**Why Study Baptist History**

**Text:** Deuteronomy 19:14

**Introduction:** In the past I have summarized the history of Baptist people. Today I want us to consider why we should study Baptist history. I think most here who have attended Protestant Churches in the past have probably heard the history of those denominations praised. Now please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that all Protestants today, or those in past were, rotten and evil. There have been some true men of God who were Protestant and some churches among them where a great many souls were won to Christ. There have also been some Baptist pastors who were scoundrels, and some Baptist Churches that ought to have been burned to the ground.

Nevertheless, the facts are that Baptists are the only ones with a church history that can be traced right back to Christ and His apostles. Even more important in my opinion, Baptist history is the only church history that is without the stain of blood to tarnish it. Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, and even Methodists cannot look back on their histories without finding extensive persecutions of others over matters of conscience.

But today I am not going to give a lecture in Baptist history. I'll save that for another day. This afternoon I simply want to take a few minutes to consider some Biblical reasons for studying Baptist history. Have you ever read a good history of Baptists? If you haven’t, I can recommend some for you to read. It will strengthen your faith and encourage your heart!

**We need Landmarks (Deuteronomy 19:14).**

First, we should study Baptist history because we need some landmarks. Before Joshua led the people of Israel into the land God had given them as an inheritance, they were given some important instructions by God, through Moses. One of those important instructions was to set up landmarks to identify each family's personal property. God knew that greedy men would be tempted to move those landmarks just a little bit each year whilst no was looking. In this way they could steal their neighbor's inheritance, without ever paying for it.

Our history is something as valuable as land. It bothers me that Baptists have become the only "denomination" (which we really are not) that feels the need to apologize for being what we are. I have never read the church web page of a Presbyterian or Methodist Church that said, "We only loosely identify with our heritage and founding." But I have seen many Baptist churches that have just that kind of thing to say about themselves.

Frankly, I wish that if they are embarrassed about their heritage that they would just remove the name entirely and reorganize. Christ probably stopped identifying with them long ago (Matthew 10:32-33). If you aren't willing to identify with Christ's real church, which is visible and local, then you really don't identify with Christ at all. We ought to study Baptist history because it is a precious landmark of distinction from other Christian people who can’t truthfully say they have always followed Christ directly.

**Jesus promised the perpetuity of His Church (Matthew 16:18).**

Second, we should study Baptist history because Christ promised the perpetuity of His church. Did you know that the Lord Jesus promised His church would never cease? It will never be totally overcome by the world.

Now to be sure certain congregations have ceased. Since I come to Seoul in January of 1999, about 8-10 churches that supported us as missionaries then are no longer in existence today. Their membership, for whatever reason, decided it was too great a struggle to keep going on. We are still here, but they are gone.

Sometimes churches continue on, but Christ has nothing more to do with them. That is exactly what the Lord Jesus warned the Ephesians' church in Revelation 2:5. Perpetuity does not mean that every single Baptist congregation will continue for all ages. It means that in all ages, there will always be some genuine Baptist churches. And so there has always been Baptist churches somewhere in this world. They are not always identified by the name Baptist, but rather by their doctrine. We ought to study Baptist history because the Lord promised the gates of hell would not prevail against His church, not other churches, just His, not Luther's church or Calvin's church, just Christ's church.

**Jesus purchased the Church with His own Blood (Acts 20:28).**

Third, we should study Baptist history because Christ purchased it with His own blood. There is a disturbing tendency today to minimize and marginalize the real church. I know people who won't tithe because they say the "visible" church is hopelessly corrupted and they don't want to support a corrupt organization.

Here is something I have noticed about those people. When they are sick, they want the members of the "corrupted" visible church they attend to pray for them. When they attend the "corrupted" visible church they enjoy the comfortable pews or chairs, the heat and the air conditioning, the hymnals, and the piano, etc, etc. They like and enjoy all those things, but they are just too stinking cheap to help pay for it. They are religious freeloaders who use puffed up spiritual excuses to justify their welfare mentality.

