Why We're Baptist

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[0:00] Amen. Well, it's good to see you here tonight for Elevate. We're concluding our series on! Denominations, doctrines, and the deceived, and we're looking at tonight why we're! Baptist. This is the last sermon in this series, and so I hope this series has been helpful for you, but tonight I want to kind of just positively state what we believe. And so you've been getting our theology through the back door as we go, as we disagree and interact with other denominations and other groups that are part of the deceived, but tonight I just want to take an opportunity to positively state what we believe from the Bible. And I recognize that as you grow up and as you become adults, that not all of you will end up in a Baptist church. Depending on where you're at in our country or our state, you may just have to find a Bible-believing church somewhere. And so my highest desire for you, what I labor for in you, is that you would be Christians above all else, that you would believe in Christ. Secondly, I want you to be in a Bible-believing church, a place where

God's Word is proclaimed. And thirdly, my desire for you would be that you end up in a Baptist church that believes the Bible. That's the highest form of Christianity, in my opinion. And there's several different ways to be Baptist, and some of these are true of people within our own church. You can be Baptist by circumstance, by convenience, or by conviction. And so being Baptist by circumstance would look like, you know, you're a Baptist because your parents are Baptist, because your grandparents are Baptist. This is just kind of what you've known, what you've grown up in. You wouldn't be anything else because this is what your family has been historically. Or you can be Baptist by convenience.

You're just looking for a place that preaches the Bible, and you happen to go to a Baptist church here in Mustang because this is where the Bible is preached. And so you can be Baptist by circumstance or convenience, or the best way to be Baptist would be by conviction, by saying, this isn't just what my family has been. This isn't just where the Bible is taught. Convictionally, I see this in the Bible.

I see that being Baptist is the most biblical way to behave as a church, to behave as a Christian. And so I'd hope that all of you would be in that third category of Baptist by conviction, and that you'd be convinced from God's Word that this is right. And so I want to go through our normal outline for tonight of looking at the background of Baptists, looking at some positives and negatives tonight. We'll look at some negatives. And then thirdly, we'll look at specific beliefs. So first, Baptist background, the Baptist background. And Baptists actually have debated origins. We fight over when exactly we started. Some people would claim that we started with John the Baptist.

That's not right. We can't trace our line back to John the Baptist. He certainly baptized people. He certainly would be a part of the Baptist church, but we can't say he was a Baptist. That's not a good argumentation. Another place of origin that people say Baptists came from would be a group called the Anabaptists. The Anabaptists. This group originated in the 1500s in Switzerland, and that term Anabaptist just means to baptize again. And so we certainly would have that in common with them. [3:26] They're saying we should only baptize people who have faith, so we should not baptize babies. And because of that, they were persecuted. But certainly on that point, we would agree. But the Anabaptists kind of drifted into all kinds of other things that we wouldn't agree with. So they became extreme pacifists, not involved in any government positions or government agencies whatsoever. And they also kind of dabbled in some anti-Trinitarianism heresies. So we wouldn't align with them. We don't come from them. Where we come from is a group called the English Separatists. The English Separatists. This group formed in the 1600s. It broke off from the Church of England over the issue of baptism. And so they were in the Church of England in the 1600s and said, we shouldn't baptize babies. We think the New Testament teaches that only those who have faith in Christ should be baptized. And so they were persecuted by the Church of England, ended

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up fleeing to the United States in search of religious freedom. And so that's how Baptists began to exist and then got to the United States. And so this goes back to the early 1600s in England and to the late 1600s in the United States. You can go to Providence, Rhode Island, and there you will find the First Baptist

