

# Baptist Distinctives 1

Bro. Larry Tolley

**Rock Hill Baptist Church**  
**605 Rock Hill Road**  
**Lexington, Tennessee 38351**

**Pastor David Buffaloe**  
**731-845-6104**  
**online at bibleteacher.org**



## Definitions

**Baptism** – baptizo- literally means **to immerse**, to sink, to plunge, to dip wholly, **to submerge**

**Baptist** – one who baptizes, or immerses

**Church**- ecclesia (ekkleisia)- comes from to Greek words ek- from and kaleo- called - It literally means to call out from and is used of the Christian assembly that is called out from the world by Jesus Christ. It was used in the Roman and Greek world to indicate an assembly of government officials who are given authority to assemble to carry out the business of the government. Each city had an ekklesia, which would be the same as our modern city council or board of aldermen. This is important because a true ecclesia must be called together by the proper authority to carry out the business at hand.

**Just any assembly of people does not constitute a proper, authoritative ecclesia**, but would be a chaotic, riotous group. The word can mean a riotous gathering and the way to know the difference is by asking the question. Who started the assembly or how was it started? Did one in authority call it out or was it called out in some other way.

**Denomination**- A class, society or collection of individuals, **called by the same name**; as a denomination of christians.

**Distinctive**- something that makes one different or by which one can be known

### **A list of some of the major Baptist distinctives**

1. Jesus Christ is the founder, the foundation and the head of his ecclesia (church)

2. The Bible is the Word of Almighty God, is the only means of knowing absolute truth and is the final authority for faith and practice.
3. Salvation is not in the church, but in Jesus Christ and is available to all who believe unto salvation regardless of their denominational affiliation.
4. Baptism is the total immersion of those old enough to make a conscious choice to receive Christ as their savior and is not in order to be saved but is the outward response of a person that has had an inward conversion by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as their savior.
5. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ commonly referred to, as a **New Testament Church is not a denomination and Baptists are not in the strictest sense a denomination**, for the name Baptist was a generic name that was given to us to describe one of our major distinctives - immersion. Many who were known by other names over the years were called Baptists or ana-baptists because of the fact that they practiced immersion and would not accept the validity of the baptisms of groups that practiced any other mode, such as pouring or sprinkling. They also would not accept the baptisms of groups who held another belief about how to be saved even if they immersed. A prime example of this today would be the Mormons. **Baptists are not identified by names but by distinctive faith and practices and conversely many who never used the name**

**Baptist are recognized as being our brethren and therefore New Testament Churches that are recognized by their founder Jesus Christ.**

6. Baptists believe the local, visible church that assembles in any given place is the highest authority on earth and that ecclesiastical hierarchies or hierarchies of clergy are not scriptural and that no one has the right to tell the local church how to carry out it's business except that we are to abide by the laws of government as long as they don't ask us to go against the laws of God. This is referred to as the **autonomy of the local church**. While elders (pastors and deacons) should be looked to for leadership and guidance and should be respected for the position that they hold in the church the fact is that the church as a whole is to be the final authority to decide all matters pertaining to the carrying out of the business of the church.
7. The church ordinances are baptism (immersion) and the Lord's Supper and while very important are not means of obtaining salvation but are rather acts done by those who are already saved. (Salvation is by grace through believing faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, plus nothing and minus nothing).
8. Salvation is not of man but of God, and we can do nothing to deserve or lose our salvation other than to believe or not to believe in the finished work of Christ, and that once we believe unto salvation that we cannot lose it.

9. Baptists now and always have believed in the total separation of church and state. What this means is the church is not to be a part of or supported by the government. Nor does the state have the right to license, control or oversee its work in any way. **This does not mean that government should not recognize God or that churches should not recognize governmental authority.** It simply means that government should not discriminate by having a state recognized religion that is supported by state funds and conversely the church should not control the government in any way other than by the obvious consequence of saved, Godly people being so numerous that they vote and live their Christian values whether they hold public office or simply vote in called elections.

#### 10. Purity and separation **1 Corinthians 6:14-18**

We will begin with two major Baptist distinctives:

1. Baptists look to Jesus Christ as the founder, the foundation and the head of the ecclesia (church.) **1 Corinthians 3:1-16, vs. 10, 11; Matthew 16:15-19, Ephesians 1:19-23, Luke 6:13, Mark 3:13,14, 1 Corinthians 12:28**
2. Baptists look to the Bible as the only means of knowing absolute truth. We believe that the Bible is literally the words of Jesus Christ (who is God) to us, that it was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is now complete and we neither need nor want any revelation of spiritual truths

from any other source oral or written. We further believe that the Bible has been preserved by the direct intervention of God and that we have available to us today all that God wants us to know. (God has preserved his words in the original languages and there are available in many other languages accurate and reliable translations of the original languages, which were complete, and without error in the original autographs. By a comparison of the existing manuscripts that have survived in the original languages of Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic we can know **positively and absolutely** the truths God wants us to know.) **1 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:12-21, Luke 3:16**

Luk 1:1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are **most surely believed among us,**

Luk 1:2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

Luk 1:3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

Luk 1:4 That thou **mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.**

Distinctive # 3 - Salvation is not in the church, but in Jesus Christ and is available to all

who believe unto salvation regardless of their denominational affiliation.

Joh 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

**Act 19:1** And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples,

Act 19:2 He said unto them, **Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?** And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.

Act 16:29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas,

Act 16:30 And brought them out, and said, **Sirs, what must I do to be saved?**

Act 16:31 And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**

Act 16:32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house.

Act 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, **straightway. (immediately, forthwith, instantly, Thayer's Greek Lexicon)**

Act 10:46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

Act 10:47 **Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?**

**Two of the earliest errors to present themselves in the church were the establishment of a hierarchy of clergy to rule the local churches and baptismal regeneration. Which brings us to the next point.**

Distinctive # 4 - Baptism is the total immersion of those old enough to make a conscious, private and personal choice to receive Christ as their savior and is not in order to be saved but is the outward response of a person that has had an inward conversion by believing on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

- Baptism comes from the Greek word *baptizo* and means to immerse, or completely submerge
- Baptism was only valid in the New Testament when administered by someone who had the proper authority. *Compare Acts 19:1-5 and Matthew 28:19-20.* Here we see that in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is the form and in the name of Jesus is the authority (*vs. 19 all power- Greek word *exsousia* meaning authority*) Jesus has the authority that was given to him by the full agreement and backing of the Holy God-Head.

Act 19:3 And he said unto them, **Unto what then were ye baptized?** And they said, Unto John's baptism.

Act 19:4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.

Act 19:5 When they heard *this*, **they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. - *As there is no other instance in the New Testament of any persons having been rebaptized, it has been made a question by some critics whether it was done here; and they have supposed that all this is the narrative of Luke respecting what took place under the ministry of John: to wit, that he told them to believe on Christ Jesus, and then baptized them in his name. But this is a most forced construction; and it is evident that these persons were rebaptized by the direction of Paul. For:*

***(1) This is the obvious interpretation of the passage - what would strike all persons as correct, unless there were some previous theory to support.***

*(2) it was not a matter of fact that John baptized in the name of Christ Jesus. His was the baptism of repentance; and there is not the slightest evidence that he ever used the name of Jesus in the form of baptism.*

*(3) if it be the sense of the passage that John baptized them in the name of Jesus, then this verse is a mere repetition of a tautology of which the sacred writers would not be guilty.*

*(4) it is evident that the persons on whom Paul laid his hands and those who were baptized, were the same. But these were the persons who heard what was said. The narrative is continuous, all parts of it cohering together as relating to a transaction that occurred at the same time. If the obvious interpretation of the passage be the true one, it follows that the baptism of John was not strictly Christian baptism. It was the baptism of repentance; a baptism designed to prepare the way for the introduction of the kingdom of the Messiah. It will not follow, however, from this that Christian baptism is now ever to be repeated. For this there is no warrant in the New Testament. There is no command to repeat it, as in the case of the Lord's Supper; and the nature and design of the ordinance evidently supposes that it is to be performed but once. The disciples of John were rebaptized, not because baptism is designed to be repeated, but because they never had been, in fact, baptized in the manner prescribed by the Lord Jesus. (Barnes)*

- Baptism qualifies one to be a part of the local church and is not a saving ordinance. Belief or faith is what places one in the family of God and is the only thing necessary to be saved. John 3:3, Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 3:14-15, Titus 3:5 **Baptism is only a sign, and therefore should never be separated from the thing signified; but it is a rite commanded by God himself, and therefore the thing signified should never be expected without it.** Mistaking baptism to be the means of salvation rather than the sign of it led to several other errors regarding it.

Error #1- Baptism is to be administered only by the

church, and places one in the church, so if salvation is attained by being baptized then you must be in the church to be saved. The logical conclusion then is that there is no salvation outside of the Church.

Error #2 – Baptism is the New Testament equivalent of circumcision and since Jewish male babies were circumcised shortly after birth then if we want our children to be saved we can kill two birds with one stone and baptize them as infants. If salvation is by baptism administered by the Church then the child would be saved if it should 1) die as an infant or 2) not be receptive to the teachings of the church later on in life. Basically the decision about being a Christian is made for them without their consent or knowledge and faith is out the door as the means of attaining eternal life.

Error #3 – The water is just symbolic of the churches approval of the child, and since the total immersion of infants is difficult at best, pouring water on them is just as good. (*this is called affusion*)

Error #4 – If pouring water on the baby is ok then why upset the little fellow by drenching him with it; let's just sprinkle a minimal amount of water on the child. (*This is how sprinkling of infants came about*)

Error #5 – If there is no salvation outside of the church then one must be in the church to be saved. This led to the common misconception that being in the church and being saved are one and the same thing. The truth is that a person can be saved and never assemble with other believers (*ekklesia translated church in our English versions means a called out assembly,*) and many who are in the church have never been saved.

Over 50 million Christians were persecuted and killed in

the most brutal fashion during the years called the dark ages (*approximately 426 AD – 1530AD*). These Christians were killed for refusing to accept infant baptism or the authority of the Church hierarchy to control the salvation of the individual Christian. They taught and practiced the priesthood of the believer, believers baptism of those old enough to believe for themselves, and required that all who came to Christ in believing faith be baptized after their conversion even if they had been immersed or sprinkled before they were saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Because of this they were called by their enemies – **Ana-Baptists**. (*ana means re, Baptist means an immerser therefore they were called re- immersers*)