

## Baptism, Who Did It?

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Here are two assertions to be considered. First, the Bible does not show that baptism was performed *strictly* by those who are called officers or servants of a church. The fact is, the Word of God rarely informs us who it was that administered baptism. Second, the Bible does not show a church's *direct* involvement in those performing baptisms. By direct involvement I mean that a church voted, sent, or otherwise *authorized* brethren to go out to do what they did. (Churches can't authorize what has already been authorized by Christ.)

### Who is Philip, and what church was involved in this baptism?

When Philip comes to Gaza, the Lord commands him to join himself to an eunuch from Ethiopia. And as we know, the eunuch heard the Word of the gospel of Jesus Christ and received baptism. The Scriptures are clear on this occasion that Philip was the one who baptized this man. (Acts 8.38) Whatever connection Philip has to the church in Jerusalem is at best pure *speculation*. He *was* of the church of Jerusalem. And that's all we know.

### Who is Ananias, and what church was involved in this baptism?

At the conversion of Saul to Christ, the Lord sends a man named Ananias to inform him of the will of God for his life now that he has believed in Christ. From the Biblical account we can only *assume* that Ananias was the one that baptized him. (Acts 9.18) We have no idea who Ananias is. We do not even know whether there is a church in Samaria. To say otherwise is to *speculate*. We base that on the text which follows this account. (cf. Acts 9.31)

### Who baptized Cornelius, and what church was involved in these baptisms?

In Acts chapter 10 Cornelius and those of his house believed the preaching of Christ by the apostle Peter. After reading verses 44-48, we can only *assume* that Peter baptized them. And it is pure *speculation* for anyone to infer anything about a church's direct involvement in this account. Frankly, Peter didn't even know why he was coming to Caesarea where Cornelius was. It is assumption that a church or any church was involved in this account.

### The first and second missionary journeys: who baptized and what church was involved?

In Acts chapter 13 God called forth Barnabas and Paul to their first missionary journey. It is pure *speculation* to say that the church sent them forth. The Scripture states that there were gathered certain men that were *in the church*. It only states that these men sent them away.

In Acts chapter 16, during the second missionary journey of the apostle Paul, he and his entourage arrived in Philippi. There we read that Lydia came to the faith of Christ and was baptized. (v.14, 15) But again the detail about who baptized her is not given. Was it by Paul, Silas, Timothy, or Lucas? We don't know. Why does it matter? Next, the Philippian jailer and his house were brought to faith in Christ in Act chapter 16. Who baptized them? Was it Paul or Silas, or even Timothy? In 1Co. 1.14-17, the apostle Paul confesses that he baptized very few of those who came to Christ at Corinth. That means that those which were administering baptism were Silas, Timothy, Luke, Aquilla, perhaps some from among the membership of the very recently founded church of Corinth, or *all of the above*. (Acts 18.2, 3, 5, 7, 8) We simply don't know. Again, why does it matter? It is pure *speculation* to conclude anything beyond this. Is there anything wrong with any of these persons administering these baptisms? We have no alternative but to accept every possibility as being valid baptisms because we do not know, and we have to conclude it was proper. Finally in Acts chapter 19, there is the rebaptism of *certain* Ephesian brethren. We are not told who actually performed the baptizing. *Only* speculation can tell us what

church was involved in all of these baptisms. Someone will respond, 'But He was sent out by the Antioch church.' Really? What chapter and verse was that in? The Bible only says that the brethren recommended *them to the grace of God*. The context would teach us that the brethren were those of the church at Antioch. We don't know if it was *all* of the brethren or *some* of the brethren. It is a moot point. The truth is, it didn't matter if *any* of the brethren recommended them! This was a work that was to be done because of Christ's authority. If a church or some brethren oppose Christ, they are out of order. That which or men which are called must. I wonder how many times missionaries have gone out to the work only to have their (home) church cut them off because they came to understand truths that differed with those back home? What did they do? Those I've know kept going. And praise God, rightly so!

There is a lot of emphasis placed by some about the importance of the one who baptizes and the role that a church has in it, and yet the Word of God is almost completely silent on these points. All I've done is laid out the facts; they speak for themselves. By the way, there is not a single instance where the church voted to baptize anyone! (1Co.10.47; 11.2 is whether they *ought* to baptize Gentiles.)

Conclusion: The ordinance of baptism may be carried out by any disciple of Christ at another's profession of faith. And a church may as soon as two or three come together for the purposes of serving Christ be a church there in that place. Why would any church or any fellow Christian oppose another fellow brother doing this in the name of Christ? Power. Authority is power. Power says yes and power says no. Power says yes and no, not only to fellow brethren but to fellow churches as well. And if that power is not in the hands of Christ it has been usurped. Our Lord said that *He* has all power, and *He* said go!

Brethren I believe in church succession, but by that I mean that baptism is the organic connection that leaves a trail of churches in the wake. We cannot ever hope to, and we do not need to track the history of the Lord's churches church by church, because there simply is no such link.

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