

BASIC BAPTIST BELIEFS

A Brief Study of New Testament Doctrines

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INTRODUCTION

"I'm a Baptist." You have said it many times - or maybe you said, I'm a Southern Baptist." When you make that statement you identify yourself with a major religious denomination; a large denomination and an old one; a denomination that practices baptism by immersion, and teaches that "if you are once saved you are always saved." That is about all some people know about the people called Baptists. It is understandable that unsaved people and even members of other denominations do not usually know much more than this about Baptists, but it is disturbing to find that many who profess to be Baptists have only a vague understanding of basic Baptist distinctives. Baptists have no creeds, no bishop to dictate policies to the local congregation, and no conference to impose its will on the autonomous local church. However, many "Confessions of Faith" have been published. Any Baptist group can draw up and publish its confessions of faith at any time. In 1963, the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Kansas City, adopted a statement entitled "The Baptist Faith and message." This statement sets forth some of the basic teachings which most Baptists believe. This statement is recommended for study and will be used with a selection of other works in this brief study. The sincere Christian should study the Scriptures regularly. We should also study Christian doctrines, church administration, and other related materials. All Scripture quoted in this study is from the King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 edition, will be referenced as (NAS).

I. THE BIBLE

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word "biblos" meaning book. The Bible is THE BOOK. R. G. Lee often referred to it as the "miracle book of unity in diversity, of simplicity in infinite complexity."

A. THE WORD OF GOD

The Christian reads the Bible, not because it is a great book, but because it is THE BOOK. It is the Word of God. To say that it contains the Word of God is not enough. It is the Word of God - with His seal of authenticity on it. In Isaiah 55:11 we read: So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it (NAS).

B. INSPIRATION

STATEMENT

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture for its matter (Baptist Faith and Message).

1. "And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah" (Exodus 24:4).
2. "Now the word of the Lord came unto me saying..." (Jer. 1:4).
3. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Inspiration means that the Scripture is "God breathed." This does not destroy the image of the author, nor did it mean that he did not have to be well informed. For example, Luke did extensive research before writing his two books (Luke 1:3). In reading Isaiah and Amos you are aware of the great difference in the background of the authors. In reading the following books, what do you learn about the author of each?

1. Exodus _____
2. 1 Sam. _____
3. Proverbs _____
4. Acts _____
5. I Cor. _____

Around 1960, the late Francis Shaeffer stated that the Scripture would be the next great battlefield of Christianity. Boy, did he ever get that right! The issue is Inspiration of Scripture. Jimmy Draper wrote a book in which he emphasized the fact that the Bible authorized - and a friend of mine was livid. How dare he write such a book!

What is the real issue, inspiration, the method or extend of inspiration, infallibility, inerrancy, or authority? Since scholars strongly disagree, the issue is not simply academic. Since people of faith disagree, it must not be simply a matter of faith. Since sincere people disagree on the subject, it must not be simply a matter of sincerity. As far as scholarship is concerned, there are textual problems, and we will never solve all of them to everyone's satisfaction.

In this study. The writer assumes the very highest view of Scripture of which he is capable of understanding and communicating. This is a theological conviction, not a

political stance, and it is based upon years of study, and it is sincerely based upon absolute faith that any God Who could create us in His image would in no way be challenged by the task of communicating to us His perfect Word. The way I see it, If God could not have a produced a perfect Bible, why do we call Him God? If He could have produced a perfect Book and would not, what kind of God is He? But I am completely open to change - when I get to Heaven and He tells me to change my view, I will do so without any argument.

C. UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Written by some 40 different authors with various backgrounds, recorded over a period of many centuries, and sent to many different individuals or groups, the Bible has unbelievable continuity. It has one message. In my youth I often heard R. G. Lee - and if anyone ever "waxed eloquent" on the subject it was Dr. Lee - refer to the Bible as the "miracle Book of unity in diversity, of simplicity in infinite complexity."

D. THE BIBLE A LIVING BOOK

The Bible is the living Word of the living God. It could be no less if it is the only Word of the only God. By this we do not mean the same thing many in our judicial system mean when they refer to the United States Constitution as a living document. What they mean is that it is subject to change, so the Supreme Court hands down decisions which effectively changes the intent of the Founding Fathers. They are re-interpreting the Constitution. What we mean by the living Word is that it is the Word of life in that it reveals how we may have eternal life. It never needs to be re-interpreted. This morning's newspaper is already out of date, but the Bible is both immutable and timeless.

1. "For the Word of God is living and active..." (Heb. 4:12).
2. "The Word of God which liveth and abideth..." (I Peter 1:23).

E. POWER

The word power is descriptive of only one book in all the world. Man may refer to other books as powerful, but when compared to the Word of God, it is obvious that they are powerless.

This includes Bible commentaries and devotional books. The greatest of them are weak and powerless by comparison. It really is a miraculous book, a supernatural Book. Many hostile critics have been won to Jesus Christ by reading it. General Lew Wallace, author of Ben Hur, is but one example.

F. AUTHORITATIVE

1. The authority of the Bible is assumed. Acts 17:2; Romans 4:3; Romans 10:11; Luke 5:29
2. Reason tells us that if the Bible is inspired it is authoritative.
3. The Holy Spirit, the divine Author will affirm it.

G. RELIABLE AND ACCURATE

There are still many who think the Bible contains contradictions and errors. Evidences are available to prove the accuracy of the Scriptures but since most Baptists do not doubt the reliability of the Bible such proof will not be listed here. It may help to remember that if a science book has been published it is out of date. But, "the Word of God shall stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

The Bible is reliable and accurate, because it was inspired, in the whole, by the Holy Spirit. As such, it is infallible, inerrant, and eternally perfect - the perfect Word of the perfect God.

H. MAJOR DIVISIONS

1. OLD TESTAMENT Law (first five books)

Judges (Josh. - Ruth)

History

Poetry (Job - Songs of Sol.)

Major Prophets

Minor Prophets

2. NEW TESTAMENT Gospels (Matt. - John)

History (Acts)

Pauline Epistles (Rom.-Philemon)

General Epistles

Prophecy (Revelation)

I. NAMES FOR THE WORD

1. SEED, Luke 8:11
2. LIGHT, Psalm 119:115
3. FIRE, Jer. 23:29
4. SWORD, Ephesians 6:17

J. REFERENCES

Deut. 4:1-2 Josh. 8:34 Ps. 89, 105, 140

Is. 34:16; 40:8 Matt. 5:17-18 Luke 21:33

Rom. 15:4 Heb. 1:1-2 II Tim. 3:15-17

K. BASIS FOR OUR BELIEFS

The Bible is the authority for the church and upon it Baptists formulate their theology. In the study of Baptist beliefs the Bible will be the sole authority. The Holy Spirit inspired the various Scripture writers to write it. That is called Inspiration - it is God breathed. He has miraculously preserved the Scripture (Preservation); and He helps believers to understand it. That is called Illumination. The one thing we cannot expect the Holy Spirit to do is to add anything to, or take anything from the Scripture. He will not reveal anything to anyone which contradicts Scripture and when we hear that He has revealed some new truth to some individual, we had better test the spirit behind the claim. It is understandable, then, that the only way to study Baptist beliefs is to study the Scripture, with special emphasis on the New Testament.

L. FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

Close to 800,000 words are found in the Bible. It is well known that the number of letters, words, verses, various words contained in the Bible have been counted, but by whom, when, or where, is not generally known. The amazing thing is that anyone would have taken the time to count them before the modern computer, but we know that someone did. Treat's publication, entitled "Curiosities of the Bible," claims this task was of Spanish origin, and that the Prince of Granada, fearing usurpation, caused the arrest of the supposed would-be usurper, and by order of the Spanish crown, he was thrown into an old prison situated in Madrid, where he was confined for thirty-three years.

During his confinement, he counted the letters, etc., contained in the Bible, and scratched the several numbers on the stone walls with a nail. When his work was discovered, he was furnished with writing material and ordered to make a copy of the results of his long and tedious task; and, on its being completed, he finally received his liberty. The following is a correct copy of his great works:

The Bible contains 3,566,480 letters;

773,746 words;

31,173 verses;

1,195 chapters;

66 books.

The word "and" occurs 10,684 times;

The word "Lord" occurs 1,853 times;

The word "Reverend", only 1 time, which is in the ninth verse of the 111 Psalm.

The middle verse is the eighth verse of the 118 Psalm.

The 21st verse of the 7th chapter of Ezra contains all the letters of the alphabet, except the letter "J".

The finest chapter to read is the 26th chapter of Acts of the Apostles.

The most beautiful chapter is the 23rd Psalm.

The 19th chapter of 2 Kings and the 37th chapter of Isaiah are alike.

The four most inspiring promises are to be found in the 6th chapter of St. John, 37th verse; 40th chapter, second verse; 11th chapter of St. Matthew, 28th verse; and the 37th Psalm, 4th verse.

The longest verse is the 9th verse, 8th chapter of Esther.

The shortest verse is the 35th verse, 11th chapter of St. John.

There are ten chapters in the book of Esther in which the words "Lord" and "God" do not occur.

The 8th, 15th, 21st, and 31st verses of the 107th Psalm are alike.

Each verse of the 136th Psalm ends alike.

The 117 Psalm contains but 2 verses.

The 119 Psalm contains 176 verses.

There are no words or names of more than six syllables.

II. GOD

STATEMENT

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intellectual, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. To Him we owe the highest love and obedience. The eternal God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but Without division of nature, or being (Baptist Faith and Message).

A. DEFINITION

There really is no way to define God. All attempts to define Him leave something to be desired. E. Y. Mullins describes God this way: "God is the supreme personal Spirit; perfect in all his attributes; who is the source, support, and end of the universe; who guides it according to the wise, righteous, and loving purpose revealed in Jesus Christ; who indwells in all things by his Holy Spirit, seeking ever to transform them according to his own will and bring them to the goal of his kingdom."

This definition is far from complete. Finite man cannot define an infinite God.

Regardless of what you say about Him, He is still more. Man must go to the Bible to study God. The Bible does not argue the existence of God; it simply states it and declares His will and purpose.

B. NAMES FOR GOD

GOD - Elohim. The generic name for God, denoting the "One to Whom all power belongs," occurs 2550 times in the Old Testament. God had the power to create all things.

"For I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah 45:22).

"From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

This term (Elohim) usually refers to God but it was also used to signify pagan gods (II Kings 1:2).

LORD - Adonai. This is a plural word meaning Lord. This word, used 340 times in the O. T., sometimes refers to a husband, or it can be used as a term of respect (Gen. 18:12; 19:18). The word is used to show respect and reverence when it refers to God. It denotes sovereignty - the Lord God is sovereign over all He created. He has the right to reign over all that exists.

JEHOVAH - YHWH (YAHWEH). The most sacred name in the Old Testament, used 6,823 times in the O. T., is the covenant name for God given to Moses at the burning bush. This was a name that was unknown to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was translated "Jehovah" in the 1901 American Standard Version of the Bible (ASV). "I am YHWH: that is my name" (Isaiah 42:8). The Lord gave His people a personal name by which He was distinguished from false or pagan deities.

God revealed Himself to Moses as "I AM". In Exodus 3:14, He told Moses to tell the Israelites, "I AM hath sent me to you." The literal meaning is, "I Am That I Am." The name Jehovah comes from the Hebrew verb "to be" and is in the future tense, third person singular, carrying the force of "I exist of Myself." Yahweh, the uncaused Cause of all things, is also the source of our existence. A richer interpretation of the word is, "I will Be That (which) I Will Be." In the fullest sense of the word, it carries the weight of "I am that which I am, I was that which I was, and I will be that which I will be." He is the changeless God of eternity.

"HOLY, HOLY, HOLY IS THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME" (Rev. 4:8, NAS).

Coupled to this meaning is His redemptive love and the revelation that He is Creator and Sustainer of the universe - He is also the Redeemer. He is God and there is no other beside Him of like Him.

SACRED NAME: Jehovah (YAHWEH) is a sacred name. "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain" (Ex. 20:7, NAS). Ancient Jews would not mention His name. In reading, they would skip it or substitute Adonai (Lord). They would write it only with a new quill and new ink. Jehovah, God Almighty (El Shaddai) is jealous of His Name.

C. HIS NATURE

1. God is Spirit (John 4:24)
4. God is love (I John 4:8)
2. God is alive (I Thes. 1:9)
5. God is a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24)
3. God is light (I John 1:5)
6. God is holy (Isiah 6)

D. OTHER ATTRIBUTES:

1. God is OMNIPOTENT - He is all powerful, (Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer.)
2. God is OMNIPRESENT - He is everywhere present at one time.
3. God is OMNISCIENT - He is all knowing. He knows everything. He has perfect knowledge with limitations of time and space. He has foreknowledge without predetermining man's fate or destroying his freedom of choice.
4. God is SELF-EXISTENT - God is the "living God" (I Tim. 3:15) and He is self-existent. No one created God, but He is the source of all other life. He is the uncaused cause of all that exists.
5. He is IMMUTABLE - He is changeless. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). The Psalmist wrote, "The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind..." (Ps. 110:4, NAS). In Malachi 3:6 we read, "For I, the LORD, do not change..."(NAS).

E. MORAL ATTRIBUTES

1. God is HOLY
2. God is RIGHTEOUS
3. God is LOVE
4. God is TRUTH

THE OLD TESTAMENT PICTURES GOD AS:

1. _____, PS. 18:31
2. _____, 2 Sam. 22:2
3. _____, Gen. 15:1
4. _____, Job 6:16

F. TRINITY

God's revelation of Himself is through the three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He is not three Gods, but one (Deut. 6:4.) The one holy God is manifested in three Persons. We must, however, be careful to avoid a unitary concept of God. While that view may be explained with simplicity and illustrated in numerous ways, it also denies the Trinity. Some avoid the term because the term does not appear in the New Testament. It does not - but there are many other valid terms that do not appear in Scripture - systematic theology, for one.

God is one in essence, three in personality, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Francis Shaeffer stated that if it had not been for the doctrine of the Trinity he might have remained an agnostic. There was perfect fellowship in the Godhead - He did not create man because of any inadequacy within Himself. He did not create man because He needed someone to love. Nor did He need someone to love Him.

G. REDEEMER

The redeeming love of God is the most marvelous thing in all the world. Paul wrote, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NAS). John 3:16 has been called the Gospel in a nutshell, and appropriately so: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life," (NAS). For more on the doctrine of God, see the study, "God" by this writer.

III. JESUS CHRIST

STATEMENT

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself the demands and necessities of human nature and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, partaking of the nature of God and of man, and in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever-present Lord (Baptist faith and Message).

A. THE BIBLE AND CHRIST

"The Bible is unintelligible apart from Jesus Christ." (Hobbs)

1. The Old Testament theme is Messianic hope.
2. The Gospels recount the Incarnation.
3. Acts records His continuing work.
4. The Epistles interpret His person and work.
5. Revelation tells of His final victory and glory.

B. NAMES ACCORDED JESUS

1. GENERAL NAMES: About 80 names are used in the NT for Jesus, among them are:

1. Seed of the Woman (Genesis 3:15).
2. Shiloh, "He Whose right it is" (Genesis 49:10).
3. Branch of Jehovah (Isaiah 4:2).
4. Immanuel, "God with us" (Isaiah 7:1).
5. Wonderful, Counselor, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).
6. Rabbi, "Teacher" (John 1:38).
7. Judge (John 5:27).
8. Lamb of God (John 1:29).
9. Savior (Luke 2:11).
10. Alpha and Omega (Rev. 1:11).

2. SPECIFIC NAMES:

- a. JESUS, "Jehovah is Salvation." This is His personal name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). The name "Jesus" is New Testament equivalent of the Old Testament word "Joshua." Jesus is the personal name God gave for His Son. He is God's only begotten Son (John 3:16) and there is no other name given by God by which man can be saved. (Acts 4:12)
- b. CHRIST, the Anointed One (Messiah). This is His title. This is the title or name that most closely parallels the Old Testament word "Messiah", which means "The Anointed One" (Luke 7:1).
- c. LORD - Showing ownership, lordship, sovereignty. He is the Master.
- d. LORD JESUS CHRIST - a combination of the first three.
- e. WORD - "Logos", John 1:1, 14. John played on this agnostic term to emphasize Jesus' relationship to God the Father. He uses this term to show that Jesus was both THE SON OF MAN and THE SON OF GOD. By our word we reveal our heart, our feelings, and our thoughts. Through Jesus God communicates His redemptive love to us. What better way to express His love!
- f. THE SON OF MAN. This is the term used so often by Jesus for Himself. It emphasizes His humanity (John 3:14; Matt. 0:2). In Matthew 9:6, He says, "'But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--then He said to the paralytic, 'Get up, pick up your bed and go home" (NAS).
- g. THE SON OF GOD - His deity stressed. Mark begins his Gospel account with the words, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1, NAS).

C. HIS PRE-EXISTENCE

Jesus existed before the birth in Bethlehem. "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, but the world knew Him not" (John 1:10). "Before Abraham was, I am..." (John 0:53). Jesus is the co-eternal, co-existent Son of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1, NAS).

D. INCARNATION

Incarnation means "in flesh." The incarnation of Jesus Christ means that Jesus "Was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14, NAS).

1. HUMAN ASPECT- Jesus was fully man.

- a. He became tired and hungry (John 4:6; Matt. 4:2).

- b. He endured physical pain (Heb. 5:8).
- c. He felt human sorrow (Mark 14:34; Luke 19:41).

2. DIVINE ASPECT - Jesus was fully God.

- a. He was one with God (John 10:30).
- b. He exercised power over nature (Luke 9).

- c. He forgave sin (Mark 2:5).

Jesus "emptied Himself" of the glory He had in heaven---without losing any of His deity. Read Phil. 2:6-11, and What did Jesus have in Heaven that He did not bring to earth with Him. What did He have on earth that He did not have in Heaven? How was He either blessed or limited by His self-emptying?

E. THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit, having no earthly father (Matt. 1:18-20). After intensive research, Luke the physician, accepted the virgin birth. According to Dr. Herschel Hobbs the virgin birth is: (1) morally necessary (Gen. 3:15); (2) divinely possible (Luke 1:37); (3) authentically recorded (Luke 1:1-3); and (4) experientially affirmed (John 3:16). His was a miraculous in birth.

F. HIS LIFE

1. His Growth - Luke 2:52.

- a. He grew in wisdom.
- b. He grew in stature.
- c. He grew in favor with God - He grew spiritually.
- d. He grew in favor with man - He grew socially.

2. His Religion.

- a. He grew up in a religious home - Luke 1-2.
- b. He attended the synagogue regularly - Luke 4:16.
- c. He was a man of prayer - Mark 1:35.
- d. He knew the Old Testament Scripture - Luke 4:17.

3. His Character.

"He was tempted in all points like as we, yet without sin"(Heb. 4:15). Jesus was perfect, holy, pure, righteous, honest, and unselfish. He is the ultimate expression of the love of God. (Rom. 5:8).

G. HIS MINISTRY

1. PREACHING - study the Sermon on the Mount.

2. TEACHING- "Never man so spake" (John 7:4). He taught with authority (Matt. 7:29; John 3:1ff).--"Authority" (from exousia, meaning "out of being" - that is, out of Himself, or out of His Own authority). Jesus taught out of the very nature of His being. He assumed the authority that is His because of the very nature of His being.

3. MIRACLES - Jesus was a miracle worker. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead, and healed the lame. The question is, "why did He perform Miracles?" Was it just to show that He could do these things, or was there a more serious purpose? In John, these miracles are called signs. Jesus used them to teach a lesson. What do the following signs teach us?

1. Changing water to wine (John 2)
2. Feeding the multitude (Ch. 6)
3. Raising of Lazarus (Ch. 11)

H. HIS DEATH

1. Voluntary - John 10:17-18; Matt. 26:52-53.
2. Substitutionary - Rom. 3:2; 4:26; Is. 53; Gal. 3:13; Heb. 2:9
3. Once for all---He who all the time loves us once for all did for us.

I. THE RESURRECTION

THE ULTIMATE VICTORY, THE ULTIMATE SIGN

1. Jesus announced His resurrection---Matt. 16:21; 17:9, 22, 23.
 2. He gave His enemies but one sign---Matt. 12:39-40.
 3. This was the proof Christians used to convince lost men that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.
4. It is significant, even for us today.
 - a. It proves the deity of Christ.
 - b. It proves we serve a living Savior.
 - c. The Resurrection Jesus Christ assures our resurrection from the dead.

J. THE ASCENSION

After forty days and numerous appearances following the Resurrection, Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50-51).

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been

taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

K. EXALTATION

He is now at the right hand of God (Heb. 10:12-13). He is the Christian's Advocate with the Father (I John 2:1), making intercession for him (Heb. 7:25) that he might have forgiveness for his sins (I John 1:9).

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

L. SECOND COMING

1. Jesus promised that He would return (John 14).
2. His return will be visible (Acts 1:11).
3. Believers will be gathered unto Him (John 14).
4. His enemies will be put under His feet (I Cor. 15:25-26).
5. He will be honored as "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16).
6. Jesus promised, "Behold, I come quickly," (Rev. 22:20).

M. SAVIOR

"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16-18, (NAS).

QUESTION: WHAT DID PEOPLE SAY ABOUT JESUS IN HIS DAY?

QUESTION: WHAT DO PEOPLE SAY ABOUT HIM TODAY?

IV. THE HOLY SPIRIT

STATEMENT

"The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand the truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the assurance of God to bring the believer into the fulness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service." (Baptist Faith and Message)

A. IDENTIFICATION

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the third member of the Trinity. The attributes of God the Father and God the Son are to be applied to the Holy Spirit. He is omnipresent (Ps. 139:7); omniscient (I Cor. 2:10); and omnipotent, (I Cor 12:11). For more on the ministry on the Holy Spirit in the world today, see John 14-16 and Acts 1-2.

B. A PERSON

The Holy Spirit is referred to as "He" and not "it" in the Bible (John 14:16-17, 26). He is not just a person, but a divine person. As a person He:

1. Reproves, John 16:8
2. Comforts, John 14:16ff
3. Guides, John 16:13
4. Empowers, Acts 1:8

C. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE O. T.

1. He was present in the creation of the universe (Gen. 1:2).
2. He was present in the creation of man (Gen. 1:6).
3. He came upon men who did great works (Judges 11:29; 14:6).
4. He revealed divine truth to the prophets (Ezekiel. 2:2; 8:3).
5. He was to be the anointing power of the Messiah (Is. 11:2).

D. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE N. T.

1. He was the agent in the conception of Jesus (Matt. 1:18).
2. He was present at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3:16).
3. He drove Jesus into the wilderness (Luke 4:1).
4. After the temptations, Jesus came to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:14).
5. Jesus went to the cross in the "eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14).
6. Before His death Jesus promised the coming of the Holy Spirit as Comforter, Teacher, Guide, Lord (John 4).

E. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE SCRIPTURE

"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 Spirit" (II Pet, 1:21).

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16).

F. PENTECOST

ACTS 2

Fulfilling the promise of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in power, hope, and assurance on the Day of Pentecost. Read the passage and fill in blanks below.

1. Believers were all with _____ in _____.
2. There was a _____ from heaven as of a rushing _____.
3. Cloven tongues _____ as of _____ appeared and _____ upon each of them.
4. The Christians spoke with _____ tongues.

G. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE GOSPEL

1. He approved the preaching of the gospel to Samaritans (Acts 3:1ff).
2. He led Phillip to witness to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26ff).
3. He brought peter and Cornelius together (Acts 10).
4. He led Christians to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10-11).
5. He sent out the first foreign missionaries (_____ and _____, Acts 13:2ff).

H. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND LOST PEOPLE

1. He convicts "the world of sin, righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8-11).
 - a. "Of sin, because they believe not on me" (16:9)
 - b. "Of righteousness, because I go to my Father" (16:10).
 - c. "Of judgment because the prince of the world (Satan) is judge" (16:11).
2. He reveals Jesus as Savior and Lord.

The Holy Spirit convicts man that he has sinned (Rom. 3:23); that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23); and that through His great love, God offers new life (Rom. 5:3). He reveals that salvation comes with faith in Jesus Christ. There is no salvation without the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE CHRISTIAN

When a person becomes a Christian the Holy Spirit comes into his heart to abide with him (John 14:17; I Cor. 3:16). He seeks to bring about sanctification. Paul was "Sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

The Holy Spirit is the divine COMFORTER. The New Testament word for comforter is "paraclete" which means "one called along side," or "one who stands along side". He is with us to guide, comfort, challenge, teach, convict, and nurture.

FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT - "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Gal. 5:22-23) are listed as fruits of the Spirit.

POWER - "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

V. MAN

STATEMENT

"Man was created by the special act of God, in His own image, and the crowning work of His creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by His Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence; whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, and as soon as they are capable of moral action become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore every man possesses dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love" (The Baptist Faith and Message).

