

## Baptist Heritage

# Baptist Pioneer Missionaries

Born in 1788, Adoniram Judson was one of the first missionaries sent from the United States to spread the Good News of the Gospel.

In June of 1810, Judson and three other aspiring missionaries met with the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, newly organized by the Congregationalists. The Board advised them to 'wait for the openings and guidance of Providence.'

While he was waiting, Judson met a deeply devout school-teacher named Ann Hasseltine. When the call came from the Board, Ann and Adoniram were married on February 5, 1812, and the next day Judson, Samuel Newell, Samuel Nott, Gordon Hall, and Luther Rice were ordained as 'Christian Missionaries to carry the Gospel of Salvation to the Heathen.'

On February 19, the cargo ship *Caravan* sailed out of Salem harbor with the Judsons and the Newells on board. Thus started their four month journey to India. With much time during the voyage for Bible study, the Judsons became convinced that believers' baptism was correct.

Upon arriving in India, they asked for baptism by immersion, although they knew that meant breaking ties with the Congregationalists who were supporting them. The British did not welcome anyone evangelizing the Hindus, so the Judsons eventually found themselves on a boat to Burma. On July 13, 1813 Ann and Adoniram finally arrived in the land that would be their home.

Their companion, Luther Rice, returned to the United States, to work with Baptists congregations to support the mission in Burma. Because of his work, the first Baptist mission board was formed in 1814.

Ann and Adoniram quickly learned to speak Burmese, and Adoniram spent years studying the language so he could translate the entire Bible into Burmese. Ann wrote a catechism in Burmese.

Life was not easy in this hot and humid climate. There were no other English speaking people, no western conveniences, and no tolerance for religious diversity. Two of their children had died, and they



Adoniram Judson

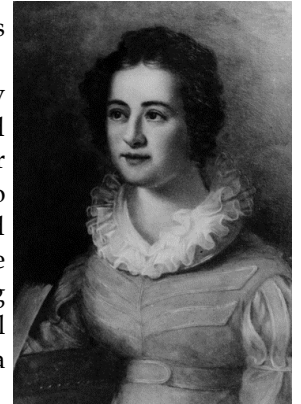
suffered frequent illnesses. Adoniram was accused of being a spy and put in prison.

Other missionaries were now coming into Burma, going to the Chin and Karen peoples. The missionaries were eager to teach the Burmese to read, especially to read the Bible. Education of children and adults was one of the primary legacies of the Judson's and other missionaries. Translating the Bible and religious tracts and educational materials into the local language was also a focus.

Other enduring principals include the development of mission boards to raise funds for mission work. Women's leadership in the U.S. was developed as women organized for mission and trained as missionaries.

Missionary letters to churches back home along with the work of the missionary societies, educated and raised awareness about conditions in foreign countries not just in religious circles, but throughout the whole society. The interface of politics and social issues became apparent as missionaries sought ways to improve the lives of impoverished and uneducated people.

Local autonomy has always been a founding principal for Baptists. They lived it out by raising up indigenous leaders through education and leadership training. These churches are strong today because of this.



Ann Judson



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