



# Goahead Theological Seminary & College

9 East Homestead Ave. Palisades Park, NJ 07650 in USA

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## Baptist

Baptism is a denomination of Protestantism that originated in England under the influence of Puritan theology. While some claim that the Baptist denomination originated from the Anabaptist movement on the European continent, this claim is not historically proven. The Baptist denomination derives its name from its belief that baptism should be administered only after a person confesses their faith in Jesus, and that immersion in water is the biblical method of baptism. The Anabaptists and the Baptists had different theological ideas and never interacted at the denominational level. The Anabaptists also did not consider the English Baptists as part of their group or a related branch. While some believe there might be a connection between the English Baptists and the Anabaptists in Holland (specifically the group known as the Waterland Anabaptists, who practiced adult baptism), leading to the translation of "Anabaptist" as "re-baptizer," there is no historical basis for this claim. The Anabaptists who migrated to America settled as the Amish, while the English Baptists, without any interaction with the Amish or similar groups, grew into the largest denomination in the United States. The issue of slavery and the Civil War led to a split between the Northern and Southern Baptist churches, resulting in the denominations we see today.

### Overview:

Baptists differ from Presbyterianism and Methodism in that they emphasize believer's baptism (not infant baptism), salvation through faith alone, and the Bible as the sole principle of faith and practice, as well as the autonomy of each local church. That is, each individual church is a complete and independent entity, regardless of its size or organizational structure, and no church can be a part of another church, nor should any church interfere with or be interfered with by another church. Therefore, it is fundamentally impossible for any other church or general assembly outside of a particular church to interfere with, judge, or make decisions on problems that arise within that individual church. On the other hand, it differs from "church individualism" in that independent individual churches, free from interference from any external organization, voluntarily unite and cooperate. Its characteristics include voluntary association for cooperative projects and the self-reliant, cooperative nature of regional churches formed by the mutual cooperation of individual churches. Therefore, historically, the Baptist church has its deepest roots in the "Particular Baptists," who emerged from Puritan Congregationalists who embraced Calvinist theology. However, each individual church or association tends to freely adopt its own theological stance. Nevertheless, today, there is a general tendency to broadly adhere



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to evangelical and fundamentalist lines of thought. The church offices include pastors and deacons.

While some consider the congregation founded in Amsterdam in 1609 by the English Separatist John Smyth to be the first Baptist church, historians of the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States do not definitively label it as such, instead referring to it as a "pathfinder." They acknowledge its contribution in considering and testing several conditions necessary for establishing a congregation based on the New Testament. Smith rejected infant baptism and only administered baptism to those who made a specific confession of faith. However, he deeply pondered the proper method of baptism, whether his own baptism was valid, and if so, why. John Smith's congregation ceased to exist after his death. However, the Free Church movement in England gave rise to Particular Baptists, who based their theology on the Calvinism of Puritan theology, and General Baptists, who were less theologically rigorous and even showed Arminian tendencies. The Particular and General Baptists had significantly different ecclesiological views, resulting in little denominational interaction. The General Baptists declined, barely maintaining their existence before ultimately being absorbed by the Particular Baptists. In that respect, it can be said that British Baptists showed a strong tendency towards Reformed or Particular Baptist principles, based on Calvinism. In 1639, Roger Williams established the first Baptist church in America, and the spirit of freedom in America was similar to the spirit of freedom in the Baptist church, which became the foundation for the growth of the Baptist church. Particularly after the Great Awakening in the mid-18th century, American Baptist churches, along with Methodist churches, began to increase in number.

As of 2000, the number of Baptists worldwide was approximately 150 million. In American Protestantism, the Southern Baptist Convention, the world's largest Protestant denomination, has the largest membership.

## Baptist Church Offices and Doctrines

### Autonomy of Individual Churches (Congregationalism):

Each Baptist church has autonomy in its policies, organizational structure, and teachings. Baptist churches emphasize the independence of each congregation and are not subject to direct control by institutions such as a general assembly or a leader like a pope. Church operations, leadership, and teachings are democratically decided by the lay members of each church, resulting in variations in beliefs among different congregations. As a characteristic of congregationalism, many associations and conventions have been established. These associations exist for purposes such as missionary work, education, and charity, and they do not have authority over



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the operation of individual churches, respecting the autonomy of each church. Therefore, there are also independent Baptist churches that are not affiliated with any general assembly.

## **The Priesthood of All Believers:**

The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers means that all Christians can have direct access to God without the need for intermediaries such as priests, and can receive the truth revealed through the Bible. This doctrine is based on 1 Peter 2:9, which states, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light," and was popularized by the Reformation led by Martin Luther and by John Wycliffe, a 15th-century English church reformer. The Baptist doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is one of the pillars supporting their belief in religious freedom.

## **Sacraments:**

Generally, Baptist churches observe two sacraments found in the New Testament: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

## **Baptism:**

Baptism is a ritual in which a person is completely immersed in water after confessing Jesus as the Christ, the one who saved the world. It symbolizes the death of the old self and the rebirth into a new person. Therefore, we do not support the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. Most Baptist churches consider believer's baptism, received after salvation, as a requirement for membership.

Baptists do not recognize infant baptism because they believe that salvation is obtained through grace received through a confession of faith in Christ, and therefore parents cannot decide their child's salvation.

In the Baptist tradition, baptism emphasizes complete immersion in water. This method, used by John the Baptist, involves the minister lowering the person being baptized backward into the water, and is performed by reciting Matthew 28:19-20, which mentions the Trinity and Jesus Christ's command to make disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or by reciting



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other statements of faith. This ritual appropriately illustrates the teaching in Romans that Christians die and are resurrected with Jesus.

