

Religions in America: Baptist

Who are the Baptists?

Where most of them live: Baptist churches are all around the U.S. But they are strongest in the South.

How many people are Baptist in the U.S.? About 36,000,000.

How long has the Baptist church been here? Since about 1650.

Baptists are well known for: Always carrying their Bibles with them, also believing in adult baptism by immersion (totally under the water).

Names of some Baptist groups: Southern Baptist Convention, American Baptist Convention, Free-Will Baptist, Conservative Baptist Association, National Baptist Convention, Primitive Baptists, Baptist Bible Fellowship, General Baptists, Regular Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, and many, many more.

Now we will look at what they believe.

Where is their teaching from?

Baptists say all their teaching must come from the Bible. They will use a verse like Psalm 119:105 to show how God's word is important. They refuse to follow any teaching that is not from the Bible. Baptists strongly believe that all of the Bible is God's word.

Baptists will not use creeds. They say creeds are from people, not from God, because people write the creeds. They will not write one statement and say all Baptists believe it. Different Baptists believe many different things. But one thing they all agree: the Bible is all God's word. All our beliefs and life should be based on the Bible. Read Hebrews 8:10. Baptists say we don't need creeds because God teaches us directly through His word and He writes His law on our hearts. (But then why do not all Baptists believe the same?)

What is Our Biggest Need?

Baptists believe that we are sinful, we are separated from God. Baptists believe what Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Our biggest need is for God to get rid of our sin and make us clean.

Can We Help Ourselves?

Baptists are split on this. Some Baptists say we can help ourselves, others say we can't. Some follow the teaching of John Calvin, others follow the teaching of Jacob Arminius. John Calvin was a reformer in the church who lived close to the time of Martin Luther, in the early to mid 1500's. He said God chooses people to go to heaven and He chooses people to go to hell (read Ephesians 1:4). We have no choice, we can't change anything. Some Baptists believe that way. Jacob Arminius lived a little after John Calvin, in the late 1500's. He went against Calvin's teaching. Arminius said we have complete free will. If we will become saved, it is our choice and our decision. We

must choose to believe and follow Christ (read Acts 16:30-31). Some Baptists believe that way. So some Baptists say you can't help yourself, God does all the work. Some Baptists say you must help yourself, you must choose to follow Christ. But Baptists normally say our good works don't help save us.

What Does "Salvation" Mean?

For the Baptists, salvation means Jesus forgives your sins so you can go to heaven. They also believe that we have forgiveness because Jesus died on the cross and rose again for us. They are good at using John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish (die) but have eternal life." When you believe in Jesus, all your sins are forgiven and you can go to heaven. Baptists also emphasize that you should get baptized. Read John 3:3.

What Will Happen When We Die?

Baptists believe when we die, we will go straight to heaven or hell, depending on whether or not we believe in Jesus.

What Do Baptists Think About Church?

Baptists will say that church is a place to meet with other believers and study God's word. They don't say you must be a member of a church to go to heaven. Baptists really emphasize your independence. You are free to interpret the Bible how you want. The church can't tell you how you should understand the Bible (but read Acts 2:42). Instead of emphasizing church, they focus on your "personal relationship with Jesus."

Do Baptists Have Sacraments?

No. Most Baptists believe in baptism by immersion (totally under the water) for teens and adults, no little children or babies. They say baptism gives you nothing from God. God told us to baptize, so we baptize to obey Him and for the people getting baptized to show God they believe in Him.

Baptists will have the Lord's Supper, but they don't call it a sacrament. They do it mainly to remember Jesus and because Jesus said to do it.

Anything Else They Do?

Some Baptists are well known for saying the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible is the only correct Bible to use. They say all other Bibles are wrong.

The Baptist churches are often eager for mission work, here and around the world.

What Do Lutherans Say?

Baptists are good at focusing on God's word. But some Baptists forget salvation is ALL God's work, not our decision. Sometimes they use the law too much. They forget that Jesus saved us to be free and love. Jesus didn't save us so we have to obey the law again. Also they forget God's wonderful gifts in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.