Church of America. What a sick name that is. First Baptist Church of America. Still there. You can take tours of it. It's a beautiful historic building. It's the First Baptist Church on American soil, and it goes back to the late 1600s. Our church in particular is part of a denomination called the SBC, the Southern Baptist Convention. And it's actually the largest denomination in the United States that we find ourselves a part of. And so we're grateful for the cooperation we have among other Baptist churches in the United States. And there are lots of Baptist churches around. There's one on pretty much every corner in Mustang. So I'm not going to list all of them because they're everywhere in Mustang and in Oklahoma and even throughout the South. As I said, it's the largest denomination in the United States. So secondly, let's get into some positives and negatives. Normally we just list the positives and the negatives we kind of go back and forth on in specific beliefs. But obviously tonight for our specific beliefs, we agree with them. And so I do want to be fair and take a chance to also speak on some things that I think we could get better at, some things that we're weak on that I think we could strengthen as a church and as a denomination in particular. So first, the positives.
I've got three positives of being Baptist or three positives of the Baptist. Number one, it embraces Orthodox Christianity. It embraces Orthodox Christianity. And when I say Orthodox Christianity, think things like the Nicene Creed, which we just sang about, think the deity of Christ, the death and resurrection of Christ, salvation through faith in Christ alone, basic Christian gospel stuff Baptists agree with. Number two, Baptists are evangelistic. Baptists are evangelistic.
Baptists historically have been focused on faith and repentance. They've been focused on repentance and faith in Christ. And so Baptists have been highly evangelistic. And when I say evangelistic, think in terms of our states, our Oklahoma and also the United States of sharing the gospel with our neighbors, sharing the gospel with our coworkers, evangelism, kind of individual people sharing the gospel with others focused on repentance and faith in Christ. Number three, the third positive is Baptists are missional, missional. And so when we think evangelism, think of like one-on-one sharing of the gospel. When we think missional, think of sending people out, crossing language barriers, crossing cultural barriers, leaving their country of origin to go to another country to preach the gospel there. So that's the distinction between evangelism and missions, even though the message would be the same. But historically, Baptists, we've been burdened for the lost around the world. And the SBC, our denomination, has been one of the most prolific missions sending agencies in the history of the world. It's called the IMB, the International Mission Board. And the beauty of it is that if you want to be a missionary, if you want to give your life for proclaiming the gospel in another country where Jesus is not known, after you go through their vetting process, after you have some theological education, the IMB will fully fund you to go out.
And the beauty of that is you can spend your time solely focused on doing the work of missions and not having to come back once a year or once every other year to raise support and raise your own money.
[8:17] They will take care of that so that you can focus on the work of missions. And so Baptists have been incredibly missional throughout their history here in the United States. Now, three negatives, three negatives.

Number one, lack of oversight. Lack of oversight. And so convictionally, Baptist churches are what we'd call autonomous or they have freedom. There's no board over an individual church. There's no ecclesiastical authority presiding over individual churches, which I think is right. And I think that's biblical.
But with that lack of oversight comes the ability for individual churches or missionaries to kind of drift from Baptist ideology, to drift into things that we wouldn't necessarily support. And so if a church goes into error or if a missionary goes into error, the process for correcting them or fixing that is very slow if it ever happens. And so I think this lack of oversight is a negative, not necessarily theologically, but just practically in terms of correcting error that's coming out of our denomination, whether in the States or abroad. And so Baptist churches in the United States are kind of like gas stations. You've got the same concepts, whatever gas station you go to, but there can be wildly different on the inside. So they're all called Baptist churches, just like they're all called gas stations. But you go in and depending on who's running it, it might look completely different from another one

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you're familiar with. So number two, second negative is prone to pragmatism. That's a $5 word there, pragmatism. It's P-R-A-G-matism. Matism. And so what is pragmatism? Well, pragmatism is the idea of like, hey, we're just going to do what works. And so, yeah, this may not be exactly in the Bible, but it's working.
Like, how can you deny that God is at work through this? And so, yeah, it's a little bit different. Maybe it's weird, but look how many people are showing up. And so you're just basing everything on results. And so, hey, this is a little bit unconventional, but look how many people are showing up for it. Look at how many people are hearing the gospel from it. And so this can kind of lead you on a dangerous path of being able to, being willing to do anything you want, so long as it gets results. Number three, Baptists tend to disconnect from history. They tend to disconnect from history.
[10:48] And so in the last 100, 200 years, I think Baptists in America have wrongly kind of detached themselves from history, saying like, yeah, we're kind of unique and different. And so we just have our Bible and and that's it. And now the Bible is the supreme authority over the church. The Bible is sufficient.

The Bible is enough, but also we're not detached from history in terms of what we believe. We have a rich heritage, not just going back to the 1600s, but even going back to the apostles of what they believed and what they taught. And so while the Bible is the supreme authority over the church, we should be careful to honor those who have gone before us and been faithful in Christ and not just throw them out because they're not in the Bible. And so they're irrelevant. And so I think that's a negative that we can tend to disconnect from history. Now, some of history is bad, obviously, but we need to be aware of what's gone on historically. So those are three positives and three negatives. Now, third main point, I want to get into specific beliefs, specific beliefs. And I want to take you on a line of thoughts tonight that kind of goes from the inside out. And so what we believe about our church depends on what we believe about individual salvation and what we believe about individual salvation depends on what we think about the new covenant. And so I want to take you along that line from the inside out tonight, thinking about the new covenant and thinking about salvation and think about what that means for the church. And underneath that third main heading of the church, we'll have a bunch of subheadings to think about because under the heading of the church is kind of where we get all of our Baptist distinctives from is in terms of what we think about the church. But first I want to think about the new covenant. So the first specific belief is the new covenant. And I want you to open with me to Jeremiah chapter 31. So if you can find Isaiah roughly in the middle of your Bible, go to the right one more book, Jeremiah chapter 31. And we'll be there in just a moment. Jeremiah 31. And so when we think about the old covenant, when I say old covenant, I want you to think of the Mosaic law summarized in the 10 commandments, the laws written in places like Deuteronomy and Leviticus and Exodus. That's the old covenant. And underneath the old covenant, the people of God were a mixed group of believers and unbelievers. And so Paul can say in Romans 9 that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. And so just because you're an ethnic Jew, just because you're descended from Abraham does not mean that you were saved. Doesn't mean that you had faith.
[13:33] And so you would have been a member of the old covenant by birth, but you would not have necessarily believed in God. And so you would have been part of this old covenant community, but you wouldn't have necessarily had faith that Abraham had just because you were one of his children. And the sign of the old covenant was circumcision. And so they would circumcise their baby boys on the eighth day as a sign that they belonged to the old covenant. You did not have to have faith to be a part of the old covenant.

You were just brought into it by birth. But we see something radically different with the new covenant. And we think of the new covenant, think of Christ, think of the gospel, think of the Holy Spirit and dwelling believers. And this new covenant is actually predicted in the old Testament. And we see in Jeremiah chapter 31 will be in verse 31 and following. And this passage is the only place in the old Testament where the words new covenant are used. And so we want to pay careful attention to this passage. The Lord says, behold, the days are coming, declares Yahweh, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. And so the Lord's saying, I'm going to make a new covenant. Israel and Judah at this point were split nations. He says, I'm going to make a new covenant with both of them. And now what is this covenant like? What will this new covenant be? Well, he first explains it to us by what it's not like. So verse 32 says, this new covenant is not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I

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took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. So this is the old covenant, my covenant that they broke though. I was their husband declares Yahweh. And so this covenant that he gave them when he took them by the hand and brought them out of Egypt, this is the old covenant that was given through Moses. And so this new covenant is not going to be like that old covenant.
Well, how is it going to be unlike the old covenant? Well, he explains in verse 33, for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares Yahweh. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, no Yahweh, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest declares Yahweh. And how will they know him?
How will the people of the new covenant know the Lord? For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. And so in this new covenant, there's going to be actual removal of sin. There's going to be actual removal of guilt. And it's through this forgiveness, it's through this cleansing that we will know the Lord. And so notice how the new covenant is different than the old covenant.
[16:38] It's internal, not external. It's written on the heart, not written on tablets of stone. It's change from the inside. It's not external, but it's internal. And everyone who belongs to this covenant knows God and has their sin forgiven. And so under the old covenant, not everyone in that old covenant community knew the Lord. It was a mixture of believers and unbelievers who were just born into this community.

In the new covenant, everyone who's a part of that new covenant knows the Lord. Everyone connected to this covenant knows who he is and has had their sins forgiven. That was not true of the old covenant.
Now, another place I want you to go is Ezekiel 36. So turn right through the short book of Lamentations to Ezekiel chapter 36. This is another major place where the new covenant is mentioned, even though it's not called the new covenant by name. It is still described in detail here. So Ezekiel 36, starting in verse 25.
The Lord says, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses and from all your idols. I will cleanse you and I will give you a new heart and a new spirit. I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. Verse 27.
And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. And so under the new covenant, all of the people are regenerate. They're all saved. They're all believing people. There's no longer a mixed group. Everyone who belongs to this new covenant has received this new heart, has been washed clean from their sins and from their idolatry.
[18:39] And so anyone who's not saved isn't actually a member of the new covenant because the only people in the new covenant are those who have a new heart, who have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them.

And so everyone in the new covenant has direct, unmediated access to God. And so we no longer need a priest. We no longer need Moses to speak to God for us. The apostles did not function this way in the early church. Everyone knows the Lord, as Jeremiah 31 said. And the spirit is now placed within us. Everyone who belongs to this new covenant has the Holy Spirit. So much so that if you don't have the spirit, you're not a part of the covenant. If you don't have the spirit, you don't belong to Christ.
And that's what Paul says in Romans 8, 9, whoever does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him. And so in the old covenant, there's a distinction between physical seed and spiritual seed. Those who were descendants of Abraham by blood and those who were descendants of Abraham by faith. Enter the old covenant. How did you become a member of that covenant? By birth. You were born to Jews. If you were a boy, you were circumcised. You were brought into the covenant by birth. Well, how does someone become a member of the new covenant? How does someone enter into the new covenant?
Also by birth. Not by a physical birth, but by a second birth, a new birth, a spiritual birth. And the sign of the old covenant was circumcision. The sign of the new covenant is baptism. And so both are entered through birth, one a physical birth, the other a spiritual birth. Both of them have outward signs. One is circumcision. The other is baptism. So the sign of the old covenant is circumcision.

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The sign of the new covenant is baptism. And the way you become a member of the old covenant is by birth.
And then you receive the sign of that covenant circumcision. The way you become a member of the new covenant is by the new birth. And then you receive the sign of that covenant, baptism. And we'll unpack this later, but this is why we only baptize those who have been born again. We only baptize those who have faith. We only give the covenant sign to those who belong to the covenant. And babies cannot profess faith. Babies cannot explain the gospel. And so they cannot receive this new covenant sign. So second thing we want to talk about is salvation. Salvation. And we believe that individual people are saved as they place their faith in Christ and turn from their sins. And I want you to go with me to John chapter 3. So New Testament now, John chapter 3. And so we believe that people are saved as they turn from their sins and place their faith in Christ. And this itself is a work of God. God is the one who saves. God is the one who gives life.
[22:00] But faith and repentance are signs of that new life, are evidences of that new birth. And so when a newborn baby screams screams after he's born, that screaming isn't making him alive, that's not causing him to live, but it's a very good sign that he is alive. And if he's not screaming, it's a sign that something could be wrong. And so babies just scream all the time, which is, it doesn't make them alive, but it shows that they have life. And so if you look at John chapter 3, when we describe entrance into the new covenant as a new birth, it comes from Jesus in John chapter 3. And so in John 3, we get to hear a conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a ruler of the Pharisees, very educated, very knowledgeable in the Old Testament. He comes to Jesus by night. We don't know exactly why he came by night.

Maybe he was embarrassed to be associated with Jesus in the daytime. Maybe he just wanted more time to have an extended conversation with Jesus. We don't know exactly why, but he's there at night. And he says to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. And Jesus just kind of bypasses his statement. And Jesus answered him, truly, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
Nicodemus said to him, how can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? And Nicodemus is like, how is this possible? Like, how can anyone do this? How can anyone become born again? And so he doesn't quite understand Jesus' point, but he is mystified and understands this is impossible. Verse five, Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes. And so Jesus is playing with words a little bit. The word for spirit and wind are the same. So he says, the wind blows where it wishes, and you hear it sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the spirit. And so what Jesus is saying here is just like you can't see the wind. Like, can anyone in here see the wind? No, you can see the effects of the wind. And so you can't see the wind blowing, but you can see the effect that's having on that tree, or you can feel its force on your body as you're walking into it. But you can't see the wind itself. You can just see its effects. And Jesus is saying, that's the same thing with the spirit. You can't see the spirit saving someone, but you can see the effect it has on someone's life. You can see the results of the spirit produces in someone's life. And remember, Jesus is comparing this to a new birth.
What did you contribute to your earthly birth? Absolutely nothing. You did not do anything to cause yourself to be born. And so when Lacey and I have kids, and she's pregnant with number four, due in March, praise the Lord, we're excited. Another boy. When babies are born, born, we will talk to them. We will sing to them. We'll pray with them. We'll laugh with them.
But do you know what we've never done, what we've never said to any of our kids? Thank you so much for choosing us as your parents. Thank you. Thank you so much for deciding that we would be good parents for you. We've never said that to them because that's not how it works.
[25:59] They played zero role in the beginning of their life or in their birth. They had zero choice. They did nothing to cause that to come to pass. And so Jesus is saying the same thing. You need to be born again. You didn't do anything for your first birth. You need the spirit to breathe life into you. You need the spirit to bring you to life. And we can't see someone getting saved, but we can see the effect it has in their life. And so what is that effect? What is the effect? How do we know if someone's been born again? Belief. Belief. And I want you to look with me at verse 15. That

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whoever believes in him may have eternal life. In verse 16, for God to love the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he's not believed in the name of the only son of God. And so notice that salvation is individual and on the basis of belief or faith. Same idea. And so the evidence that someone has been born again is belief in Christ and who he says he is and what he's done. And so this is why Paul, this new birth is why Paul can say in 2 Corinthians 5 17, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new what? Creation. Who in the Bible is able to create?

God alone. God alone is the one who does the work of creation. And so is faith and repentance the ultimate cause of someone being saved? No. The new birth is God's activity. God is the one who does this and the evidence of it is belief in Christ. So God's the one who causes this new birth. God's the one who saves people. Now the question is, when did God decide to do this? When did God decide to save someone?

We know we're saved in time and the evidence of that is belief and faith in Christ. But when did God decide to do that? Did he say, hey, right now, I think I want to save this person. When did he decide to do this? And for this, I want you to go to Ephesians chapter 1 with me. A couple books to your right.

We know that salvation takes place when someone places faith in Christ, but when does God decide to do that? Look with me at Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3.

The apostle Paul says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[29:00] Verse 4, even as he chose us in him, when? Before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the beloved. In him, we have redemption through his blood. And what is redemption? What is salvation? The forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

In verse 11, in him we've obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who are the first to hope or believe in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. And in him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

And so it's not on the basis of works, it's on the basis of belief. So when did God decide to save you? When did God decide to save anyone? Ephesians 1 says it was before the foundation of the world.

Before the world began, God decided to save people. And some people will view election as like, okay, God looked into the future and saw that they would respond favorably or that they would be holy and blameless and so he chose them. No, no, no. The Bible says he chose us not because we were holy and blameless, but so that we would be holy and blameless. He chose us in him. And so not every Baptist would agree with this view of salvation. This is a Calvinistic or Reformed understanding of salvation, but we would happily be described as Reformed Baptists because we think it's biblical based on passages like Ephesians 1. And so God saves us, God causes us to be born again, but he doesn't just save us and then leave us alone, he saves us into the church. He saves us into the church. And so thirdly, I want to look at the church. The church. And we need to ask a question, what is the church? What is a church?

Now I've got a definition for you up on the screen. It's a lengthy definition, which I think is typically not helpful during a sermon, but here we go. We're letting it fly, baby. So this is on the slide.

[31:31] You can write it down or you can just take a picture of it, but I'll read it for you. A local church is God's blood-bought, word-created, spirit-filled people who identify themselves by covenanting together and regularly gathering under the word. And the word is both proclaimed, think sermon and song, and demonstrated, think baptism and the Lord's Supper. And so it's a group of people who have been saved by Christ that covenants together and regularly gather together for the word, both proclaimed and demonstrated, proclaimed through the sermon and through the songs that are sung and demonstrated through the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Now, how does this church kind of govern itself? How is this church structured? Well, first sub-point

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under the church is something called congregationalism. Congregationalism. And so our church believes in congregationalism.

And so this basically means that the final human authority in the church is the congregation itself. And so Christ is ultimate in ruling over his church. We are bound to follow him, but the ultimate human authority in the church isn't the pastors, isn't the senior pastor, isn't some board of rulers over the church. It's the church itself that makes decisions and governs itself and tries to stay faithful to the gospel. And so there's no ecclesiastical authority over the local church. Each local church is able and must govern its own affairs. And we think this is biblical. This isn't just logical. This isn't just democratic. This is actually biblical. And so you read in places where churches are struggling, like Paul writes to the churches of Galatia. He doesn't write that to the pastors. He doesn't write that to the board of elders presiding over those churches. He writes to the churches and says, you guys need to get yourselves in order. You guys need to bring yourself back to the gospel.

And the churches themselves were equipped to do that. Number two, second thing under the church is membership. We practice church membership. You've seen new members presented at our church on a regular basis. If you've been here for a long period of time, why do we do membership? Is that biblical? What is membership? Well, in order for any group to exist, there need to be rules for who belongs and who doesn't, whether it's your chess club or your sports team or your group of friends. There's some defining characteristics about who belongs to this group and who does not. There's a distinguishing mark of those who belong to the group. Those are members of the group and those who do not belong to the group. Those who are not members of the group. And so do we see this? We see this in the New Testament.

If you read the book of Acts, it continually says the Lord added to their number and they continued to grow day by day, or the word continued to advance day by day. And so what this teaches us, and sometimes there's a number associated to those who belong to the church. And so what we know is that they were keeping track of who belonged to the church and who did not. They were keeping track of who responded to the word and was baptized and who had not. And so we want to do the same. We want to know who belongs to our church and who does not. And so that's why we do membership. Now, how is membership kind of guarded? How is membership entered? How is membership ended? How is that membership continued or discontinued? Well, the third thing under the church is baptism. Baptism. This is the most distinguishing mark of Baptist. This is literally why we're called Baptists. It's because we only baptize those who have faith in Christ. And so this is the most distinguishing mark we have. And so that term Baptist was actually originally intended as like a pejorative nickname. They were like making fun of us by calling us Baptists. And we liked it. And so we're happily called Baptists. That's what makes us

[35:48] Baptist. And so what is baptism? Baptism is the external sign of the new covenant, like I mentioned earlier. And only believers belong to the new covenant. And so only believers should be baptized.

Only believers should receive the sign of the new covenant. And this is actually the most ancient view of baptism in the history of the church. This is what the apostles believed. But even after them, this is what the early church believed about baptism as well. It's biblical, which is the most important, but this is also how we see the early church functioning as well. And I want you to pay attention to something in the New Testament. Baptism is never talked about apart from faith or administered before faith. And so anytime we see baptism discussed in the New Testament, it's always talked about either in the context of belief and faith, or it's talked about to people who have faith and have already been baptized. But never in the New Testament does baptism come before faith. According to the New Testament, faith comes before baptism. Faith precedes baptism. And so this is why we don't baptize babies, because babies cannot make professions of faith. And I want you to see this. So go with me to the book of Acts, Acts chapter 2. You're probably familiar with the context of this passage. We've come to it several times throughout our series as we've looked at different groups and what they believe about this passage. But looking at Acts chapter 2, verse 38. So Peter's preaching the first Christian sermon.

He's showing that they've rejected Christ, who is God's Messiah, that he sent to save his people from their sins. These people are cut to the heart by Peter's message, verse 37. And they said, what should we do? In verse 38, Peter said to them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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And look at verse 41. So those who received his word were baptized. And there were added that day about 3,000 souls. And so what this is saying here is that there were people there who heard, but did not receive the words. They did not have faith, and so they were not baptized. The only ones who were baptized were the ones who received the word in faith and repented and turned from their sins and were obedient to be baptized. And so baptism is always talked about in connection with faith, and faith comes before baptism even in the New Testament. Now go with me another place to the book of Colossians. So further to your right, Colossians chapter 2.
Colossians 2. And here baptism and circumcision are discussed alongside one another. And so we see that these are both signs of the covenants like we've already discussed, but there's a difference with baptism. These things aren't exactly equivalent. And so Colossians chapter 2, verse 11 says, in him, that's in Christ, also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him, look at this, through faith in the powerful working of God who raised him from the dead. Verse 13, and you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of death that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. And so baptism and circumcision are both signs of the covenant that they belong to, but there's a difference. Circumcision was given to newborn baby boys pointing forward to something that they needed. They were circumcised in their flesh, showing that they needed this new heart. They needed a circumcised heart. They needed a new heart put within them.
[40:14] And so it was a sign, not of something that had already occurred, but something that needed to occur. And so circumcision pointed forward to the possibility and the need for heart circumcision.

