

# HISTORICAL BAPTIST

## EARLY BEGINNINGS AND MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE

# WHY ARE YOU BAPTIST?

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1. Conditioning- life experiences have been mostly Baptist, grew up in a Baptist church, family has always been Baptist
2. Convenience- presently attend a Baptist church, identity is found in membership to a local body, prefer some aspect of your current church over another
3. Conviction- beliefs and practices match church fellowship

“WHAT ONE BELIEVES  
ABOUT GOD, THE BIBLE,  
SALVATION, AND THE  
CHURCH IS ULTIMATELY  
MORE IMPORTANT THAN  
ONE'S HERITAGE OR  
PREFERENCES.”

- THE BAPTIST STORY

“THE FAITH WHICH YOU  
HAVE, HAVE AS YOUR OWN  
CONVICTION BEFORE GOD.  
BLESSED IS HE WHO DOES  
NOT JUDGE HIMSELF IN  
WHAT HE APPROVES.”

- ROMANS 14:22



# BAPTIST CHURCH BEGINNINGS



# EARLY BEGINNINGS

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- The beginning of the Baptist church is a much debated and hard to define moment of church history
  - Some have attempted to follow the “trail of blood” back to the apostles of the NT
  - Some have denied that the Baptist are Protestant at all
- Many respected church leaders and church historians vary on their interpretation of Baptist beginnings
- It does appear that the Baptist church has its roots in the Protestant Reformation as one of the “Radical Reformers”

# EARLY BEGINNINGS

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- There are clear influences of both the early church Reformers and those who came out of the Reformation period
  - Martin Luther- his insistence on Scripture alone for authority
  - Ulrich Zwingli- his doctrine of the Lord's Supper as a memorial, symbolic event
  - John Calvin- his doctrine on the salvation of man
- Elements of influence by various other groups as well (Anabaptist, Brethren, Mennonite, Separatist)



## EARLY 1600'S

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- Clear first signs of a visible Baptist Church
- John Smyth
  - Baptized himself and then others to form the first congregation
  - Became the unlicensed pastor of the group
  - Later sought membership and was accepted into the Mennonite Church
- Thomas Helwys
  - Assumed the pastoral leadership of the body
  - Since 1611 there has been a succession of Baptist churches

# BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

WHAT BAPTIST HAVE HISTORICALLY  
BELIEVED AND AFFIRMED

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## “SOLA SCRIPTURA” – SCRIPTURE ALONE

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“Baptist have always traced their origin and existence to the prominent place they give to the Bible for their faith and practice.” –Norman

-The Bible is the sole authority

-The Bible is above all church councils, creeds, and confessions

-A proper understanding of the Bible is all that is necessary

Catholic Church- church tradition and interpretation is authoritative. The church is the final voice of authority.

Liberalism and Neoorthodoxy- religious experience is authoritative, Bible leads the individual into an experience, can vary from person to person

Quakers, Mystics- the Holy Spirit speaking to the heart is authoritative

# “SOLA SCRIPTURA” – SCRIPTURE ALONE

Baptist, along with others, have continued to affirm that it is the Bible alone, being properly understood by the guidance and revelation of the Holy Spirit, is the final word of authority to all believers.

- An affirmation of both the OT and the NT as important for understanding
- Revelation is seen as progressive in Scripture
- The best interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself
- The aim is to be a NT church not an early century church



# THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

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- Christ alone is Lord of both the individual and the Church
- The sovereign rule of Christ over the individual has an impact on their place and importance in the local Church
- He is the head of every individual and the head of His Church
- As head, He alone dictates, through His word, what the church should be and do

# REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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“Thus, to be a member of a Baptist church, one, first of all, has to be a genuine Christian, living as a Christian ought to live. Next, there has to be the visible profession of faith in believer’s baptism. Then, finally, the prospective member is expected to enter into covenant with the church.”

-John Hammett, *Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches*

Baptist see the church as the “called out” ones, those who have proclaimed Christ as their Lord and Savior and followed Him in baptism.

The church is seen as the home of the saved, not the place to be saved.

This is instrumental in understanding the concept of believer’s baptism and rejection of child baptism.

# REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP (BAPTISM)

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Baptist Churches reject child baptism for several reasons

- These cannot make a profession of Christ

- Interpret Scriptural baptism as being given to those who make a profession of salvation

- Baptism is an outward display of an internal reality

- Again, the church is not where one goes to be saved, but rather is where one joins after salvation

- Baptist traditionally teach that any interpretation of Scripture used to affirm child baptism is an eisegesis (a reading into the text) of Scripture rather than an exegesis (reading out of the text).





# REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

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Traditionally Baptist Churches maintained regenerate membership in three ways.

1. Believer's Baptism
2. Church Covenants
3. Church Discipline

# CONGREGATIONAL POLITY

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Church membership is important because of this distinctive.

Baptist affirm the Biblical teaching of the priesthood of the believer

Every believer has the same and equal access to God through Christ as any other believer.

Each congregation is to govern itself and is therefore autonomous.

Historically Baptist affirm that there is no Scriptural mandate for a governing body higher than the local church.

This polity differs from the two major other forms...

- Episcopal, decisions are made by a single bishop or group of bishops and handed down to the church.

- Presbyterianism, a group of elders within the local church make decisions for that body, a group from various churches of a region make a general assembly

# CONGREGATIONAL POLITY

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In Baptist churches the ultimate authority to make decisions resides in the gathered body of believers.

This does not imply that the majority always rules.

Leadership within the Baptist church is delegated to others but is never authoritatively given to them.

This elevates the importance of church membership

- Every believer has the opportunity and responsibility to take an active role in the church decisions
- The church is not a place to be served but rather a place to render service
- Each one matures as they seek the Lord's leading and guidance in matters that pertain to themselves and the church
- Every member is an important part

# TWO LESSER KNOW BUT CONNECTED DISTINCTIVES

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- Soul Competency
  - All persons have an inalienable right of direct access to God
  - Man has the ability and capacity to know God
  - Each one must be given the opportunity to personally know God
- Religious Freedom
  - Arrives very early on in Baptist history (motivation behind earliest confessions of faith)
  - There shall be no state funded or sanctioned churches
  - The right of liberty of conscience to worship as one chooses

# CONFESSİONAL

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- Historically Baptist churches have been confessional rather than creedal
- Confession are simply a public profession of what one believes
- At no time have these confessions be seen as final or authoritative
- Never seen as final or complete summaries of what Baptist believe
- “They are expressions, declarations, or affirmations of the Christian faith as Baptist understand it.” –Tom Nettles, *Baptist and the Bible*

# QUESTIONS?

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