

## WHAT IS A PRIMITIVE BAPTIST?

**The name, Primitive Baptist**, is unknown to some, and misunderstood by others. When I tell people that I am a pastor of a Primitive Baptist Church I encounter a vast array of responses. The most common is: "what is the difference between the Primitive Baptists and other Baptists?" Others assume we are like other Baptists but with a different name. Some ask around as to what we believe and the answers they get from the public greatly misrepresent the Primitive Baptist faith. For these reason I will try to answer a few questions and give a brief sketch of our people.

The most common fallacy is that Primitive Baptists are people that believe in election, and predestination and for that reason *must* believe that God predestinates *everything*- including the bad tie the preacher wore on Sunday. That is enough to scare anyone away.

To this accusation I say: true; true; false.

**True:** we do teach the doctrine of *election* because it is one of the most prominent doctrines in the Bible. (See Mt. 24:24; 24:31; Mk. 13:22; 13:27; Lk. 18:7; Ephesians 1:4; Rom. 8:33; 9:11; 11:5; Col. 3:12; 1 Thes. 1:4; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:10. God chose His people, they did not choose Him. By the way, He was there first.

**True:** we do teach *predestination* because it, too, is in the Bible. (See Romans 8:29; 8:30; Ephesians 1:5 1:11). God did not sit in heaven hoping something might happen to save His people. He predetermined that His Son would die for them, save them, change them, and bring them home.

**False:** we do not believe that God predestinates everything-especially the preacher's tie. We believe He predestinated the things that He *said* He predestinated. These are listed very plainly in the Bible- things I have just mentioned.

These doctrines frighten people because they are foreign to many Christians. Modern seminaries have denounced these doctrines. But they represent historical Christianity.

Some accuse us of being *Calvinists* because we believe in the doctrines of election and predestination. But we are not Calvinists. We embrace these doctrines because they are biblical. We actually oppose many facets of Calvinism. To say we are Calvinists because we believe in election is like saying that anyone that baptizes is a Baptist. The name, 'Primitive Baptist', has been around for about 150 years. There was a time that it was the largest, and most well known Baptist church in our country. Most people will find a Primitive Baptist or two somewhere in their ancestry. Many have been brought to the church because they sought out the faith of a former loved one.

Primitive Baptists have the richest history of all the churches in America. At one time there was only one group of Baptists in America. They were just called *Baptists*. These were misrepresented and persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church- even by the reformation churches that came out of the Catholic Church. But God spared and blessed them. (See article by Jerry Samons on our web-site for more detailed information of Primitive Baptist history).

Another thing that many people don't know is that other Baptists, which include the Southern Baptists, the Missionary Baptists, and the Landmark Baptists, all find their roots in the Primitive Baptist Church. That is where they came from.

But around 1830 there was a split in the Baptist Church. The split was over 'means', or *how* people are saved. One group determined that people in other countries were going to hell because there were no preachers there. So they formed missionary societies to get preachers to other countries to save the people from hell. The other group contended that salvation was by *grace*, not by means. They contended that the elect in other countries would get to heaven just like they did- by God's grace. They agreed that it would be good for preachers to go there and tell them of the Jesus that saved them, but that it wasn't the 'means' by which sinners were saved to heaven. Christ was sufficient.

Slowly, the churches divided. One group called themselves the New School or Missionary Baptists. The other group called themselves the Old School, or Primitive Baptists. Some referred to them simply as the Old Baptists. The reason was because they didn't change their doctrine, or their practice. The term 'Primitive' was coined because it means *original*: original doctrine and original practice of the original Baptist Church.

While we realize that God did not give a name to His Church, people must be called something. Baptist was coined for the simple reason that they baptized their converts. Primitive was coined after the split.

The term '*Primitive*' seems to bother some people. But it is only because they don't understand where the term came from or what it means. Sometimes they associate it with the Mennonites who live by *primitive* means not wanting to conform to the luxuries of the present world. But we like the luxuries they censure. Luxuries like automobiles, electricity, and telephones. The term primitive just means *original*.

If people would read some accurate books on the history of the Christian church, book like Schaff's History of the Christian Church; Jones Church History; or Hassel's History of the Christian Church, they would discover just how far Christianity has shifted from the days of the apostles to our present day. I am very thankful to be in a church, though imperfect, that is very much like the original pattern in both doctrine and practice.

Some people seem to focus on what we don't have and what we don't do rather than the truths we stand for. For instance, we do not have musical instruments, Sunday schools, women teachers, youth groups, missionaries, and a vast array of other things. But we can't find them in scriptures. We are just trying to do what the Bible says. Hopefully, God will not condemn us for that, though it is no longer vogue.

We believe in all the historic principles of Christianity which include: The deity of Jesus Christ; the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the doctrine of original sin; the resurrection and eternal felicity of the elect; the resurrection and eternal damnation of the wicked; that Satan will be cast into hell with the wicked forever; and best of all, that Jesus was successful- He saved His people for their sins. This is great security for sinners.

Concerning these specifics:

**Musical instruments:** They used them in the Old Testament in the law service but the New Testament is silent concerning the use of musical instruments. Can you imagine Paul playing an electric guitar and Peter on the drums? There are only two passages in the New Testament concerning music and the emphasis in both passages is the *heart* of the individual, not a performance. (See Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Furthermore, there were never musical instruments in the Baptist Church until a few hundred years ago. The Roman Catholic Church introduced an organ about 300 A.D.

**Sunday Schools:** Introduced in England about 300 years ago when children did not have public schools to attend. They formed schools in their churches, inserted some religion, and from that sprang the Sunday School, youth groups, youth ministers, women teachers, church camps, and youth missionaries. There is no mention of such things in God's Bible. The pattern is for parents to teach their own children (See Ephesians 6:4; II Timothy 1:5).

**Women teachers:** Again, these were never found in the ancient church and have only become popular since the institution of the Sunday School. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 2:12; 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14:34). Nothing could be plainer.

Youth groups and missionaries are terms that are foreign to scripture, inventions of men. Even the term "reverend" is used only one time in scripture and it refers to God, not a preacher. (See Psalm 111:9). Bishop, elder, pastor and preacher are the biblical terms for the teachers in the church. Accurate, historical Christianity will back all of this, and much more up- as well as God's word.

As you can see, we have reasons for what we do. We don't want to be primitive, just original. But that is what primitive means. And we are certainly not saying that everyone else is going to hell. We love all Christians and we want them to love us as well.

That is another wonderful thing about the Primitive Baptist faith. Understanding election, and predestination enables us to understand that God has people in every kindred, tongue and tribe and a person that never has the opportunity to hear the wonderful message of Jesus Christ is just as secure as those who do if Christ died for them. When Helen Keller was presented with the gospel her response was primitive: "I already know Him. I just didn't know His name." As a deaf mute God had already visited her, quickened her, and revealed Himself. She rejoiced to learn that His name was Jesus!

I have said it before, but I will say it again: I am amazed at people who say they have accepted Christ, but will not accept His doctrine.

These are the best answers I can give you. I hope they are sufficient. But I also encourage you to visit one our churches. It is better to "come and see" than to wonder. I promise that you will find a blessing. -NMP