is an extremely dangerous and very cult-like model.
- II. The Biblical From of Church Government
  - A. The Church is under the headship of Christ
    1. Colossians 1:17-18, Ephesians 5:22-25, Matthew 16:18
    2. The ultimate leader, love, purpose, and example for the church to follow is Christ Himself (I Corinthians 11:1, I Peter 5:3-4)
    3. The church is His because He loved it and purchased it with His sacrifice.
  - B. The Church follows the authority of Scripture
    1. II Timothy 3:16-17; I Peter 1:23-25
    2. The church is not to be built on theory, personality, or any other guide except the Word of God
  - C. The Church is governed democratically through congregational rule
    1. Each local congregation is free to govern itself according to its own conscience and the guides of the Spirit and the Scripture.
    2. Some examples from the Scripture
      - a) Matthias was elected by "lot" or vote of the church - Acts 1:26
      - b) Deacons were elected by the church - Acts 6:1-7
      - c) Missionaries were sent by the church - Acts 11:22-24, 13:1-4

- d) Church discipline is the responsibility of the congregation - I Corinthians 5:1-13
- D. The Church is led by Pastors and Deacons
  - 1. These are elected to their positions by the congregation.
  - 2. The congregation also holds the power to dismiss them.
  - 3. Do not forget that God is working in this! - Ephesians 4:8,11-12
  - 4. The Pastor
    - a) Leads as the executive head of the church (bishop) - I Timothy 3:1
    - b) Leads through teaching, training, and discipling (pastor and teacher) - Ephesians 4:11
    - c) Leads through example (ruler) - Hebrews 13:7,17,24
    - d) Leads through service (servant) - 2 Corinthians 4:1,5
    - e) His qualifications are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9
    - f) Should be ordained - I Timothy 4:14, Titus 1:3
  - 5. The Deacon
    - a) Leads through service (servant) - Acts 6:1-7, I Timothy 3:8-13
    - b) Deacons are never given ruling authority in the scriptures greater than any other members. Their authority lies in their service and example.
  - 6. Other offices (Treasurer, Sunday School teacher, etc.) are acceptable as long as they do not usurp the Biblical model of church government.

## The Church

# The Officers of a Church

Today we will take a more in depth look at the work and requirements of the Pastors and Deacons as shown in the Scripture.

- I. Relationship of a church and its officers (pastors and deacons)
  - A. Officers are elected to their positions by the congregation.
  - B. Officers are bound to act within the commands of Scripture.
  - C. The congregation also holds the power to dismiss them.
  - D. Do not forget that God is working in this! - Ephesians 4:8,11-12
- II. The Pastor
  - A. Their Leadership
    1. Leads as the executive head of the church (bishop) - I Timothy 3:1
    2. Leads through teaching, training, and discipling (pastor and teacher) - Ephesians 4:11
    3. Leads through example (ruler) - Hebrews 13:7
    4. Leads through service (servant) - 2 Corinthians 4:1,5
  - B. Their Requirements
    1. Should be saved, baptized, and member of their church.
    2. Should be called by God - I Timothy 3:1
    3. Should be ordained - I Timothy 4:14, Titus 1:3
    4. His qualifications are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9
      - a) blameless - unstained testimony and character
      - b) husband of one wife - not a polygamist or probably even a divorcee
      - c) vigilant - watchful and aware
      - d) sober - sound mind and understanding
      - e) of good behavior - decent, respectful, appropriate
      - f) given to hospitality, lover of hospitality - ready to care for all men
      - g) apt to teach - ready to capable of discipling and training
      - h) not given to wine - not a drunkard or addict
      - i) no striker - not quarrelsome
      - j) not greedy of filthy lucre - seeking fortune
      - k) patient - meek, gentle
      - l) not a brawler - not contentious, but peaceable
      - m) not covetous - not seeking his own gain
      - n) ruleth well his own house - home-life in good order
      - o) not a novice - trained, experienced, capable
      - p) have a good report... - good reputation and testimony in the community
      - q) not self-willed - not determined to have their own way in everything
      - r) not soon angry - not irritable, good temperament
      - s) a lover of good men - keeps company with solid Christians
      - t) just - even, fair
      - u) holy - clean, consecrated, separated
      - v) temperate - in control of themselves, self-denying

