

## Baptist Distinctives

\* “How should I choose which church to attend?”

People often choose a church based upon the convenience of the location, the appearance of the building, the friendliness of the people, the kind of music presented or the various services and programs offered.

• As important as these qualities may be, other considerations surpass them all.

➤ First and foremost, the church you choose should hold to the *fundamentals* of the **Christian faith**:

- *The inspiration and authority of the Bible.*
- **Jesus’ virgin birth**, His eternal *divinity* and His sinless *humanity*, His *penal substitutionary death* providing His *blood atonement for sin*, His *bodily resurrection* validating believer’s *justification* through faith in Him, His future *literal return* to establish the Kingdom of God on earth at His 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
- **The Holy Trinity**: One God existing eternally in *three co-equal persons*.
- The Creation and the Fall of man.
- The universality of sin in man and the universal need for salvation.
- The *exclusivity* of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
- The final judgment to come.
- The literalness of heaven and hell.

📖 Many varieties of Bible-teaching churches hold these primary beliefs as essential truths.

➤ But beyond these fundamentals, there are *specific teachings* that set one church apart from the others.

➤ Each member of a **Baptist church** should **know** what a **Biblical Baptist church** believes and does, and should practice the same faithfully.

➤ Baptists are distinguished from other Christian groups by specific *Biblical distinctives*. The name “**Baptist**” identifies people who hold those *distinctives*.

These Baptist distinctives relate to questions of vital interest and relevance today.

**For example:**

- Does absolute truth exist, or are all belief systems relative, are all beliefs equally valid?
- Who controls the program, property, finances, staffing, and doctrinal position of a local church?
- How does being a representative of God on earth affect the believer’s way of living in marriage, work, or in relationship to government and society?
- Does God dispense His grace through religious rituals?
- Should a free society “legislate morality”?
- Is it right to “judge” anything about another person?
- Is there a Biblical model for church leadership?
- What is the proper relationship between church and state?

## Why Is It Important to Know the Baptist Distinctives?

- They are ***Biblical!***
- They are part of God’s truth as revealed in His Word for our instruction.
- The knowledge of these facts provides ***practical benefits*** for living relevant to today.
- Such knowledge enables one to select a church that is faithful to these ***Biblical truths***.
- It demonstrates the meaning, worth, and significance of the name “**Baptist.**”
- Certain Biblical distinctives have distinguished their doctrinal positions.
- The name “**Baptist**” is ***understood through*** its ***distinctives***.
- Baptists should be confident in what the name Baptist stands for.
- It helps members maintain the Baptist position of their church, preventing digression into unscriptural positions.
- General titles such as “Christian” or “Christ” and churches labeled “community” or “nondenominational,” are ambiguities and can lead to misunderstandings.

## How Did These Distinctives Originate?

- Baptists arrived at these distinctives through ***careful study of the Bible***.

That is why these teachings are more precisely called...

 **The Biblical distinctives of Baptists** rather than Baptist distinctives.

These teachings emerged as Baptist distinctives because individual Baptist churches have consistently and independently held to them, not because some group of Baptist leaders composed the list and then imposed the distinctives on local churches.

Church groups other than Baptists have held some of the Baptist distinctives, and one may even find churches that hold all of the distinctives but do not call themselves Baptist. Such groups are “*baptistic*,” but for some reason they choose not to be identified as Baptists.

On the other hand, some churches naming themselves “Baptist” are not truly Baptist because they no longer hold the historic Baptist beliefs or even the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

- Baptists are **people of the Book** above all else.

## What Are the Eight Baptist Distinctives?

### “B-A-P-T-I-S-T-S”

#### † **B**iblical Authority

We hold to what is known as the “**High View**” of the Bible.

We believe in the ***divine inspiration*** of the original manuscripts, which therefore necessarily mandates belief in **plenary inerrancy** and **infallibility**.

The Bible is the final authority in all matters of belief and practice because the Bible is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself.

Whatever the Bible affirms, Baptists accept as true.

No human opinion or decree of any church group can override the Bible.

Even creeds and confessions of faith, which attempt to articulate the theology of Scripture, do not carry Scripture’s inherent authority.

