

The Original Mississippi Baptists

By Elder David Pyles

The history of the original Baptists in Mississippi is well-documented. These courageous frontiersmen endured such peril and persecution that they deserve the rank of legendary. The first Baptist church in Mississippi was established in 1791. This was Salem church near to Natchez. Other Baptist churches were established shortly thereafter, and in 1806 six Baptist churches formed themselves into the Mississippi Baptist Association.

Many modern Baptists would be surprised to know the doctrinal beliefs of these early Baptists. I have included below the original Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association and have followed this with the Articles for the original Salem church. One will see significant differences from what most Baptists believe today. The reason is that shortly after these articles were written, there was a highly-controversial movement to change Baptist doctrine from what it had been for hundreds of years. The movement started in England under the teachings of a Baptist minister named Andrew Fuller, whose doctrine thereafter took hold in America. The movement was concerted and protracted, and it eventually prevailed in the vast majority of Mississippi Baptist churches. Fortunately, the last few decades have seen significant movement within Baptists back to their original, and more biblical, system of beliefs.

Articles of Faith of the Mississippi Baptist Association (1806)

1. We believe in one only true and living God; and that there are a trinity of persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.
2. We believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, are of Divine authority, and the only rule of faith and practice.
3. We believe in the fall of Adam; in the imputation of his sins to all his posterity; in the total depravity of human nature; and in man's inability to restore himself to the favor of God.

4. We believe in the everlasting love of God to his people; in the eternal unconditional election of a definite number of the human family to grace and glory.
5. We believe that sinners are only justified in the sight of God, by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is unto all and upon all them that believe.
6. We believe all those who were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world are, in time, effectually called, regenerated, converted, and sanctified; and are kept, by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.
7. We believe that there is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who, by the satisfaction which he made to law and justice, "in becoming an offering for sin," hath, by his most precious blood, redeemed the elect from under the curse of the law, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love.
8. We believe good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, are evidences of a gracious state, and that it is the duty of all believers to perform them from a principle of love.
9. We believe in the resurrection of the dead, and a general judgment, and that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be eternal.

Articles of Faith of Salem Baptist Church (1791)

Art. 1st - That the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the word of God and the only certain and infallible rule of Faith, and obedience, containing everything needful for us to know, believe and do in the service of God, and able to make us wise unto Salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus, by which we expect to be judged at the last day, and to which our opinions and Practices ought at all times to be conformed, and therefore that all Persons who can read the Scriptures ought to search them daily, Praying to God for the light of the Holy Spirit without which none can understand them Effectually.

Art. 2nd - That there is but one Living and true God the Almighty creator, Preserver and disposer of all things, visible and invisible in

whom we live, move and have our being and to whom alone all divine Worship and adoration is to be rendered and ascribed both in time and Eternity by men and Angels, as being only worthy of it and that he will not give his glory to another or his Praise to idols having strictly forbidden us to worship or adore any but himself.

Art. 3rd - That there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost. The same in Substance, Power and Glory and therefore not to be divided in essence though Distinguished by several peculiar Personal Relations.

Art. 4th - That our Lord Jesus Christ, the second person in the adorable Trinity, who was Eternally with the Father, did in time take on him as real Human Nature in which he fulfilled the Law, and died to make atonement for sin, is the only Saviour of Sinners, the Prophet, Priest and King of his Church, appointed heir of all things and judge of the quick and the dead, in whom alone we hope for and expect Redemption and deliverance from Divine wrath and eternal misery.

Art. 5th - We believe in the doctrine of Particular Redemption, Personal Election, Effectual calling, Justification by the imputed Righteousness of Jesus Christ, pardon of sins by his atoning blood, Believer's Baptism by Immersion, the Final perseverance of the Saints, the Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

Art. 6th - That Christ will return in Glory to judge men and angels at the end of the world, at which time the Righteous shall enter into everlasting life or happiness, but the wicked shall be driven away into Everlasting and eternal Misery, which doctrines are contained at large in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.