

A Brief Survey and History of Baptists

- In a 2015 study, conducted by the Pew Research center, researchers said that 15.4% of the U.S. population identified as some form of Baptist. That's about 48 million people.
- Where did they all come from?

There are 4 predominant views about the origins of Baptists

1. Succession, or perpetuity. Also known as Landmarkism, and “Baptist Bride”
 - Baptist Churches have existed in an unbroken chain since the time of Jesus and John the Baptist
 - This is the view taught in the booklet “Trail of Blood”
 - Landmarkism also usually includes:

- Opposition to alien baptism (baptized by any other denomination)
- Only Baptists are true Churches
- The Church is only local and visible
- There can be no “pulpit affiliation” with non-Baptists
- The Kingdom of God is composed only of “true Churches”
- For more information, research “The Cotton Grove Resolutions”

2. Baptists are a continuation of those who embraced Baptist faith and practice

- Baptist faith and practice have existed since the time of Christ and John the Baptist, but Baptist Churches have not

3. They emerged from Anabaptists.

- They had similarities with the Anabaptists (baptism, separation of Church and state)
- They had major differences from Anabaptists (they were not pacifist, nor communal)

4. They emerged from the English Separatist movement

- England: Catholic, Church of England (1534), Puritans (Church of England who wanted to purify Anglicanism), Separatists (Non-Conformists)
- The main difference between position # 3 and 4 is the influence of the Anabaptists upon the Baptists

- The first Church known to call itself a “Baptist” Church was located in Amsterdam in 1609
- It was founded by the English separatist John Smyth
- He was exiled from England because of his separatist views (complements of King James)
- He baptized himself, but later repented of this and joined the Mennonites
- He preferred the term “Christians Baptized on Profession of their Faith,” but Baptist is what stuck

- Smith opposed using English Bible, taking an offering, and singing only the Psalms in worship
- It was his conclusion that infant Baptist was wrong that led to his self baptism.
- One of his members (Thomas Helwys) in Amsterdam returned to England and founded the first Baptist Church in England

- Helwys wrote (as far as is known) the first English book defending religious liberty
- He sent the book to King James, who arrested him and put him in jail. He died there in 1616
- Helwys wrote the first Baptist Confession of Faith

- The first Baptist Church in America was founded by Roger Williams in the colony of Providence Plantations, in 1639. Providence Plantations and 3 other colonies were formed into Rhode Island in 1663.
- Williams advocated religious liberty (he had been expelled from Massachusetts Bay Colony for his views), separation of Church and state, baptism by immersion, and abolition of slavery

- Baptists in America grew in numbers, forming various associations
- There were conflicts over various doctrines, but the core Baptist doctrines about baptism, religious liberty, and the separation of Church and state were fairly consistently observed
- In 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention was formed because of the growing abolitionist sentiment of northern Baptists

Baptists identify themselves through a number of distinctives

- B. Biblical authority. II Tim. 3.15-17
- A. Autonomy of the local Church. II Cor. 8.1-5
- P. Priesthood of the believer. I Peter 2.5- 9
- T. Two ordinances: baptism and Lord's Supper

- I. Individual Soul Liberty (freedom of conscience in matters of faith). Romans 14.5
- S. Saved Church membership. Acts 2.41-47
- T. Two offices: Pastor and Deacon