Did not God give greatly? What an example He set! He gave His only begotten Son. Did not Christ give greatly? Our text here says He purchased the Ephesian Church with His own blood! That certainly motivates me to want to know more about Baptist history! Praise God, Baptist history is discernable because Baptist churches were visible and local.

**The Church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Timothy 3:15).**

Fourth, we should study Baptist history because the church is the pillar and ground of truth. Both Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy were written by Paul to Timothy, through divine inspiration, to instruct him in church truth. There is much I could say about church doctrine. I plan to soon begin a study of Ephesians. There is plenty of doctrine in that Epistle that has been wrongly taught and misunderstood. Let it suffice for now, that God obviously intends a Christian's life to be centered in the assembly that is the visible body of Christ in a particular local.

Since Jesus Christ did not purchase with His precious blood publishing companies, campus ministries, food banks, missions agencies, and Bible colleges then we can sure that those organizations are not integral to our faith. It is only churches that our Saviour purchased at so great a cost to Himself. I remind you that the only defendable definition of church is a called out local assembly. Any other meaning attached to the Greek word *ekklesia* is illegitimate.

In all areas of life, we learn by example. Paul was an example to young Timothy. Timothy was to lead the church at Ephesus by good example. Every pastor or bishop or elder (the different words merely emphasize different aspects of the same office) ought to know how to behave himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth. He can then teach that same truth to those in his congregation. Our history is the story of Bible doctrine being lived out faithfully. Beloved there is significant things to be learned by examining our history.

**We must commit the things we have learned to the next generation (Judges 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:2).**

Fifth, we should study Baptist history so we can teach it to the next generation. History can be considered from different aspects. It can be done by looking to the influence of good men. Paul, for example, had a remarkable influence on Timothy and Titus. But history can also examine ideas rather than individuals. Political historians can trace the influence of democracy, socialism, fascism, and despotism. Theological historians consider trends in understanding certain religious faiths.

Scriptures shows the necessity of preserving not just the history of Baptist people, but of the Baptist faith. There are churches not far from us that sport the Baptist name upon their buildings and their literature, but will gladly accept into membership those who have never been immersed in identification of Christ and His church. Sometimes they even call the Lord's Supper a sacrament, which is blasphemy!

I think it is a wonderful thing to study Baptist history so that you can know who Benjamin Keach, and John Bunyon and Shubal Stearns were. But more important than knowing men is knowing Bible doctrine. Baptist history is pointless if it does not major in the substance of our faith. Our children need our faith. They need to know that it is worth living for and worth dying for the truth.

**We must earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3).**

Finally, there is just one last reason I bring for your consideration as to why we ought to study Baptist history. According to our text here in Jude, it is commanded of us. We should not just contend for the faith, we should earnestly contend for our faith. But that is not all. We must earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. That essentially means that anything that comes along afterwards is not what we should contend for.

We should not contend for sprinkling or infant baptism. Those were man-made doctrines that came along well after apostolic times. We ought not contend for sacraments, but for the ordinances once delivered. We ought not contend for Calvinism, but for the Great Commission. We ought not contend for Nicolaitanism (priestly hierarchy), but for complete equality of church membership. We ought not contend for denominationalism, but for local church autonomy. We ought not to contend for an unsaved church membership, but for a scripturally saved, baptized church membership. We must not contend for faith in creeds and confessions, but for the complete authority of Scripture in every area of faith and life. We ought not support or contend for 3 or 4 different kinds of church officers when the Bible knows of only two (both limited to only men).

The only things we ought to use our precious time supporting and contending for is the truth that was once delivered by the original and only apostles of Christ. We don't need tongues and modern-day miraculous spiritual gifts. We don't need ecumenical councils and inter-denominational cooperation. We ought to earnestly contend for the very same things that our Baptist forefathers believed in enough to seal their faith with their own blood!