

Why I Am A Baptist

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Why I Am A Baptist

I am going to talk to you this morning on, "**Why I am a Baptist.**" In the last chapter of Matthew, verses 18-20 you will find these words: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen." My text is found in Matthew 28th chapter, and 20th verse, "**Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.**"

Peter told us "to be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." That is a good reason why every Baptist here today ought to be able to tell why he is a Baptist. Every Baptist ought to be able at any time to give his reasons for being a Baptist: and contrariwise, since the Master never established but one church, every man, who isn't a Baptist ought to be able to give reasons, good and sufficient to satisfy the Lord Jesus at the judgment, why he is not a Baptist. For if the church that Jesus built was a Baptist church, then no churches but Baptist churches are churches

of Christ and every man will have to face the Lord Jesus at the judgment and tell Him why he joined some church founded by an uninspired man, instead of the one founded by the Lord Jesus Himself. There is much talk now-a-days about a community church. Why should not Baptists go in with all others and organize one church in every community? If it were left to us nothing would be more delightful. We like to agree and get along with other people. But it isn't left to us and to our consciences. The Master's plain command to the first church was "to teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Church-membership is not left to your consciences or your whims or your reasonings; it is a matter of loyalty and obedience to Jesus Christ who bought us and saved us with His own precious blood. Conscience is not a standard of right or wrong for any man, for conscience is a creature of education and needs teaching. The conscience of the ignorant, or uninformed would say one church is right or none, and the conscience of the man who is taught would say another. So you see conscience cannot be a standard by which men are to regulate their church-membership. A standard must be that to which all men can come, and which when submitted to will make all men do what the Lord, Himself, says do. That is why Jesus said "teach them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you." The Bible is the standard and men's consciences never get right until they get right with the Bible and then they all agree. The fundamental and distinguishing Baptist doctrine and the one underlying all other Baptist doctrines is this: **"The Bible, the Bible alone, is our only and all sufficient rule of faith and practice."** If you can't find it in the Bible it isn't Baptist doctrine; if it is Baptist doctrine you can find it in the Bible. That is the shibboleth of the message this morning. Our authority for making this our distinguishing teaching is our marching orders, given us by the Lord Jesus; the Head and Founder of the First Baptist church.

The man God sent to make ready a people out of whom the Lord Jesus organized His church was called by God Himself a Baptist. Mat. 3:1. Mark you, he was not called a Baptist because he baptized. He was called a Baptist by the Lord before he ever baptized anybody, before he ever preached a sermon. He was called a Baptist because of the work God sent him to do. Jno. 4:1. His mission was set forth in these words: "Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John." His mission was the same kind of a mission that Baptists have always had. John was a Baptist because his mission was to make and baptize disciples. Baptists are the only folks on earth who are still working at that kind

of a mission—who make men disciples then baptize them and baptize nobody else except disciples, or Christians. John the Baptist baptized Christ and all the twelve apostles and Christ's church is built on them, "Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. 2:20. Since the material for the church Jesus built was made ready by a Baptist preacher it was Baptist material and the church organized out of it was a Baptist church. The church that Jesus called "My Church" was therefore a Baptist church. To that church He gave His marching orders—Mat. 28:18-20. His marching orders are His program for that church and every other Baptist church until He comes again. His orders are very explicit: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Baptists are commanded to teach all things the Lord Jesus has commanded: they are not commanded to teach anything He hasn't commanded. That is why I say Baptist doctrine includes all things commanded and taught and practiced by Christ and His apostles and excludes every thing else. If it isn't in the Bible it isn't Baptist doctrine: if it is Baptist doctrine you can find it in the Bible. Our orders tell us to

go and preach the gospel to every creature: that's why we are Missionary Baptists. A member of this church or any other Baptist church who doesn't believe in missions or who doesn't do something for missions is a hypocrite and disobedient to the last orders of the head of this and every other Baptist church. The Bible tells us that "Jesus made and baptized disciples"—and His orders to us are to "go, make disciples" and then baptize them. "Disciples were called Christians" at Antioch. A disciple is a Christian. The Oxford Bible in Matthew 28:19 gives these words as the literal translation, "teaching all nations, or making Christians of all nations." Jesus baptized none but disciples, or Christians. He commanded us to baptize none but disciples or Christians. For that reason Baptists baptize no infants, no seekers, no inners, no probationers, nobody except those who claim to be Christians; because Jesus, the founder of the first Baptist Church, did not baptize anybody but disciples or Christians. He left us an example and told us to walk in His steps. That is why Baptists are sticklers for regenerated church-membership. Jesus started us that way and told us to "observe all things whatsoever He commanded."