- w) holding fast the faithful word - sound doctrinally
- C. Their Work
  1. Preparing himself through study, prayer, consecration - I Timothy 4:12-16
  2. Preaching and teaching - I Timothy 4:2, II Timothy 2:2
  3. Maintain the ordinances (Baptism and Lord's Supper)
  4. Involving church members - II Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5
  5. Interaction with church members - Acts 20:20, James 1:7
- III. The Deacon
  - A. Their Leadership
    1. Leads through service (servant) - Acts 6:1-7
    2. Deacons are never given ruling authority in the scriptures greater than any other members. Their authority, if any, lies in their service and example.
  - B. Their Requirements
    1. Should be saved, baptized, and member of their church.
    2. Should be elected to the office by the church - Acts 6:2,5
    3. His qualifications are given in I Timothy 3:8-13
      - a) grave - mature, appropriate in behavior and action
      - b) not double tongued - not a hypocrite or a liar
      - c) not given to much wine - drunkard, reveler
      - d) not greedy of filthy lucre - seeking their own fortune
      - e) holding the mystery of faith in a pure conscience - grounded, steady
      - f) first be proved - tried and true
      - g) blameless - irreproachable
      - h) Of their wives
        - (1) grave - mature, appropriate in behavior and action
        - (2) not slanderers - accusers, slanderers, gossips, etc.
        - (3) sober - sound mind and understanding
        - (4) faithful in all things - consistent, steadfast
      - i) husbands of one wife - not a polygamist or probably even a divorcee
      - j) ruling their children and their own houses well - home-life in good order

# The Church

## Church Members

Now that we have looked at the leadership and government of the church, we will look at what it is to be a member of a local church.

### I. Requirements

A. \* Note: These two requirements are KEY to the Baptist identity.

#### B. Salvation

1. A personal salvation - Romans 10:9
2. By grace through faith - Ephesians 2:8-9

#### C. Baptism

1. As testimony of salvation, not for it! - Acts 8:36-37
2. Administered properly (immersion, etc.) in a church of like faith
  - a) Baptist churches almost always accept baptisms by other Baptist churches
  - b) Baptist churches should never accept infant baptisms
  - c) Baptist churches should never accept baptisms by groups that claim it is essential for Salvation (Church of Christ, etc.)
  - d) Baptist churches should never accept baptism by any mode except immersion.

### II. Methods of Joining a Church

A. Through Baptism - Acts 2:41

#### B. Church Letter

1. In "olde" times, this was actually a letter sent with an individual as they left one church for a new area.
2. Today, its basically a form that is mailed acknowledging membership.
3. Joining by this method should require a church vote.

#### C. Statement

1. In this method, a person joins simply by their testimony of salvation and baptism.
2. Joining by this method should require a church vote.

#### D. NOT THROUGH:

1. Attendance
2. Salvation
3. Donations
4. Popularity

### III. Responsibilities of a Church Member

A. Note: I'm "borrowing" this outline from one of my teachers, Bro. Dave Noffsinger.

#### B. To Love

1. The Lord - Matthew 22:37
2. The brethren - I John 4:7
3. The church

#### C. To be Loyal

1. To the Precepts of the church

2. To the Practices of the church
3. To the Principles of the church
- D. To be Liberal in Giving
  1. Giving through a sincere heart - Romans 12:8
  2. Giving through a single heart
  3. Giving through a serving heart
- E. To Learn
  1. Learn the truth to be free in Christ - John 8:31
  2. Learn the truth to worship the Lord
  3. Learn the truth to share it - I Timothy 3:15
- F. To Labor
  1. Fulfilling God's will for their lives
  2. "Church members are to be working people, doing that which is ordained of the Lord."

## The Church

# How to Start a Baptist Church

Not many church members have the opportunity to be part of a church as it is first organized. It's a topic usually relegated to ministry students, but I think we can learn much about the structure of a church by looking at its inception.

### I. Getting Started

- A. To keep things simple, let's run with the scenario of a new church plant being started.
- B. We will start with a preacher moving into a new city to start a church there.
  1. He goes there by the leading of the Holy Spirit
  2. He goes there through the authority of another local church
    - a) Many churches start technically as "missions" of another church.
  3. He researches and learns about the area to help plan
- C. He finds a place to meet
  1. Usually rented, such as a school gym or a store front, or possibly in their own home.
  2. He prepares the place (seating, etc.)
  3. He sets a date for the first services.
- D. He spreads the word
  1. Through every means possible: door-to-door visitation, advertising, mailers, signs, social media, etc.
- E. Services begin
  1. The first services are held, usually just on Sundays
  2. Ministries and services and begin as they are able to
- F. The church grows
  1. Through continuing work and God's blessing, attendance should grow.
  2. Through continuing work and God's blessing, the people should grow.
    - a) It is great if you can have grounded families with you at the beginning to help the process.
    - b) If not, new converts need to be disciplined to the point where they can handle the responsibilities of church membership.

### II. Charter Service

- A. When the group of believers is ready to assume as its independence as a church, then a charter service is scheduled.
- B. A number of things will happen at this service:
  1. Those gathered enter into a business session by vote
  2. Moderator and clerk are elected for this meeting
  3. Motion is made to organize a new church
  4. If motion passes, those wishing to become charter members (by statement or by letter) are recognized
  5. Items such as church covenant, statement of faith, and initial bylaws should be discussed

6. Those charter members then sign a copy of the resolution stating their desire to form a new church and their acceptance of statement of faith, etc.
  7. Officers may be elected, including pastor, at this point by the charter members
  8. At this point those wishing to join the new church by baptism may do so.
- C. A new church now exists.

## The Church Church Discipline

A very often neglected area of a church's responsibility is that of exercising discipline towards members that are in gross sin. You may even hear someone joke about "churching" somebody. This is a very somber duty that the church is supposed to exercise in (hopefully) rare cases.

- I. The On-Going Discipline of Discipling
  - A. Anyone else never realize how close the two words are? Hope I'm not the only one!
  - B. Christ's mission for the Church is three-fold (Matthew 28:19-20)
    1. Teach all nations - preach the Gospel
    2. Baptizing them - establish churches
    3. Teaching them - discipling, growing as Christians
  - C. As a group of believers have organized themselves together as a local church and endeavor to glorify Christ, they must be growing in the Christian Faith, which is discipling.
  - D. Hosea 4:6 - "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..."
    1. It is possible to ignorantly do wrong, though it really doesn't lessen its effect
    2. This is why there is a need to educate, train, and disciple new or weaker brothers
  - E. Romans 14:1
    1. There is no such thing as a "super-Christian", but there is such a thing as a weak Christian who needs to be aided in their spiritual growth.
    2. It is the duty of the stronger in the Faith to help the weaker.
  - F. Hebrews 4:12
    1. The preaching of the Word of God as the church meets is a form of discipling
    2. Part of the work of the Word of God is purifying the church - Ephesians 5:25-27
  - G. Ephesians 4:12
    1. Part of the work of God through the church is the "perfecting", or "completing", of Christians.
  - H. I contend that the observance of the Lord's Supper does much in dealing with issues of church discipline - I Corinthians 11:27-32
- II. The Example of the Church at Corinth
  - A. The Corinthians were a church full of issues (aren't they all?), but one extreme case is brought out. - I Corinthians 5:1
  - B. This man's sin was so heinous that even unbelievers were shocked!
  - C. Paul takes a very strong stand - I Corinthians 5:13
  - D. The church seems to have exercised discipline and the man appears to have repented.
  - E. However, the church appears to have gone too far and Paul has to teach them about the purpose of discipline - II Corinthians 2:1-11
- III. Exercising Church Discipline

