

WHAT IS A PRIMITIVE BAPTIST ?

What is a Primitive Baptist? What do Primitive Baptists believe? How do Primitive Baptists differ from other Baptists? These are just a few questions that I'm asked on a regular basis by those who learn that I am a Primitive Baptist. My answers usually begin with the noticeable differences such as: no Sunday Schools, no musical instruments, etc., to a lengthy discussion of doctrine and practice. Most people, when they hear the name Primitive Baptist, associate it with those who want to live in the past, with no modern devices. I remember having a person ask me if we still drove wagons to Church on Sunday. The truth is the name Primitive is not referring to that at all, but to a group of baptized believers whose zealous efforts are to worship (doctrine and practice) in the 'Original' way the Church did in the days of the Apostles. The word Primitive means just that, Original Condition. Several miles up the road from my home there is an Antique Store that sells Primitive Antiques. This is implying that the articles that you will find in their store are those that have been unaltered and unchanged from their original condition. The Primitive Baptists are a group of baptized believers that claim to worship in a way unchanged or unaltered from the New Testament worship of the Apostles and the early Church of the Bible.

As a child growing up in Northeast Georgia, I attended many different Churches. My daddy was a pastor of Missionary Baptist Churches throughout the area. As he was blessed to have more knowledge of the Bible, he was convinced the things that he heard and preached in those Churches had no scriptural foundation. He searched and found the Primitive Baptists. At that point, I began to examine my own beliefs and searched for a group that worshipped in scriptural doctrine and practice. According to Jesus in Matthew 16:18, He would build His Church "and the gates of hell would not prevail against it." By that verse alone, I knew the True Church, even though She has been called by many names down through the ages, was somewhere on this earth. In my search, I was blessed to find the Primitive Baptist.

After several visits and comparing what they believed and the practice of the worship service with scripture, I was convinced, as my daddy had been earlier, that they bore all the scriptural identifying marks of the true New Testament Church. I know you may be asking, 'What does identifying marks mean?' Identifying marks are the evidences which align with scripture that help us conclude that something is of God and true. What are the identifying marks, you ask? They are, but are not limited to:

(1) The membership consists of those persons who have confessed a belief in the Lord and manifested evidences of grace in their lives. In Matthew 3:6-7, we find a time in the Church's history when John the Baptist would not baptize people. John was willing and happy to baptize those that had shown their faith in the Lord and confessed their sins, but would not baptize the "generation of vipers." The reason John would not baptize anyone in this group is they did not manifest the works of grace in their lives by repentance and confession of their sins. The true Church is made up of children of God who have repented of sins and confessed their belief in Jesus Christ the Lord. In Acts 8:36, it was a eunuch of Ethiopia who asked, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip's answer was, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

(2) Believing that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ is not a man who evolved into God. He is not a man who was established as God. He is God that became Man. He never ceased to be God, but became God/Man as the mediator and representative of His people. The Scriptures simply will not allow any room for argument on this subject. Just as the Father is God, the Holy Spirit is God, so is

the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, God. In John 10:30 Jesus affirms this very fact. He said, without question, that He and His Father "are one." In 1 John 5:7, it is the Apostle John who teaches us this very same thing when he writes, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Jesus did miracles that only God could do (John 2:11); said things that only God could say (John 7:46); and lived a perfect life that only God could live (John 18:38, 1 Peter 2:22).

(3) Baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (not by sprinkling or pouring of water). The scripture is very clear concerning this doctrine. In Matthew 3:16 it was Jesus, who "went up straightway out of the water;..." In Acts 8:38, it was Philip and the eunuch "who went down both into the water,..." And in John 3:23 we learn that John baptized "in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there:..." There is no scriptural proof where sprinkling or pouring was a method for baptism. Baptism, according to scripture, is showing forth death. When we are baptized we are declaring that we believe when Christ died, He died for me. When He was buried, I was represented in Him. And when He arose, I was there positionally in the Savior. Neither sprinkling nor pouring will show forth the Lord's death, burial and resurrection.

(4) Regular Observance of Communion. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I have delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The Apostle, in this portion of scripture, makes it evident that this ordinance of the Lord's Church will be kept by her till the day the Lord appears in the clouds. Notice that Paul did not say what day, or how often, but "as oft as ye." The true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ then is a group that observes this ordinance on a regular basis. Whether it be once a year, twice a year or etc., the New Testament Church of the Lord is one that observes this service.

(5) The use of unleavened bread and real wine in Communion. When reading the events that took place in that "large upper room" and the time of the year this took place, it is as clear as the noon day sun on a cloudless day that unleavened bread and real wine were the elements of the table.

Let us first consider unleavened bread.

(a) Leaven is used throughout scripture as an emblem of sin. 1 Corinthians 5:8 compares leaven to "malice and wickedness." When choosing an emblem for the Lord's sinless body, leavened bread cannot be considered.

(b) According to Exodus 14:15, all leaven was to be taken out of the houses during the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. If there was leaven in the "large upper room," God would have broken His own commandment.

(c) Leaven is an agent that causes a rising or puffing up. There is nothing about leaven that shows the Lord's humility in life and death.

Now let us consider the real wine.

(a) The Passover was on the 14th day of Nisan, which would be our March/April. During that time of year, there was no grapes to be harvested. Their last grape harvests were some time in October. Without any fresh grapes, the cup would have to be filled with wine.

(b) In 1 Corinthians 11:21 the congregation became drunken with the contents of the cup. Without

question, this was wine.

(c) With the commandment of all leaven being removed, the cup would be filled with wine, understanding that grape juice has leaven, but wine, through fermentation, would be unleavened.

(6) Believing in an inerrant Word of God. The Primitive Baptist believe that the Word of God is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17; came from God) and is preserved by God (Psalms 12:6-7), therefore is the perfect standard.

(7) Believing that eternal salvation is by grace, and grace alone. According to scripture, Eternal Salvation is not by any works, but by the grace of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Ephesians 2:9, "Not of works, lest any man should boast"; Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done,..."; and Romans 3:23-24, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:..." For a congregation to believe anything else but Eternal Salvation by Grace and Grace Alone, would be to deny the Bible and disqualify them as being the true Church.

(8) Believing and practicing foot washing. The foot washing service has a sweet place in the writers heart. This humble service has been a great teacher to me, by showing me my place in the Kingdom of God. The service of a disciple of Jesus is not found in a self centered, self driven, self absorbed attitude, but is found in humility and willingness to do for others. Jesus Christ taught us this in John 13. In John 13:14, Jesus Christ said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought to wash one another's feet." Jesus also taught us in this same chapter, that happiness is not living and doing for yourself, but living and doing for others. John 13:17 reads, "If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

(9) Practicing of Church discipline. When searching the scriptures, it is easy to find that the early Church required its members to live their lives to a higher standard than one the world would accept. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5 we read of a man who probably had no issue fitting in with the population of Corinth, but was in need of exclusion from the Church body according to the Apostle Paul, because the man was in the state of fornication. Paul made it clear when he said, "For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor 5:3-5).

(10) No musical instruments in the Worship Services. Very often when reading the Bible, many students fail to recognize that there are two covenants of service that have been given by the Lord. In Galatians 4:24 we read, "these are the two covenants"; In Hebrews 8:7, "For if that first covenant had been faultless,..."; and in Hebrews 9:1, "Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." When we examine these two covenants of service, we clearly see the first (Old Covenant or Old Testament) had the offerings of animals, a worldly sanctuary (temple), a priesthood (Levites), and even musical instruments were used (Psalms 150). In the New Testament Covenant of service we find something different. We see Jesus Christ as the sacrifice for sin and the children of God offering themselves as a living sacrifice to His service. We see the Church, which is a group of Baptized believers in Jesus Christ, gathered together singing without any musical instruments. According to Paul in Acts 17:25, the Lord is not worshipped with men's hands. In Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, Paul informs us how the Lord is to be worshipped in the New Covenant of Service, by Singing with grace in our hearts. There is simply no

verse of scripture that can be cited that supports musical instruments in the New Testament Worship Service. In my humble estimation, it would be just as scriptural to offer goats and calves on an altar of brass in the Church as it would be to bring in a piano or organ. The Lord has given us an instrument to play in the house of God; a voice to sing praises to His precious Name.

(11) A God-called ministry. The true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ does not appoint men to the ministry (even though each Church body has the authority to call a pastor, by the leadership of the Spirit), but believes that God Himself calls His men to the service of preaching the gospel. The Church only recognizes that calling that God has done. This is very contrary to many in the world today, but the Bible gives no room for argument. In John 1:6 we read, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." Notice in this portion of scripture that it was God who called this man to the service, not a group of men. In Romans 1:1, Paul confesses that it was God who called him to his office of service and even though we do not have apostles today, the calling of God's ministers is in the same manner.

(12) The autonomy of each Church body. The true Church of Christ finds its headquarters in heaven. The New Testament Church does not have a place or group of men who gives its law, but the true Church answers to the Lord Himself. No one Church body has the authority to walk into another and say, 'you must do this or, you must do that,' but each Church body looks to the Lord for its laws. Even though one Church body can declare non-fellowship with another if there are cases of deviation from scripture, no Church body has any authority over another. In Revelation chapters 2 - 3, we read of seven different Church bodies. Each one of those bodies received a message from the Lord concerning their state, but not one received a letter to act in judgment within the other. Paul taught the Church at Corinth to "Examine yourselves,..." not the Church at Rome, which if we do, will make for much more peace and fellowship among the individual Church bodies. There was a precious sister at Mount Paran when I first accepted the position as pastor that would often quote 1 Thessalonians 4:11, which reads "And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business,..." To that I say, Amen!

Other things that convinced me of the Primitive Baptist being the true Church of Jesus Christ was their love and forgiveness of one another. When I saw that love and kindness, my heart rejoiced to see people manifesting the love of Christ in their lives. Jesus told us in John 13:35 that the love shown "one to another" is an evidence of discipleship. I'm convinced that the Primitive Baptist show that love more than any I've come in contact with, and even though I and the Primitive Baptist Church believe that God has children all over the world, a number that cannot be numbered, there is a true Church that is still here on earth, and I'm convinced that it is the Primitive Baptist Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk