

Why Am I Not a Member of the Baptist Church?

Are all “Christ-based” churches authorized and approved by Christ? How can they be when they all teach, believe, and practice different things and are divided? God does not want all these divisions. He wants all of His people to be united as one church. After all, Christ only built one church—His church (Matthew 16:18, John 17:22, Romans 12:5, I Corinthians 1:10, 12:12, Ephesians 4:4-6). We know from Revelation chapters 2 and 3 that Christ does not approve of every church. The church in Ephesus was in danger of losing their status as Christ’s church unless they repented of things they were doing that Christ did not approve. He also threatened the church in Pergamos because they were teaching false doctrine. Christ was so angry with the church in Laodicea for not doing what God commanded that Christ told them He was going to vomit them out of His mouth. We could discuss for hours all of the things the church in different locations was doing wrong and how the apostles constantly had to teach, reemphasize, and rebuke them. So, it must be important to do things exactly according to God’s instructions when it comes to the church. And we know that Paul warned several times that there would be those who would depart from the truth and make up their own false doctrines. One example is in I Timothy 4:1-5.

So, why am I not a member of the Baptist church? First of all, please forgive me if I do not accurately portray the teachings, beliefs, and practices of the Baptist church. I am aware that each congregation is autonomous and that there are different types of Baptist churches such as the First, Southern, Freewill, Independent, etc. I am getting my information from the internet and personal friends who are members of the Baptist church. Second of all, it is not my intention to personally offend anyone. I want to discuss the teachings, beliefs, and practices of the Baptist church—not personally attack anyone.

Here are some of the teachings, beliefs, and practices of some Baptist churches which preclude me from being a member of any Baptist church.

Several times I have been given pamphlets by the Baptist church either in person, in the mail, or door to door. As a matter of fact I just received two pamphlets from the Victory Baptist Church who call themselves an Independent Baptist Church. These pamphlets told me how to be saved:

1. Realize that God loves me (John 3:16)
2. All men are sinners (Romans 3:23)
3. Sin must be paid for (Romans 6:23)
4. Christ paid for my sins (Romans 5:8)
5. I must personally pray and receive Christ as my Personal Savior (Romans 10:13)

Then I was instructed to say something called a “sinner’s prayer”—something I cannot find anywhere in God’s Word. At that point, according to this pamphlet, I was saved.

The first four statements are completely accurate based on God's Word. However, there are some crucial things missing. Hearing God's Word (Romans 10:17), believing it (Mark 16:15-16), and repenting of my sins (Luke 13:3) I guess are implied here. I was told nothing about confessing with the mouth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Romans 10:10; Acts 8:35-38). And baptism was not a part of salvation at all. Many Baptist churches teach baptism, and strongly encourage their members to be baptized, but teach that it is not part of God's Plan of Salvation. Even Billy Graham himself says that although baptism is important, it should never be viewed as part of salvation. His support for his statement is to refer to the thief on the cross and how Jesus told him he was saved. It is assumed that the thief was never baptized. What Mr. Graham fails to realize is that the New Testament did not take effect until after Jesus died on the cross. Therefore, the thief lived under the Law of Moses and baptism was not a part of the Law of Moses. And even if the thief lived under the Law of Christ, he had the very Son of God telling him to his face that his sins were forgiven. He would have most certainly been an exception to the norm. The Bible absolutely teaches that baptism is essential for salvation and is just as important as belief, repentance, and confession. Baptism is how we figuratively contact the blood of Christ for forgiveness of sins, how we get into Christ, and how God adds us to the church:

- Jesus said in Mark 16:16 that whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. The Baptist church says that He who believes is saved and then is encouraged to be baptized later.
- Paul told the Roman Christians in Romans 6:3-4 that they were baptized into Christ's death and that baptism is a burial with Christ and just like Christ was raised from the dead, we also rise from the "watery grave" to walk a new life. The Baptist church says that I just need to say a man-made prayer called the "sinner's prayer" and accept Jesus as my Personal Savior. Later, after I am saved, I should be baptized as a show of faith.
- Peter said in Acts 2:38 that the people should repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**. The Baptist church says I should be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ **because** I am already saved.
- Luke then said in Acts 2:41 and 47 that those who gladly received Peter's teaching of the gospel were baptized and added to the church by God. The Baptist church says that I am saved first and then later I should be baptized to be added to the church by a vote of the members.
- Ananias told Saul in Acts 22:16 to rise up and be baptized and wash away his sins. The Baptist church says baptism does NOT wash away sins.
- Paul told Christians in Galatians 3:27 that they were baptized into Christ and in I Corinthians 12:13, he said they were baptized into one body—the body of Christ—the church. The Baptist church says baptism does NOT get me into Christ. I am already in Christ (i.e. saved) before I am baptized but baptism does get me into the body—the body of Christ—the church. How confusing!
- Paul said in Colossians 2:11-12 that we put off the body of the sins of the flesh by being buried with Christ in baptism. The Baptist church says baptism does NOT put off sins.