- A. The purpose of church discipline is to help bring a wayward believer back into the right paths - Galatians 6:1
  - 1. It is not to harm, belittle, or run off any one.
- B. Some Causes for church discipline
  - 1. Rejection of Fundamental Christian doctrine - Galatians 1:8-9, Titus 3:10
  - 2. Gross sins that bring reproach to the name of Christ - I Timothy 5:20
  - 3. Personal offenses that individuals will not resolve - Matthew 18:15-17
  - 4. Divisive behavior or actions - Romans 16:17
- C. A Biblical Method for Church Discipline
  - 1. A private, personal effort should be made to address the issue - Matthew 18:15-17
  - 2. If this fails, bring the issue to two or three others (probably best to be a pastor, deacons, etc.) and seek their aid in addressing the issue. - Deuteronomy 19:15
  - 3. If this fails, the issue needs to be escalated to bringing it before the church.
    - a) Before discipline may be exercised, there must be a church vote.
- D. Results of Church Discipline
  - 1. The disciplined can be removed from the church rolls and denied privileges (voting, holding office, etc.)
  - 2. Request of membership transfer or even minister reference can be denied.
  - 3. The disciplined may be barred from church services.
  - 4. Fellowship by church members with the disciplined should be limited
    - a) It's ok to be kind and say howdy
    - b) In most cases going the Amish route and shunning them is overboard.
  - 5. If the disciplined repents and seeks reinstatement, the church will devise a plan and vote thereupon.

PLEASE NOTE:

This is a very complex issue that hopefully none of us will experience any part of. There are many differences of opinion out there, and really every case and situation is different. Church discipline is an extreme measure that should only be exercised in extreme cases. The goal should always be to restore the weaker brother to fellowship and strengthen them, but also to maintain the church's ability to bring honor and glory to the name of Christ.

## The Church

# The Purpose of the Church

As we have spent so much time on *what* the church is, we would be remiss to not cover *why* the church exists. God has definite plans for the church and definite goals to be striven towards.

- I. The Praise of God
  - A. I Corinthians 10:31
  - B. Everything a Christian does ought to bring glory and honor to Christ
    1. He is worthy of all praise - Psalm 145:3
    2. The duty of the believer - I Corinthians 6:19-20
  - C. The purpose of the church is not to lift up itself, its leaders, its opinions, or anything other than Christ!
- II. The Perfecting of the Saints
  - A. Hebrews 10:25
  - B. Remember that “perfecting” means to complete or finish
  - C. As we established in our last lesson concerning church discipline, Christians ought to be growing and advancing in their spiritual lives.
  - D. Ephesians 4:11-13 clearly states the the Spiritual gifts and roles given to church are for the good of those in the church.
  - E. Fellowship also works towards this - Proverbs 27:17
- III. The Purification of Doctrine
  - A. Colossians 3:16
  - B. The example of Berea - Acts 17:10-12
  - C. The church is constantly warned about false doctrine and teachers - Ephesians 4:14
  - D. The church should not simply rely on its leadership to spot false teaching. Each and every member should be grounded enough to discern heresy.
- IV. The Propagation of the Gospel
  - A. Matthew 28:19-20
  - B. The mission of the church is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to all lands and all peoples
  - C. The early church is marked by its spread of the Gospel and conversions
    1. Acts 2:41, 2:47, 4:4, 5:14, 6:7
  - D. It is not the duty of the church to grow numerically. It is the duty of the church to faithfully proclaim the Gospel.
    1. Too many people/preachers get caught up in growing numbers. The Bible never commands a church to increase in number. That is a byproduct of its faithfulness, but growth does not equal godliness. We are to remain faithful and allow God to give the increase as He deems fit.

## The Church

# Independence and Cooperation

One of the key distinctive of a Baptist church is that they are independent and autonomous. But that does not mean that they are incapable of fellowship and cooperation with other churches.