Jesus walked sixty miles to be immersed in the river Jordan by the first Baptist preacher. That explains why Baptists are sticklers for immersion and for Baptist

baptism. They were started that way and the Master told us to do like He said. The Bible, our guide-book, makes baptism so clear and plain that anybody can read it out of the Book, if they want to. That is why so many of the common people are Baptists. I could tell you this morning, if I had the time, how that when there were no Baptists in Germany John G. Oncken, made a Baptist by reading the New Testament, started to England to find a Baptist preacher to baptize him. I. N. Yohannon, a Persian, converted under a Presbyterian Missionary, read the New Testament and came from Persia to New York to get Baptist baptism. In the island of Cuba, Diaz became a Baptist from reading the New Testament. That is why in the state of Parahiba, Brazil, men converted under a Presbyterian Missionary and made Baptists by reading the New Testament, sent for a Baptist preacher in Pernambuco to come up and baptize them. Baptists take the Bible as it reads and don't try to explain it away. The Bible says that John was baptizing in Enon near to Salem because there was much water there. Jno. 3:23. Baptists believe what the Bible says and hunt "much water," when they go to baptize. The Bible says that Jesus came to the Jordan to be baptized of John. Mat. 3:13. That is why Baptists go to the water instead of bringing the water to the candidate. The Bible

says Jesus was baptized in Jordan. Mark 1:9. That is why Baptists baptize in water instead of putting the water on the candidate. Years ago Brother A. J. Preston met a prominent Presbyterian Judge in the city where he was pastor at that time, who said to him, "Have you see the Birmingham morning paper? Did you read where De Witt Talmage immersed a man in the River Jordan the other day?" Bro. Preston said: "Judge I want to ask you one question. How is it that when you read in a daily paper that a Presbyterian preacher in the 19th century baptized a man in the river Jordan, you say he immersed him: and then when you read in the Bible that in the first century a Baptist preacher baptized the Lord Jesus in the river Jordan, you deny that He was immersed?" The Presbyterian Judge has not answered him yet. The Bible says that Philip and the eunuch went down into the water. Acts 8:38. That is why Baptists do it that way today. The Bible describes baptism as a burial and resurrection. Rom. 6:3-4. That is why Baptists insist that immersion only is baptism. The Bible says that Jesus after His baptism came up straightway out of the water. Mark 1:10. It takes "much water," "going to the water," "going into the water," a burial and a resurrection and a "coming out of the water" to make a Bible baptism. That is why Baptists will not have any

other kind. There isn't any other kind in the Bible and Baptists will not accept for doctrines the commandments of men. Mat. 15:9.

The Bible says: "Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God." Rom. 14:12. For that reason Baptists have no god-fathers or god-mothers or sponsors and do not believe in any proxies in religion. We do not baptize babies nor believe in infant membership because that puts a preacher or a priest or an ordinance or a church or a sacrament between the soul and God; and the Bible says "There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." I Tim. 2:5. Baptists believe that infant baptism is a sin against God and against little children; because it takes away from the child the privilege and duty of obeying Jesus for itself in baptism after it has repented and believed in Christ for life and salvation. Because Baptist churches take the Bible as their only rule of faith and practice, they are the only churches that in all their history have never connected salvation with baptism, either for infants or adults; but have always contended that salvation is essential to baptism rather than baptism being essential to salvation. God's order is always salvation first and then baptism. "The Lord added to the church daily the saved." Acts 2:47. Peter gave as a reason for the baptism of the household of

Cornelius that they had already received the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:43-47.

Because the Bible says: "In vain do ye worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9) Baptists do not believe that one church is as good as another and think it makes lots of difference what church you join. Since all other churches except Baptist churches were established by men—to join any of them is to obey the commandments of men and the Bible says "We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29. Baptists do not believe that a wife ought to join the church with her husband unless the Bible teaches what his church teaches, because the Bible says: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." The first loyalty and allegiance of every blood-bought soul is to Jesus Christ and he ought to obey Christ, even if he has to forsake father and mother and wife and children and all kinsmen according to the flesh to follow Christ. Paul said when it came to following Christ "he knew no man after the flesh." A man or woman should follow Christ in the matter of what church he joins, even if in so doing it means a house divided against itself. Mat. 10:34-36.

