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# What is a Baptist?

A thumbnail sketch of Baptist identity from history and Scripture.

## Three Kinds of Baptists

- Baptist by *condition*
- Baptist by *convenience*
- Baptist by *conviction*

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## Where did Baptists come from?

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## The First Baptists

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- The First London Confession of Faith (1644)

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## What is a Baptist?

- Part of the Protestant, Reformation tradition
  - Authority of Scripture
  - Priesthood of all believers

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## Baptist Distinctives

- Regenerate church membership

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## First London Confession, Article XXXIII

“That Christ hath here on earth a spiritual Kingdom, which is the Church, which he hath purchased and redeemed to himself, as a peculiar inheritance: which Church, as it is visible to us, is a company of visible Saints, called & separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel, being baptized into that faith, and joined to the Lord, and each other, by mutual agreement, in the practical enjoyment of the Ordinances, commanded by Christ their head and King.”

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## Baptist Distinctives

- Regenerate church membership
- Believer's baptism

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## First London Confession, Article XXXIIX

“That Baptism is an Ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed only upon persons professing faith, or that are Disciples, or taught, who upon a profession of faith, ought to be baptized.”

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## First London Confession, Article XL

“The way and manner of the dispensing of this Ordinance the Scripture holds out to be dipping or plunging the whole body under water: it being a sign, must answer the thing signified, which are these:”

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## First London Confession, Article XL

“first, the washing the whole soul in the blood of Christ: secondly, that interest the Saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection; thirdly, together with a confirmation of our faith, that as certainly as the body is buried under water, and riseth again, so certainly shall the bodies of the Saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of resurrection, to reign with Christ.”

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## Baptist Distinctives

“This vision of the church as a body of converted individuals ran counter to a major aspect of thinking of seventeenth-century Anglicans and Presbyterians. These two Christian communities conceived of the church as an established state entity, where the arm of the government maintained religious uniformity and infant baptism was all but required for citizenship.”

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## Baptist Distinctives

“Baptists, on the other hand, were convinced that the church is ultimately a fellowship of those who have personally embraced the salvation freely offered in Christ, not an army of conscripted men and women who have no choice in the matter...Only those who have knowingly professed faith should be baptized.” (*The Baptist Story*, 26)

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## Baptist Distinctives

- Regenerate church membership
- Believer's baptism
- Congregational governance/polity
  - “*Polity* refers to a church's basic structure and patterns of leadership. Congregational polity, or congregationalism, is the belief that local churches should be governed by their own membership.” (*The Baptist Story*, 336)

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## Baptist Distinctives

- Regenerate church membership
- Believer's baptism
- Congregational government/polity
- Local church autonomy

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## Baptist Distinctives

“Local church autonomy is closely related to the aforementioned Baptist distinctives: the whole congregation of regenerate saints takes ownership of the church’s ministry with the understanding that Christ alone is Lord of the church and his will is the standard by which the church’s faithfulness is measured.” (*The Baptist Story*, 339-340)

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## Baptist Distinctives

- Regenerate church membership
- Believer’s baptism
- Congregational government/polity
- Local church autonomy
- Religious liberty

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