The accepted methods and subjects of baptism can also vary among churches. Many Baptist churches only recognize baptism by full immersion in water, but some churches allow alternatives to immersion in exceptional cases, such as for people with disabilities or the elderly. Furthermore, some churches recognize baptisms received in other Christian denominations (excluding infant baptism) when transferring members.

## The Lord's Supper:

The Lord's Supper is called by various names in different Christian denominations, such as Holy Communion, Eucharist, and Lord's Supper. In the Baptist church, it is called the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a ritual that imitates Jesus' Last Supper as recorded in the Gospels. According to Luke 22:19, Jesus said at the Last Supper the day before his suffering, "Do this in remembrance of me." Those who participate in the Lord's Supper do so by sharing bread and wine, which symbolize the body and blood of Jesus. In the Baptist tradition, the bread and wine are interpreted symbolically, rejecting the literal interpretation of transubstantiation (the belief that the bread actually transforms into the body of Christ) as accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. During the celebration of the Lord's Supper, verses 23-25 of 1 Corinthians chapter 11, from the first letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthian church, are quoted.

The bread used in the Lord's Supper is often unleavened bread, such as square-shaped bread without yeast (baking powder) or wafers, using the type of unleavened bread believed to have been used at the Last Supper. In the United States, due to temperance principles, Baptist churches primarily use non-alcoholic grape juice for the Lord's Supper, although some churches still use alcoholic wine. Typically, individual small cups are used to distribute the beverage, but sometimes the entire congregation shares a single large cup. The backs of the long pews often found in churches may have a circular indentation where the communion cups can be placed. The bread and wine are usually passed from the pastor to the deacons, who then distribute them to the congregation. Generally, as a symbol of unity, all members of the congregation eat the bread and drink from the cup simultaneously. In some cases, the bread and wine are consumed together.

The frequency of the Lord's Supper can be weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. It is usually held at the end of the worship service, but it can be held at any point during the service. The criteria for participation in the Lord's Supper vary: some churches allow all members who profess Christian faith to



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participate, others restrict participation to baptized members, and still others limit participation to registered members of their own congregation.

## Church Offices:

Generally, in the Baptist church, pastors and deacons are considered to be the offices described in the Bible. The office of elder, which is common in other denominations, is considered equivalent to the office of pastor and is not seen as a separate office. There was a period of debate regarding whether these offices were exclusively for men, but in 2009, the Baptist General Assembly approved the ordination of women as bishops and deacons, and this is the current practice. This was accomplished based on Joel 2:29 in the Old Testament, which says, "In those days I will pour out my Spirit on my male and female servants," and it is a result of prioritizing the Bible as the highest authority over long-standing human traditions.

## Pastor:

The primary role of a Baptist pastor is to preach during worship services, that is, to interpret the Bible and deliver God's word. The pastor also visits sick members at their homes or in hospitals and visits families who have not yet made a decision of faith. They officiate at weddings and funerals of church members and preside over business meetings. In larger churches, there are associate pastors who are responsible for specific ministries. The areas of responsibility for associate pastors include administration, counseling, social work, church music, youth education, children's education, and church management.

## Deacons:

In the early church, as the apostles' ministry expanded, they were unable to handle all the various issues of fairness and justice that arose in different places. Therefore, certain individuals were chosen to serve as deacons. Stephen, whom we know well, was one of those chosen and ordained as a deacon. The deacons' duties primarily involved financial matters. They were responsible for managing and overseeing the church's finances, from providing relief to the needy to handling the financial transactions of various church projects.



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## Origins in the New Testament Era:

Some views trace the origins of the Baptist movement to John the Baptist and Jesus in the New Testament. Those who support this view argue that, although they were not called Baptists at the time, Christians gathered in congregations and continued the practices and traditions of what is now known as the Baptist denomination. According to this view, the Baptist denomination existed even before the Reformation and is therefore unrelated to it. However, most Baptists, with the exception of some fundamentalist Baptists, consider this claim unfounded. Furthermore, very few Baptist theologians today make such a claim.

## Anabaptist Origins:

The Anabaptists were a religious group from the 1500s who did not recognize infant baptism and instead practiced "re-baptism" of adults. This group shared many similarities with the Baptists, including baptism after a confession of faith and freedom of belief, and influenced the formation of the Baptist denomination. Some explain that the churches founded by some Puritans who were influenced by them are considered to be part of this tradition.

The Puritans were 17th-century separatists who opposed the episcopal system and the use of vestments in the Church of England, demanding a democratic church governance system known as Presbyterianism. Some believe that a group of these Puritans founded the Baptist church in London, England, in 1620.

## Introduction to Korea:

The Baptist church in South Korea originated from the Korean Christian Church, founded in 1889 in Wonsan, Hamgyeong Namdo Province, by Canadian missionary Malcolm Fenwick (the denomination changed its name to the East Asian Christian Church in 1921). It developed into a full-fledged denomination in 1949 through its affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention of the United States. Additionally, the Korean Bible Baptist Fellowship began its missionary activities in 1954 through American missionary Isaac Foster.

In 1959, a theological dispute between members centered around Southern Baptist missionaries and indigenous members from the East Asia Christian Church led to a split into the Korean Baptist Convention and the Christian



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Baptist Convention of Korea. However, the two factions reunited in 1968. The current name is the Korea Baptist Convention. @