

- o The household baptisms in the NT have long been used as a support for paedobaptism. This is despite the fact that many prominent paedobaptists deny that the cases of household baptisms hold any evidence of infant baptism (e.g. Neander, Pierre Marcel, James Bannerman). Furthermore, many prominent paedobaptists admit that there is no example or direct evidence of infant baptism in the NT (e.g. John Murray, Thomas Boston, Richard Baxter, Louis Berkhof). They have had to rely on “good and necessary inferences” to support infant baptism which, as we have seen, are not really good and necessary inferences of Scripture.
- = Here, we examine the household baptisms, and show that they do not support infant baptism.

1. The “oikos formula” (“oikos” is Greek for household).

- This has been invented by Joachim Jeremias to support infant baptism. The claim is that the NT was written in a missionary situation, in which adult Jews and Gentiles who believed were baptised. However, it is claimed that evidence for children’s baptism is hidden in the adult baptism. Jeremias argues from Jewish proselyte baptisms, the works of Tertullian, and various early funeral inscriptions.
- The argument is that the NT baptisms are a continuity of the OT circumcision, in which infants and slaves were included. This would require that infants and slaves in the households of the NT be baptised when there was an adult converted. Jeremias, however, inconsistently claims that it was “extremely unlikely” that slaves were present in those households. Obviously, this claim is made to avoid the complications of having to baptise unbelieving slaves.
- Another paedobaptist, Kurt Aland, uses the same resources as Jeremias to show that there is no historical evidence for infant baptism until the third century A.D. Against Jeremias, he affirms the real possibility that slaves were present in households of that day.
- The real problem with the “oikos formula” is that it appeals to a cultural and sociological concept not clearly specified in Scripture in order to justify infant baptism, while ignoring the clear teaching of the NT which rejects infant baptism, viz. the baptism of disciples alone by John and Jesus. Furthermore, the instances of household baptisms in the NT do not support the “oikos formula.” Instead, they support the baptism of believers alone, a requirement stated by Peter on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38-41).

2. Cornelius’s household (Acts 10:44-48).

- Here, the Holy Spirit fell upon “all those who heard the word” (10:44), and they spoke with tongues and magnify God (10:47). These cannot include infants.
- Only those “who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have,” i.e. just as the Jewish believers had on the day of Pentecost, were baptised (10:47). It was confirmed later that those who were baptised received the Holy Spirit as at the beginning (i.e. on Pentecost), that they believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that they were granted repentance (11:15, 17, 18).
- There is no indication of infants being baptised. Instead, only those who believed were baptised.

3. Lydia’s household (Acts 16:13-15).

- Lydia and household were baptised at the river before she took Paul back to her house (16:15). All the members of her household appeared to be at the riverbank with her. They seemed to have been women only (16:13). She was probably unmarried or a widowed businesswoman.
- Even if she were married and her children were with her on the riverbank, there is no mention of infants or older children in her household.
- While we are not told that the household believed, we must compare with other passages which show that only those who repented and believed were baptised (e.g. Acts 2:41).

4. The Philippian jailer’s household (Acts 16:30-34).

- Paul and Silas preached the gospel to “all who were in his house” (16:32), and “all his household” believed in God with him (16:34).
- Some scholars claim that “having believed” in verse 34 is masculine singular, pointing to the faith of the jailer alone, which the whole household rejoiced over. If this is true, we still have the problem of infants rejoicing, if they were present.
- On balance, the passage supports the baptism of believers alone.

5. Crispus’s household (Acts 18:8).

- Here, it is clear that the whole household believed in the Lord as well as Crispus, its head.

- In addition, we are told that many Corinthians outside Crispus's household were baptised because they had first believed.
- This case clearly supports believer's baptism.

6. Stephanas's household (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15).

- Paul was responding to a controversy among the Corinthians over factionalism. He states that he is thankful he did not baptise many of them, except Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas. The passage itself does not support infant baptism.
 - Comparing with 1 Cor. 16:15, we discover that Crispus's household were the "firstfruits," i.e. they were among the first converts, in Corinth. Furthermore, "they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints." This cannot possibly include infants.
 - This case supports the baptism of disciples alone.
- = The so-called "Oikos formula" is a grand-sounding hypothesis that has no basis in Scripture. It is based on questionable and speculative ideas about the date and practise of Jewish proselyte baptism. It ignores direct evidence of Scripture in which baptism is of believers alone - evidence from the baptism of John the Baptist, of the Lord, and of Peter.
- = The account of Lydia's household is inconclusive and cannot be used to support infant baptism. All the other household passages - four in all - support believer's baptism. A basic rule of Bible interpretation is to compare Scripture with Scripture. Another rule is to determine what is not clear from what is clear. We must conclude that even in the case of Lydia's household, all those who were baptised had repented and believed in the Lord.
- = The household passages do not support infant baptism. Instead, they support the baptism of disciples alone.