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BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

BAPTIST PERPETUITY

By: Pastor Tom Ross

Recently I was asked how Baptists can prove they existed during the Dark Ages in light of the fact that the Catholics persecuted them and destroyed any historical records they may have had.

As a Bible believer I firmly believe that my lineage as a human being goes back to the three sons of Noah on this side of the flood, and ultimately all the way back to Adam and Eve. I've never really studied my family tree or found out how far back it goes, but I know I am a descendant of Adam and Eve by faith. I don't need historical records to prove that I am a human being.

How do we know Baptists go all the way back to the first church Jesus started during His earthly ministry, gave the Great Commission to, and promised perpetuity to? The promises of Christ and the clear statements of Scripture. Matthew 16:18 declares: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Christ did not give this promise to the Roman Catholic

Church or any of her Protestant harlot daughters. They weren't even in existence when this promise was made. It was made to a group of saved men chosen by Christ and baptized with the baptism of John the Baptist during the earthly ministry of Christ. He told that first church that the church He founded as an institution would have a perpetual existence without fail. This clearly means that Christ never intimated that His kind of church would ever have to be reformed or restarted. Jesus reinforced this truth of Baptist perpetuity and succession when He gave the Great Commission: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have com-

manded you: and, lo, I am with you always, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD. Amen"

(Matthew 28:18-20, Emphasis mine, TWR).

Christ promised to be with His kind of church unto the end of the world as it faithfully carried out the terms of the Commission. Catholics and Protestants have never baptized anyone after the manner

and order commanded by

Christ. Only Baptists have carried out the terms of the Commission as they were laid out. Baptists have done this on a continual basis in every century without fail. John 15:16 states: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." Christ is here talking to the first church and He promised that as they went and brought forth fruit, their fruit would remain.

All other denominations trace their origin back to a man rather than Christ.

The first church, ordained, chosen, and empowered by Christ brought forth spiritual fruit as they preached the Gospel, baptized the believers, and taught them the truth. The church of Jerusalem brought forth fruit and was blessed to organize the church at Antioch (Acts 11:22-26). The church at Antioch brought forth fruit and was blessed to send out missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) who were ordained and authorized to start and organize churches (Acts 14:21-23). That fruit bearing pattern has existed since apostolic times up unto this very day. Every time a New Testament Baptist Church is organized it is an affirmation to the truth that the fruit Christ was referring to still remains. Paul the apostle intimated that the Lord's church as an institution would exist without fail through the eternal ages: *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen,"* (Ephesians 3:21).

As I read all the promises of Christ regarding Baptist perpetuity and succession I don't find a promise to preserve all the historical records of the Lord's churches through the centuries. I am sure some have been lost, stolen, misplaced, or destroyed through the years. However, Christ promised perpetuity to His kind of church, not the preserved records of individual churches. I know the Lord's churches existed during the Dark Ages because

of the promises of Christ and that's enough for me.

Fortunately for Baptists, even Catholic and Protestant historians admit that Baptists go all the way back to Christ. In my book, Teachings on the Local Church I quote Catholic and Protestant historians who acknowledge that Baptists have existed since Christ started the first Baptist church during His earthly ministry. Here is an excerpt of the chapter Which Church pages 6-9 with their testimonials:

John Clark Ridpath, a Methodist, said:

"I should not readily admit that there were Baptist churches as far back as A.D. 100, although without doubt there were Baptists then, as all Christians were then Baptists." (3)

Cardinal Hosius, Roman Catholic president of the council of Trent wrote the following in 1554:

"If the truth of religion were to be judged by the readiness and boldness of which a man of any sect shows in suffering, then the opinion and persuasion of no sect can be truer and surer than that of the Anabaptists since there have been none for these twelve hundred years past, that have been more generally punished or that have more cheerfully and

steadfastly undergone, and even offered themselves to the most cruel sorts of punishment than these people." (4)

Drs. Dermont and Ypeij of the Dutch Reformed church wrote in 1819:

"We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, and in later times Mennonites, were the original Waldenses, and have long in the history of the Church received honor of that origin. On this account, the Baptists may be considered the only Christian community which has stood since the Apostles, and as a Christian society which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages." (5)

Robert Barclay, a Quaker historian, wrote:

"We shall afterwards show the rise of the Anabaptists took place prior to the Reformation of the Church of England, and there are also reasons for believing that on the Continent of Europe small hidden Christian societies, who have held many of the opinions of the Anabaptists, have existed from the times of the apostles. In the sense of the direct transmission of Divine Truth, and the true nature of spiritual

religion, it seems probable that these churches have a lineage of succession more ancient than that of the Roman Church." (6)

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Church of Christ said:

"I would engage to show that baptism as viewed and practiced by the Baptists has its advocates in every century of the Christian era...and independent of whose existence, clouds of witnesses attest the fact, that before the Reformation from popery, and from the apostolic age, to the present time, the sentiments of Baptists, and the practice of baptism have had a continued chain of advocates, and public monuments of their existence in every century can be produced." (7)

Mosheim, the Lutheran historian wrote:

"The true origin of that sect which acquired the denomination of Anabaptists by their administering anew the rite of baptism to those who came over to their communion, and derived that of Mennonites from the famous man to whom they owe the greatest part of their present felicity, is hidden in the depths of antiquity, and is of consequence, extremely difficult to ascertain...It may

be observed, in the first place, that the Mennonites are not entirely in an error when they boast of their descent from the Waldenses, Petrobrusians and other ancient sects, who are usually considered as witnesses of the truth, in times of general darkness and superstition. Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay concealed, in almost all the countries of Europe, particularly in Bohemia, Moravia, Switzerland and Germany, many persons who adhered tenaciously to the following doctrine, which the Waldenses, Wickliffites and Hussites had maintained, some in a more disguised, and others in a more open and public manner, viz.: That the kingdom of Christ, or the visible church which he established upon earth, was an assembly of true and real saints, and ought, therefore, to be inaccessible to the wicked and unrighteous, and also exempt from all those institutions which human prudence suggests, to oppose the progress of iniquity or to correct and reform transgressors." (8)

Even C.H. Spurgeon, whom the Reformed Baptists of our day revere and hold in high esteem said:

"We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our exist-

ence at the Reformation, we were reformers before Luther or Calvin were born; we never came from the church of Rome, for we were never in it, but we have an unbroken line up to the apostles themselves. We have always existed from the very days of Christ, and our principles, sometimes veiled and forgotten, like a river which may travel underground for a little season, have always had honest and holy adherents...Long before your Protestants were known of, these horrible Anabaptists, as they were unjustly called, were protesting for the one Lord, one faith, and one baptism...I am not ashamed of the denomination to which I belong, sprung as we are, direct from the loins of Christ, having never passed through the turbid stream of Romanism, and having an origin apart from all dissent or Protestantism, because we have existed before all other sects." (9)

I believe that I have proven historically that the kind of church Jesus started and promised perpetuity to was a Baptist church. All other denominations trace their origin back to a man rather than Christ. All other denominations bear many of the birth marks of their mother, the Roman Catholic Church.



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