

# The Last Judgment

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## ***In This Issue:***

***The Last Judgment***  
Page 1

***Good Works***  
Page 4

***Baptists and the Order of the  
Primitive Church***  
Page 7

***Why Are We Called Baptists?***  
Page 13

***We Have No Right to Change the  
Ordinance of Baptism***  
Page 15

***Arriving Late for Church Services:  
A Common Evil Reproved***  
Page 16

**T**here is a sense in which God judges men perpetually. To him "the books" are always open and the account balanced, so that every man is either acquitted or condemned. At every instant and with reference to every person it may be said: "Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3). But this does not render "the last day" superfluous, for the object of that day is "the manifestation of the righteous judgment of God," while his perpetual judgment is known only to himself.

Not even to the conscience of the person judged is the mind of God as to the degree of his guilt fully revealed in this life - much less is it revealed to others. Hence the bad are sometimes esteemed good, and the good bad; the hypocrite is revered for sanctity, and the upright man suspected of evil. But the veil will be lifted at the last day. "Then God will make judgment the line, and righteousness the plummet" (Isa. 28:17). Misapprehensions will be corrected; for "God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be bad" (Eccl. 12:14). In respect to that judgment the following particulars are made known by the word of God:

**(1) It will be conducted by the Lord Jesus Christ.** This is distinctly affirmed by the Saviour in John 5:22, 23, 27, 29; and in Matt. 25:31-46; not to mention other passages. It is also plainly asserted by Paul in Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1. Paul declares that God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained," etc., and the expression, translated "the world," means literally "the inhabited earth," or, by metonymy, "the inhabitants of the earth."

And there is no occasion for doubting that he intended by this all mankind.

In the Saviour's words preserved by John a reason why the judgment of men was assigned to him is stated. "He"—the Father—"gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a Son of man." His genuine humanity rendered it suitable that he should fill this office than which a higher can scarcely be imagined. The Sufferer must be crowned; the Redeemer must be made Head over all. Whether his ability to sympathize with men was also a reason for committing the work of judgment to him is left undecided by the context.

But there is evidence that Jesus Christ will associate with himself as judges those whom he has redeemed. (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22 30; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3) On the first of these passages Dr. Broadus remarks: "It is idle to insist upon the exact number twelve, and 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel' certainly does not mean that only Jews will be judged, or that one apostle will judge one tribe."

An Oriental monarch "often had persons seated near him (called by the Romans assessors), to aid him in judging" (Rev. 4:4). To such a position will the Twelve be exalted at the last day. Dr. Bliss, commenting on the second passage, finds the essence of the thought to be this, "that in the day of judgment their testimony concerning the truth of the gospel, and its indispensable power to save, shall condemn the mass of the unbelieving Jews."

But when these passages are compared with the third, it becomes evident that judicial functions are prominent in the Saviour's words, and that the least which they can be supposed to teach is that in the final judgment the Twelve, and indeed "all saints," will be taken into the counsel and called to unite in the decision of the infallible Judge as to the guilt and doom of the wicked, whether angels or men. Not that they will be helpful to the great King in forming his decisions, but that they will be honored as his friends with so full a view of the reasons for every decision, as to make it as truly theirs as his own.

What a pledge is this of the high intelligence and the moral perfection to which the saints will be exalted! It seems almost incredible that sinful men should ever rise by the power of divine grace into this absolute union with their Lord, even when his righteous judgment condemns the unbelieving.

This view of the participation of the redeemed in the judging of angels and men at "the last day" suggests the probability that the word "day" may in this connection denote a longer period of time than is sometimes supposed. It is really an indefinite expression, and one may well bear in mind the language of Peter, that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). It is vain for us to attempt conjecture, for we have no means of ascertaining, even approximately, the rapidity with which events may pass before the mind in the future life.

But there are other statements of Scripture closely allied in meaning to those which refer to the judicial function of the saints, statements that speak of them as reigning with Christ, or as sharing his glory. (See Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17-19; Rom. 5: 17; 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4; 22:5) Some of these may be fulfilled before the last judgment, and some of them after that august event, but beyond all doubt, they assign a regal position to the friends of Christ.

**(2) It will be a universal judgment.** That is to say, all mankind, from the time of Adam to that of Christ's final appearance, will be subject to it. In proof of this statement, our appeal is to the following passages: Heb. 9:27; Matt. 12:36, 37; 25:32; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rev. 20:11-15. If there be any exception to the universality of the judgment as related to mankind, it must be of those only who were incapable of moral action during their earthly life.

Apart from these, all will be called to give account of their words and deeds to him who is ready to judge both the living and the dead. (See especially Eccl. 12: 14; Matt. 12:36, 37; Heb. 9:27) As to the comprehension of the words, "all the nations," there is some difference of opinion. Several interpreters maintain the opinion that it refers to non-Christians only: so Keil, Olsh., Greswell. Others believe that it refers to Christians only: as Grotius and Meyer. But neither of these views is satisfactory.

A great majority of interpreters, ancient and modern, are agreed in holding that the expression, "all the nations," is tantamount to "all mankind." Bengel says, in his inimitable manner, "All the angels, all the nations, how vast an assembly!" But while insisting that these words describe the judgment as universal, we do not attach special importance to the form of procedure delineated. The throne, the placing of the good on the right hand, and the bad on the left, and the particular phraseology employed respecting the conduct of the two classes may be regarded as figurative, though it must never be forgotten that these figures stand for realities. Yet their exact import will be considered under the next head.

In calling the last judgment "universal" reference has only been made thus far to mankind. But the question presents itself naturally: Are not angels to be judged at the same time? If the language of Phil. 2:10, 11 is related to that of Rom. 14: 9-12, and refers to the judgment day, must we not include angels among those who are to give an account of their stewardship, and bow before the divine Judge? Paul appears to associate the judging of the world with the judging of angels: "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?...Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2, 3)

Moreover, it is evident from the whole tenor of the New Testament, that evil spirits or demons, under the leadership of Satan, have always had much to do with the wickedness of mankind. Satan is called the "prince of this world" (John 12:31),

whose power was first broken by the crucifixion of Christ; and the unequivocal testimony of the evangelists assures us that he undertook to seduce the Lord Jesus from his appointed course.

Since, then, the relation of sinful angels to mankind has been so intimate and influential, since their life has touched human life at so many invisible points, it would seem almost necessary to connect their judgment and final doom with those of men.

And there is an intimation in Matt. 8:29, "Art thou come to torment us before the time?" that evil spirits look forward to a day that will bring severer punishment than they now suffer; and the language of Jude, verse 6, appears to specify that day: "And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day." Of the nature of the "bonds" and "darkness" here mentioned, we have no definite knowledge, but they must not be supposed inconsistent with the activity of the angels in tempting men. Moreover, their judgment is assigned to the same King and the same day as is the judgment of mankind. But the words of Jesus in Matt. 13:39, 49; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31, and Mark 8:38, imply that the holy angels will not be then judged, but will attend and serve the holy Judge. In speaking, then, of the last judgment as "universal," we refer to evil angels as well as to the fallen human race.

**(3) It will be a righteous judgment.** This fact is of the utmost importance, and should never be lost sight of. By the final sentence no one will be wronged—everyone will be sent to his own place. The proceedings of that day will be such as to illuminate the dark features of providence, and vindicate the ways of God to men, so that the good will never more be able to doubt his righteousness. (Acts 17:31)

Three particulars respecting the last judgment are worthy of special consideration:

(a) That every act of life will be brought under review. (Eccl. 11:9; 12:14; Rom. 2:6-11; 14:12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:23; 20:12) (Cf. Gal. 6: 7-9) Can anything be fairer than this? The decision will be founded on the whole life. No voluntary movement of the spirit will be overlooked or misinterpreted. Secrets will then be revealed and data for a perfect estimate of character be made manifest. The principle announced by Christ in the words, "by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:16), will then be verified as never before; for all the fruits of moral life will be seen, and seen with unbiased mind.

(b) That every circumstance of personal life affecting moral conduct in the slightest degree will be taken into the account. The man who was entrusted with one talent will not be called to answer for the use of ten. (Matt. 25:15 f.; Luke 12:47, 48; 19:13-25; Rom. 2:12 f.) The same truth is implied in the passages which affirm that "God is no respecter of persons" (e. g., Acts 10:34, 35). The unprivileged classes, or those who have but little truth in respect to God and duty put within their reach, will not be held responsible for the use or abuse of much truth. "It standeth to reason, that he who had most light, most conviction, most means of conversion, and that was highest towards heaven, he must needs have the greatest fall, and so sink deepest into the jaws of eternal misery." (Bunyan, II., 128) We need not fear that Christ will deal hardly with any man at the last day. Then "all odds will be made even," and no one will be able to say in truth that he is not treated as well as his neighbor.

(c) That union with Christ will insure forgiveness and justification in that day. Then will be seen, as never before, the infinite graciousness of Christ towards all who are in spirit allied to him, towards all who are conscious of their ill desert, and who appreciate divine mercy. (See Matt. 25:34-40; John 6:29; Rom. 6: 14, 15, 16) And the same day will reveal the morally perverse and self-righteous spirit of those who are out of Christ. (See Matt 7:22; 25:41-45)

But will the record of their past sins confront the saints, and be exposed to the gaze of all the universe? There is reason to believe it will. That day will be one of open vision, and we cannot but suppose that the saints themselves will be unwilling to have it anything else. So deep will be their gratitude and so ardent their love to the Saviour, that they will desire to have the relation of his mercy to their guilt perfectly manifested. And it is difficult to imagine how this can ever be done to finite minds without a full review of the past.

As to the effect of the disclosures of the final day upon the ungodly the Scriptures are for the most part silent. In the parable of the marriage feast Jesus represents the guest without a wedding garment as being "speechless," when asked by

the king, "How earnest thou in hither not having a wedding-garment?" (Matt. 22:12) But in the great passage, Matt. 25:31-46, those on the left hand are represented as objecting to the charges made against them: "When saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee." Yet they make no reply to his words, uttered in response to this question: "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me." To this no answer can be made.



## Good Works

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J. M. Pendleton

From *Christian Doctrines: A Compendium of Theology, 1878*

It is important to understand what is meant by "good works." They have their proper place in the Christian scheme. They do not precede justification, so as to procure it, nor are they performed before regeneration, so as to effect it, but they follow both and are evidences of both. While the phrase "good works" implies a proper state of heart, from which they spring, it is evident from the New Testament that such works are chiefly outward acts of consecration to God.

In proof of this, I quote the words of Christ, as follows: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) This is the first use of the words "good works" in the Scriptures, and it is plain that Christ refers to external performances, which could be seen. So also when he said to the Jews (John 10:32), "Many good works have I shewed you from my Father," he referred to his beneficent miracles which they had witnessed. In Acts 9:36, it is said of Dorcas, "This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." These good works were visible, and therefore known. From Rom. 13:3 we learn that "rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." Here, too, there must be a reference to external works.

Paul taught likewise that an aged widow, before receiving assistance from a church fund, must be well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." (I Tim. 5:10) In the same Epistle, the rich are exhorted to be "rich in good works" (I Tim. 6:18), while in the letter to Titus he is urged to show himself "a pattern of good works." (I Tim. 2:7)

When it is said in Heb. 10:24, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works," it is manifest that good works refer to outward acts, even as love refers to the heart. The good works of the life were to proceed from the love of the heart. Peter wrote to his brethren, "Having your conversation [behavior] honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (I Pet. 2:12) Here, again, as in the first passage quoted, the visibility of good works is taken for granted.

I have now referred to a large majority of the places in the Scriptures where the phrase "good works" is used, and it cannot be denied that it denotes external acts. Now, while there are good works and evil works, it is very important to know what the qualities of good works are. In other words, their nature must be defined. What, then, is the nature of good works? I give a threefold answer:

**1. They are prompted by supreme love to God.** The first and the great commandment of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." (Matt. 22:37) This is the universal duty of creatures. Indeed, we are so constituted that we cannot conceive how God can create a rational being under no obligation to love him.

The obligation is as undeniable as the light of day or the darkness of night. It is true, also, that unless love to God is in the heart of man, no act of obedience rendered to any command can be acceptable. It is impossible for God to be pleased with such obedience. I will illustrate this point. Wives are required to obey their husbands, and, according to the teaching of

Scripture, "the husband is the head of the wife." (Eph. 5:23) The husband, it is to be supposed, requires nothing unreasonable of the wife in the way of compliance with his wishes. She may perform any number of acts of external obedience, but if the husband is not assured of her love he is utterly dissatisfied. The want of love he considers a defect so great as to vitiate every act of obedience.

In view of this conjugal illustration, I may surely say that want of love to God pollutes every act of obedience which man may perform. There can be no acceptable element in any obedience severed from love to God. This was the capital defect in "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." They were punctilious in paying tithes of herbs, but the Saviour told them, that they "passed over judgment and the love of God." (Luke 11:42) The love of God in their hearts did not prompt their obedience, and therefore the obedience did not secure the divine approval, so far from it, the frown of God was upon it.

No works are evangelically good unless they proceed from love to God, and there is no love to God in any unrenewed heart. Hence good works are performed by the regenerate alone, and are the evidences of regeneration. "Every one that loveth is born of God," and has been "created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (I John 4:7; Eph. 2:10) The performance of good works follows the great change referred to under the imagery of a birth and a creation.

**2. They are conformed to the divine law.** This is an important point. It must not be imagined that if we love God, we can do anything we please and still be within the sphere of good works. This view is entirely wrong. A good work must not only proceed from love to God, but it must be conformed to his law, and if so, it will be performed in compliance with the moral obligation of the actor.

For the law of God is the expression of his will, and of course recognizes the obligation of man to do that will. I would not indulge in conjecture, but I may say, that while moral distinctions are traceable to the divine nature as their supreme and original source, the divine will, as expressed in the divine word, is the standard and the measure of human obligation. It follows, therefore, that no work can be a good work the performance of which conflicts with the will of God and is a violation of moral obligation. No matter what motive may prompt such a work, it cannot be a good work. It is characteristic of a regenerate soul that it "consents to the law that it is good," and good works are performed in obedience and conformity to the law.

**3. They are performed for the divine glory.** This follows the two preceding points, for those who love God and are conformed to his law must desire his glory. They therefore act with reference to it. This is the highest object that mortal man can propose, and no loftier purpose controls the motives of an archangel. More than this, God himself acts with a view to his glory. The essential glory of God is alike incapable of increase or diminution, but there may be an increase of his declarative glory. His declarative glory is his manifested glory—the glory resulting from an exhibition of his character and perfections. All the good works of the saints have this tendency—to present the character of God in a favorable light—for they are performed under his inspiring influence, and are feeble imitations of the good works which he is constantly doing. ***Let it never be forgotten that good works are performed by his people in order that God may be glorified.***

Having attempted to define the nature of good works, it is well to allude to two classes into which they may be divided. They refer to the bodies and to the souls of men. The acts of kindness mentioned in Matt. 25:35-40 pertain to the body:

"For I was a-hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a-hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

It is the body that hungers, thirsts, is naked, sick, imprisoned. The good works specified in the verses quoted pertain to the body, and they will be approvingly recognized at the judgment of the great day. They will be referred to, not as meritorious of salvation, but as evidences of the Christian character of those who will be welcomed into the heavenly kingdom. The question was once asked in a company of Christians, "What is a good work?" and a pious woman, without learning, but with

much common sense, said, "An act of kindness that we do to the needy for Christ's sake, and then forget it." Admirable answer!

It is written in James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." To visit, in the sense of this passage, is, no doubt, to do acts of kindness for widows and fatherless ones. Alas in all ages, the condition of widows and fatherless children has been a sadly eloquent appeal for help. It is an appeal that is practically regarded by those who carry into effect the New Testament idea of good works. Jesus said, and his words are full of meaning, "For ye have the poor always with you." (Matt. 26:11)

**Souls have supreme claims.** The body has value as the tenement of the soul. What must be the worth of the immortal spirit? The question which Jesus asked has remained unanswered through all the centuries: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26) This language implies that if a man should gain the whole world and lose his soul, the gain would be unspeakably paltry and the loss infinitely great.

Souls need salvation, and must perish without it; and salvation, if obtained at all, must be secured during this short life. When Jesus died on the cross his estimate of the value of souls was written in characters of blood. Surely, those who have the mind of Christ must feel compassion for unsaved souls, and be ready to labor to rescue them from ruin. It is often the case that kindness shown to the needy and suffering body opens an avenue through which the soul is reached. "He that winneth souls is wise." (Prov.11:30); and the soul-winner shows his wisdom in the sanctified tact to which he resorts in gaining his purpose.

The phrase "good works," as descriptive of the efforts of Christians for the salvation of sinners, has an enlarged meaning. It includes all the methods of Christian labor. These methods are many; among which I may mention religious conversation, consistent example, circulation of the Holy Scriptures and the truths of the gospel in other forms, the support of the Gospel, home and foreign missions, and other Christian works.

The consecration of their tongues is a thing which Christians greatly need. They should talk of the things of God, and recommend the religion of Jesus to their dying fellowmen. How can the tongue be so usefully employed as in telling of salvation through the Crucified One?

What the tongue says, however, must be enforced by the power of Christian example. Words have but little influence when they are merely used to commend that which is not practiced by the speaker. Christian usefulness depends greatly on the deportment which the Christian calling requires.

The Word of God is the prominent means of conversion and salvation. The Holy Spirit makes use of it in enlightening the mind and renewing the heart. To disseminate this word as far as possible is one of the good works which Christians should be ever performing. "The seed is the word," and this seed should be sown far and near. The extent of the spiritual crop to be gathered from it will not be known till the great harvest-day. It will be seen then what good has resulted from the circulation of divine truth, whether in the large volume, the tiny leaflet, or the various intermediate grades of Christian publications.

The gospel must be supported. By this I mean "that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." I Cor. 9:14) Most of those whom God calls to this work are taken from the poor of this world. Ministers of the word are sometimes placed in circumstances which require them, like Paul, to labor with their hands for the necessaries of life, and it is honorable for them to do so. Ordinarily, however, the people who enjoy a minister's labors can give him, at least, moderate support.

We are accustomed to speak of home and foreign missions, but in truth the cause of missions is one, and the spirit of missions is one. The language of Christ "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," (Luke 24: 47) is the fullest authority for missions in the most enlarged sense of the term. "Beginning at Jerusalem" embraces the work of home missions in all the forms of that work; while the words "among all nations" direct attention to foreign missions in their world-wide operations. How sublime is the missionary enterprise! It

contemplates the evangelization of the world, the salvation of immortal souls, the triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the manifestation of God's glory in all the earth.

This enterprise calls for the large financial contributions of the rich and the smaller offerings of the poor. Every Christian who is not "an object of charity" should give conscientiously and systematically to this cause. How can money be so wisely used? How can gold be employed for a better purpose than in extending the gospel of salvation, which is more precious "than gold, yea, than much fine gold"? Among the good works of Christians pecuniary donations to the cause of God must never be forgotten. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. (Hag. 2:8)

But while the good works embraced in the various fields of Christian labor are diligently performed, unceasing prayer must be offered to God for his blessing. Success depends on his benediction. Means, however earnestly used, accomplish nothing, unless he renders them effectual. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) Let the sacramental host of God's elect "occupy a supplicant attitude. Prayer on God's footstool brings dawn blessings from his throne.

In view of the considerations presented in this chapter the words of the Holy Spirit through Paul are very impressive: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." (Tit. 3:8) Such works are the appropriate fruits of faith, proving it to be a vital principle, which, while it justifies before God, prompts active consecration to his service. These works also are evidences of regeneration, for they show in the holiness of the life that the germ of holiness has been deposited in the heart.

In performing good works Christians have the satisfaction of knowing that they are copying the example of Jesus their Lord. We are told, that when personally on earth he "went about doing good." (Acts 10:38) This was his business, his calling. He not only did good, but "went about" to find opportunities of doing good—to find objects on whom to confer his benefactions. There was no bodily suffering that did not excite his pity.

There was no sorrow in any heart that did not touch a responsive chord in his bosom. He has left his followers an example which it is their highest honor to copy. Let them, like him, go about doing good, making the world better by their beneficent labors, and when their work on earth is done they will be transferred to a sphere of more exalted service in heaven.



## Baptists and the Order of the Primitive Church

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John Quincy Adams

From *Baptists: The Only Thorough Religious Reformers*, 1854

*"Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized...And the Lord added to the church, daily, such as should be saved."*  
(Acts 2: 41, 47)

All professed Christians, who admit that the Scriptures contain a model for church organization, strenuously maintain that the denomination with which they are connected is formed after the scriptural pattern. This is true alike of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and others. But it is abundantly evident, that while these denominations are so very dissimilar, they cannot all resemble one scriptural model.

It is further evident, that some who make pretensions to be "the church," are not satisfied to rest their claim to that title, simply on a comparison of their organization with the New Testament pattern of a gospel church, but very gladly seek to

bring in evidence from other quarters, by which they hope to support their cause. Jewish antiquity, the Fathers, Tradition, Expediency, are all pressed into their service, to supply the lack of evidence afforded in Scripture, or, as is sometimes the ease, to nullify and render powerless its direct testimony against them.

All this, I say, is done by those who profess to find, in the New Testament alone, a warrant for their ecclesiastical systems and organizations. They do not seem to perceive, that the very course which they adopt to support their claims, affords most conclusive evidence that they are false and vain.

But while some appeal to Tradition, and others to expediency, it is the glory of the Baptists that they act on the principle of the sufficiency of the Bible in testing this, as well as all other questions relating to religion. Though Jewish antiquity, the Fathers, and Tradition, yield as much or more support to their distinctive features, as to those who are most clamorous in demanding submission to them, still they prefer to appeal to "the law and to the testimony."

It is certain that primitive church order has been generally abandoned, from the fact that so many different organizations exist, each claiming to be the gospel church. Now, it is evident that not more than one of these dissimilar organizations can be constructed after the Scripture model. All that is necessary in testing their claims is that they be compared with the New Testament description of a gospel church. And any body of Christians that is unwilling to be brought to this test must of course give up this claim. Let us inquire,

### **I. What was the Order of the Primitive Church?**

We can only obtain satisfactory information on this point from the Word of God. The text and its connection present to us the circumstances under which the first gospel church was formed. From this it will be perceived, that first, the gospel was preached, then repentance and baptism were urged upon the hearers; "then they that gladly received the Word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

**1. Primitive churches were composed of professed believers.** Those who "gladly received the word." In all the epistles to the churches, it will be seen that the members composing them are addressed as believers, chosen ones, saints, partakers of like precious faith with the apostles; and even where their sins are spoken of they are alluded to as brethren, who had departed from the faith. Dr. Dwight says, "There is but one character given in the New Testament to those who were church members, and that is the character of Christians. There is no mixture of any other character."

**2. Primitive churches were composed only of baptized believers.** By baptized I mean immersed believers. "They that gladly received his word were immersed;" this is the translation—in our version we have only a transfer. Let me, on this point, give you a few authorities for this translation, for there are some who deny its correctness—none, however, of any pretensions to scholarship.

The learned Bossuet says: "Baptism was performed by plunging. In fine, we read not in Scripture that baptism was otherwise administered; and we are able to make it appear, that for 1300 years baptism was thus administered throughout the whole church, as far as possible."

Doddridge says "'Buried with him by baptism.' It seems the part of candor to confess that here is an allusion to the manner of baptizing by immersion, which was the primitive mode."

John Wesley says: "Buried with him,' alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion."

Whitby, author of a commentary on the New Testament, and more than forty other learned works, says:

"It being so expressly declared here, that we are buried with Christ in baptism, by being buried under water, and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death, by dying to sin, being taken from hence; and this immersion being observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries, and the change of it into sprinkling, without

any allowance from the Author of this institution, being that which the Romanist still urges to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity; it were to be wished that this custom might be again of general use."

Dr. Chalmers says: "The original meaning of the word baptism is immersion; and we doubt not that the prevalent style of administration in the apostles' days was by an actual submerging of the whole body under water."

Archbishop Tillotson says: "Anciently those who were baptized were immersed and buried in water, to represent their death to sin; and then did rise up out of the water, to signify their entrance upon a new life."

I might go on and fill a volume with similar quotations, from every scholar of any note who has ever written upon the subject. In addition to this, every lexicon of note gives it a meaning, by which it signifies, either an immersion into an element, or a complete overwhelming with it.

It is evident, also, from the narration of circumstances connected with baptism in the New Testament, that immersion was the primitive mode. Christ, when he was baptized, came up out of the water. When Philip baptized the eunuch, he went down into the water with him, in order to do it. The apostle Paul, in alluding to baptism, twice calls it a burial, and once a burial and resurrection. All who became members of the primitive churches were admitted by immersion; and as none were admitted but believers, none but believers were immersed.

**3. In the primitive church none were admitted to the Lord's table but those who were immersed.** Though they were, at the time of their conversion, members of the Jewish nation, or, as a Pedobaptist would say, of the Jewish church, and had been circumcised in their infancy, still they must be immersed before becoming members, or enjoying the privileges of a Christian church. Yea, even though they had been proselytes to the Jewish religion, and were circumcised after they arrived at maturity, they must still be immersed, when they professed faith in Christ, before they could sit down at the Lord's table. It is admitted by all, to have been the practice of the primitive church, to receive none but the baptized to the Lord's table.

**4. Primitive churches were independent in their government.** All the members were on an equality in each church, and each church was on an equality with every other church. There were no bishops, in the sense in which that term is used by Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Methodists. There were no church sessions, presbyteries, assemblies, synods, or conferences. Advisory councils, having no power to legislate, were sometimes called to give counsel in difficult matters. But individual churches possessed supreme authority to administer discipline, and transact their own business. The church was the highest court of appeal.

