

In many ways comparing the beliefs of Baptists and Episcopalians is similar to comparing beliefs between Baptists and Catholics. Like Catholics, Episcopalians attempt to trace their history in an unbroken line of priestly succession all the way back to the NT era. In recent years a concerted effort has been made to reunite the Episcopal Church and The Roman Catholic Church. The Episcopal Church in the United States is a direct expression of the Anglican Church (the official state church of England) and arose as a result of English colonization in America. The Church of England broke off from the Roman Catholic Church when Henry VIII threw off the authority of the Pope in 1534 in a dispute over setting aside Henry's arranged marriage to Catherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn.

**The Scripture: Baptists recognize the 66 books of the Bible (39 OT, 27 NT) as the divinely inspired and infallible revelation of God.** As such, the Bible is the sole and final authority for all matters faith and practice. The Episcopal Church recognizes as its sources of spiritual authority as *the Bible, church traditions, and reason*. Episcopal doctrine declares that the Bible contains all things sufficient for salvation. The wording of these last two statements reveals a significant difference in Baptist and Episcopal beliefs. Baptists affirm the Bible as God's inspired, complete and final revelation and as such our final and only authority. **The Episcopal joint-emphasis on scripture, tradition, and reason offers broad harbor for a great variety in doctrinal beliefs within the Episcopal Church. Thus, any of the subsequent areas of doctrine may vary significantly based on individual views and opinions.**

**Jesus Christ: The stated Episcopalian creedal view that Jesus is both human and divine is similar to Baptist belief in the total humanity and deity of Christ.** However, the previous statement that tradition and reason are equal in authority with scripture in determining beliefs leaves room for many different views on the biblical reports of the events, deeds, and teachings of Christ. Baptists leave no latitude for variant beliefs about who Jesus is or the accuracy of all that scripture records about Him.

**Salvation: Like Catholics, Episcopalians understand salvation as coming to an individual through the institution of the church and its administration of the sacraments, particularly Baptism and Communion.** Baptists understand salvation to come through a direct personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ alone. No rite or sacrament is seen as a source or channel of salvation.

**Unique Emphases: Practically speaking, the most distinctive feature of Episcopalian belief is their acceptance of wide variation, individuality, and independent thinking in one's beliefs.** Since Baptists accept the total accuracy and authority of scripture, we do not believe that doctrine can be determined or shaped simply by individual thinking. Since the scripture is true and God's complete revelation, we are obliged to believe it and obey it.

Next Week: Baptists and Adventists