Whereas baptism actually points backwards. Baptism points to the reality that this new heart has already been received. We profess our faith in baptism, showing that this transformation has already taken place. And so circumcision pointed forward to something that was needed. Baptism points backwards to something that has already taken place. And historically, baptism has been called the initiatory rite, meaning the thing that begins your membership in the church. So baptism is really the front door of the church.
You think of Matthew 28, the Great Commission, where Christ says, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And so baptism is the front door of the church. It's how you get into membership in the local church. Now, number four, we're going to look at the Lord's Supper. And so if baptism is the initiatory rite, the Lord's Supper is the ongoing rite. And so baptism is how you begin your public walk with Christ. The Lord's Supper is how you continue your public walk with Christ. Baptism is what you do to start identifying as a Christian. The Lord's Supper is what you participate in to continue identifying as a Christian. And baptism, because of this, baptism should not come before the Lord's Supper. And so if you haven't been baptized, you shouldn't take the Lord's Supper. Because baptism is how you begin publicly following Christ, and the Lord's Supper is how you continue doing that. There are several different names for the Lord's Supper. It can be called Lord's Supper, can be called the Eucharist, can be called communion. I think all three of those are fine. I like communion, and I want to focus in on that one. So why is it called communion? Or communion with whom? Who are we communing with? Well, certainly as we take the Lord's Supper, we're in communion with the church, for sure. Like we're fellowshipping with each other around the Lord's table. But ultimately, we're fellowshipping with Christ. We have communion with Christ. And I want you to go to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. 1 Corinthians chapter 10. And the Apostle Paul says in chapter 10 and 11, he talks about the Lord's Supper quite a bit. But he describes it as participating with Christ. And the Corinthians were struggling with idolatry. Some of them were attending these idolatrous feasts in pagan temples where an animal had been sacrificed to a false god, and they celebrated that sacrifice by eating of the food.
And Christians were participating in this. And Paul's saying, you can't do that. And he explains why. So 1 Corinthians 10 verse 14. It says, therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to sensible people, judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there's one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one

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bread.
[43:37] Consider the people of Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifice participants? In the altar? What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything? Or that an idol is anything? No. I imply that what pagan sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? And so what Paul is saying is that by you participating in this feast, celebrating this pagan God, you are communing with demons. You are fellowshipping with demons to whom this sacrifice was made. And Paul is saying when we take the Lord's Supper, we're participating with the Lord. We're communing with the Lord and the sacrifice that he made. And so you can't do that with the Lord and do that with demons at the same time. You'll provoke the Lord to jealousy because that's idolatry. And so we participate with the Lord through the Lord's Supper, just like pagans participate with demons as they make sacrifices to him. And so the Lord is there for his supper. The Lord is present for his supper. The question is how? How is the Lord present for the Lord's Supper? Catholics have said that he's there because the elements are transformed into the substance of his body and blood. The Lutherans would say Christ is present in the elements, in, with, and under the bread and the grape juice.
For us, we would say Christ is present spiritually. He's there spiritually. He's present with his church to dine with them. And this is similar to what he would say in Matthew 28, I'm with you always to the end of the age. In Matthew 18, he says, wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them in terms of church discipline. And so this is a facet of Christ's omnipresence, of Christ being present with his people. He is present here at the Lord's table to dine with his people. And if you look over to chapter 11, verse 23, Paul gives some instructions for the Lord's Supper. And he says, for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also took the cup 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.
And so in the Lord's Supper, we share in fellowship with Christ by confessing our sins, by remembering his death, and by looking forward to our future communion meals with him. And if you think of Christ's words in Matthew 26, he says, I will not drink the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And so we're proclaiming his death. We're looking forward to his return, where when he returns, we will forever share in the supper with him. We will forever dine with him at the Lord's table. We will forever share in this fellowship with him. And so it's a memorial in so far as we remember what Christ has done for us, but it's not just a history lesson when we take the Lord's Supper. It's not like, hey, remember Christ, he died. Yep, remember that. Okay, cool. Do this, drink this.
[47:18] No, he's there. We do remember his death. That's what Christ told us to do, is to do this in remembrance of him. But it's not just a history lesson. He is actually present there to bless. Not literally present, but symbolically and spiritually. And it does good for our souls. We're spiritually benefited by our participation in the Lord's Supper. And here lately, in the last 100 or 200 years, Baptists have, in many ways, lost this sense of Christ's presence at the Lord's Supper. And so historically, Baptists, as well as all Orthodox traditions, have believed that Christ is present at the Lord's Supper. But here lately, baptism and the Lord's Supper have become less relevant in Baptist life. And they've kind of been pushed to the sideline as evangelism has become the more dominant focus of the church. And evangelism isn't bad. Obviously, evangelism is good. But many Baptists now view the primary purpose of the gathering of the church as evangelism. And evangelism is important, but it's not the primary purpose of why the church gathers to hear his word. Evangelism happens. You'll hear the gospel. You'll see the gospel. You'll hear the word proclaimed. And so invite friends to church. But that's not the primary purpose why we gather. And so many Baptists, by viewing evangelism as this all-encompassing motive for everything, will say, hey, let's do everything we can to have as many unbelievers here as possible.