A. WHO MAN IS.

WHAT IS MAN WHAT THOU ART MINDFUL OF HIM?

1. Man is more than a physical organism. God created man in His own image. (Gen. 1:26, 27)
2. Man is a spiritual being. When God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, he became a living soul.
3. Man is the only creature with the freedom of choice, the power of reason, and self-consciousness.
4. Only man has a moral nature. He has a sense of right and wrong and can distinguish between the two. Man received this sense of right and wrong through the creative act of God.
5. Man is:
 - (1) an intelligent being with the power to reason;
 - (2) an emotional being with the power to exercise rational affection;
 - (3) and he is a volitional personality with the power of will, or will power.

B. RELATIONSHIP OF MAN TO GOD

"Man has no capacity to know God except as God reveals himself, nor could God reveal Himself to a being who had no capacity to know Him" (W. T. Connors). Man is created

with the capacity for God but he is ever dependent on God'. revelation of Himself before he can know God.

Man is created with a need for God. "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God" (Psalm 42:1). The craving of the human spirit is in Jesus Christ, the light, Bread, Way, Truth, and the Life (John 9:5; 6:35; 14:6). He is to man's spirit what bread is to the physical body. As Connors wrote many years ago, "Thus we see that man was made for the gospel, and the gospel was made for man."

C. CHRISTIANITY VS. WORLD VIEW OF MAN

Communism says man is a tool of the state and of value only in such a way as he can advance the state. The Communist anthem, "godless, classless state" reveals that system's rejection of God. The heart of Communism is evolutionary atheism. Nazism was essentially an evolutionary occultism which despised God. Like so many of the other "isms" in the world these murderous "isms" reject a Creator in favor of random chance (evolution).

If you want to sell people on abortion, euthanasia, or genetic engineering, sell them first on evolution and you have opened the door to a view of man that is diametrically opposed to that of Scripture. The evolutionary view of man - no matter what philosophy it is associated with - is a low view of man.

New Age religious philosophy (and it is essentially religious) is very high on god, but very low on God, the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer (with emphasis on "the"). I believe it was Francis Shaeffer who said that the most meaningless word in the English language is the word god (spelled with a small "g," and the significant word in the English language is the word God (spelled with a capital "G").

The New Age - or Postmodern - view of man is directly associated with their view of God. Postmodern, or New Age religious movements have rejected post-Darwinian atheistic evolution in favor of pre-Darwinian Pantheism (or Monism - all is one and one is all, I'm god, you're god, everything is god - there is just one entity).

The New Age view of man must, of necessity, impact their view of morality. If God is not the source of your existence, you will never have to stand before Him to give account of your deeds. Morality is determined by a majority opinion or a majority vote. Situation ethics and moral relativity are essential doctrines of this postmodern view. Therefore, to them, the worst thing you can do is to say that they are wrong in what they do.

Pagan religions also have a distorted view of man. In the first place, if they worship a false god (Islam, Hinduism) or hold to a false view of the true God (Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses), they will quite naturally hold a warped view of man.

The Scriptural view of man is revealed throughout the Word of God, beginning with his creation in the image of God, to the Fall, God's provision for redemption through His Messiah - Jesus Christ, Christian ethics, Sanctification, and ultimate Glorification. Paul wrote, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet

sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, NAS). Man is sinful and rebellious but God loves him and seeks to save him.

VI. SIN

A. REALITY OF SIN: SIN BY ANY NAME

Sin is called by many names in the Bible:

1. Sin - to miss the mark.
2. transgression - to step across the line.
2. Iniquity - to be twisted, crooked.
3. Wickedness.
4. Offense.
5. Disobedience.
6. Lawlessness.
7. Rebellion.

But the word "sin" is most often used to describe rebellion against God. The Lord used the word "sin" in warning Cain: "If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it" (Gen. 4:7).

B. DEFINITION

The word "sin" literally means to "miss the mark" or to fall short of the target. Sin, then, is falling short of the mark (goal, standard, purpose) God has set for each individual. It means to miss the mark by an act of rebellion, (commission) or by negligence (omission). Who has fallen short? Paul said, "All have sinned and come (fall) short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

C. THE SOURCE OF SIN

There are three sources of temptation to sin: Satan, the world, and the flesh. Satan, the devil, tempted the first man through the serpent (Gen. 3). He tried to deceive Job, and he even tried to get Jesus to alter His plan and serve him.

D. NATURE OF SIN

Sin is rebellion against God - it is a deliberate act of rebellion against God (even a sin of omission is against God). You may be guilty of an injustice against your neighbor, or a felony against the state, but a transgression of the law of God is sin. David knew that his sin was against God - "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51).

Now, what about those who joke about sin? Read Pro. 14:9 and fill in the blank:

"_____ make a mock at sin."

E. SIN IS UNIVERSAL

"For there is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings 8:46).

Complete I John 1:10: "If we say that we have not _____, we make Him a _____ and His _____ is not in us."

Where do you find the Scripture, "All have sinned..."? _____

F. THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

The unpardonable sin is defined as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy means to speak evil against. The unpardonable sin is to attribute the work of the Lord to the devil, and seems to imply that a person can willfully blind himself to the light (truth) until he reaches a point that he is spiritually blind. It may seem too general, but it really is fair to say that no Christian has committed this sin and no lost person who is concerned about his condition has Committed it.

G. THE WAGES OF SIN

1. "The wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6.23).

2. Ezekiel said, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." No one can cleanse himself of sin. Christ is the only hope.

VI. SALVATION

STATEMENT

"Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes Regeneration, Sanctification; and Glorification.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning -rom sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Saviour and Lord. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

B. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual perfection through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

C. Glorification is the consummation of salvation and is the final blessed abiding state of the redeemed." Baptist Faith and Message.

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

The Lord has provided but one means of salvation, whether we call it a plan, method; or provision" For by grace are ye saved 'through faith; and that not of yourself, it is the gift of God" (Eph.2:8). Some terms may be of help in this study.

A. TERMS

ATONEMENT: It may seem like an oversimplification, but in essence the word means just what it says - at-one-ment. It means to reconcile or to make a reconciliation (Lev. 6:30). The basic meaning is to make two one, to reconcile a difference between two, or to remove something that separates two persons.

