

OUR BAPTIST HERITAGE

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I shall prove that the church of our Lord's day on earth was in all essential elements Baptist. The characteristics that distinguish a Baptist church are peculiarly set forth in the Bible as having belonged to the New Testament church.

We discover that originally, (1) None but believers were baptized; (2) baptism was immersion; and (3) each church was an independent republic, knowing nothing of extraneous powers to dictate her policies. These principles characterize both Baptist churches of today and the New Testament churches. The banner that waves over true Baptist churches is that of Jesus only; the ordinances that distinguish Baptist churches have the example of Jesus only; the principles that govern these churches have the authority of Jesus only; and the Founder and Head of these churches is Jesus only. I am humbly proud to be identified with people the light of whose martyred blood has been projected along the pathway of the centuries until now. And proceeding, let us consider:

(1) John the Baptist prepared the material for the first church. He did this by preaching the gospel which led people to repent of their sins and believe in Christ for salvation. Speaking of the mission of John, Luke 1:77 says: "To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins."

(2) Fifteen times in the first three New Testament writers (Matthew, Mark and Luke) John is called Baptist. His name was not Baptist but John. "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John" (John 1:6). John was called Baptist because of the Divine authority back of him, and this authority gave him the right to preach and administer baptism.

(3) Both Christ and His first disciples received their baptism at the hands of John. They went to a Baptist minister for their baptism. If one should go to a Mormon, for instance, for baptism, no one would think to call him anything but a Mormon. Or if one should seek "baptism" at the hands of a Catholic, he would be recognized as a Catholic. That is logical. Equally so, if one should come to a Baptist and by him is given in the light of the Bible the sacred rite of baptism, he would also be known as a Baptist. That is exactly what Jesus and His disciples did. Why, then, should we not identify them as Baptist? Poor rule that will not work both ways, we have been told.

But some may want us to point out in the Scriptures the exact name, "The Baptist Church." Why should such a demand be made in the face of all the array of facts that show that the first church was in all essential elements Baptist? For instance, a house built of brick does not need

a sign across its facade reading —
THIS IS A BRICK HOUSE. People who are not blind can see that it is a brick house, for the builder took brick material and constructed it.
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Even so, Jesus, the great builder of the church, took Baptist material prepared by John the Baptist and built His church. Why, then, was it not a Baptist church even if no sign were ever written over its doors — **THIS IS A BAPTIST CHURCH?** Its identity as a Baptist church is as easily recognized as the identity of a brick house.

But again, some want to know how John could be a Baptist and administer baptism since no one ever baptized him. Well, it is like this: No one can be a man unless he is born of a woman, still Adam was a man. The Lord started the human race by creating man and woman. So when He got ready for the world to have a Baptist, He took off time to make one, and then authorized him to preach and baptize.

(4) Jesus, baptized by John, was himself a missionary, as was John. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:57). Jesus actually preached the gospel. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt. 4:2). Going to John the Baptist for baptism, Jesus identified himself with the Baptist minister and thus giving us reason to call Him Baptist; and having been sent on a mission "to seek and to save that which was lost," He was definitely a missionary. Hence we have a Scriptural right to refer to Jesus as a missionary Baptist.

(5) The first disciples, who were baptized by the Baptist minister, were missionaries. This we read in Luke 9:1: "He sent them to preach the ~~kingd~~ kingdom of God, and to heal

the sick." And in John 4:1, 2, we learn that they also administered baptism. This they did after having received baptism at the hands of John the Baptist. Hence we have a Scriptural right to call those disciples missionary Baptist.

(6) The first church, composed of members baptized by John the Baptist and sent on a mission by the Lord, was in fact a missionary Baptist church. Why not, as they had identified themselves with the doctrines of the Baptist minister, and being baptized of him?

But some one may be ready to say that the title Baptist came from John and not the Lord, and that Baptists got their name from a man. This is a mistake. The title came from God himself, and therefore John had nothing to do with its origin. He had the distinction of being the first one to wear the God-given title, which had relationship to his religious activities. So "Baptist" was a title given by the Lord, and if it were good enough for Him, why should it not be good enough for us also? When you reject the title Baptist, you are saying in effect what the Lord bestowed upon John is not good enough for you. Baptist is the only name ever worn by a New Testament minister. I gladly wear the honored title, and am not ashamed to be called a Baptist.

(7) The baptism of John was Christian baptism, as it belonged to the gospel dispensation. (Read Mark 1:1-3). The ministry of John is here said to mark the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." As John's baptism was the only baptism Jesus and the first members of the church ever received, it stands to reason the church is without Christian baptism if John's baptism were not Christian.

(8) The Great Commission, given

to the church which we have shown to have been essentially Baptist, enjoins upon His churches to make disciples, baptize them and teach them as He had taught them. Then Jesus promises: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Here we have the authority to spread the principles of the Lord, as also we have here the proof of the doctrine of church perpetuity. As the church started out Baptist and has lived on until the present day, we logically conclude that it is a Baptist church now. That should be sufficient to settle the question in your minds if you are seeking honestly for the identity of the New Testament church today. It is missionary Baptist.

by Dr. D. N. Jackson
(1895 - 1968)