- Peter, comparing the flood to baptism, said in I Peter 3:21 that there is an antitype to the flood which now saves us—baptism. The Baptist church says that baptism is NOT a part of God's Plan of Salvation at all.

When I study God's Word and compare what the Baptist church teaches, believes, and practices about God's Plan of Salvation, I see some serious contradictions. How can I be a part of a church that does not seem to teach what God's Word teaches about God's Plan of Salvation? How can I be confident that Jesus has put His stamp of approval on the Baptist church? I cannot.

Some Baptist churches have done away with elders in the church. They just have deacons who rule the church. This is a direct contradiction to God's specific instructions for the organizational structure of the church. When I asked a Baptist friend of mine why the Baptist church had changed God's organizational structure of the church, he told me that the Holy Spirit told them they could. How can this be when Paul himself said in Galatians 1:6ff that he was appalled that the Galatian Christians had already left the Word of God so quickly and were following false doctrines? He then told them that even if an angel came and told them something different than what they had preached to them, that angel would be cursed. How can anyone today say that the Holy Spirit personally came to them and told them something that contradicts God's Word? This would make God's Word completely useless to us today. Each autonomous congregation should have both elders (to shepherd the flock-I Peter 5:1-4) and deacons (to serve) if there are men who meet the qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. In addition, some Baptist churches allow women to take these leadership roles. The qualifications for both elders and deacons include being the husband of one wife. Women cannot meet this qualification. God has specific roles for men and women in the church. He wants the men to be men and take the leadership roles. Women are to be silent in worship (I Corinthians 14:34, I Timothy 2:11-12). As a woman, I can run a country but I cannot run the church. How can I be a part of a church that does not follow God's specific instructions on the organizational structure of the church? How can I be confident that Jesus has put His stamp of approval on the Baptist church? I cannot.

Some Baptist churches do not observe the Lord's Supper every first day of the week even though the church in the New Testament did (Acts 20:7). I am sure these churches expect their members to give money to the church every first day of the week as commanded in I Corinthians 16:1-2 but not remember that Christ died for them? A Baptist friend of mine told me they do not observe the Lord's Supper every week because then it becomes meaningless. So they decide how often to observe the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Who are we to change God's Word? I firmly believe God instituted a weekly observation because He knows that as humans we are weak and forgetful and need a constant reminder.

Another aspect of the worship in some Baptist churches is the addition of instrumental music in worship to God. Instrumental music was never a part of worship in the New Testament. It cannot be found anywhere. It was added by man many years later. A common attitude in this area is that the Bible does not say we cannot have music in worship, therefore, we can. This is

a dangerous approach to God's Word. The Bible also does not say we cannot have burgers and fries with the Lord's Supper but most people understand that this would not be appropriate. We are not to add things to God's Word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; and Revelation 22:18-19). God's Word tells us how to worship Him when it comes to singing and which instrument we are to use—our heart in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19-20. If someone wants to argue for having instrumental music in worship, it will not have anything to do with God's will. It will be completely what man wants. And there is such a thing as vain worship (Matthew 15:9, Mark 7:7). In addition, II Timothy 3:16-17 says that God's Word is all sufficient and will tell us what to do to be complete as children of God for every good work. If a work, such as adding instrumental music to worship, cannot be found in God's Word, how can it be a good work? How can I be a part of a church that decides how they want to worship God rather than allowing God to tell them what He wants? How can I be confident that Jesus has put His stamp of approval on the Baptist church when they add things to worship that God did not command? I cannot.

There are many other reasons why I cannot be a member of the Baptist church such as the name itself. The word "church" simply means a called out people for a special purpose. So, how does the name "Baptist church" show that Christ is the head of the church? It's Christ's church—not baptism's church.

Again, I do not mean to personally offend anyone but it is so important to take God seriously. When He provides us an entire book and 23 of those books/letters (Acts-Revelation) directly address how to become a Christian, how He wants His people to worship Him, how He wants the church to be organized, what the church should be doing and not doing, we need to take it seriously and obey Him.