Baptists reject all other baptisms except Baptist baptism because there is no other

kind in the Bible. Jesus and the twelve apostles had Baptist baptism. For that reason we receive no other except Baptist baptism. To reject Baptist baptism is to follow the Pharisees instead of Jesus. "They rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized of John. Luke 7:30. All rejecters of Baptist baptism are therefore followers of the Pharisees instead of Christ and "despisers of the Church of God," which was built by Jesus out of persons, baptized by the first Baptist preacher. 1 Cor 11:22, 12:28, Acts 1:21-22.

Baptists are a Democratic people. "One is your Master, all ye are brethren," said the Lord Jesus. Mat. 23:8. Baptists have no bosses or overlords. For that reason, Thomas Jefferson got his idea of democracy from a little country Baptist church in Virginia, whose Saturday business meetings he used to attend. While this government is not a pure democracy, but a republic; Baptist churches are pure democracies; that is, "a government of the people and by the people and for the people." They elect their own officers. Peter was no pope or bishop. He called himself a fellow-elder with other Baptist preachers. 1 Pet. 5:1. He did not appoint a successor to Judas Iscariot; but the 120 members of that Jerusalem church nominated two brethren and then after prayer gave their lots and the lot fell upon Matthias. Acts

1:15-26. Peter in Acts 6 did not appoint seven deacons; neither did the apostles as ruling elders or a colleague of bishops elect them, but the twelve called the multitude of the disciples together and they chose the seven deacons. Baptists not only follow the Bible in electing their own officers; but they also track the Scriptures by receiving and dismissing their own members. In Acts 9:26 Paul tried to join the church at Jerusalem, but they refused to receive him because they were not satisfied about his conversion. In Rom. 14:1 Paul tells the church at Rome, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye," showing that the church received folks into its membership. In 1 Cor. 5, Paul tells the church at Corinth to exclude an unworthy member and in 2 Thes. 3:6 the church at Thessalonica is commanded to "Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly." If it isn't in the Bible, it isn't Baptist doctrine; if it is Baptist doctrine, you can find it in the Bible.

For that reason, Baptists believe in Close Communion. Jesus Himself was a close communionist. He did not invite his mother, nor the man in whose house He instituted the Lord's Supper to be present at that supper. How could you have closer communion than that? Our marching orders put salvation and baptism before the Supper. The church at Jerusalem in carrying out its marching orders had first sal-

vation, all that "gladly received his word," then baptism, then church membership, then continuance in the apostles' doctrine, and continuance in church fellowship before getting to the breaking of the bread. Acts 2:41-42. Paul told the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:18-20) quoting the Revised Version, that if there was division or heresy present it was not possible to eat the Lord's Supper. Open communion therefore is an impossibility. Open communion is the eating together of those who are divided into different sects and teach different and oft-times contradictory doctrines. All doctrines that differ from the Bible and the Baptists are heresies, and Paul says if there is division or heresy present it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper. So it is either close communion or it is not the Lord's Supper.

Finally, Baptists believe that if a man is once saved, he is always saved. No doctrine we hold is more abundantly supported by the Scriptures than this one. Jesus said of the man once saved that "he shall never perish;" that he "shall never thirst" and therefore can never go to hell because in hell they do thirst (Luke 16:24); that he shall "in no wise be cast out;" that "neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Paul in Rom. 8:28-30 shows that all that God foreknew will be called, justified and glorified. Beginning back in God's foreknowledge and reaching out be-

yond time to final glorification, Paul plainly says that not a single one that God foreknew would be saved, will ever fail to reach final glorification. Therefore apostasy is impossible. But in Rom. 8:38-39 Paul puts it, if possible, stronger still. He shows that nothing in life "death nor life," nothing in heaven or hell "angels, principalities nor powers," nothing in time "things present nor things to come," nothing in space "height nor depth" and then for fear something had been left out, he adds "nor any other creature," which includes the believer himself, "shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Baptists believe those once saved are always saved, because the Bible says so. Baptists take the Bible alone as their only rule of faith and practice. That is why I am a Baptist. If you can't read it in the Bible it isn't Baptist doctrine; if it is Baptist doctrine you can find it in the Bible.