Atonement may be attributed to the love of God. God is love (I John 4:8; 16). He is the source of love (4:10). Hershell Hobbs says, "for His love to be complete required someone to be the object of His love who could, in turn, return it. Sin, therefore, broke the fellowship of love between God and man." God is a righteous God and the relationship between God and man must be a righteous one. God cannot ignore man's sin. Some-one must remove that which separates man from God. This breach between God and man could only be solved by God. And His answer is Jesus Christ. "There is no other name known among men whereby you must be saved."

CONVERSION: Conversion means a turning; a change of course; an about face. There are two very important aspects to man's conversion, One is "repentance;" the other is "faith."

REPENTANCE: Repentance follows conviction, for no one can repent Until he is convicted of the need to repent. But it must be noted that repentance is more than conviction, Many are convicted of sin who do not repent, but no one is going to repent until he is convicted that there is sin in his life.

Repentance is more than sorrow for sin; more than turning over a new leaf, It is an inner experience with the Lord at which time the individual becomes a new person. Of course there will be outward manifestations of the inner change. True repentance is essential to salvation because "all have sinned..." Repentance is a turning from sin and its consequences to God and His blessings.

FAITH.The faith that saves is faith in Jesus Christ. Faith and repentance go hand in hand. Paul preached "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21).

Find Hebrews 11:1 and fill in the following blanks:

"Now, faith is the _____ of things hoped for, the _____ of things not seen."

Faith involves belief, acceptance, and surrender. Faith and repentance are inseparable and interrelated. The first steps in the conversion experience are repentance toward

God and faith in Jesus Christ. Saving faith is absolute trust in Jesus Christ in which the individual commits all to Him. Satan believes God exists, but he does not trust in Him and he has not committed himself to God through Jesus Christ. Saving faith is a trust which results in everlasting life - we are justified once for all time. There are those who reject the doctrine of Security of Believers, but it is a simple fact that the faith that falters before the finish was faulty from the first.

JUSTIFICATION. Justification means to be declared just, or righteous. Salvation is more than just conversion, God not only saves the soul from hell, He restores the sinner to divine favor; He treats the new born Christian as though he had never sinned.

There are three basic teachings about Justification.

1. Justification by works (Gal. 2~16).
2. Justification by works plus grace, Some accept a theory of works and grace (Rom. 11:6).
3. Baptists accept Justification by grace (Eph. 2:8).

ADOPTION. God does more than forgive and justify. He adopts the believe into His own family and makes him a child of God.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (Rom. 8:15, NAS).

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26, NAS).

SANCTIFICATION. Sanctification means to be set apart, consecrated, dedicated, It is quite literally, growing in the Christian experience (from the time of regeneration until glorification).

ULTIMATE SALVATION IN THREE STAGES. J. Clyde Turner ONCE WROTE, "There is an initial experience - regeneration; a growing experience - sanctification; and a culminating experience - glorification." It is salvation from the guilt of sin, and salvation from the power of sin, and finally, salvation from the presence of sin" (From a Gospel Tract).

B. THE WAY TO ABUNDANT LIFE

According to the Word of God

I. You are God's creation. "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him" (Gen. 1:27).

II. God loves you. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

III. You have sinned. "For all have sinned , and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

IV. The wages of sin is death (Rom. 8:23). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:20).

V. You can be saved. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Paul wrote, in Romans 10:9-10:
if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

VI. You can be saved now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

C. GOD'S PROVISION SIMPLY STATED

1. You have sinned, Rom. 3:23
2. You are lost, Rom. 6:23
3. God loves you, Romans 5:8
4. God will save you, Rom. 10:9-13
5. God will keep you, John 10:28.

THE LITTLE GOSPEL. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? In the space below, tell how you would go about leading someone to faith in Jesus Christ.

QUESTION: WHY? Why does God bother with man?

VII. THE CHURCH

STATEMENT

"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body of baptized believers who are associated by cove~ant in the faith and fellow -ship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, committed to His teachings, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Church is an autonomous body, operating through democratic processes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. In such a congregation members are equally responsible. Its Scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages" (Baptist Faith and Message)

A. DEFINITION

A definition of the church may be very involved and often leaves a lot to be desired. The church, in the local sense, is a body of baptized believers of equal rank, bound together by a common faith in Jesus Christ, A desire to grow in the Christian experience, and a genuine compassion for the lost. This is a very inadequate but it does give us a beginning point. Now consider these observations:

1. The word translated "church" in the New Testament is ekklesia, meaning "those who are called out", or an assembly. It is used 115 times in the New Testament and at least 92 times it refers to the local church. The other references seem to refer more to church in a general sense. In this sense the church refers to all believers everywhere. But in this study we will deal more with the local church.
2. The church grew out of the redemptive mission and work of Jesus Christ. The church is a redemptive society.
3. The church is the body of Christ and He is the head of the church.

B. FOUNDATION

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ. Where do we get that idea? See Matthew 16:15-18, where Jesus asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?"

SIMON PETER: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

JESUS: "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it (emphasis added).

Simon is called a small rock (petros) or a fragment of a rock. But the foundation upon which Jesus built was (petra) a ledge rock, or a foundation stone. The church's foundation is not Peter but the experience in which one comes to know Jesus Christ as Savior and the profession of that faith under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This is only possible through the revelation of God. It is upon this experience that the church is founded. With this foundation the church can beat down the gates of Hades. The gates are defensive, and therefore the church is seen as aggressive and offensive.

C. OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

1. General Officers in the New Testament.

In the New Testament, apostles, prophets, and evangelists (I Cor. 12:28,29; Ephesians 4:11) do not seem to have been officers in the local church but exercised a great influence on the overall church.

2. Local Church Officers in the New Testament.

a. PASTOR. "The most significant officer in the New Testament as connected with a local church was that of pastor. There are three terms used in the New Testament for that office - pastor, elder, and bishop. In Acts 20, in the account of Paul's meeting with the elders of the church at Ephesus, in verse 17, they are called "elders," while in verse 28 Paul calls them "bishops" (As). The verb translated "feed: it' verse 28 means to tend as a shepherd, act as shepherd. This is the verb corresponding to the noun that is translated "pastor." So here in one passage, the same men are called "elders" and "bishops" and they are exhorted to "pastor" the flock. Again, in Titus 1:5,7, Paul uses the terms "elders" and "bishops" to apply to the same office. In I Peter 5:1,2, Peter addresses the "elders" and exhorts them to "pastor" or "shepherd" the flock" (Connors).

b. DEACONS. Deacons were the second class of officers in the New Testament church. The choosing of the seven in Acts 6 seems to have been the origin of the office, even though they were not called deacons. The qualifications of deacons were much the same as those of pastors. See I Tim. 3:8ff for qualifications for deacons.

c. OTHER OFFICERS: While pastors and deacons are the only officers of a local church clearly referred to in the New Testament, it is possible, even probable that there were other officers, or at least individuals performing specific tasks for the church. The election of these other officers can be justified on the ground of necessity. Three things are essential for the officers elected to serve in the local church. First, they must be mature believers who are well grounded in the Word of God. Second, they must be led by the Holy Spirit. Third, they should use common sense and judgement in carrying out the task committed to us by our Lord.

Consider the following officers and see if their election can be justified in the light of the New Testament. Briefly note their responsibilities.

1. Clerk

2. Treasurer

3. Trustee

4. Sunday School Director

5. Discipleship Training Director

6. WMU Director

D. GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

There are many forms of church government and different churches subscribe to different systems, or forms. Some are autocratic, others use the presbyterian method (govern by committee), and still others are run by a hierarchy. Baptists universally subscribe to the democratic form of government, but in reality, many Baptist churches are governed by committee (presbyterian form) - they are run by deacons or church council. The ideal is a theocratic form of government, in which the church conducts its business in a democratic manner after having received a sense of direction from the Holy Spirit.

Baptists also subscribe to the autonomy of the local church. Most Baptists hold uncompromisingly to this policy in denominational relationships. Southern Baptists cooperate in an effort to honor the Great Commission and to minister to those in need. Local churches cooperate on three levels in this ministry: the Association, the state Baptist Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention (since 1845). The lifeline of missions among cooperating Southern Baptists is the Cooperative Program (since 1925). Each Southern Baptist church is self-governed and the form of self government is democratic (ideally, theocratic) the membership being of equal rank.

A study of the book of Acts and the Pauline Epistles points to this form of government in the New Testament church. They were self-governing and democratic. We glean a lot of the information we have about the government of the local church in the New Testament from passages like those dealing with the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:22; Galatians 2. See also I Cor. 5).

W. T. Connor said, "we believe that it (democratic government) is essential to a true church. No other form of organization is consistent with a spiritual religion, and any other form of organization tends toward a formal and sacramental religion. To the extent that the church departs

-from a democratic organization and government, to that extent does it cease to be Christian in its principles and life."

But What about the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention? The convention is the servant of the churches and never dictates policy to the local church. Each church participates on a voluntary basis in the programs and mission of the convention. The good news is that no one can tell a Baptist church what to do. The bad news is that this often includes God Himself!

E. PARLIAMENTARY LAW

Since the business of the church is attended to in an assembly, or "business meeting" and since business meetings of this nature must be conducted in an orderly and democratic manner, there must be some recognized rules by which the assembly will be governed. "Parliamentary Law is generally understood to be that system of rules by which deliberative assemblies govern themselves" (Kerfoot). Robert's Parliamentary Law is an excellent book to follow, as is Kerfoot.

F. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS?

1. THE FIRST REQUIREMENT. Conors stresses, "Only those should be received into the church membership who give credible evidence that they have received Christ as Saviour and Lord." The New Testament is clear in this matter. In Acts those who came into the church are mentioned in such a way as to make it clear that they voluntarily received the Word repented of their sins, and believed in Christ as Saviour (Acts 2:41ff; 4:4; 13:48; 16:32-34). It must be emphasized here that Baptists do not hold to the thesis that salvation comes from church membership, Baptism, or the Lord's Supper. Church membership is for those who have already been saved. Baptism is an outward manifestation of the inward experience that occurs when one is born again, a symbol of the individual's having died with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6). The Lord's Supper, like baptism, has no significance except to those who have already become Christians. Salvation is by God's grace, through man's faith (Eph. 2:8f) - a faith which he received through God. Grace is not handed down through sacraments, ordinances, and church membership, but by God when an individual trusts in Jesus Christ..

2. BAPTISM A REQUIREMENT. Baptism is essential - not to salvation, but church membership. The mode of baptism in the New Testament was emersion and that is the only mode of baptism Baptists can receive or advocate. Paul assumes that all Christians have been baptized in his argument in Romans 6:ff.

G. HOW WE RECEIVE MEMBERS.

1. BY PROFESSION OF FAITH. The individual gives credible evidence that he has received Christ as Lord and Savior and following the approval of the membership is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. BY CHURCH LETTER. The individual comes forward during the invitation indicating his desire to become a member of the church, giving assurance that he has previously accepted Jesus as Savior and that he has been baptized by emersion into another Baptist Church. The church votes to accept him by letter and the clerk sends a request for that person's letter to the church he previously joined.

3. STATEMENT. In the event that a person desires membership in the church and gives evidence that he has been saved in the past and that he has been affiliated with a Baptist church, and for some reason cannot obtain a letter, the church may accept him on statement. An example would be a man who joined a church that was later destroyed by fire or a storm. The records were destroyed and possibly the church was not built back. You may give other examples....

H. HOW WE LOSE MEMBERS.

1. BY LETTER. The church votes to grant a letter when requested by another church. Under score ANOTHER CHURCH - letters are not normally granted to an individual. There have been some exception to this practice. Stories of individuals who requested and were granted church letters when moving to another part of the country were common in the first part of the Twentieth Century, but one seldom hears of the practice any more. Why? Because it is a church letter and not an individual letter. Many of the people to whom a letter was granted kept it at home in a trunk instead of joining another church after they moved - they just couldn't find a church like the church back home!

QUESTION: Would you vote to receive a person who has his letter with him when he asks for membership in the church? Why?

2. BY DEATH. Speaks for itself. The church may have many members who might as well be dead

as for as worship, stewardship, ministry, and witnessing are concerned, we do not remove them from the church rolls until they are actually dead.

3. BY EXPULSION. I have been Moderator of two Baptist Associations, Vice-Moderator of two, and served in various positions in associations for many years. I have been receiving the official minutes from the association where I served for forty years, and I do not recall ever seeing a notation that any church in any of those associations have ever lost a member by expulsion during those years. But several years ago my wife was given a copy of the minutes that had been in her grandfather's possession for many years. We were surprised to see a category listed on the associational chart in the minutes for "Members Lost By Expulsion." Several churches had numbers listed under their name in that category.

Does a church have the right to dismiss a member who refuses to repent of his sins - who deliberately commits open sins of such a nature that he hinders the work of the church and makes it a joke in the community? Better yet, does the church have the obligation to dismiss a member under certain circumstances? Turn to the second chapter of Revelation and read the letters to the churches at Pergamos and Thyatira. Now how would you answer that question?

VIII. THE ORDINANCES

STATEMENT

Christian baptism Is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour the believer's death to sin, the burial of the Cd life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming." Matt. 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2: 41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; I Cor. 10:16, 21; 11:32-29.

A. BAPTISM

Believers are "Buried with Him by baptism" (Romans 6:4).

In an old Gospel tract entitled, *Salvation Symbolized*, the late R. G. Lee is pictured on the cover preparing to baptize a young lady. On page 2, he says, "to symbolize means to reproduce a reality in terms of sight. The reality of salvation is symbolized in baptism, the initial ordinance of the New Testament church." On page 3, he adds, "Baptism reproduces, in terms of sight, Calvary's cross, Christ's death on that cross, Christ's burial after his death, his resurrection the third day after the burial. Standing for the cross, representing the empty tomb, baptism is the sublime memorial of Christ's burial and resurrection."

Baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Christ died for our sins . . .he was buried...he rose again according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3-4). Jesus had no sins of his own to bury, but he had the sins of the world to bury. His baptism portrays His assuming the responsibility for man's sins. It visualized His vicarious death.

Baptism symbolizes the death and resurrection of the believer. Baptism cannot save, but it symbolizes the experience that has taken place in the heart of the believer. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). Charles Haddon Spurgeon stated, "Baptism is the mark of distinction between the Christian and the world. It very beautifully sets forth the death of the baptized person to the world. Professedly, he is no longer of the world; he is buried to it; and he rises to a new life." Burial in the water shows death to the world, sin, self, the devil. The believer who is dead to the world is alive to Christ, to truth, to agape love, to others. The mode of baptism is immersion. Jesus was baptized by immersion. The Ethiopian eunuch went with Philip down into the water (Acts 8:38). Don and Carol Antley visited their son, Michael, who decided to take advantage of an opportunity to teach a year in Austria following graduate work. Michael told them that ninety-nine percent of all church members in Austria are Roman Catholic. After speaking to a group about his beliefs, he found that there were totally amazed that Baptists baptize adults. "We were baptized when we were babies," they said.

Only baptism by immersion can symbolize the death) burial, and resurrection. Only in this manner can we be "buried with him by baptism." It is also significant that the Greek word for baptism meant to take beneath the surface and bring forth again. The closest English word is the word to dip.

Baptism is an outward manifestation of an inward experience. A believer is baptized, not for salvation, but because he is saved.

B. THE LORD'S SUPPER

Luke 22: 7- 20

1. WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER.

There are many different theories about the Supper of our Lord. Two of the most widely known are the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran. Roman Catholics hold the theory of transubstantiation, which teaches that when the priest consecrates the bread and the wine they are converted into the substance of the flesh and blood of Christ. According to this theory those who take the elements of the Supper are literally Drinking His blood and eating His flesh.

Lutherans hold the theory of consubstantiation, which rejects the Catholic theory but affirms that Christ is present "in, with, and under," the substance of the bread and wine. Baptists believe the Lord's Supper is symbolic in its significance. The Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ for our sins. The bread represents the broken body and the juice (fruit of the vine) represents the blood that was shed for our sins. Paul points out that as often as we eat this bread and drink this wine we show forth the Lord's death.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:23-26, NAS, emphasis added).

The Lord's Supper is primarily a communion with Christ, but there is a sense in which it is a communion with one another. The Supper was given, not to private individuals, but to an organized group of believers. It is a church ordinance - for believers who have been baptized into the fellowship of the church.

Several of the points made about baptism also apply to the Lord's Supper. Name some of them.

2. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SUPPER OF OUR LORD.

1. When was the ordinance given?
2. To whom was it given?
3. What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
4. How often should it be taken?

5. Who should administer the Lord' Supper?
6. How can a person take the Lord's Supper in a sinful manner?
7. What is represented by the bread; and the fruit of the vine?

CONCLUSION

What you have just read is statement about basic Baptist beliefs according to Johnny Sander. Another Baptist may disagree on certain points. That is his privilege, and I will defend with all mi might his right to disagree on certain points. However, there are some essential doctrines on which I refuse to compromise: who God is, what the Bible is, what God says we must do to be saved, and what God expects of every believer. Baptist believe in the priesthood of believers. Every person has the privilege of going to God for himself and in behalf of others. Every member has the freedom to read God's Word and interpret as he feels the Holy Spirit leads him/her.

Early in my ministry I often listened to a local minister who had a daily radio program. He said very little about how lost people may be saved, or how the saved should live, for that matter. He spend most of his time telling people why they should not join a church of another denomination.

His primary target was the Baptist church. He would tell his audience something Baptists teach and assure them he knew what he was talking about because, as he said, "I read it in their manual."

I have been a Southern Baptist since I was twelve years old, and I have missed very few services in all those years. I graduated from a Southern Baptist college (Mississippi College) and from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, which is a Southern Baptist Seminary - the M. Div. Degree requires 98 hours and includes Greek and Hebrew, whereas most masters programs require about one-third as many hours, with no language. I went back and earned the Doctor of Ministry degree. And I have still never seen "the Baptist manual." Have I been looking in the wrong places? No. The simple fact is, there is none.

To Baptists, the Bible is our manual. We have no creed apart form Bible. So, for that reason, I prefer to think and speak of New Testament theology instead of Baptist doctrine. Et there are certain things we hold in common, certain doctrinal distinctives that bind us together in a spirit of cooperation in our efforts to carry out the Great Commission. I have set down in this paper some of the basic beliefs. Most Southern Baptists will subscribe to most of what I have written, but if they want to express it differently, I will invite them to do so - so long as we do not compromise on the basics. God is Who He says He is, the Bible is what He says it is, and Jesus Christ is the only name known among men whereby one can be saved.

It is my prayer that through His Word, and to some degree, through this paper, the Holy Spirit will equipt us to carry out the Great Commission:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:19-20).

It is also my prayer that this study will be used for the edification of the saints and that any church that elects to study these doctrines will be blessed - and that it will be a blessing.

The LORD bless you, and keep you;

The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26, NAS