

Baptism Part 9
Household Baptisms
and
Family Solidarity

I. Surveying Examples of Household Baptism

Acts 11:13 – 15; 16:14 – 15, 29 – 34; 18:8
1 Corinthians 16:14–16

“It is characteristic that Luke could report the matter thus. For by so doing he gives expression to the fact that ‘*the solidarity of the family in baptism* and not the individual decision of the single member’ was the decisive consideration.” **Joachim Jeremias (quoting Oscar Cullman)**

“The family is the New Testament basis of the church of God. God does make the man the head of the woman—does enjoin the wife to be in subjection to her husband—and does make the parents act on behalf of their minor children. He does indeed require individual faith for salvation, but he organizes his people in families first, and then into churches, recognizing in their warp and woof the family constitution. His promises are all the more precious that they are to us and to our children. And though this may not fit with the growing individualism of the day, it is God’s ordinance.” **B.B. Warfield (Reformed paedobaptist)**

II. Family Solidarity, Family Division, and the Gospel

Matthew 10:34–39
John 1:11–13
1 Corinthians 7:12–16, 29–31

“The paedobaptist interpretation [of 1 Cor. 7:14] can only obscure the meaning of the text, because the apostle is not speaking to a situation in which a decision for Christ, made by one member, unites a family; rather he is speaking to a situation in which such a decision *divides* a family. He is confronted with the problem reflected in Christ’s pronouncement that he came not to bring peace, but a sword (Matt. 10:34). Not family solidarity, but Christian individualism and inwardness are the root of the Corinthian question. It is a question that arises because in a profound sense a family has been divided: one parent becomes a Christian while the other remains an

unbelieving pagan. Only the propensity to read the New Testament as though it were the Old can account for the failure of paedobaptists to perceive this fact.” **Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace***

III. Summary and Conclusion: 4 Strengths of the Believers’ Baptist Position

1. It fits better with the reality that there is no clear command or example of infant baptism in the New Testament (even many paedobaptists admit that the household passages are not decisive).
2. It fits better with the meaning of baptism agreed on by all—that baptism is a sign of union with Christ, faith and repentance, washing from sin, and allegiance to Christ.
3. It has a category for people who outwardly appear to be new covenant members, but who later prove themselves to be impostors and hypocrites. Conversely, it doesn’t force us to introduce unbiblical categories like that of non-communicant members (children who have been baptized but are not yet allowed to take the Lord’s Supper).
4. It fits better with the already/not yet structure of New Testament theology shared by all. It avoids the ditch of over-realized eschatology by recognizing that hypocrites still exist, perseverance is still necessary, warnings are still needed, and the natural family is still a reality. It avoids the ditch of under-realized eschatology by recognizing that membership in God’s people is no longer based on natural ties, but on spiritual realities, such as knowing the Lord, having the Spirit, and being taught by God, as well as by recognizing that the natural family, though still necessary and good, is also on its way out (1 Cor. 7:29 – 31; Matt. 22:30).