

Questions & Answers about Primitive Baptists

Written by Tim McCool

By Elder Tim McCool

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Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. - Isa. 55:1

Q1: What is the basic difference between Primitive Baptists and other religious groups?

A: Primitive Baptists believe in salvation by grace, meaning that God saved his people through His plan of salvation (Matt.1:21). As a result those who are saved are exhorted to glorify him for what He has done (Eph. 2:10). Primitive Baptists declare that eternal salvation is by God ALONE. (Isa. 53; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8-9; Jn. 6:37-39; 17:2-9; Rom. 8:28-39; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 2:16; Tit. 3:4-7; Heb. 9:12-15)

Q2: What do Primitive Baptists believe is the role of God the Father in salvation?

A: In making a covenant with God the Son and God the Spirit, God the Father foreknew, elected and predestinated an innumerable host out of all mankind before the foundation of the world to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28; Eph. 1:3-6, 11; I Pet. 1:2; Jn. 6:37-40; Jn. 17:2)

Q3: What is the role of God the Son?

A: God the Son came to earth to save his people from their sins (Mt. 1:21), to suffer the wrath of God for their sins in their place (I Pet. 3:18), and redeem (buy back) those whom God the Father had previously chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:7; Jn. 6:37-40; Matt. 1:21; Jn. 10:27-30; Jn. 17:2-3; Tit. 3:6; Heb. 9:12-14; I Pet. 1:1).

Q4: What is the role of God the Spirit?

A: God the Spirit promised to enter the heart of every person whom God the Father foreknew and for whom God the Son redeemed, giving the "new birth" (Tit. 3:5; Jn. 1:13; Jn. 3:1-8; Jn. 6:63; I Pet. 1:1), and also to guide those children in their understanding of the word of God (Jn. 16:13). According to the scripture, this "new birth" is not given because of any action of our own, but by His mercy and grace (see cites above).

Q5: Understanding this, then what is MY role?

A: If you have been born again by His Spirit, it means that you are included in the purpose of God and YOUR ROLE is to give God glory in your life because of the life he has given you (Eph. 2:1). This involves repenting of sin, embracing his truths, confessing Him, following His instruction, and joining his church (Acts 2:38; Psalm. 119:105; Rom. 10:9; Rev. 4:11; I Pet. 3:21).

Q6: Does this mean I must "accept Christ"?

A: The word "accept/accepted/accepting" occurs 12 times in the New Testament in reference to salvation. Not ONCE does it mention that I am to "accept Christ", which is a phrase that was coined around 100 years ago. However, as one already born again, the Bible declares that "in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, IS ACCEPTED with him" (Acts 10:35). Like the "sinners prayer" and other terms not found in the Bible, the idea of "accepting Christ" arose through years of distortions and mis-teaching of the fact that God's children "receive" the Spirit into their hearts by volition of the Holy Ghost (Jn. 1:12; Jn. 3:27; Rom. 8:15; I Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 11:4; Gal. 3:2; Col. 2:6). But you can accept the gospel (2 Cor. 11:4), the good news of your salvation, which declares the truth that CHRIST has MADE US ACCEPTED (Eph. 1:6), which involved no work of our own! If you have received the Lord's gift, then you are required to repent and be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

Q7: If I believe in election, then why did Jesus have to die?

A: Election and predestination are merely the terms used by God to describe what He did in

appointing the innumerable host of His children to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). In order for this to be accomplished, someone had to suffer the penalty for the sins of His people. God's wrath must be satisfied on all mankind, including those He chose (the elect). Only one Man could do that, Jesus Christ. He suffered the penalty of sin in our place (Acts 17:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6; Heb. 9:12-28), which had to occur in order for the innumerable host of His children to be housed in heaven.

Q8: Are Primitive Baptists Calvinists?

A: No. In the minds of most people, Christianity is divided into two major groups, those who believe eternal salvation depends on your choice (i.e.-"accepting" Christ) and Calvinists (those who advocate the theology of John Calvin). Clearly, there is a plain distinction between Primitive Baptists and those who believe you can "accept" Christ. However, when people hear Primitive Baptists proclaim the doctrines of grace (election, predestination, etc.) they assume that Primitive Baptists are some branch of the Calvinist family. The fact is, Primitive Baptists have never been a part of either group, since they and their ancestors have maintained their identity since the days of Christ and the Apostles. John Calvin was a Protestant Reformer who seceded from the Catholic church and started Presbyterianism. Baptists derive their existence from Christ and the Apostles and as such, predate Catholics and have maintained separate existence even through the Dark Ages, hence the name, "Primitive." (Matt. 16:16-18; Eph. 2:20).

Q9: Is election/predestination something to be afraid of?

A: Not if you understand that if it were not for God's electing a people and Christ dying for their sins and the Spirit making them a new creation, NONE would be saved (Rom. 3:10; Ps. 14; Ps. 53). Interestingly, ALL of the first churches embraced election as part of the good news that was preached to them (I Thes. 1:4; Eph. 1). The conversion and baptism of ALL the early church members involved an integral, working knowledge of this fundamental teaching. The Apostle Paul taught this in his FIRST messages to the Thessalonians (Acts 17; I Thes. 1:4), the

Ephesians (Acts 19 & 20; Eph. 1 & 2), the Phillipians, the Corinthians, etc. The Apostle Peter taught this truth (Acts 2:38-41; I Pet. 1:2 & 2 Pet. 1:10). Furthermore, Jesus Christ taught it (Matt. 24:12, 31; Lk. 4:25-27; Lk. 18:7; Jn. 5:40; Jn. 10:27-29; Jn. 15:16; Jn. 17:2-3).

Q10: Do Primitive Baptists think they are an exclusive group?

A: It is a common misconception that because Primitive Baptists embrace salvation by grace as plainly taught in the scriptures, they therefore believe God's chosen people are an exclusive group. On the contrary, Primitive Baptists are the only known group in existence who believe that God has an all inclusive group of chosen, sanctified and redeemed people in every kindred, tongue, people and nation (Rev.5:9). When a believer understands that were it not for God's choice of a people, then there would be no one in Heaven because of man's sin (Rom.5:12), it is clear that God did not exclude anyone from heaven. The Lord Himself looked down upon the children of men to see if there were any that would seek Him, and He found none (Rom.3:12; Ps.14:2; Ps.53:2). It was Adam's choice to sin, not God's choice, that excluded ALL mankind from heaven, and were it not for the inclusive grace of Jesus Christ, none would be saved. Jesus declared, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden" (Mt.11:28). The cry of Primitive Baptists is inclusive for all born-again sinners, no matter their age, race, color, creed or background, to take up the cross and follow Jesus as an evidence of Jesus' saving grace in their heart (Lk.9:23). However, a person who believes that a sinner must invite Jesus into their heart, accept Christ, say a particular prayer, or meet any man-made condition to enter Heaven, embraces a false salvation that is exclusive and not contained in the scripture. Accordingly, any person who does not meet that group's particular condition is excluded.

Q11: Will all of God's elect children be saved?

A: Yes, because Jesus said all that the Father gave him would come to him (John 6:37). This is the only plan of salvation that in addition to saving competent people, would also include the salvation of those incapable of receiving the gospel, such as infants (Lk. 1:41; Ps. 22:9; Jer. 1:5; 2 Sam. 12:23; I Kgs.14:13) or mentally challenged persons!

Q12: But what about the person who wants to be saved and is left out by this plan?

A: If you believe the promise of Jesus (Jn. 10:27-29), you understand there is no such person who has ever existed! A person who "wants" to be saved is saved already! (Jn. 1:13).

Q13: What is the purpose of preaching then?

A: Just to name a few purposes: to instruct, comfort (Isa. 40:1-9; Eph. 4:11-16), reprove, rebuke, exhort (2 Tim. 4:2), warn, teach (Col. 1:28), spread the gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ alone among all nations (Lk. 24:47).

Q14: What is the purpose of the gospel?

A: To bring life and immortality to LIGHT, but NOT to LIFE (2 Tim. 1:10). The gospel is the information / education / understanding of how you are saved. It illuminates (brightens) what God has already placed in your heart. There is no life to illuminate in a spiritually dead being (Eph. 2:1).

Q15: What is the Primitive Baptist understanding of the Bible's teaching concerning missionaries?

A: The term missionary is found nowhere in the Bible. The gifts of the church are found in Eph. 4:11. The purpose of these gifts is for the benefit of the saints, or, those who are already born again. Primitive Baptists wholeheartedly believe that gospel ministers must go where directed by the Spirit and not by a mission board (Acts 20:22-23). The call to "save lost sinner", or the cry of mission work as is common today, whether intentional or not, works to de-emphasize the importance of the local ministry and place the importance of the Christian walk somewhere far away. It causes an individual to lose sight of his or her true "mission", that of being content with where God has placed them and striving to spread the gospel to those in the area where they have the most influence, their home and their communities. It is noteworthy that Primitive Baptists have established churches in foreign lands, such as the Philippines, Africa and India, to which no organization or board has directed men to go to, other than the Lord.

Q16: What are Primitive Baptists' position on Sunday schools?

A: Like missionary societies, there is no biblical precedent for Sunday schools and the church was never instructed to have them. Bible study is expected out of church members and is not limited to a formal church setting. Scriptural example dictates that such activities are conducted in contexts other than formal church worship (Acts 2:46; 17:17; 20:20). There is nothing in scriptures to indicate that worshipers, either in the New Testament or the old, were ever segregated by knowledge, age, sex, marital status, or any other criterion. Instead, all worshiped in a common assembly. Jesus himself charged the first preachers to feed the lambs (little ones), as well as the sheep (Jn. 21:15) in the context of the general assembly. We are told that childrens' understanding can exceed that of the wise and prudent (Mt. 11:25; 21:15), and that God has ordained praise in the utterances of babes (Mt. 21:16). Accordingly, Jesus rebuked His disciples for denying admittance of children to His presence (Mt. 19:13-15, Mk. 9:36-37, Mk. 10:13-15). Hence, it should not be assumed that children are incapable of receiving proper instruction from the general assembly. The modern practice of denying children entrance to church sanctuaries is very much against the spirit of the scriptures. However, Primitive Baptists do advocate a better position than Sunday schools, that of parents, whether single parent homes or otherwise, instructing their children in their homes on a daily basis, which provides much more instruction than 1 hour per week. The church cannot take the place of the parental

responsibility of teaching in the home (Eph. 6:4).

Q17: What is the Primitive Baptist view of the scriptures?

A: Primitive Baptists view scriptures as the divinely inspired word of God and as the sole rule of faith and practice for the church. It is also believed that the scriptures have been divinely preserved over the ages, and that the 1611 King James version is the proper English translation of the scriptures. Paul claimed that all scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:16). Accordingly, Jesus said that scripture cannot be broken (Jn 10:35). Such infallibility could only occur in writings under the power of plenary (full) inspiration. The apostle Peter said, ...no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophesy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (II Pet 1:20-21). Hence, scriptural prophecy is void of any private opinions of the writers. They were actually moved by the Spirit of God when writing. Furthermore, the psalmist David declares, The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever (Ps. 12:6-7).

Q18: Why do Primitive Baptists refer to their preachers as elders?

A: The scriptures offer two alternate titles for preachers - bishop and elder (I Tim 3:1-7, Tit 1:5-9, I Pet 5:1). The importance of using scriptural titles is emphasized by Jesus' condemning the Pharisees for taking aggrandizing titles to themselves (Mt 23:5-12). The term reverend is used only once in the scriptures where it has reference to God (Ps 111:9). We are therefore unworthy to wear this title. The term apostle is clearly used by the scriptures to mean a minister who is an eyewitness to the sufferings and resurrection of Christ (Acts 1:1-3, Acts 1:21-26, I Cor 9:1, I Pet 5:1). Also, apostles were granted special powers not possessed by ordinary elders (Acts 8:18, II Cor 12:12, Heb 2:3-4). Any man claiming this title for himself today does so in error.

Q19: Do Primitive Baptists have schools for training ministers?

A: Primitive Baptist elders are called by God and chosen by the individual congregations from among male members who have demonstrated a calling and proven to be faithful to the church and its principles. All Primitive Baptist elders are expected to be educated in the Word of God and have frequent contact with other ministers about questions of scriptural interpretation and other matters pertaining to the church (2 Tim. 2:2). The Apostle Paul taught Timothy as a father instructs a son, laboring and serving together in the gospel (Philip. 2:22). This system of education is preferred above ministerial training schools because:

- a. Elders in the New Testament were primarily self-educated in the scriptures.

- b. Elders in the New Testament learned under the direction of the Holy Spirit and other elders rather than academicians.

- c. The system makes the scriptures themselves to be the curriculum.

- d. The elder learns in the same setting in which he is expected to teach. Congregations taught by these elders will be expected to have the discipline to educate themselves in the Word of God. The elder should therefore prove himself to have the same discipline.

- e. The system is less vulnerable to the widespread propagation of error so commonly found when numerous ministers are trained under the same teachings of heretical academicians.

Q20: Why do Primitive Baptists wash feet?

A: because Jesus commanded it (John 13:14-15). Although it is not an ordinance as the Lord's Supper and baptism, it is a practice set forth and commanded to be observed.

Q21: Why do Primitive Baptists require baptism by immersion?

A: The example set by Jesus is clearly one of baptism by immersion. Mark described Jesus' baptism with these words: And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him (Mk 1:10). "Coming up out of the water" clearly cannot be by sprinkling or pouring. John baptized in Aenon because there was much water there (Jn 3:23). An abundance of water is not needful for sprinkling or pouring. Accordingly, the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in a body of water (Acts 8:36). Paul explains in Rom 6:1-5 that baptism represents a death, burial, and resurrection. Nothing about pouring or sprinkling depicts these events. Immersion obviously does. Finally, the Greek word for baptism (baptizo) means immersion.

Q22: Why do Primitive Baptists prefer a cappella singing?

A: There is no biblical precedent for the usage of musical instruments in New Testament worship. The scriptures give repeated instructions to sing in the church, but never to play (Rom 15:9, I Cor 14:15, Eph 5:19, Col 3:16, Heb 2:12, James 5:13). Things that affect the setting of worship (i.e. - electric lights, air conditioners, etc) are not a part of the worship service and are allowable. A distinction must also be made between an addition to the New Testament pattern and an aid to this pattern. Electric lights, songbooks, reference Bibles, etc. are aids to worship, but musical instruments are additions to worship. It is commonly objected that Psalm 150 offers

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instruction to praise the Lord with various kinds of musical instruments. However, these instructions are not referring to New Testament worship. Procedure used in Old Testament worship obviously cannot be used to amend the New Testament pattern; otherwise, animal sacrifices, priests, etc. could be legitimately introduced to the church. It should be observed that Psalm 150 also commands to praise the Lord with dance (Ps 150:4), yet those who use the Psalm to defend musical instruments would generally condemn dancing in the church. Furthermore, the prophet Amos condemned the very musical instruments David invented (Amos 6:1-5).

Q23: Why do Primitive Baptists not have entertainment for youth?

