

Lesson 1—Being a Baptist

I. Introduction: The Importance of Knowing What You Believe

- **Key Scripture:**

- **1 Peter 3:15 (NET)**

¹⁵But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess.

- **Illustration:** If you had to stand in a courtroom to defend your faith today, how confident would you be?
 - **Discussion:** What are all the reasons to have a clear understanding of what you believe?
-

II. What is a Baptist?

- **Misconception:** Baptist is just a denominational title.
- **Truth:** Being a Baptist means holding to a set of **biblical doctrines and practices** that define the faith.
- **Comparison to Other Groups:**
 - **Roman Catholicism & Orthodox Churches:** Authority of the Church & traditions over Scripture.
 - **Protestant Denominations:** Often hold to creeds & confessions rather than local church autonomy.
 - **Bible Way Baptist Church:** As much as possible, we seek to base everything on the **Bible alone**, not tradition, councils, or outside authorities.

The Baptist Distinctives (Preview)

- **Biblical Authority**
 - **Autonomy of the Local Assembly**
 - **Priesthood of the Believer**
 - **Two Ordinances**
 - **Individual Soul Liberty/Responsibility**
 - **Saved, Water-immersed Membership**
 - **Two Offices**
 - **Separation**
-

III. The Structure of Churches

A. Three Types of Churches by Subject of Baptism

1. **Unbelievers**

- Paedobaptists (Infant Baptism)
- Non-Believer Baptists
- Coercive-Baptists (Forced Baptism)

2. **Believer's Baptism**

- Spirit-Only Baptists (No Water Baptism)

3. Believer's Baptism

- Confessional-Baptists
- Voluntary-Baptists

B. Four Types of Churches by Mode of Baptism

1. Spirit Immersion by Jesus Only
 2. Water Sprinkling by Man / Spirit Immersed by Jesus
 3. Water Pouring by Man / Spirit Immersed by Jesus
 4. Water Immersed by Man / Spirit Immersed by Jesus ([Matthew 3:16](#); [Acts 8:36-39](#))
- **Discussion:** Why do we practice baptism by immersion and not sprinkling or pouring?
-

IV. The Lord's Supper: Symbolic or Sacramental?

Three Views of the Lord's Supper

1. Transubstantiation (*Catholic View*) – Bread & Wine become the actual body & blood of Christ.
 2. Consubstantiation (*Lutheran View*) – Christ is present in, under, and around the elements.
 3. Remembrance (Symbolic) View ([1 Corinthians 11:24-25](#)) – Elements *represent* Christ's body and blood.
- Bible Way Baptist Church believes the Lord's Supper is a memorial, not a means of grace or salvation.
 - **Discussion:** How does viewing the Lord's Supper as symbolic impact our understanding of salvation?
-

V. Church Government & Leadership

A. Three Types of Church Government

1. Prelatical (Hierarchy System)
 - Led by popes, bishops, or councils (e.g., Catholic & Anglican churches).
2. Presbyterian (Elders Rule)
 - Governed by synods or church assemblies (e.g., Presbyterian & Lutheran churches).
3. Congregational (Independent)
 - Governed by the local members (e.g., Baptists, Bible churches—[Matthew 18:15-17](#); [Acts 6:1-6](#))

B. Biblical Leadership Structure

- Pastors (Bishops/Elders) – Shepherd the church ([1 Timothy 3:1-7](#)).
 - Deacons – Serve the church ([Acts 6:1-7](#)).
 - The Congregation – Final earthly authority ([Matthew 18:17](#)).
 - **Discussion:** Why is it important that no outside authority controls our church?
-

VI. Understanding Salvation: Faith Alone in Christ Alone

A. The Work of Christ

1. Partial Payment

- Some churches teach that Christ's sacrifice must be supplemented by good works, sacraments, or penance.

2. Full Payment for the Elect Only

- Teaches that Christ only died for a select group, not all people.

3. Full Payment for All (1 John 2:2)

- Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all, but only effective for those who believe.

B. How is Salvation Received?

1. By Sacraments & Good Works

2. By Faith + Good Works

3. By Faith in Christ Alone (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- Salvation is a **gift**, not something earned.
 - **Discussion:** What are the implications of adding works or sacraments to salvation?
-

VII. The Purpose of the Church

• Key Scripture:

- **Matthew 28:19-20 (NET)**

¹⁹Therefore *go* and **make disciples** of all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰*teaching* them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

The Church Exists to Fulfill These Purposes:

1. **Evangelism** – Sharing the Gospel.
2. **Edification** – Teaching & Discipleship.
3. **Worship** – Honoring God.
4. **Fellowship** – Encouraging believers.
5. **Service** – Ministering to others.

- **Discussion:** How can new members participate in these purposes?
-

VIII. Application & Reflection

A. Discussion

- Why do different churches have different beliefs?
- What makes Bible Way Baptist Church distinct from others?

- How can you begin applying these biblical truths to your life?

B. Next Steps

1. **Confirm Your Salvation** – Have you personally trusted in Christ alone?
2. **Consider Baptism (If Not Yet Baptized)** – Are you ready to publicly declare your faith?
3. **Commit to Learning More** – Continue attending classes and studying the Bible.