

THE EQUIP INSTITUTE

Theme: Baptist Beliefs

Topic: Introduction to Baptist Beliefs

Fall 2025

Introduction

The Equip Institute exists to equip members of Taylors First Baptist Church to think rightly about God and his Word for the sake of living rightly before God in his world. The topic tonight is an introduction to our year-long emphasis on Baptist Beliefs.

Taylors FBC is an autonomous Baptist church that cooperates voluntarily with the Southern Baptist Convention, the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and the Three Rivers Baptist Association.

Baptists and Other Christians

Baptists are first and foremost **Christians**. With all professing Christians everywhere, Baptists believe in the Triune God, the full divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ, his sinless life, his sacrificial death on the cross, his bodily resurrection, and his second coming. We believe all humans are created in God's image, all humans are sinners, and all sinners need salvation, which is found in Jesus alone. We believe in the church universal, which includes all true Christians, at all times, in all places.

Baptists are also **Protestants**. Some of the radical Puritans in England, known as the Separatists, rejected infant baptism in favor of believer's baptism in the early 1600s. Baptists trace our roots to those English Separatists. We are also similar in some ways to the European Anabaptists, who date to the 1500s, though the Baptists came to their views independent of the Anabaptists. Like other Protestants, Baptists believe in the supreme authority of the Bible over church tradition. We also believe that salvation is by grace alone, though faith alone, in Christ alone.

Baptists are also **evangelicals**. Baptists are evangelicals in the historic sense of the term, not necessarily the political sense. Like other evangelicals, we emphasize the importance of Jesus's substitutionary death, the need for personal conversion to faith in Christ, the command to spread the gospel to all people, and the full authority and trustworthiness of Scripture.

Baptists by conditioning have been Baptists for nearly all their Christian life, perhaps before they were born again, and maybe even before they were born the first time. They know Baptist traditions and Baptist lingo. They have a hard time imagining being part of a different Christian tradition, even if they appreciate some things about other traditions. As R.G. Lee famously said, “I’m Baptist born, and Baptist bred, and when I die, I’ll be Baptist dead.”

Baptists by conviction are members of Baptist churches because they are persuaded that Baptist beliefs are more biblical than the beliefs of other denominations. This is their tradition, even if they started out as a Baptist by conditioning or a Baptist by convenience. If they move elsewhere, they will look for another Baptist church that shares their beliefs. Even if they join a nondenominational church, they will want it to be as “Baptish” as possible because beliefs are what is most important to them.

Liberty of conscience: one's beliefs about religion or spirituality are ultimately between the individual and God. Our ultimate accountability is to God, and neither church nor state should attempt to coerce belief.

Believer's baptism by immersion: only those who give credible evidence that they've been born again should be baptized. Baptism, which is the full immersion of a professing believer, marks the public beginning of a life of discipleship.

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Congregationalism: the most important decisions in the life of a church are made by the whole body. At minimum, this means the whole church chooses its officers, maintains its membership, and takes responsibility for its resources.

Local church autonomy: every congregation is free from external religious authority. At minimum, this means the church chooses its own pastors, owns its own property (when applicable), and determines its own priorities.

Religious liberty for all: the ideal earthly arrangement is a free church in a free state. Government's duty is to foster the conditions that allow for maximal, ordered religious freedom. The church's mission is to make disciples, not to accumulate earthly political power.

Statements of Baptist Beliefs

Church covenants are summaries of the faithful Christian life and the expectations of church membership. Historically, Baptist membership has been covenantal, meaning members agree to walk together under the Kingship of Jesus, accountable to one another.

Catechisms are teaching tools that articulate beliefs through a series of questions and answers. Historically, Baptists wrote catechisms to teach children and new believers, often revising more famous catechisms like the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* or the *Heidelberg Catechism*. Catechisms fell out of favor among most Baptists around the turn of the twentieth century, but they are still helpful statements of historic Baptist beliefs.

Confessions are by far the most prominent summaries of Baptist beliefs. The first two Baptist churches in the early 1600s wrote confessions of faith to summarize their respective congregations' beliefs. Beginning in 1644, groups of Baptist churches began writing confessions to summarize their collective beliefs. Like with catechisms, some Baptist confessions are revisions of documents from other traditions. For example, Baptists revised the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and republished it under various names like the *Second London Confession* (1689), the *Philadelphia Confession* (1742), and the *Charleston Confession* (1767). Other Baptist confessions were original compositions. For example, Baptists in New England adopted the *New Hampshire Confession* in 1833, which

later became the basis for the first edition of the *Baptist Faith and Message* in 1925.

Recommended Resources

Douglas K. Blount and Joseph D. Woodell, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

John A. Broadus, *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms*, Library of Baptist Classics, eds. Timothy George and Denise George (B&H Academic, 1999).

Matthew Y. Emerson and R. Lucas Stamps, *The Baptist Vision: Faith and Practice for a Believers' Church* (B&H Academic, 2025).

Anthony L. Chute, Nathan A. Finn, and Michael A.G. Haykin, *The Baptist Story: From English Sect to Global Movement*, 2nd ed. (B&H Academic, 2025).

EQUIP Seminar

Topic: Meaningful Church Membership

Date: October 12, 2025

Time: 3:30-5:00pm