- I. Independence of Local Churches
  - A. A church is a local assembly of believers - Galatians 1:2, Revelation 1:11
  - B. Each local congregation is free to govern itself according to its own conscience and the guides of the Spirit and the Scripture.
  - C. Examples:
    1. Each church has its own leadership - Acts 14:23, I Peter 5:1-3
    2. Each congregation exercises its own church discipline - I Corinthians 5:1-13
- II. Cooperation of Local Churches
  - A. Just because churches are independent and autonomous does not mean that they cannot work together
  - B. Example of Spiritual Liberty
    1. In Christ, we as individuals have tremendous liberty - John 8:36
    2. It is possible to misuse that liberty - Galatians 5:13
    3. Although we have individual liberty, that does not mean that fellowship is not needed or commanded - Hebrews 10:25
    4. In fact, we hurt ourselves by isolating ourselves
    5. LIKEWISE: independent, local churches can and should have fellowship with other likeminded independent, local churches.
  - C. Examples from Corinth
    1. In giving
      - a) Paul wrote to the church at Corinth concerning giving in cooperation with other churches - 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8:1-15
      - b) Paul DOES NOT command them to give, but exhorts them to - 2 Corinthians 8:8-9
      - c) Therefore, it is expedient and proper for churches to work together in the pooling of resources to further accomplish the work of God.
    2. In workers
      - a) Titus had arrived to minister at Corinth
      - b) Note his recommendation is from the *churches* - 2 Corinthians 8:18-19
      - c) Therefore, it is expedient and proper for churches to aid each other through the work of their ministers
    3. In support
      - a) Paul states that his work in Corinth was financially supported by other churches - 2 Corinthians 11:7-8
      - b) Therefore, it is expedient and proper for churches to support works that aid other churches.
  - D. Example of the Council of Acts 15
    1. Many people falsely point to this incident as an example of church hierarchy

2. The rise of the false doctrine needed to be dealt with - Acts 15:1
  3. In order to help settle this, Paul and Barnabas are sent, voluntarily and not compulsorily, for counsel to Jerusalem - Acts 15:2
  4. The decision that is arrived at is disseminated, not commanded, to other churches - Acts 15:23
- E. Basis for Cooperation
1. That the churches be likeminded
  2. That they participate as equals
  3. That all cooperation be voluntary

## The Church

# The Bride of Christ - Part I

The relationship of the church and Christ is compared about six times in the Scripture to the that of bridegroom and bride. Today, we'll look at the significance of that analogy and the role it plays in the future of the believer.

### I. The Bride in the New Testament

#### A. John 3:29

1. John the Baptist compares himself to being a part of the wedding party but not the groom.

#### B. Romans 7:4

1. Here Paul is illustrating the freedom from the Law that we have through Christ by illustration. That illustration is that since the Law is dead through Christ's sacrifice, we are now free from that obligation to be Christ's alone.

#### C. II Corinthians 11:2

1. Here Paul makes another illustration regarding the purity of the church and its doctrine by comparing its purity from evil to that of an bride-to-be.

#### D. Ephesians 5:25-33

1. Here Paul combines two truths, one practical (marriage) and one spiritual (Christ and His church). Here we really begin to dig into the truths alluded to in previous passages.

#### E. Revelation 19:6-9

1. Here John records the wedding celebration of Christ and His bride. The only detail given as to the identity of the bride is the last phrase of verse 8.

#### F. Revelation 21:2

1. I see this as illustrative through comparing the beauty of a bride to the coming of the New Jerusalem. As we'll see next it is an apt description.

#### G. Revelation 21:9

1. Here the angel tells John that he will reveal the bride of Christ, then shows him the New Jerusalem. I think it is reasonable to say that the city *contains* the bride and is not the bride herself.

#### H. Revelation 22:17

1. Here the bride compels, with the Spirit, for man to accept salvation.

### II. Identifying the Bride

#### A. Analysis of the previous passages

1. Paul relates the church to the Bride in three passages.
  - a) I think the clearest of these is Ephesians 5.
2. The passages in Revelation do little to identify

#### B. Not Israel

1. We can exclude Israel from being the Bride of Christ as Israel is alluded to being the wife of God - Hosea 2:16, Jeremiah 3:14
2. Also, it would be impossible for Israel to fit the fulfill the details given in Revelation.

3. John 3:29 could be taken to mean that Old Testament saints are not part of the Bride.
- C. The Bride as the Church
1. Proven by the repeated use of imagery
  2. Pretty clear in Ephesians 5.
- D. Who is the “church” that is the bride?
1. Some hold all the saints of all ages, but that doesn’t fit the prerequisites.
  2. Some hold only their particular denomination (Catholics, etc.)
  3. Some hold only the members of the faithful and Scriptural congregations
    - a) Among Baptists, this is a key part of the “Landmarker” movement
  4. Based on my study, I believe the Bride is assembled saints from Calvary to the Rapture.
- III. Some Defense of My Position
- A. First, I think the principle of Deuteronomy 29:29 comes into play
- B. Paul and the Corinthians
1. Paul wrote the Corinthians that he and they were baptized by the Spirit into one body (I Corinthians 12:13).
  2. This baptism is not water baptism but Spiritual (such as described in Romans 6:3-7)
  3. Paul then separates himself from the Corinthians and calls their church a “body” (I Corinthians 12:27)
  4. THEREFORE, there are two groups spoken of, one the local assembly and another more inclusive. The latter I believe constitutes the Bride of Christ.
- C. God sees the future as present, or sees positionally
1. Ephesians 2:5-6 have the saved sitting “together with Christ in heavenly places”.
  2. For us this will not happen until death or Rapture, but God speaks of it as being in the present tense
  3. THEREFORE, I contend that God can see believers, assembled in local assemblies now, as already assembled in Christ.
- D. I agree with David Cloud’s analysis:
1. “Taking all of these passages together, I believe all born again New Testament saints will be part of Christ’s bride. Those He redeems in this age by His blood will make up His beloved bride. In this present world, some born again Christians are not very faithful, and some are not even effectual members of a biblical church, and even the best saint is merely an “unprofitable servant” (Luke 17:10), but in Christ’s eyes, viewing everything from His eternal perspective (such as that described in Ephesians 2:18-22 and Hebrews 12:22-24), His bride already exists even though it is growing and taking shape day-by-day in this present time.”
  2. [http://www.wayoflife.org/database/are\\_you\\_a\\_baptist\\_brider.html](http://www.wayoflife.org/database/are_you_a_baptist_brider.html)

## The Church

# The Bride of Christ - Part II

We will continue our study of the Church as the Bride of Christ building off the foundation from our previous lesson.

### I. Review

- A. There are eight verses or passages that we base this doctrine on
  1. John 3:29, Romans 7:4, II Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25-33, Revelation 19:6-9, Revelation 21:2, Revelation 21:9, Revelation 22:17
  2. I think Ephesians 5:25-33 is clearest.
- B. I will contend that the Bride is comprised of all the assembled saints from Christ's Resurrection to the Rapture
  1. Please note that I slightly changed this based on further study and thought.
    - a) Changing the beginning point from Cavalry to the Resurrection I think better defines the period. Christ's blood paid for our sins, but the Resurrection gave us victory over death. The Empty Tomb ushered in the Christian era.
  2. This is not a "universal church", as some would call it today. Verses such as I Corinthians 12:13 clearly point to a larger collection of believers beyond the local church.

### II. The Jewish Wedding

- A. To further highlight the truths of the doctrine of the Bride of Christ, we will take a look at how Jewish weddings would have been performed in ancient times.
- B. A basic outline:
  1. The father of the groom arranges for a bride to be selected - Genesis 24:1-4
  2. A "marriage contract" is arranged
    - a) The groom pledges to support his wife to be - Genesis 24:52-53
    - b) The bride's dowry is set
  3. A payment is made to the bride's family, which ultimately is the bride's. This payment set her free from her father's house - Genesis 24:53, Genesis 29:20,27
  4. The "betrothal" period
    - a) A ceremony is held under a canopy sealing the betrothal vows
    - b) Legally the couple is married
    - c) However, they do not live together for a year.
    - d) The groom leaves the bride with a parting gift to show his love and his sure return.
    - e) Preparations:
      - (1) The bride prepares herself and her wedding garments
      - (2) The groom prepares their new home (usually at his father's home)
        - (a) The new place had to be deemed better than the brides current home
        - (b) The groom's father decided when the preparation was complete.
  5. The Wedding

- a) The bride waits ready for her groom to arrive - Matthew 25:1-13
- b) A shout and a horn blast announce the coming of the groom
- c) The couple return to the groom's family home
- d) The marriage celebration lasts for seven days (while the couple "honeymoon") - John 2:1-11
- e) After seven days the couple joins in a final marriage party.
- f) The couple then go to their own home

### III. The Wedding of the Bride of Christ

#### A. Let's follow the same outline as above:

1. The Father has arranged the Bride for His Son - Ephesians 1:4
2. The New Covenant is arranged - Hebrews 12:24
  - a) Christ gives His life for the Bride - Ephesians 5:25
  - b) The Church presents itself - I Corinthians 6:20
3. The Bride is purchased by Christ - I Corinthians 6:19-20, I Peter 1:18-19
4. The separation or betrothal period is the the Church Age
  - a) Ceremony: how about the Lord's Supper? - Matthew 26:27-29
  - b) The Bride is already wedded to Christ - SECURITY!
  - c) The Bride and Christ are not together - John 14:3
  - d) Gift? How about the Holy Spirit? - Ephesians 1:13-14
  - e) Preparations
    - (1) The church is preparing herself - Ephesians 5:25-27
    - (2) Christ is preparing a place for us - John 14:2-3
      - (a) Heaven is WONDERFUL! - I Corinthians 2:9
      - (b) Only the Father knows when Christ will return - Matthew 24:36
5. The Wedding at the Second Coming of Christ
  - a) The church awaits the Rapture - Titus 2:13-14
  - b) A trumpet and a shout announce the Rapture - I Thessalonians 4:16-18
  - c) The raptured saints got o be with Christ in his Father's House: Heaven - John 14:2-3
  - d) Seven days? Seven years of Tribulation! The church is raptured out of the earth and in Heaven - Daniel 9:27
  - e) The Tribulation culminates in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb - Revelation 19:6-10
  - f) The Bride returns with Christ to be on earth for the Millennial Kingdom - Revelation 19:11-14

#### B. Think these similarities are a coincidence? I think not!

## The Church Teaching and Training

Today we will take a look at one of the church's primary functions, that of training the believer up in the faith.

- I. Teaching in the Old Testament
  - A. God charged Israel to teach their children - Deuteronomy 6:7-9
  - B. God charged the priesthood in teaching - example: Deuteronomy 24:8
  - C. Great men, such as Ezra, taught - Ezra 7:10
  - D. Teaching and its results are commended - Proverbs 9:9
  - E. God Himself is seen as a teacher throughout the Psalms - Psalms 25:4-5, 119:12
- II. Teaching in the New Testament
  - A. Christ "taught" in over 20 different verses - example: Matthew 4:23, 5:2, 7:29, 9:35, 13:54, 21:23
  - B. Part of the Great Commission is teaching/training - Matthew 28:19-20
    1. The Great Commission is three-fold: Evangelism, Baptism, and Discipleship.
    2. To fulfill Christ's command ALL THREE must be done.
  - C. Teaching is exalted in the Church at Antioch - Acts 11:25-26, Acts 13:1
  - D. Paul identifies Himself as a teacher - I Timothy 2:7, II Timothy 1:11
  - E. Christian leaders are required to be teachers - I Timothy 3:2, II Timothy 2:24
- III. Biblical Teaching
  - A. The Biblical model of a wise, or educated, person is one who knows and practices their knowledge - Psalm 1
    1. Christ amplifies this in Luke 6:46-47
    2. This is the burden of the teacher: responsibility - James 3:1
  - B. Biblical Teaching is rooted in Biblical truth - Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:7, 9:10
  - C. Paul describes the motive of the teacher - 1 Timothy 1:5
    1. charity - "love in action"
    2. pure heart - holy, not mixed with personal ambitions or evil
    3. good conscience - free of guilt
    4. faith unfeigned - no hypocrisy, true
- IV. The Church's Role in Teaching
  - A. EVERYTHING the church does ought to be usable in pointing people to Christ or Biblical truth, thus teaching by example
  - B. Preaching should contain teaching
    1. Not simply facts, but practical instruction
  - C. Today, the Sunday School is one of our primary teaching tools.
  - D. Christians:
    1. Ought to practice what they preach - James 1:22
    2. Ought to be ready to teach - I Peter 3:15
    3. Ought to pass on their knowledge - II Timothy 2:2

