
WHY I AM A BAPTIST

PERSONAL TESTIMONY. I am not a Baptist because I was raised in a Baptist Church. In fact, I was raised in a liberal Methodist Church and never heard the Gospel. No one ever handed me a tract in all my 25 unsaved years, no Christian ever visited me or spoke to me about Christ. I was saved at age 25 through reading the Bible (the KJV). I had no interest in God and was reading it for another purpose. Though saved, I knew nothing but began to go to Church (no one told me to) right away. After visiting seven or eight, (none of which said anything like what had happened to me), I came to one where the man preached the Gospel. I was thrilled! I was not there very long when I heard him say on many occasions that a saved person could be lost again. I memorized much Scripture, though no one told me to, and I knew that was not possible, John 10:28, etc. Then, I found a small Baptist Church where I began attending and joined.

Some who read this may be upset. The truth is always unsettling to some people, but it needs to be proclaimed just the same. If you can prove that you are right, you should have nothing to be upset about; if you are wrong, you should be willing to change. A great majority in our day, including a good many Fundamentalists have adopted the philosophy that we are to tone the truth down so as not to offend anyone. While there may be times to be silent, our goal is not to appease and get along with everyone. It was not the Savior's goal! What we need is the truth! I am not saying there are no Christians in other churches. There are other churches which have some truth and there are some Baptist churches that err from the truth which I would not want to be associated with. However, it is Baptist churches that adhere most clearly to the Word of God.

I'M A BAPTIST DUE TO THE WORDS OF JESUS. In Matt.16:18 Jesus said, "**I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**" Now it is quite clear that Jesus built His Church first in Jerusalem. Then, His disciples went into various places throughout the world and where people were saved, they were baptized and organized into local churches. The Lord said the gates of hell would not prevail against His Church. If all you have is the denominational churches, which have been built by men, the gates of hell did prevail against His Church for many centuries. Where was the truth for more than a thousand years of Romanism during the dark ages, if not in the small groups of Anabaptists scattered here and there? I also believe Jesus when He said, "**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**" Matt.28:19. There is little point in arguing about the method of Baptism! The word means "*to immerse.*" If you read the Book of Acts, you find that wherever people believed the Gospel, they were baptized and they went down into the water to do it! One historian has written: "*During the first three centuries, congregations all over the East subsisted in separate, independent bodies...All this time they were*

baptized churches...and they give great numbers of histories of the baptism of adults and yet there is not one record of a baptism of a child until the year 370 A.D." The combined testimony of Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the early Church is that immersion of believing adults is the only form of baptism.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? The English word church comes from a Greek word - *ecclesia* - which literally means "*called out ones.*" The word *ecclesia* was in common usage, for in Greece, every city had a group of officials who were selected to govern the affairs of the city. They were designated the "*ecclesia.*" They were called out of the general population. God used that word to designate His own wherever he chooses to save people and build His Church. Incidentally, there is no such thing as the invisible, universal church. Did Christ build an invisible Church? Did the apostle Paul? A true Church is a local Church. We realize there are some believers who are in no church and others in a wrong church. However, that does not justify twisting Scripture to somehow include them in a universal church. We should say a word about when the Church began. There are differences of opinion among good men, but I firmly believe the Church Jesus built began on the Day of Pentecost. If the Church began with John the Baptist, as many teach, why did Paul rebaptize those men at Ephesus in Acts 19 since they had already received the baptism of John? You have the same situation in Acts 10 (see v.37-48). I think it is clear that the Church began with the new age, or dispensation, in Acts 2. I know it says, "**There were added unto them...**" But it doesn't say they were added to the Church, but to *them* - the group of believers already in existence, the disciples. The disciples of Jesus became members of His Church when the Holy Spirit came upon them and formed a new body of believers - at Pentecost.

I AM A BAPTIST BECAUSE OF BIBLE TRUTH. Now, I understand that no Church, past or present, is perfect. We are not talking about a line of perfect churches but a line of churches which can be traced back to Christ and the apostles. A line that is consistent with the teaching of the New Testament. First, true Baptists have never held the doctrine of salvation by works, which most churches hold in one form or another. They have insisted on salvation by grace through faith alone! They have never baptized babies. No other church has consistently held to all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. No other church has been more faithful in proclaiming the true Gospel of Christ. Is there any other group that has constantly preached that salvation is through repentance and faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ? Baptists do not believe in sacraments for they find no such teaching in the Scriptures. They hold to the two ordinances, memorials, given by the Lord: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. What other church has been consistently been premillennial, separated, rejecting the idea of a priesthood or

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clergy. You see, we are not talking about a few minor points or merely (though very important) the mode of baptism, but the very heart of the Gospel.

TESTIMONY OF NON-BAPTISTS. Non-Baptists who are knowledgeable and truthful have over the years acknowledged that Baptists are the only ones who can show this succession of Bible doctrines and the mode of baptism back to Jesus and the apostles. Joseph Belcher, writing in *Religious Denominations in England and America* said, "It will be seen that the Baptists claim the high antiquity of the commencement of the Christian Church. They can trace the succession of those who have believed the same doctrine, administered the same ordinances directly up to the Apostolic Age." Clark Redpath, a Methodist who died in 1900 wrote, "I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist Church as far back as 100 A.D. although without a doubt, there were Baptist churches then as all Christians were then Baptists." Johann Mosheim is no doubt the greatest Lutheran historian; he died in 1775. He stated: "The sacrament of baptism was administered in the first century without public assemblies in places appointed and prepared for that purpose and was performed by an immersion of the whole body in a baptismal fount." Concerning the 2nd century he says, "The persons that were to be baptized after they had repeated the creed, confessed and renounced their sins, especially the devil and his allurements, were immersed under water." Bishop Taylor, the learned Episcopalian, said: "The custom of the ancient churches was not sprinkling, but immersion." Another distinguishing mark of Baptist churches has been the independence of each Church. Miall, in his *Memo of Early Christian Churches* says, "That each Christian Church was in the earliest period of ecclesiastical history individualized and unassociated except by the religious feelings which alike pervaded all, is admitted by most candid historians."

PROTESTANT CHURCHES GO BACK TO THE REFORMATION. First, let me say that the enlightened person knows that the Roman Catholic Church is not the true church. It doesn't go back to Jesus and the apostles for its teachings are in direct contradiction. That it teaches salvation by works cannot be denied, whereas the Bible teaches salvation by faith alone! All Protestant churches go back no further than the reformers. Lutherans began with Luther; Reformed began with Calvin; Presbyterian with Knox, etc. Sir Isaac Newton said, "The Baptists are the only body of Christians that have never symbolized with Rome." Mosheim said, "Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secret in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of modern Dutch Baptists." The *Edinburgh Cyclopedia* (Presbyterian) says, "It must have already occurred to our readers that the Baptists are the

same sect of Christians that were formerly described as Anabaptists. Indeed, this seems to be their leading principle from the time of Tertullian to the present time." Tertullian goes back before 200 A.D. Then, all Reformation churches have some vestiges of Roman Catholicism including infant baptism, sacraments, ecclesiastical hierarchy, amillennialism (the church is the kingdom), etc.

I'M A BAPTIST BECAUSE THEIR HISTORY CAN BE TRACED TO THE BIBLE & APOSTOLIC AGE. We've already given proof that Baptists existed long before the Reformation. The great church historian Philip Schaff, says of the Waldenses (who were Anabaptists): "They were the strictly Biblical sect of the Middle Ages." They appeared long before 1200 A.D. There were many other similar groups, among them the Paulicans and the Albigences. These believers observed the Lord's Supper as a memorial (not a sacrament) and practiced baptism upon believing adults only. They were severely persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church, whole villages and areas being destroyed, many years before the Inquisition was instituted. Luther and other Reformers also persecuted the Anabaptists. Then, there were the Cathari, who go back to within a few centuries of New Testament times. Dr. John Newton Brown, editor of the *Religious Encyclopedia*, says, "The Cathari or Puritan churches of the Novatians also had at that very period, about 325 A.D., been flourishing as a very distinct communion for more than seventy years over the empire." The Novatians and the Donatists were of the same tradition and became prominent in the third and fourth centuries. The mainstream of the church was already becoming quite corrupt in its doctrines and practices. Both of these groups rejected heretical baptism and practiced baptism by immersion only on believing adults. At the heart of their beliefs was the purity and separation of the church, which in their day was being polluted by its association with the Roman Empire. At the end of the second century, only a hundred years after the last of the apostles, one finds the Montanists. One of the most notable was Tertullian, a lawyer who was saved in his forties. He strongly opposed infant baptism and was a leader in establishing the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. He was also a strong believer in the Premillennial return of Christ. We are not suggesting any of these groups were perfect, but they did stand in the line of orthodoxy that emanated from Christ and His Apostles through His Word. Today many Baptist churches are taking the word *Baptist* out of their names in order to be more acceptable to the world. I might be ashamed of many who call themselves Baptists, but I am not ashamed to be a Baptist. It is the only Church on God's earth that is in the line of the One Jesus built! I stand upon the Rock!

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