



Lesson 05: The "Local" Church / Baptist Bride Pt 1

As studied in our previous lesson, we believe each local church is directly accountable to Jesus Christ. There are some independent Baptists who take a different approach. They believe the local church's authority is inherited through a succession of other like-minded churches. This creates a false authority and **hierarchy** between churches that is unbiblical.

I. Background

In the mid 1800's, a Southern Baptist preacher named J.R. Graves wrote a series of papers, identifying what he believed were "landmarks," of the faith. In this series, he stated there have always been churches who believed these core doctrines.



J.R. Graves

Those who supported Graves' work separated from the Southern Baptist Convention and started "landmark" independent Baptist churches. In the mid-1900's the movement further distinguished themselves by claiming that their was a **line** of

succession **connecting** those churches who believed those core truths throughout history, and that **only** those churches were the pure **Bride** of Christ.

Thus the term "Baptist Brider" or "landmarker" is a term that has been given to them over time because of their belief they are are the true "bride" of Christ.

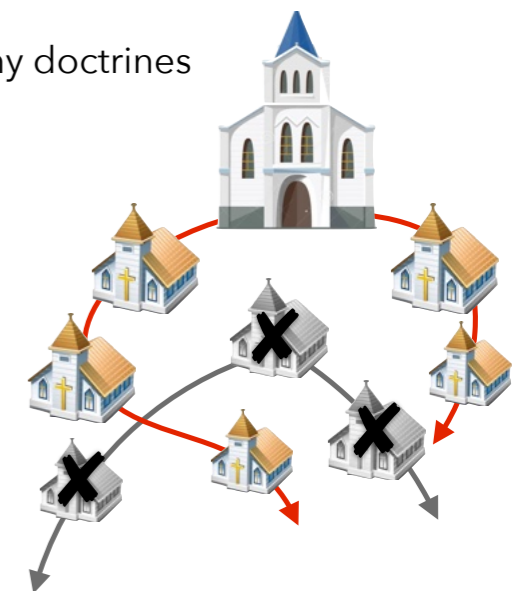
II. Beliefs

Baptist Briders believe the term "body of Christ" (and the "church") only refers to **local** churches. This is the **foundation** of their church doctrine. This means, that "true" churches are only those that have been started with the proper "**authority**," which they believe has been literally passed from church-to-church from the time of Christ until now. This "succession" requires faith on their part since it cannot be proven.

- This system of beliefs affects many doctrines and practices, including:

1. baptism
2. church **membership**
3. communion
4. the believer's position "in Christ"
5. their fellowship with **other** churches and believers

- Scripture teaches it is "**God's Word**" that gives churches their authority -not a **hierarchy** or an imaginary line of succession.



A. Body of Christ

- By believing in only “local” churches, they deny the “universal church” or “one body of Christ” made up of **all** saved people.
- The word “church” is used 13x’s in the Bible. Most of the time, it refers to a **local** assembly. In fact, the Greek word for church means, “a local **gathering**.”
- However, the context of some Scriptures clearly refer to a gathering of **multiple** local assemblies, or a universal church.
 1. **1Cor 10:32** -Paul compared “the church of God,” as a **collective** group similar to the Jews and Gentiles.
 2. **1Cor 15:9** -Paul explained that he had **persecuted** “the church of God,” several churches, not just one gathering (see also **Gal 1:13**).
 3. **Mt 16:18** -Jesus said that He would build His “church.”
 4. **Eph 5:23-32** -In this passage, God interchanges the word “church” and “body”. If “church” only referred to a local church, that would mean that Jesus “gave himself” only for **one** local church. From several Scriptures it is clear Jesus not only died for **every** believer, but for the sins of the **whole** world. **Jn 1:29; 1Tim 4:10; 1Jn 2:2**
- This passage also states this “church” is to be holy and without blemish. No **local** congregation has every been



“holy and without blemish.” But one day the **collective** body of believers will be.

5. **1Cor 12:13** -This passage makes it clear **all** believers are baptized into one body by God’s Spirit. Baptist-briders believe this is verse refers to **water** baptism and membership into a local church. Other Scriptures make it clear, this is referring to the **supernatural** baptism of the Holy Spirit that takes place at salvation. **Ac 1:5; 10:45**

B. Baptism

Some Baptist Briders’ claim there have always been “Baptist” churches since the time of John the Baptist. This is a stretch at best.

- John's baptism was not **recognised** as a valid New Testament baptism. **Acts 19:1-5**,
- John declared his baptism was temporary, and would be **replaced**. **Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33**
- Jesus said, even the **least** in the kingdom of heaven would be greater than John. **Mt 11:11** This is because they would be indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist did not found any churches and was never a member of any church.



John the Baptist