A: Primitive Baptists do not condemn entertainment when it is moral and in moderation. We also recognize that men of God in the scriptures occasionally use humor and sarcasm (Is 40:18-23, Is 44:12-20, Lk 16:9), so this too is acceptable provided that it is clean, purposeful, and moderate. However, the idea that it is the role of the church to entertain is absolutely alien to all that is scriptural. When churches have taken sports, games, comedy, and other amusement, and have commingled them with songs of praise, prayer, and preaching, then no difference is being made between the holy and profane (Ezek. 44:23). The scriptures suggest that Paul had an interest in some sports (I Cor 9:24, II Tim 2:5, Heb 12:1), yet he condemned competitiveness in the church (I Cor 4:7, I Cor 11:21-22). The instruction of the scriptures are both necessary and sufficient to guide young people as well as old, and to strengthen them against the temptations of the world (Deut 6:6-7, Ps 119:9-11, I Tim 5:14, II Tim 3:15-17). Furthermore, youth group involvement yields more civil and criminal liability risks each year, as deviant and deceptive individuals are at times unknowingly placed in positions of supervision over children.

Q24: What do Primitive Baptists believe about John 3:16?

A: This verse of scripture is often taken out of context to attempt to prove that Jesus died for all the inhabitants of the world. Taken in context, Jesus is making a factual point to Nicodemus (a Jew who erroneously believed that eternal salvation was limited to the physical nation of the

Jews) that God so loved the world (Greek kosmos : created order), and NOT just the Jews, that he gave His only begotten Son. The purpose of His Son being given was that whosoever, which is a definitive group and not mankind in general, believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life. The Greek word for believeth is pisteuo, which is the same root word for faith, and faith by definition is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8). The very belief / faith in the heart of those who believe is placed there by the mercy and grace of God. The fact that John 3:16 is not teaching that Jesus offered himself to all the inhabitants of the world is further confirmed by the fact that Jesus said that he who does not believe in this is condemned already (v.18), indicating the fallen state of mankind in Adam's transgression (Rom.5:20). Furthermore, it is of the utmost importance to understand what "world" Jesus is referring. Christ declares in the same gospel of John, chapter 17, verse 9, that, "I pray NOT for the world." For example, in Lk. 2:1, the writer declares that Ceasar Augustus sent out a decree that "all the world should be taxed". Obviously, Ceasar did not send tax collectors to pre-North America to collect taxes from the native Indians. Rather, he taxed the "world" that was under His jurisdiction. Jesus Christ could not have died for the general population of the world because that is not the "world" under consideration. Also, this would have contradicted the promise of Christ that ALL of His children would never perish (Jn. 10:28). If Christ offered himself for all the inhabitants of the world, then according to his promise, all the inhabitants of the world would be housed in heaven. On the contrary, Christ declared that he had power over ALL mankind, for the purpose of giving life to "as many as thou hast given him" (Jn. 17:2), and not all the inhabitants of the world. This relates back to that innumerable host of children that God the Father foreknew, predestinated, called justified, and glorified in His Son (Rom. 8:29-30). The world that God created was good in God's eyes (Gen. 1) until mankind defiled that world with sin. God so loved this created order that He sent His Son to die for whosoever believes in him. Obviously, this is a factual statement and not a non-contextual offer.

Q25: Why should I become a Primitive Baptist?

A: For the sake of God's truth: God has declared that His glory can only be seen in the salvation plan set out in His holy word. This plan involves no work or act of our own, but His alone. Rev. 4:11 declares that we are created for His glory, and we are to glorify Him in our bodies (I Cor. 6:20). In order to achieve maximum glory to God, His truths must be embraced and man's opinions and devices put aside. Forsaking all for His glory is our only choice.

For the sake of sincerity: in a time when people are looking for depth and quality, a deep, personal relationship with Jesus Christ and with brothers and sisters in Christ can only be found

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by embracing His truth.

For the sake of simplicity: from programs and entertainment, to day-care facilities and segregation, religious worship of today grows more complex and bigger each year. Instead of looking for God in a multitude of activity, we should strive to see the simplicity in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11:3), that can be found in a worship style in which families, whether single parent homes or traditional, worship together in spirit and in truth, where spiritual food can be bought without price (Isa. 55:1-2) and the only demands placed upon the individual are the commandments of God, which are not grievous (1 Jn. 5:3). To sing, preach and pray in worship of the Lord, to fellowship together frequently in His word, and bring the good news to captive, condition-laden sinners that their salvation rests in the free grace of Jesus Christ alone.

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