 2 Timothy 3:15–17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 1:20–21

### + **Autonomy of the Local Church**

The local church is an *independent body* accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

All human authority for governing the local church resides within the local church itself. Thus the church is *autonomous, or self-governing*.

No religious hierarchy outside the local church may dictate a church's beliefs or practices.

Autonomy does not mean isolation.

A Baptist church may fellowship with other churches around mutual interests in the interest of Christian unity.

But Baptists have typically avoided ecumenical and interdenominational entanglements that would compromise doctrine.

☞ Colossians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 8:1–5, 19, 23

### + **Priesthood of the Believer**

“Priest” is defined as “one authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, especially as a *mediatory agent between humans and God*.”

Every believer today is a priest of God and may enter into His presence in prayer directly through **our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ**.

**No other mediator** is needed between God and people.

As priests, we can study God's Word, pray for others, and offer spiritual worship to God. We all have equal access to God—whether we are a preacher or not.

☞ 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 5:9-10

### + **Two Ordinances**

The local church should practice *two ordinances*:

(1) **Baptism of believers** by immersion in water, identifying the individual with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and

(2) **The Lord's Supper**, or communion, commemorating His death for our sins while waiting expectantly and proclaiming His imminent second coming.

☞ Matthew 28:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:23–32

### + **Individual Soul Liberty**

Every individual, whether a believer or an unbeliever, has the liberty to choose what he believes is right in the religious realm.

No one should be forced to assent to any belief against his will.

Baptists have always opposed *religious persecution*.

However, this liberty *does not exempt one from responsibility to the Word of God* or from *accountability to God Himself*.

☞ Romans 14:5, 12; 2 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:9

## † **Saved, Baptized Church Membership**

Local church membership is restricted to individuals who give a *believable testimony* of **personal faith in Christ** and have *publicly identified themselves with Him in believer's baptism*.

When the members of a local church are believers, a **oneness** in Christ exists, and the members can endeavor to keep the *unity of the Spirit* in the *bond of peace*.

☞ Acts 2:41–47; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 4:3

## † **Two Offices**

Christ is the Head of the Church.

The Bible mandates *only two offices in the church*—**pastor** and **deacon**.

The three terms—“pastor,” “elder,” and “bishop,” or “overseer”—all refer to the same office.

The two offices of pastor and deacon exist within the local church, not as a hierarchy outside or over the local church.

☞ 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Acts 20:17–38; Philippians 1:1

## † **Separation of Church and State**

God established both the church and the civil government, and He gave each its own distinct sphere of operation.

The government's purposes are outlined in Romans 13:1–7 and the church's purposes in Matthew 28:19–20. Neither should control the other, nor should there be an alliance between the two.

Christians in a free society can properly influence government toward righteousness, which is not the same as a denomination or group of churches controlling the government.

☞ Matthew 22:15–22; Acts 5:17–29

(Outline format compiled with reference to GARBC material with changes)

## † **Some specific distinctives of Bible Baptist Church**

- The Eternal Security of believers.

1 Pet.1:3-5; Jn.5:24; 1 Jn.5:10-13

- The pre-tribulation rapture of the Church.

Jn.14:1:1-3; Rev.3:10; 1 Thes.1:10, 5:9

- The pre-millennial return of Jesus Christ to the earth.

Rev.19:11- Rev.20:7

- The literal establishment of the 1,000 yr. Millennial Kingdom on earth.

Rev.20:4; Rev.3:21, 5:10

- The dispensational understanding of God's dealing with mankind throughout history. Consistent Historical, Grammatical, Literal interpretation of scripture.

2 Tim.2:15 ; 2 Pet.1:20

Distinction between Israel and the Church

1 Cor.10:32; Ro.11:15-29

# B-A-P-T-I-S-T-S

B - BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

A - AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

P - PRIESTHOOD OF EACH BELIEVER

T - TWO ORDINANCES

I - INDIVIDUAL SOUL LIBERTY

S - SAVED MEMBERSHIP

T - TWO OFFICES - PASTOR AND DEACONS

S - SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE