

## **The Subject of Baptism (2nd)**

(Previously we studied the passages in the gospels regarding the Greek words for baptism and how they are used in connection with baptism. Our study today continues with this theme in the book of Acts.)

Previously we looked at all the passages in the gospels that use the Greek words for baptism and their connection with the ordinance of baptism and we did not see any reason for concluding that “infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized.” Today we will take up our study in the book of Acts.

Acts 1:22 speaks of one being selected to replace Judas Iscariot and that one of the qualifications being that he must have accompanied the apostles “beginning from the baptism of John.” This passage can hardly be used to support the baptism of infants. However, in Acts chapter 2, where three thousands were baptized on the day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:38, 41), the argument is made by the reformers that infants are included because in verse thirty-nine it is stated that “the promise is unto you, and to your children.” However, the passage does not stop there. It continues with “and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” In the preceding verse (v. 38) the command given by Peter was to “repent, and be baptized.” Therefore, since we have no indication as to how we can tell whether an infant has repented, how can one scripturally baptize him? Equally, verse thirty-nine does not say the promise is unto the children of a believing parent, but as many as the Lord calls. Since the only way we know if a person is called of God or not is by the outward acts of belief and repentance, we do not have authority of the Lord to baptize him until such acts are found in the individual.

In Acts 8, where Philip was preaching and baptizing in Samaria, we see in verse twelve those whom Philip baptized “believed” his “preaching” and that “they were baptized both men and women.” Nothing is said to imply anything about little children and especially infants. Later in this chapter when Philip baptized the eunuch there is nothing mentioned in the text to include infants. The same can be said for Acts 9:18 where Ananias baptized Saul (Paul).

Next we come to chapter ten when Peter was sent by the Lord to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea. We find in verse twenty-four that Cornelius “had called together his kinsmen and near friends.” It was previously stated that Cornelius was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always,” Acts 10:2. In other words, Cornelius had fruits of repentance and feared God as well as “all his house.” After Peter came into Cornelius’ house, he said to Peter that they were all “present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God,” verse 33. Then Peter began preaching unto them beginning with the baptism of John and continued through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. While Peter was preaching the Holy Spirit fell on “all them which heard the word.” Afterwards, Peter commanded them to be baptized, verse 48. The reformers maintain that since this was an household infants must be included. However, I know many homes or households that do not include infants. If infants were included, this would be an excellent place to clarify the issue. When Philip was at Samaria, Scripture declares that he baptized “both men and women,” Acts 8:12. Therefore, if infants or small children were included at Cornelius’ house the Lord could have clear the issue by including in the text “men, women, and children (or infants).” But the case is that those who were baptized were people who were devout, feared God, gave alms, prayed unto the Lord, and “heard the word,” verse 44. Additionally, those who came with Peter heard those that were later baptized “speak with tongues, and magnify God,” verse 46. This is not the actions of infants. To me, for one to infer that infants or small children were baptized at Cornelius’ house, he has to read it into the text with a preconceived

opinion. When Peter explained this event in Acts chapter 11 there is not anything recorded there contrary to what we see in chapter 10.

The next passages are found in Acts chapter 16 where we find the baptism of Lydia and her household and the household of the jailer at Philippi. In Acts 16:13-15 we read, "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained us." And in verses 27-34 we find, "And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

Without question, all that were baptized in the household of the jailer were believers because it is said of them "believing in God with all his house." Therefore, there were no infants in "all his house." As for the household of Lydia, there is no indication that she was married. If so, why should we think those who were baptized with her in her house were different from all the other examples we have studied thus far. To build a doctrine of infant baptism on a passage that is silent and assume what is not said is dangerous, to say the least.

The next household baptism is found in Corinth. In Acts 18:8, it says, "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Those in Crispus' house and other Corinthians who were baptized are designated as "believed on the Lord" and "hearing believed."

There is nothing in the other passages in the book of Acts to suggest that little children or infants are to be baptized. Therefore, the book of Acts, which is the history of the New Testament believers, gives us much information as to the beliefs and practices of that time and does not support the baptism of infants of believing parents. Our plans are to study subsequent passages in the New Testament regarding baptism in future lessons. So far we have found that the Scriptures support what Baptists believe concerning the subjects or candidates for baptism. It is "those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance."