

## Lesson 4

# Why we are Baptists or Church Succession

The idea of succession is often scoffed at for lack of “proof”. The proof for the churches continued existence from the time of Christ till present is not in documentation but in the promise of Scripture.

\*Trans-Atlantic Cable. Same message and power at both ends prove the connection of the two ends together though the majority is unseen.

- Though we do not have written documentation of each church coming from another, we do have proof of succession by the continued existence of our principles and practices.
- The succession of the church is not in each church starting a church (though we do see that as it is the plan of God), but in the continued existence of the truth of scripture and those who hold to it.
  - Christ builds the church, not another man or church (Mt 16)
  - The authority is Christ’s not ours (Mt 28)
  - Wherever a group of disciples meet, based on the truth of scripture (in his name), Christ is there, and they are the church (Mt 18, Eph 2:20-22).
  - Thankfully, though not necessary to believe the promise of God, we do have the testimony of historians to the antiquity of the Baptists.

**Charles H. Spurgeon**



*We believe that the Baptists are the original Christians. We did not commence our existence at the Reformation, we were Reformers before Luther or Calvin we 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 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. Persecuted alike by Romanists and Protestants of almost every sect, yet there has never existed a Government holding Baptist principles which persecuted others; nor I believe any body of Baptists ever held it to be right to put the consciences of others under the control of man. We have ever been ready to suffer, as our martyrologies will prove, but we are not ready to accept any help from the State, to prostitute the purity of the Bride of Christ to any alliance with the government, and we will never make the Church, although the Queen, the despot over the consciences of men.*

### John Clark Ridpath



*I should not readily admit that there was a Baptist Church as far back as 100 A.D., although without doubt there were Baptist churches then, as ALL CHRISTIANS were then Baptists.*

### Stanislaus Hosius, Bishop of Wormes in Prussia



*There shall be no faythe more certayne and true, then is the Anabaptistes, seeyng there be none nowe, or have bene before time fore ye space of these thousand and two hundred years, who have bene more cruelly punished, or that have been more stoutely, steadfastly, cheerfully take their punishment, yea or have offered them selves of their owne accorde to deathe, were it never so terrible or grevous. Yea in Saint Augustyn his time, as he himself sayth, there was a certaine monstrous desire of death in them.*

[A Most Excellent treatise of the Begynnyng of Heresy (Antwerp: AegDiest. 1565, reprint, Yorkshire, England: The Scholar Press Ltd., 1970), p. 44]

### Ypeij and Dermout, (eminent historians of the Dutch Reformed Church)

*The Baptists may be considered as the only Christian community that has stood since the days of the apostles, and as a Christian society has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel THROUGH ALL AGES.*

### Mosheim (Lutheran Historian)

*Before the rise of Luther and Calvin, there lay secreted in almost all the countries of Europe, persons who adhered tenaciously to the principles of the modern Dutch Baptists...the origin of Baptists is lost in the remote depths of antiquity...the first century was a history of Baptists.*

By Succession (or perpetuity) we do not mean an organic succession of churches as being a requirement for legitimacy. By succession we mean that there has never been a day since the first church was started by Christ and organized by the apostles, in which there was no genuine

church existing on earth that has not held to and proclaimed the same doctrine, principles and practices taught in the New Testament and held by us today.

### **Baptist Distinctives or Baptist's Seal**

1. **Bible as the Sole Authority** -The Bible is our only authority regarding all matters of faith and practice. It is inspired by God and bears the absolute authority of God Himself (II Tim. 3:15-17; Ps. 138:2, Jn. 8:31-32, 17:17).
2. **Autonomy of the Local Church**– All human authority for governing the church resides within each individual church. No religious hierarchy outside the church may dictate a churches beliefs and practices (Col. 1:18 contra 3 Jn 9; Eph. 1:22-23; Matt. 16:18; Matt. 18:18).
3. **Priesthood of The Believers**– Every believer is a priest of God and may enter into His presence in prayer through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ (I Pe. 2:5; I Tim. 2:5; Rev. 5:10; Heb. 4:15-16).
4. **Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper**– There is a proper order to the ordinances: first baptism, then the Lord's Supper. Nowhere is this order reversed in the Scriptures. When the order is messed up we open the doors to false doctrine (Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20).
5. **Individual Soul Liberty**– Every individual, whether a believer or not, will one day stand before God and give an account of the decisions he has made in this life. No one should be forced to assent to a belief or ritual against his will. This doctrine does not exempt the individual from responsibility to God (Rom. 14:5, 12).
6. **Saved, Baptized, Church Membership**– Membership to the church is restricted to individuals who give a credible testimony of salvation, accept his doctrine, join the church and wish to publicly display their desire to put off the old live and live for Christ (Acts 2:41-42; Rom. 6:1-6, Col. 2:11-12;). Our baptism into Christ is pictured by baptism with Christ.
7. **Two Offices: Pastor and Deacon**-These two offices exist only within the church and are not an hierarchy outside or over the church (I Tim. 3:1, 13; Phil. 1:1).
8. **Separation of Church and State**– God established both the church and civil government. He gave each a distinct sphere of operation. The purposes of government are outlined in Romans 13:1-7, and the churches are outlined in Matthew 28:19-20 and the Pauline epistles (Acts 5:29).
9. **Security of the Believer**– Once an individual has trusted Christ they are saved eternally (Eph. 1:13-14; Rom. 4:5-8).
10. **Evangelism**– God has given the authority and responsibility to the church to carry out the Great Commission: Evangelize, Baptize, Teach and plant churches (Matt. 28:19-20).
11. **A Separated and Holy Church Membership**– the New Testament clearly instructs the church to be separated from the world and its ways. We are expressly forbidden to bring anything into the church that appeals to the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life (Acts 2:41-42; II Cor. 6:16-7:1; I Jn. 2:15-17).
12. **Local Church Discipline**– Christ wants His bride (church) to be pure. He has commanded that impurity be removed and has given us instructions on how to do so (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5:4-13, Ro. 16:17-18; I Cor. 1:10; I Thess. 5:14; II Thess. 3:14; II Jn.).