



# A BRIEF HISTORY OF BAPTISTS IN THE UNITED STATES

WITH A FOCUS ON CERTAIN DEVIATIONS  
FROM BIBLE DOCTRINES CAUSING THE  
DIVERGENCE OF VARIOUS  
DIFFERENT GROUPS

By Pastor Tony Tirse

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## DEDICATION

First of all, to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, without Whom I am nothing. To my dear mother, Nelsa, who told me of Jesus from a child. And to the love of my life, Mia, my wife, my best friend, and my biggest cheerleader. I am truly humbled and grateful.

# FOREWORD

By  
Dr. Phil Stringer

I am excited to see another book on Baptist heritage in the United States. Baptists have a glorious important American heritage.

More than any other group, Baptists brought religious liberty to a new country. Baptist pastors taught the separation of church and state when almost no other group did so and when there was a tremendous price to pay for such a teaching. In the pulpit, in court rooms, and before legislative bodies they created a national understanding of this precious truth.

Baptists followed pioneers west preaching the gospel, fulfilling the Great Commission, and establishing churches from one end of the new country to another. Their influence was felt everywhere! Baptists emphasized doctrine, produced books and newspapers, pioneered in education, raised the banner for morality and decency, battled modernism and cults, and influenced society in an epic fashion. Baptists first gave the country the concept of large churches with a multitude of outreach and educational ministries.

Baptists influenced political leaders for righteousness - even when they did not want to be influenced. I fear that the last two generations of Baptist young people have not been thoroughly trained in Baptist doctrine, distinctives, and history. Many have left Baptist circles, but they did not realize what they were leaving or what they were getting into. We need a massive and

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powerful return to our Biblical roots and heritage and all that this represents. Our nation and society needs to be reached with these essential and fundamental truths again.

I am also excited to see such a book written by Pastor Tony Tirse. He has demonstrated his commitment to these dynamic Biblical truths both as a Baptist missionary (in the Philippines) and as a Baptist pastor (in the United States).

I look forward to the influence of this book. I trust it will be part of the revival of the teaching of these precious truths and this precious history that I have been praying for!

Dr. Phil Stringer - Vice President - Dayspring Bible College (Quentin Road Baptist Church) Mundelien, Illinois; Vice President - Dayspring Baptist College, Angeles City, Philippines; Vice President - King James Bible Research Council

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest endeavors one can undertake is a thorough study of the Word of God. This author is thankful to God for being given the opportunity, on several occasions, to teach God's Word to various groups of people. In this capacity the author has been forced to study the Bible a bit harder, perhaps, than if he didn't have to teach it. If a teacher is to take the responsibility for the teaching of any subject seriously, that teacher must study the subject thoroughly in order to be able to teach it aptly. It is even more so in the teaching of the Bible and its great doctrines. Another of the greatest endeavors is to undertake a thorough and accurate study of history. Accuracy and proper research is a must in either of these subjects, but when combined, this becomes even greater and more important.

With this in mind, this thesis shall be a concise history of Baptists, with a focus on those in the United States. It shall include those calling themselves Baptist, with a synoptic focus on the divergence in doctrines among many different groups, conventions, associations, fellowships, and unaffiliated independents. It shall also present evidence of the deviation from the historic Baptist Distinctives and certain Bible doctrines among these groups.

Any serious Bible and church history researcher will discover that Baptist people have always been Bible people. Throughout history, since the beginning of the New Testament era, the true disciples of Jesus Christ have been the targets of the cruelest kinds of persecutions this world has ever seen. These disciples

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were burned alive, drowned, fed to lions, torn apart, slain with the sword, hunted and tormented. Not because they were malefactors, nor because they were warmongers. Not because they murdered those they considered their enemies (they did none of those things), but they were persecuted unto blood because they would not deviate from their love and obedience to the Word of God. When the authorities compelled them to take oaths that contradicted what the Bible says, they would not. When possession of a Bible or preaching the true gospel meant imprisonment, torture or death, they would not compromise.

Throughout the New Testament era these true disciples of Jesus Christ held to the fundamentals of the Bible and certain distinctives that set them apart from all other groups. These can be identified as the one group of God's people who has never held any allegiance to any other but the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word. This group has had no other belief or creed, and no other hope than that which is contained within the pages of the Holy Scriptures. There have already been many works written about this group, known throughout history as Waldensians, Albigenses, Paulicians, Anabaptists, Baptists, and other names, that have existed since the time of Christ. Whatever the names this group used, they are today known to church history students as “baptistic” in doctrine, and therefore Baptists, because Baptist doctrine is Bible doctrine.

In this work, the intention is to compare historic Baptists with the history of Baptists in the United States, going back to colonial times. This was when the first Baptists came into the colonies and began to plant Baptist churches, in the 1600s. As

this outline unfolds, it shall briefly focus on the deviation, as time has gone by, from sound Bible doctrine among the different groups and churches identifying as Baptist. Today the identifier commonly used to denote what are supposed to be sound New Testament churches are the terms “Independent Baptist” and “True Baptists.” In this work, those terms shall be used in general, except where groups of these have amalgamated themselves into the various conventions, associations, fellowships, etc. We shall start with a cursory study on the notion of doctrine, as in, what constitutes sound Bible doctrine, and go on from there.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

### **BAPTIST DOCTRINE IS BIBLE DOCTRINE**

The last few hundred years have certainly been interesting times for God's people in the United States of America. There are many facets to this when it comes to churches. There is no shortage of them. There is every type of church, denomination, religion or cult in America. It is a smorgasbord. Yet when it comes to even genuine New Testament churches, there are still a lot to choose from, as far as flavor, style, name, and doctrines are concerned. If this is narrowed further down to "Baptist" churches, there is still a very wide variety out there. There are Southern Baptists, American Baptists, Freewill Baptists, Missionary Baptists, Regular Baptists, Independent Baptists, and the list goes on. Also, not every church that calls itself Baptist is actually a Baptist church doctrinally.

No, "Baptist" is not just a name. There are quite a few that use that name, but that's not what makes a Baptist church. To be a real, actual, historic, New Testament, Bible-believing Baptist is to hold to a set of doctrines. See, Baptist is not just a name, but a set of doctrines. What set of doctrines? Well quite frankly, New Testament doctrines. Now one might say that this is an awfully broad brush. There are so many doctrines in the New Testament, where does one begin? Thus, how does one know that he has the right ones?

Certainly, there are a plenitude of doctrines in the New Testament, but that plenitude is the set itself. Being a Baptist, a true historic Baptist, means holding to the actual historic apostolic New Testament doctrines without adding to them or

subtracting from them in any way. It means to hold to them without modifying any, without adapting any to the times or culture, without avoiding or over-emphasizing any, and without making excuses for, or apologizing for, any. A church that does this, with pastors, preachers, teachers, and a membership that does this, is the biblical-historical definition of a "doctrinally sound New Testament church." This kind of church would be identified, by historic nomenclature, as a Baptist church, in the true sense.

To put it bluntly: Doctrine matters, and sound doctrine makes one a Baptist.

As stated at the beginning, these last few hundred years have been interesting times in America. Not the least of reasons for that being because living now is living in the end of the end times. Yet without digressing, living today is living in interesting times. This is because as far as the churches go, there is such a plethora to choose from. Nevertheless, the vast majority of them, even many who call themselves "Baptist," are proud to declare that doctrine is not important. Some even say that a church cannot be built on doctrine.

Realize that the word "doctrine" basically means "teaching." Teaching is the thing that teaches people about the things people are supposed to know about. For example, teaching on faith. How would one know anything about faith without receiving correct teaching (sound doctrine)? Jesus said in His Great Commission (**Matthew 28:19-20**) *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 always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

Paul the Apostle instructs (teaching, doctrine!) the young preacher, Timothy, in **II Timothy 2:2**, *And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.* How would Timothy "commit" the doctrines of Paul to faithful men? By teaching, by doctrine.

As a matter of fact, this is so important that the word "teach," "teacher(s)" "teaching," and "doctrine" occur 125 times in the New Testament. The first mention of the word doctrine in the New Testament is associated with Jesus Himself when ...*the people were astonished at his doctrine.* (**Matthew 7:28**)

In this age in the United States where doctrine seems diminished and so many are bored or even offended at the mention of it, surely this is the time to be more steadfast on doctrine than at any time since this nation was founded. Any Church in America calling itself Baptist must take doctrine very seriously. Pastors should take it very seriously. Pastors must teach it, preach it, and by the grace of God, the people of God should love it and be riveted by it. Jesus said in **John 7:17**, *If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the King of His doctrine. This doctrine, as found in His Word, will only be useful to His people when they rightly divide it, apply it, and obey it in their daily lives. The United States, of

all nations, is the place where God set up for His people in this age to be faithful in it. As Gibbs writes,

“Early Americans also believed in the Kingship of Christ. This was not some minor theological doctrine... The early colonists believed their land was a gift from God.”<sup>1</sup>

Understanding this, Baptists continued in America what they had always done: Be faithful and consistent in the gospel. When Baptists begin to be infected with the idea that the gospel is not the general responsibility of all the church members, but for the “select few” in church leadership, it will have disastrous results. Not only is preaching the gospel the responsibility of every Baptist church member, it is the central focus for all doctrine, just as Christ Himself is. One cannot have the true gospel without sound doctrine, and one cannot have sound doctrine without the true gospel. As Pastor Matthew Hines writes,

“Christ did not give His Word to scholars, critical thinkers, philosophers, or academia. Christ entrusted His Word to the New Testament church. Teaching, preaching, and promoting the Gospel of Jesus Christ must be the focal point of any church.”<sup>2</sup>

So it follows, a departure from sound doctrine leads to a departure from the gospel, and a departure from the gospel leads to a departure from sound doctrine. All of this affects the nation.