And we'll preach the gospel to them. Again, evangelism is good, but that's not the primary purpose for why the church gathers. And so what does this look like? Well, historically, Baptists would go to meet with Christ through his word and through the Lord's Supper. And so they'd come to church to

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fellowship with Christ as they hear his word and as they participate at the table with him. But now Christians go to meet with Christ at the altar during the altar call.
And so baptism and the Lord's Supper have been replaced by the altar call in many Baptist circles. And so it's like, yeah, okay, yeah, baptism, Lord's Supper, that's good, but come and meet with the Lord at the altar. Come and meet with him down here if you want to publicly profess your faith in Christ.
Christ. And this is why when we go to camp, I tell you guys not to go down front. I tell you guys, if you want to have a conversation, come back to the cabin and talk with us.
And there's a couple of reasons for that. One, I don't know who you'll talk to down there. I don't know what they believe or what their background is or if they themselves understand the gospels. That's probably primary. But number two, if you want to publicly commit your life to Christ, if you want to publicly profess faith in Christ, we have baptism. And if you want to rededicate your life to Christ, if you want to repent of your sins and publicly keep following Christ, we have the Lord's Supper. And historically, you publicly profess your faith, not down front at the altar call, but in the waters of baptism. And you rededicate your life to Christ. You repent of sin at the Lord's Supper. The Lord has given us these things to do in the church. But as evangelism has become more prominent, these ordinances have been pushed to the side. And the place you meet the Lord and deal with the Lord is through the altar call and the invitation rather than through the things that he's given us in the church. Whereas historically, baptism and the Lord's Supper are where you go to meet with the Lord and deal with your sin. So just quickly now, number five, leadership. We've talked a lot about this. You can read 1 Timothy 3 and 1 Timothy 2. And what they describe for us is that the church is to be led by pastors. And these pastors are qualified men. There are no female pastors in
[51:17] Christ's church. These are to be qualified men. And one accusation against Baptists is that we cut women out of the Great Commission. They say, you don't let women serve as pastors. You don't let them preach. You're preventing them from fulfilling the Great Commission. You're preventing them from doing what Christ has commanded the church to do. But I want to show that we don't cut women out of the Great Commission. So I need some group participation. Okay, adults too. If you were saved before the age of 15, stand up. If you're saved before the age of 15, stand up. Okay? Now, if your mother had nothing to do with that, sit down. If your mother had nothing to do with you coming to faith in Christ, sit down.

Okay, look around. Are we cutting women out of the Great Commission? No. Women are some of the best evangelists we have. Women are some of the best evangelists we have as they pass the gospel down to another generation. Thank you. You can take a seat. We are not cutting women out of the Great Commission.
We are seeking to be obedient to Christ. And women are essential in sharing the gospel with the upcoming generation as they grow up. And so just to wrap up, this has been a broad overview of our denomination and why we're Baptist. But in sum, it's because of what we believe about the new covenant.
It shapes what we think about individual salvation, which shapes how the church is structured and who belongs to the church. And so I would challenge you not to be Baptist merely by circumstance, because your family goes here, not just because of convenience, because this is where the Word of God is preached, but by conviction, because this is what the Bible teaches. All right, let me pray, and we'll go to small groups. Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for this evening. Thank you so much for the new covenant that you've given us in Christ through his blood shed for us on the cross. We pray that our local Baptist church would continue to be faithful, would continue to hold fast to your Word. I pray that these students would be edified as they go to small groups. I pray that if they are unsaved, that you would bring conviction to their hearts and bring the gospel home to them and add them to your new covenant community. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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