## II. Pedobaptists have universally departed from the Order of the Primitive Church.

The first Pedobaptist church was the Church of Rome. I presume I need not stop here to show that the Romish church does not conform to the Scripture model. All Protestants will affirm that she does not; and anyone who will read the Bible will be convinced of it. Let me remind them, however, that in nothing is her dissimilarity to gospel churches more palpably manifest than in her infant baptism; and in this thing all Pedobaptists are treading in her path, while not one of them is conformed to the New Testament pattern. For,

**1. They are not composed of the same materials.** They number among their members others than professed believers. Every Pedobaptist church holds that the children of believers, when baptised, are members of the church, and form a part of it. I substantiated this assertion by numerous quotations from printed documents, in my sermon on the "Spirituality of Christ's kingdom;" I need not, therefore, repeat them here. But I remark, in addition to this, that conversion is not necessarily a qualification for membership in most Pedobaptist churches.

With Episcopalians, admission to full church privileges is granted to those who have been confirmed. The requirements for this service are thus stated in the Book of Common Prayer: "The church hath thought good to order, that none shall be confirmed but such as can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and can also answer to such other questions as in the Short Catechism are contained." The conditions of admission being thus made, irrespective of personal character, it cannot be expected that the Episcopal church will bear a comparison with that of primitive times. Indeed, it will be perceived that all that is needed is a good memory, in order to be confirmed as a member of that church.

The Presbyterians acknowledge in their standard, that "the visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children." They further say, "Children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church, and are to be taught to read and repeat the Catechism, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, they ought to be informed it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." (*Directory for Worship*, chap. 9, sec. 1) Now, in all this there is nothing said about regeneration, repentance, or faith.

The late Dr. Chalmers, a distinguished Presbyterian minister, maintained that it was "wrong to say that none but the pious should be admitted to partake of the sacraments," while, for the decent regulation of the church, "it is well that the visibly profane or profligate are kept away." As to the duty of a minister to the "great majority of our species," who are "neither of the profligate or the pious," his business is, "not to exclude them, but to warn them." A church, formed on such principles as these, certainly cannot claim to be identical with the primitive churches.

In the Methodist body, it is held that a religious society is "a company of men, having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in the Lord, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." "There is one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies—a desire to flee the wrath to come, and to be saved from their sins."

It is well known that persons who give no evidence of conversion are often allowed, and even urged, to become "class members;" and in some instances these "seekers," as they are termed, are permitted to come to the Lord's table. It is not necessary, according to the Discipline, that a man give evidence of conversion. It is certainly not impossible for unconverted men to fulfil a term of probation. And thus, in almost every Pedobaptist church it may be seen that conversion is not absolutely insisted on as a condition of membership on the part of adult applicants.

But what shall we say of their infant membership? We frequently hear of the "children of the covenant," and the "children of the church," from Pedobaptist pulpits, but do we see anything of this kind in the New Testament? Do we find unconverted men addressed as members of the church in primitive times, or young persons urged to fulfil baptismal vows, made for them by their parents, when they were unconscious infants? No, no! We see parents urged to bring their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," but we nowhere find this duty enforced by any allusion to vows made at the dedication of their children in baptism.

Again, those united with the primitive church churches, in consequence of a sermon preached by the writer, showing that Baptists occupied common ground with others, in restricting the communion to those whom they considered baptized, invited to the Lord's table all "who desired to be Christians."

**2. Pedobaptists do not receive their members by the same initiatory rite as the primitive churches did.** The primitive churches received their members by immersion. This was the act by which they publicly "put on Christ" before the world. A great many Pedobaptist authors acknowledge that the primitive saints were immersed, and that immersion is the proper signification of the terms which are used to designate the ordinance. In addition to those already quoted, I remark that Calvin says: "Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients; for they immersed the whole body in water." Bishop Taylor says: The custom of the ancient churches was not sprinkling, but immersion."

Now, we know that Pedobaptist churches receive the majority of their members, not by immersion, but by sprinkling. Some may be immersed, but it is only after every argument to dissuade them from it has failed. The practice of these churches is sprinkling, the exceptions are immersion. In the primitive church there was "one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" and that was immersion. Here, then, is a striking dissimilarity between all Pedobaptist churches and the primitive churches. The latter were composed of immersed believers. The former are composed of a mixed multitude of believers and unbelievers, sprinkled, poured, and immersed.

The language addressed to the primitive churches cannot be addressed to them. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Have infants put on Christ?" Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." Can a

Pedobaptist minister address his church thus? "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through faith of the operation of God." (Col. 2:12) Can this language be appropriately addressed to a Pedobaptist church? No; so far from it, many Pedobaptists do not like to read it in their Bibles. But still further; a Pedobaptist preacher cannot stand up, in a Pedobaptist community, and address unconverted men as the primitive disciples did: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you." They have been baptized, as they call it, already. From all this it is evident, that Pedobaptist churches are very dissimilar to the churches in the times of the apostles, and to the teachings of the New Testament.

**3. There is a wide dissimilarity between Pedobaptist churches and the primitive church, in reference to the Lord's Supper.**

In the primitive churches, all who were baptized, and members of the church, were admitted to the Lord's table. None, who were considered proper subjects of baptism, and who had received that rite, were excluded from the communion. But Pedobaptists contend that infants are proper subjects, and that sprinkling is the proper mode. Every infant who is sprinkled, then, according to their view, is properly baptized, and a member in the visible church, and ought, according to their own reasoning, to be admitted to the Lord's table.

Pedobaptists are most inveterate close communionists. They are very eloquent against the bigotry and closeness of the Baptists, for not admitting members of Pedobaptist churches to the Lord's table, but surely they should not expect us to receive persons whom we consider unbaptized, when they will not receive their own baptized members. All whom we consider baptized, and who are members of our churches, we receive; so did the primitive churches. But Pedobaptists have large numbers, whom they consider baptized members of their churches, whom they do not admit to the Lord's table. This is a kind of close communion that we have never practiced.

**4. There is a dissimilarity in the government of Pedobaptist churches and the primitive church.** One was independent; the other is arbitrary, despotic, and tyrannical. I exhibited this fully in my Lecture on the "Equality of Christ's Disciples," and therefore need not repeat the arguments here.

**III. Baptists aim to restore the order of the primitive church.**

Baptists make no appeal to Tradition, the Fathers, or Expediency. They simply ask, "What do the Scriptures teach?" They follow the New Testament model of a church, and invite all to test them by it. It is not strange, therefore, that they confidently appeal to God's Word for proof of the correctness of all they do. They take it all from the Bible, and therefore they know it can all be found there. Take any Scripture account of the course pursued by the apostles, or of the practice of gospel churches, and you will find the counterpart in a Baptist church.

Like primitive churches, they are composed of immersed believers. We say, show us an instance of the baptism of an infant in the primitive church, and we will then baptize infants. But until you do, we will oppose infant sprinkling as an innovation of man, having no divine authority, and therefore sinful, when performed in the name of Jehovah.

Like the primitive churches, Baptists admit none to the Lord's table but those who are immersed, on profession of their faith. Show us an instance of a gospel church doing otherwise, and we will conform to the model.

Like the primitive churches, Baptists are independent in their government. Show us a pope, or bishop, or conference, or synod, or presbytery, or council, authorized to govern the church, and we will submit to just such authority as you can show us in the Bible.

Our position in these matters is illustrated by a narrative contained in a tract, published by the American Tract Society, entitled "Mick Healy, the Bible Reader." Mick had been a strict Roman Catholic for fifty years. One day he accidentally found a Bible, and commenced reading it. The more he read, the more he neglected the Romish service. The priest at length heard of it, and visited Mick, and sought to get the Bible from him. Failing in this, he began to expostulate with him. He told him he must not read it anymore; and reminding him that he had not been to confession for a long time, he told him he must come and confess, for it was his duty.

Mick held out the Bible to the priest, and said, "Will your reverence please to show it to me in the Book." Now this is just what we say to all the arguments of Pedobaptists. They tell us that all Christian parents should have their infant children

sprinkled. We say, "Will you please to show it to us in the Book." They tell us that sprinkling will do as well as to go "down into the water," and be "buried in baptism," and "come up out, of the water." We say, "Will you please to show it to us in the Book."

After some time, Mick united with a Protestant church, and regularly attended the Sunday-school. The children used frequently to gather round him, and put questions to him, to hear his answers:

"Well, Mick, why don't you now pray to the Virgin Mary?"

"Because it is not in the Book."

"Why don't you now confess your sins to Peter and Paul, Mick?"

"Because it is not in the Book."

"Why do you believe the Bible to be sufficient to make you wise unto salvation, without tradition?"

"Oh, sure, it is all in the Book."

"Must everything in religion be proved by the Bible, Mick?"

"Yes; whatever is not so, is only moonshine."

Now our Pedobaptist friends ask us why we do not sprinkle infants; we reply, "It is not in the Book." They wish to know why we "go down into the water," and immerse those who believe, and "come up out of the water." We reply, with Mick, "Oh, sure, it is all in the Book." They ask us why we do not admit to the Lord's table with us those who are unbaptized. We reply, "It is not in the Book; and whatever is not in the Book, is only moonshine." We aim to be Bible Christians, and to make our churches Bible churches. In upholding Baptist sentiments, we simply aim to perpetuate primitive Christianity.

We resemble the primitive Christians in another respect —we are "everywhere spoken against." This we expect, so long as men follow Tradition rather than the Word of God, and are influenced by the teachings of men, rather than by the example of Christ; but when the Bible,—and especially the Bible faithfully translated,—is made the standard, then we shall triumph. We make no arrogant assumptions; we utter no idle boast, but we simply use the language of humble confidence and firm faith.

The progress of the Baptist denomination can be arrested, only by taking the Bible away from the people; for, while they possess that, in spite of priests and princes, scaffolds and bundles of sticks, tortures and death, some will be found, as in all ages some have been found, who will contend for primitive simplicity, primitive purity, primitive order.

On the other hand, Pedobaptism can only succeed, by withholding the Bible from the people, or veiling the command to be immersed in an unknown tongue, or calling human tradition to support it, and enlisting carnal weapons to defend it. But its days are numbered; it is in its decline. Its end approaches; and soon will be heard the vocal shout, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen," and Rome, and all that is Romish, infant sprinkling and all, shall be destroyed. And so let it be!

Do not imagine, from these remarks, that I cherish any feelings of animosity toward those who practice infant baptism. No; far from it. I sincerely pity them. So much anxiety as many of them suffer, demands commiseration. Especially do I pity the priests and ministers who are engaged in defending it. So much labor in vain—so much pains for nought. Has not Christ said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." (matt. 15:13) Oh, how much better, to come out on Gospel ground, take the Bible, and follow Christ, and enjoy the sweet time when the Bible is read, or the Gospel is faithfully preached — abiding in confidence and strengthened, knowing that you have done what is right!



# Why Are We Called Baptist?

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Norman H. Wells

From *The Church That Jesus Loved*, 1973 (Chapter 17)

**O**ur church is identified by the name "Baptist." In order to understand why we are called Baptist it will be necessary to go back to the very beginning of the church.

## THE WORD "CHURCH"

The word "church" is used for the first time in the Bible in Matt. 16:18. "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."

This was the announcement that there was to be an organized assembly that was to carry on the work of the Lord. Christ called this assembly a "church."

The English word "church" has an interesting history.

The early Greek name for a powerful man's house was "kuriakon." This word came from a slang expression meaning "power." This term passed into Latin and was picked up by pioneer Christians, who applied it to the house of God. This Greek word "kuriakon" meant a "powerful Man's house." Various forms of this word entered into most of the languages of Europe. In English it became "church."

The English word "church" originally meant "a powerful man's house" or "the Lord's house." In this word the emphasis was always upon the house itself.

The English word "church" was used to translate the Greek word "ekklesia" in our Bibles. To understand what the word "church" is intended to mean in our Bibles it is necessary to know the meaning of the Greek word "ekklesia."

The Greek word "ekklesia" comes from two Greek words, "ek" meaning "from" and "kaleo" meaning "to call out." The word "ekklesia" literally means, "to call out from."

The "called out assembly" of Jesus Christ is called a "church" in our English Bibles. The name used in the New Testament to identify Christ's called out assembly was simply "church."

## THE NAMES OF CHURCHES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the beginning it was not necessary to identify individual, particular churches by a name because there were not that many of them. They were all alike and they all believed the same thing. The called out assembly of Jesus Christ is simply called "church" 75 times in the New Testament.

## IDENTIFYING THE CHURCHES BY LOCATION

As the number of churches increased it became necessary to identify them by location. This kind of identification is made 24 times in the New Testament.

There was the "church which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1, 11:22), the "church that was at Antioch" (Acts 13:1), the "church which is at Cenchrea" (Romans 16:1) etc.

**THERE WERE OTHER NAMES USED FOR THE CALLED OUT ASSEMBLY OF CHRIST**

Eleven times the expression "the church of God" is used in the New Testament. This identifies an assembly as being "of God" and was used as a name for all the churches ... not to identify a particular church. There was no need for any particular identifying name as all churches were "churches of God" ... in the beginning there was no other kind. The expression "churches of Christ" is used one time in the Bible. This was a general title and did not identify one particular church but was applied to all churches. The expression "churches of the Gentiles" is used once and served to identify the churches of the Gentiles from the churches of the Jewish believers. One time the title "church of the living God" is used. Thus we see that the word "church" and the expressions "church of God," "churches of Christ," and "church of the living God" were all used to identify Christ's Assembly.

In the early beginning, with just a few churches, it was not necessary to identify particular churches. It was understood what group these names designated. As the number of churches increased it became necessary to identify them by location and in at least one instance by nationality.

**THE BEGINNING OF ERROR**

Error had already gotten into the churches in New Testament times. It is revealed in the New Testament that there were those already in the churches that were teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Others were teaching that salvation was by works. Some churches had already perverted the Lord's Supper and some even denied the bodily resurrection.

Error continued to grow after New Testament times. After the close of the New Testament account it is an established fact that error continued to grow in the churches. The churches soon found that they no longer all believed the same thing.

The New Testament word "church" no longer necessarily identified a true called out assembly of Jesus Christ. It was now applied to a great number of contradicting groups. The same can be said of the expressions "church of God" and "churches of Christ." These names no longer identified the people of the Lord. They were being used by those who had drifted far away from the truth.

**IT BECAME NECESSARY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD TO IDENTIFY THEIR CHURCHES BY NAMES**

Around the third century those who clung to the truth of God's Word and insisted upon proper baptism were called "Anabaptists" which meant "rebaptizers." They were given this name because they insisted that those who came to them from other so-called churches must be baptized even if they had been baptized before into false churches.

Through the ages the name "Anabaptist" identified those churches that clung to the revealed truth and did not drift totally into error. Around the fifteenth century the "ana" was dropped from the name. From then on the name Baptist has identified these people of God.

**TODAY THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF CHURCHES**

It is readily apparent to all that there are many different kinds of churches. The word "church" is used by hundreds of conflicting groups.

**THE NAME "BAPTIST" IDENTIFIES THAT CHURCH THAT STILL CAN BE IDENTIFIED WITH THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

It identifies the church that still teaches all of the New Testament truth as it was taught in New Testament times. Over the years there have been differences arise among Baptists and some have found it necessary to add to the name in order to identify their difference, however, the name "Baptist" still identifies those churches with the New Testament truth.



# We Have No Right to Change the Ordinance of Baptism

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John Craps

From *A Concise View of Christian Baptism*, 1827

**G**od is particularly jealous of the honor of his ordinances. He admits of no human encroachment. Twice have we the order in this chapter (Ex. 25). "According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it." Human inventions are not admitted into holy things."—*Condensed Commentary*

1. The Scriptures have, instituted the immersion of believers as a rite of the gospel, without the least intimation that sprinkling should ever be substituted for immersion, or infants for believers. The divine sanction cannot therefore be produced in favour of such a change.
2. Man has no right to change a divine institution. As much authority is required to change an institution as to establish one. If we change a divine law we put ourselves in the place of God, or rather in direct opposition to him.
3. To change a divine institution, is virtually to deny the wisdom of its appointment. If we make a change we pretend it is for the better. Is not this, in effect, to say we are wiser than God?
4. To change an ordinance is to betray a trust and to handle the word of God deceitfully. As stewards we are required faithfully to keep and stedfastly to maintain the scriptural laws and regulations of Zion.
5. To change the ordinance from the immersion of believers to the sprinkling of infants is to subvert it. No instance can be produced, in which, by either precept or example, the Scriptures authorize the sprinkling of infants. The immersion of believers and the sprinkling of infants are quite distinct and different things. As the immersion of believers is baptism, and as there is but "ONE BAPTISM," infant sprinkling, so far as it prevails, makes void the scriptural ordinance of believers' immersion.
6. We have no more right to change baptism than we have to change any other part of the revealed counsel of God. If therefore we change this ordinance, may we not with as little impropriety change the Lord's Supper and every other part of revealed worship? If we admit a departure from the Scriptures on this subject, why should we not admit a departure from them on every other subject? If we may, without scriptural authority, sprinkle an infant, why may we not worship an image and invoke a saint?
7. A faithful adherence to divine ordinances is commended in the Scriptures. "Now I praise you brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them unto you." (I Cor. 11:2)
8. It was one of the great sins of the scribes and Pharisees, that they rejected the commands of God to keep the traditions of men, "For laying aside the commandments of God, ye hold the tradition of men.—Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition.—Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Mark 7:7-13) Thus they were turned from the truth by giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men. And will not our worship be worse than vain, if we set aside the divine ordinance of believer's immersion for the human tradition of infant sprinkling?
9. The Scriptures represent it as a crime of great enormity to change a divine ordinance. Awful threatenings are denounced by the prophet Isaiah. "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." (Isaiah 24:5) One of the sins for which these threatenings are

denounced is, "they have changed the ordinance." Whatever ordinance is intended, it is plain that to change an ordinance is a great sin. When two of the sons of Aaron made a change in the offering of incense, "there went a fire from the Lord and devoured them." (Lev. 10:1-3)

The most severe judgments are denounced against those who "add to" or "take away from" the book of God. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Rev. 22: 18, 19) These passages should make us tremble at the thought of changing a divine institution.



## Arriving Late for Church Services: A Common Evil Reproved

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B. H. D., Southampton  
From the *Baptist Magazine*, 1826

In a congregation with which I am acquainted, there is a poor man and his wife, who used to journey every Sabbath morning about six miles to worship; and yet they were always in time; and, whatever the weather might be, it was a rare thing for them to be absent.

One evening I went to preach at the village where this excellent couple lived. As I was a little too early, I took a walk with my friend John in his garden; and something like the following conversation took place.

"I am much pleased to see, that you and your good wife are always in time to worship, though you live at such a distance. Many persons who live in town, and within five or ten minutes' walk of the meeting house, are always late. How do you manage to be always early?"

"O Sir, I think it is very easy to be early; it only wants a little management."

"But what is your plan? I want to know — for I will tell our people in town all about it."

