

Two ordinances: communion and baptism

Mt 28:19, 20; 1Cor 11:23-31

There are only two spiritual ordinances of the local church: (1) communion; (2) baptism. They do not give a person merit or credit. They are simply rules of procedure given by the Lord Jesus Christ for His believers to obey and to be carried out as a collective body of believers.

Separation of church and state

Mt 16:18, 19; 22:21; Rom 13:1-4

The church should not control government, and government should not control the church. This is the corporate conclusion of individual soul liberty, and the final conclusion of autonomy. Every local church should be governed by their local members, not a hierarchy, including governments. Christ made it clear, that government and spiritual authority were to be two **separate**, yet **complimentary** authorities, and both needed to be recognised and obeyed. **Mt 22:21.** Historically, Baptists have never sought political favour. In fact, numerous times Baptists have stood for the religious freedom of those with opposing beliefs.

Independent

Many Baptists have slipped from autonomy in various ways, through associations, unions, etc. and they have become their own Baptist "denomination." This normally leads to compromise of other Baptist (Biblical) distinctive's. Many Baptists began using the term "independent" in the early part of the twentieth century to clarify their commitment to the autonomy of the local church.

Fundamental

Just before the twentieth century, many groups within Protestant denominations became "independent," and were known as "fundamentalists." Many of these eventually became independent Baptists. **Historically, Baptists are not Protestants.** But the term "fundamentalist" carried over from those Protestants, and became associated with all independent Baptists. Today, the term "fundamental Baptist" generally refers to those Baptists who believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures; and interpret the Scriptures, literally, unless it's context explicitly requires otherwise. Specifically, this means, "fundamental Baptists," believe in the deity, virgin birth, and vicarious sacrifice of Christ; literal miracles in the Bible; the bodily resurrection of Christ; and the literal return of Christ.



**WHAT DOES IT
MEAN TO BE AN
INDEPENDENT
FUNDAMENTAL
BAPTIST?**

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BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES

The title Baptist is not just a name or denomination. Sadly, many Baptists today do not understand the history or the significance of the name.

Undoubtedly, there are many different kinds of Baptists today. Historically, Baptists, have been identified by what they believe. These beliefs can be summarised as an acrostic of the name B.A.P.T.I.S.T.S.

*B*ible is the sole authority for faith and practice

Gal 1:1, 2; 1Th 2:13; 2Ti 3:16; 2Pe 1:20, 21

The local church as a whole is in subjection to the Bible, including the pastor. All of the ministry, doctrine, and practice of the church, is founded or based on the Bible. The Bible governs every part of the believer's life.

*A*utonomy of the local church

Mt 18:15-18; Ac 6:1-7; 13:1-3; 1Cor 5:12, 13

The church is not bound to any organisation, or denomination outside the church membership. Each church member has equal authority within the church membership. The church is not governed

by an inner circle of elite members (**3Jn 9, 10**). Though this is almost always the policy of independent Baptist churches, sometimes there will be an underlying group within the church that exercises inadvertent control over the congregation. This is unbiblical.

*P*riesthood of the believers

1Tim 2:1-3; Heb 4:14-16; 10:21-24; 1Th 5:17

We can come directly to Christ with our requests and burdens. We do not have to go through another person. Christ is our Great High Priest. As a priest, every believer is to fulfil two primary obligations: (1) We are to offer up worship to God (**1Pt 2:9**); (2) We are to pray for others. (**1Tim 2:1-3**).

*T*wo Offices: Pastor and Deacon

1Tim 3:1-13; Ac 6:1-7; 1Pt 5:1-5

There are only two spiritual positions within the local church: (1) pastor; (2) deacon. The qualifications for these offices are found in **1Tim 3:1-13**. The titles, **elder, bishop** and **pastor (1Pt 5:1-5)** are different **descriptions** of

the pastoral position, and **not** separate offices in the church.

*I*ndividual Soul Liberty

Jos 24:15; Jn 4:28; Ac 15:36-41; Rev 3:20

The belief that every individual, believer or unbeliever, has the freedom to choose a faith that his own conscience decides is best. Almost every other religion believes they are exclusive, meaning you must become one of them in order to be right with God. Further, most of them believe, they have the right to force those beliefs upon others. Baptists have always stood for freedom of conscience.

*S*aved and baptised church membership

1Cor 5:1-5; 1Tim 5:9; Ac 2:47; 16:14, 15, 33, 34

Individuals must give evidence of their personal salvation experience and must have been Scripturally baptised (by immersion) in order to join the membership of a local church. The church is open for all to attend. But membership gives the church order.

Baptism is **not** part of salvation. It is the first step of obedience for believers **after** being saved. Salvation and baptism are so closely related in Scripture they are mentioned simultaneously most of the time. For a believer to properly serve in a local church, they need to be baptised **first**.