## The Church

# History of Independent, Fundamental Baptists

We will pick up where we left off with last week's presentation on Baptist History. Sadly we ran out of time to look at the origins of our own "branch" of Baptists, so we will devote this lesson to this overlooked subject.

- I. The Rise of Fundamentalism
  - A. Christianity has always battled false doctrine and teachers, and Baptists in America are no different.
  - B. Often, three sides can be identified:
    1. The Liberal, Modernist, or Left Wing.
      - a) Prone to rethink the core components of Christianity
      - b) Very influenced by society and academia
    2. The Moderates, or Centrists
      - a) Lie somewhere in the middle, not actively engaged
      - b) Slowly trend towards liberalism
    3. The Conservative, or Right Wing
      - a) Concerned with holding the truest forms of doctrines
      - b) This does not mean they cannot change, as they often seek to purify their own positions and move closer to the right.
  - C. The 1800's were a hotbed for liberalism, often called "higher criticism".
    1. This was heavily influenced by German theologians
    2. This questioned or rejected the Bible and Christian theology.
    3. A very famous case is the "Down-Grade Controversy" fought by C.H. Spurgeon in the late 1880's.
  - D. These modern doctrines took hold in the post-Civil War years, especially in the North.
  - E. Some preachers of the day took a stand for the Bible and orthodox Christianity.
    1. These were the first Fundamentalists and were from a wide variety of denominations.
    2. Very few Baptists took part
      - a) Perhaps this is because Baptists in general were slower to adopt the burgeoning liberalism
      - b) Two prominent exceptions: George Needham and A.J. Gordon.
  - F. Fundamentalism as a broad movement was perhaps strongest in the 1920-30's
- II. The Rise of Independence
  - A. Baptists have always been (and hopefully always will be) proponents of local church autonomy,
  - B. Two key elements arose in the 1800's that fueled a rebirth of independence among Baptists:
    1. Doctrinal Disputes
      - a) Partly in response to groups like the Church of Christ, some Baptists began to reemphasize distinctive Baptists principles.

- b) Most popular among them were the Landmark Baptists, led by J.R. Graves.
  - 2. Rise of Denominationalism
    - a) Groups like the Southern Baptist Convention began to grow in power, prosperity, and influence.
    - b) Some Baptists felt this was in contrast to local church autonomy.
- III. The Convergence of Fundamentalism and Independence
  - A. During the early 1900's these two ideas began to meld together as Baptists grew more involved in the Modernist-Fundamentalist wars.
  - B. Three Baptist leaders come to the forefront
    - 1. W.B. Riley (Minneapolis), T.T. Shields (Toronto), and J. Frank Norris (Fort Worth)
    - 2. These three were influential in a fellowship called the Baptist Bible Union
  - C. The key figure for us is J. Frank Norris
    - 1. Norris was a complex and often controversial individual, but one cannot doubt his impact.
    - 2. Many key attributes of today's IFB churches can be traced to Norris, including premillennialism, door-to-door evangelism, tenacious defense of doctrine, disdain of "conventions" and "boards", practical training through Bible colleges, and strong pastoral authority in local churches.
    - 3. Practically all of the churches that our church is in fellowship with have ties back to Norris.
- IV. Today and Beyond
  - A. We, like our spiritual forefathers, seek to serve God, glorify Him, preach the Gospel, baptize converts, and grow in our Christian life.
  - B. The battles that define us still rage, even if they do not gather the attention they once did.
  - C. We, like so many others before us, seek to serve God as faithfully as we can through returning to the Bible as foundation for practice and belief.
  - D. I personally believe that God is not finished with IFB churches, and that if we remain active and faithful "the best is yet to come"!