"Why, Sir, we have no plan; I hope, that we love God's holy day — that is all."

"I should be sorry, John, to think, that some who are late at worship, do not love God's holy day."

"True, Sir; but I fear that they do not love it as they ought; or else they would act differently. We think the Lord's day such a blessing, Sir, that we are loathe to lose any part of it."

"So, I suppose, you rise early."

"Yes, Sir. We think it a shame not to rise as soon to serve God, as we do to serve our worldly interest. Sunday is our own day; our holiday; and its services refresh, but do not weary us. Then, again, Sir, I love the early hours of the morning — they are so still. I can think of a text, and pray with more pleasure in the morning, than at any time. I love, when the sun is rising, and all his fine beams are first poured over creation, to gaze on him, and ask for the brighter light of God's countenance. I often think that the Sabbath sun seems to shine brighter than that of any other day."

"I like to rise early every morning — and of course I do so on the Lord's day."

"That again, is what I think, Sir. The ministers of Christ are up meditating on his holy Word; and 'tis a shame that we cannot rise, and pray God to aid them in their great work. How can we expect a blessing, if we do not do so?"

"That, indeed, is the way to obtain it."

"Then I often think again of the Psalmist, —'EARLY,'—he says, will I seek thee! And of the dear Saviour, who rose up a great while before it was day, and went out into a solitary place, and there prayed. Our churches would prosper more, if there was more waiting on God, and more wrestling with him. This is the way in which God has appointed to bless us. Ah! Sir, what would our good forefathers have given, to have been able to have gone, unmolested, as we do, to worship God, and to sit under our own vine and fig trees, none daring to make us afraid. They could not go to their public assemblies at half past ten in the Lord's day morning. Their vine and fig-trees were rooted up by the hand of the persecutor. I warrant them, that they would have been glad to have arisen early if they had been in our circumstances. Don't you think so, Sir?"

"I do, John, from the spirit which pervades their writings, and from the whole of their admirable conduct. They were a noble race of Christians."

"Then, Sir, I think, on the Lord's day morning, how many there are in affliction, who would rejoice to go to the sanctuary, but who cannot; I don't know, Sir, how soon it may be my case. It would be very sad not to improve our Sabbaths when we are well."

"You judge rightly sickness, and death, and judgment, are approaching to us all; and we are sure, that then we shall all wish to have thought, and spoken, and acted, in a manner becoming our high and holy calling. But you are as hearty at worship in the winter, as in the summer; how is that?"

"When good habits are once gained, Sir, 'tis as easy to practise them in the winter as the summer. I do not say, though, that it is so pleasant to get up early in the cold weather. But then I have time to read the Scriptures, and to think of God, and to pray to him —and do you think, Sir, that these do not repay one for a few moments' unpleasantness in getting away from the warm pillow!"

"Well, I do. Do you think that all our congregation might be in time, if they would rise a little earlier?"

"Yes, Sir, I am sure they might."

"You have no little children, John. This makes a great deal of difference."

"Some, certainly, Sir. But if the parents get up, the children will do so, too. When ours were very young, Mary or myself occasionally stayed at home. Yet we were always in time, if we could go at all. People can go out to markets, and fairs, and for their own pleasure, and be in time too, though they have children, and even large families. It is as my Mary says, 'Where there's a will, there's a way.' We only want a heart to love God more, and all then, Sir, would be easy, though it now seems difficult and impossible."

"That is very true. How earnestly should we implore the blessing for ourselves, and for our brethren! — But you are in time in bad weather too, John, how is that?"

"Why, we don't think much of the weather. You know, Sir, if we can get any worldly good, we don't mind going through a few showers — nor do we care though it may be cold. And 'tis a hard case, if a little rain, or snow, or cold, should make us give up the service of God."

"I spoke to one of our friends the other day about coming earlier to worship, and about bringing his whole household, but he said, one stayed at home to get dinner. I told him how they managed at brother Harris's. They dress their Sunday's

dinner on Saturday evening; and then put it by the fire, when they all go out to worship. So they have a hot dinner almost every Sabbath, and ready too as soon as they come home."

"Some, they find, are late through mere carelessness. When I speak to them, they say, they thought they should be time enough — or, they really did not know what time it was — or, when they came, that they had but just sung the first hymn, —or, the whole of the chapter was not read —or, the minister had not done praying — or, they did hear the text, and the sermon, which they thought the principal things."

"Why, Sir, such persons seem to think the house of God a prison, and they will not spend more time than they can help in it. David thought it a palace. I feel uncomfortable, if I am not in my seat some little time before the service begins, that I may collect my thoughts, and ask for a blessing."

"I wish all thought so. The first hymn in many congregations is almost useless, but few join in it: those who do are constantly disturbed by the opening and shutting of doors, and sometimes by the clanking of patters. I fear that it is but of little more use in some cases, than the tolling of the parish bell, which summons people to worship."

"I am pained to observe, that often, whilst you are reading the chapter, you are obliged to pause, or raise your voice, and even then some parts of the verses are not heard."

"It would be very pleasant to see the whole congregation in their places, and uniting in the first psalm."

"It would, but this can scarcely be expected in reference to occasional hearers, yet we might hope, that members of Christian societies, and regular attendants, would seriously consider the subject, and be in the house of God, when common sense, and common decency, not to say religion, requires. If persons have no regard to the feelings of a minister, and imagine, that because he is only an individual, therefore he may bear anything; they should recollect that they disturb many devout worshippers, in their offerings of praise and adoration. In this point of view, it absolutely amounts to a species of profanity."

"I do not say, that it is possible at all times, to be exact to a minute, in our attendance. We may be detained in the chamber of the afflicted, or of the dying; or the best laid plans may, now and then, be disarranged. But the grand point is, how can we correct this evil?"

"You have spoken many times about it — and very kindly too — and sometimes a little sharply, yet it cannot be said that the evil is cured. I almost despair."

"Don't let us despair, John. We should never despair of doing good, by God's help."

"Why, Sir, if everyone would reform one, the work would be done, and this seems a very easy thing."

"Well, John, I'll tell you what I will do. I will send our conversation to the Magazine. Some who offend may do us the honour to read it, and they may mention it to others. And, who can tell? They may try and alter their conduct, and their example may be followed; and so some part of the evil may be done away. 'Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!'" (James 3:5)



Glory to God in highest strains!  
 May earth enjoy his peace;  
 Good-will to men, the Saviour reigns,  
 His kingdom must increase.

Jesus, our Saviour, will atone,  
 To men redemption bring;  
 Let every heart become a throne,  
 For Zion's glorious King.