

Discernment – The Gospel – Baptists

EVANGELICAL OVERVIEW

Over the past three weeks, we have explored the doctrines of Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians. The last of the main-line denominations are Baptists.

BAPTISTS

Each one of the denominations has schisms and variations, but with each name comes an expectation of their doctrinal understanding. For the most part, Methodists, Lutherans, and Presbyterians all follow their roots of beliefs, even though they have differences in their politics and views on social issues.

But Baptists are very diverse. There are Pentecostal Baptists, Calvinist Baptists, and Armenian Baptists, among others. So, there is no absolute standard of what a Baptist is except that they all hold to water baptism by immersion and, typically, only believers get baptized (no infant baptism).

There are over 150 Baptist denominations in the world and well over 50 different national bodies in the United States. Some of the most recognizable bodies are:

- American Baptist Churches in the USA (1 Million)
- Baptist Bible Fellowship
- Baptist Missionary
- Free Will Baptist
- Full Gospel Baptist
- General Six-Principle Baptists
- Independent Baptist
- Missionary Baptist Association
- National Baptist Convention USA (5.2 Million)
- National Missionary Baptist Convention of America
- Landmark Baptists
- Old Regular Baptist
- Old Time Missionary Baptist
- Primitive Baptists
- Reformed Baptist
- Regular Baptist
- Separate Baptist
- Seventh Day Baptist General Conference
- Southern Baptist Convention (16 Million)
- World Baptist Fellowship

For this study we will look at the three divisions of Baptists: Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), National Baptist Convention USA (NBCUSA), and American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA)

sbc.net; nationalbaptist.com; nmbca.org; abc-usa.org

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SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION (SBC)

“Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

We affirm our belief in the biblical truth that those without a personal commitment to Jesus Christ will be consigned to a literal hell, the place of everlasting separation from God according to the Word of God

Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God’s grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

Justification is God’s gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

All that’s left for you to do is to accept the gift that Jesus is holding out for you right now.

“If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.” Romans 10:9-10

God says that if you believe in His son, Jesus, you can live forever with Him in glory.

Are you ready to accept the gift of eternal life that Jesus is offering you right now? Let’s review what this commitment involves:

I acknowledge I am a sinner in need of a Savior – this is to repent or turn away from sin

I believe in my heart that God raised Jesus from the dead – this is to trust that Jesus paid the full penalty for my sins

I confess Jesus as my Lord and my God – this is to surrender control of my life to Jesus

I receive Jesus as my Savior forever – this is to accept that God has done for me and in me what He promised

If it is your sincere desire to receive Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior, then talk to God from your heart...

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ

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Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

Baptists... view baptism as an ordinance that symbolizes that God's grace is only conferred upon us through faith in Jesus Christ as we identify with his death, burial, and resurrection. Though it may seem counterintuitive when Baptists ask someone who received a sacramental baptism to be baptized into their membership, they are actually asking that person to be baptized to clarify that it is faith in Christ—not the act of baptism—that bestows all the grace necessary for their salvation.

NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION USA (NBCUSA)

We believe that the Scriptures teach that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own determined depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

We believe that the Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith, and newness of life.

We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

We believe the Scriptures teach that such only are real believers as endure to the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA (ABCUSA)

No clear doctrinal statement is found, and they appear to be primarily social in their agenda and promote soul liberty - the deep conviction that every person can enter into a direct relationship with God without outside mediation.

FAMOUS BAPTIST PREACHERS AND THEIR MESSAGE

W.A. Criswell – “when you come down here where I am, you're talking to me, you're talking about repentance. You're talking about confession. You're talking about faith. You're talking about free moral agency.”

Robert Jeffress – FBC Dallas

Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, God incarnate, the promised Messiah. He fulfilled all of the biblical prophecies of the Old Testament that anticipated His arrival, including:

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- His heritage (*Isaiah 9:6–7, Psalm 2:7*)
- His conception and birth (*Isaiah 7:14*)
- His arrival (*Micah 5:2*)
- His purpose (*Jeremiah 33:14–15*)

While on earth, Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God; He was human, yet without sin. In His substitution death on the cross and subsequent resurrection, He made provision for the redemption of men from sin, and promises to return at a day and hour only known by God.

In the meantime, Jesus desires a personal relationship with each one of us. Through His redemption, we have the opportunity to live eternally with Him, in a place He is currently preparing for us; a place without illness, sorrow, pain, and death.

This relationship—and the journey to this place—begins by accepting that Jesus, as Lord and Savior, has the power to accomplish this. And that by accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we dedicate our lives to living and learning to be more like Him.

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Charles Stanley – FBC Atlanta

God's Word explains that we can receive Christ's gift of salvation by repenting of our sin and trusting in Him (Mark 1:15).

The Gift of Eternal Life Is Received by Faith

Saving faith is not merely intellectual assent. It is trusting in Jesus Christ alone and what He has done rather than what we can do to get ourselves to heaven. Repentance is a turning toward God and away from sin and is a part of but not separate from believing faith.

The Bible says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." You can do that now by simply praying: Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner and do not deserve eternal life. But I believe You died and rose from the grave to purchase a place in heaven for me. Jesus, come into my life, take control of my life, forgive my sins and save me. I am now placing my trust in You alone for my salvation, and I accept Your free gift of eternal life.

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If this prayer is the sincere desire of your heart, look at the promise of Jesus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has eternal life." (John 6:47)

Let's see if you recognize this famous Baptist preacher:

1. God loves you and has a plan for you
2. People are sinners and separated from God
3. God sent His Son to die for your sins
4. We can't earn salvation; we are saved by God's grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for your sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that's called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your honesty.

Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15) to dramatize what He meant by the word "repent." When the prodigal son realized that he had wronged his father by demanding his inheritance and then squandering it, he didn't only repent, he didn't just sit still and feel sorry for his sins. He wasn't passive. He didn't stay where he was, surrounded by the swine. He got up and left! He turned his feet in the other direction. He sought out his father and humbled himself before his father—and his father forgave him and received him back as his son.

Too many people today think that repentance is little more than shaking their heads over their sins and saying, "My, I'm sorry for what I've done," and then continuing to live just as they have lived before.

To be sorry is not enough when it comes to repentance. Even reformation is not enough. There is no torture that we can give the body, no trials that we can set for our mind that will be pleasing to Almighty God. Our sins were atoned for by Christ on the cross. There He suffered sin's penalty. No suffering that we can undergo will lead us to repentance; but Christ will forgive us when we truly turn from our sinfulness and follow Him in obedience.

Repentance is mentioned over 70 times in the New Testament. God demands repentance and Jesus preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Our part is repenting, God will do the converting, the transforming, and the forgiving. ~ Billy Graham

CONCLUSION

This is the first major denomination where the majority does not espouse water baptism as necessary for salvation, although they do deem it necessary as obedience as a believer. A person who is not baptized is not obeying the Scripture, so they are in sin. Can a believer never be baptized? According to their Q&A, yes, but they are left out of church membership and full participation.

The conventions and most recognizable faces of the Baptists focus on repentance and give full definitions, which include the normal turning from sin, sorrowfulness for sin, commitment to living better, and/or to turn to Christ and make Him your master.

THE DIFFERENCE

Is repentance required for salvation?