

## Do the “Household Baptisms” Justify Infant Baptism?

Caleb Colley

On occasion, advocates of infant baptism appeal to Acts 10, Acts 16, and 1 Corinthians 1 for proof that infant baptism is scriptural. Acts 10:24-48 relates the account of Cornelius and his “relatives and close friends” hearing the Gospel and being baptized. Acts 16 includes the accounts of two sets of baptisms: (1) the baptism of the members of Lydia’s family (verse 15); and (2) the baptism of the Philippian jailer and “all his family” (verse 33). Paul revealed that he baptized members of the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16). These are the so-called “household baptisms” (see Coffman, 1977, p. 320; Mare, 1984, pp. 192-193). Proponents of infant baptism assume that there were children in Cornelius’ house, Lydia’s family, the jailer’s house, and Stephanas’ house, and that the infants were baptized. Since there is no mention of infants in any of these passages, those who use these passages to justify infant baptism base their claims upon two assumptions: (1) infants were present in the households; and (2) the contexts of Acts 10 and 16 allow for the baptism of infants as part of “household baptisms.”

In each example of “household baptism,” the people who were baptized were ones who had been taught what they needed to do in order to receive salvation (Acts 10:34-43; 16:14, 32; 1 Corinthians 1:16-18; 16:15-16). They were the people who could hear and understand the Word of God (Acts 10:44), believe (10:31-33), and devote themselves to the ministry of the saints (1 Corinthians 16:15). The absence of the noun “belief,” and the verb “believe,” in some of the conversion accounts, does not necessarily imply that the ones who were baptized did not, or could not, believe. Also, the context of the household conversions does not demand that any infants were baptized. Yet, some insist that infants must have been present in the “households,” and that the infants must have been baptized.

Lydia did not live in Philippi (she was from Thyatira, on the other side of the Aegean Sea). Since she was traveling, she probably did not bring her children with her, if she had any. Because *oikos* seems to denote “property” in this instance, it was probably Lydia’s servants who were baptized (Lydia certainly was wealthy enough to have servants; see Jackson, 2000, pp. 201-02; Lenski, 1944, p. 660). Notice also that, in the case of Lydia’s conversion, the evangelists spoke to a group of women who had “come together,” indicating that the members of Lydia’s household could have been found within that group of women (the very group who was praying and who heard Paul’s message; see Coffman, 1977, p. 313; Lenski, 1944, p. 659).

Some allege that Lydia’s family members were baptized, not because they believed, but only because they were in Lydia’s family, while Lydia herself **did** believe (e.g., Barnes, 1972, p. 241). This allegation rests on the fact that Acts 16:14-15 denotes Lydia’s belief, but does

not specifically reveal that her family believed. The Bible clearly teaches, however, that belief must precede baptism (see Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37; Romans 10:10-11; 1 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:21), and that a sinner cannot be forgiven of sin based on the faith of another (Matthew 12:36; Romans 14:12; 1 Peter 2:7; 4:5; 1 John 3:23).

Furthermore, Acts 16:34 (part of the account of a “household baptism”) reports that the Philippian jailer’s family, at the time of the “household baptism,” was made up entirely of “believers” (excluding infants), and the accounts of both Cornelius’ and the jailer’s conversions specifically indicate that candidates for baptism were those who had “heard the word” (Acts 10:44,47). When inspired writers wrote about “hearing” the Word of God, “hearing” often denoted not only the recognition of audible sounds, of which infants are capable, but also understanding the message, of which infants are incapable (see Deuteronomy 5:1; Romans 10:17; Job 13:17; Luke 14:35). The contexts of Acts 10 and Acts 16 imply that meaning of the verb “hear” (*akouo*).

Some base their claim that infants of the jailer’s household were baptized, upon the assumption that there would not have been enough water in a jail to immerse adults. Thus, they say, sprinkling was the mode of baptism, which would have been appropriate for infant baptism. However, Acts 16 suggests that Paul and Silas were not in the jail at the time of the major part of the teaching and the baptism, because they had been “brought out”—likely out of the prison itself—and taken to a place where the prisoners’ stripes could be washed. It was at this place that the baptisms took place, so it is an imposition on the text to imply that Paul and Silas did not have access to enough water for immersion.

There are other examples of household conversions, whose contexts attest to the fact that, when “households” of people were baptized, infants were not baptized. When the inspired writers mentioned the so-called “household baptisms,” they said that all **believers** in the households were baptized. To assert otherwise is to put an unnecessary strain on the text, and to teach that which contradicts unambiguous, definitive Bible teaching (see Mark 16:16; Acts 8:37-38; Romans 10:10-11).

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## GOD'S STALLION OF THE SEA

by Taylor Reeves

There is a tremendous variety of life in the world. Few of us can identify all of the birds that soar above us, the flowers and grasses that spring forth from the fertile ground, or the 850,000 identified species of insects (the largest single group of extant organisms). The creatures in the seas, however, have fascinated us perhaps more than any other living creatures. Fifteen hundred years before Christ was born, Moses recorded that God had created the oceans and seas with “an abundance of living creatures” (Genesis 1:20). We had no idea just how accurate that statement was until the science of oceanography (and, more specifically, the science of marine biology) came into its own. Once we developed not just the desire to study the Earth’s oceans and seas, but also the technology to master them, it became apparent to us that most of the world’s species of animals live in the water, not on dry land. And many of them certainly rank among the most intriguing!

The oceans teem with extraordinary and wondrous organisms that variously fill us with awe, engulf us with terror, or leave us struggling to find adequate terms to describe their innate beauty. From the largest creature ever to inhabit the Earth (the blue whale—which has a heart the size of a small car!), to the tiniest zooplankton, we often find ourselves filled with astonishment at the extraordinary niches they inhabit, the amazing tasks they perform, and the intricate design they exhibit.

For example, squids manufacture and expel ink. Various species of eels generate electricity. Octopi use undulating tentacles to ensnare prey. Eagle rays dip their wing-like pectoral fins into the mud while using suction to pull out clams. Some mussels produce powerful chemicals that “drill” out holes in hard coral for a habitation. Dolphins use sonar to communicate. And so on (see Macquitty, 2000, pp. 10, 25, 29, 33).

Can you imagine a fish that looks like a horse—but swims like a submarine? God apparently did—and then created the “stallion of the sea”—the superb sea horse. These peculiar “horses,” however, do not gallop gracefully through a flowering valley, drink from a long wooden trough, or journey across the dusty, remote trails under a magnificent, vibrant sunset. Rather, these horses stylishly swim within the kelp-filled meadows of the sea.

The head of a chess piece, the tail of a monkey, a rigid body that seems to be carved from wood, eyes like a chameleon, and a father who becomes pregnant—all of these describe the unique sea horse, which, oddly enough, does not resemble a fish in **any** way (see Parker, 2000, p. 22). There are about 35 identified species of “ocean equines,” the largest of which easily can grow to be a foot in length. They live in tepid, shallow seacoasts, and forcefully resist strong currents by grasping tightly to objects. They grip so tightly with their prehensile tails that it is difficult to get them to let go (“Sea Horse,” 1991, p. 342). While sea horses **are** fish, they have skin, rather than the typical scales. That skin, which is tightly yet carefully stretched over numerous sharp, bony plates, produces growths to match surrounding vegetation. Although the sea horse does not possess teeth or a stomach, it “inhales” small, tough crustaceans and sluggish pieces of floating matter through its elongated, pipe-like snout.

For fish like these, which subsist in weeds and eat plankton, being able to maintain a fixed position, and blend in with their environment, are essential survival skills. Sea horses swim uprightly, propelled by a strong, waving dorsal fin. The small pectoral fins help steer the direction of the animal as it gallantly glides through the waving waters. It has a tapering, muscular, grasping tail that conceals itself in the jungle-like underwater world of seaweed and grasses (Parker, 2000, p. 22). The fins move fast, but the sea horse does not—because it does not have to! What it needs is the ability to perform fast turns, and to move upward and downward quickly. Interestingly, the motion of its fins is perfect for both tasks.

One of the general aspects of nature is that it is the responsibility of the female to produce the young, feed them as they grow, and prepare them to survive on their own.

Different creatures handle this task in different ways, but in the case of the sea horse, the female seems to have better things to do than give birth and nurture babies, because these jobs are turned over to the male (Harris, 1991, p. 91). The sea horse exhibits extraordinary design, in that it is the only known animal where the male actually becomes pregnant and gives birth to the offspring. One could say that it performs “double duty!” First, the male produces the sperm necessary to fertilize the egg—just as occurs in most other species. But, second, the male also banks the zygote that will become the embryo, and that eventually will produce the neonate.

During mating, the pair produces unique musical sounds, and then, at the end of the ritual, the female deposits her fertilized eggs in the male’s specialized pouch. Normally, the mating ritual lasts for three days. This ceremony includes color changes, dancing, and grasping random objects. For the two weeks that follow, the male carefully aerates, nourishes, and protects the eggs. When the embryos are mature, the tiny sea horses are born—ready to swim!

God is so creative! He thought up millions of different types of animals, insects, and other living creatures. And as a “finishing touch,” He created one that had the capability to do “double duty” as both mother and father. What decisive design!

As the patriarch Job remarked in the great long ago, “Speak to the earth, and it will teach you; and the fish of the sea will explain to you” (Job 12:8). What, exactly, do the fish “explain”? They speak eloquently of the Creator Whose handiwork is all around us. From the highest reaches of the sky, to the lowest depths of the ocean, the unbiased eye can see the evidence that points unfailingly to God’s existence.

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**Q** Are Christians justified by Christ's death, or by His resurrection?

**A** In a familiar passage on the bodily resurrection, the inspired apostle Paul wrote: "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). At first glance, this might seem difficult to reconcile with the many passages that speak of Christ's atoning death and the forgiveness of sins that comes to us through His blood (Romans 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Peter 2:24; Revelation 1:5). Is Christ's death efficacious without the resurrection?

Paul told the Christians in Rome that Jesus "was delivered up for our trespasses, and was raised for our justification" (Romans 4:25). Justification is a forensic term meaning "declared guiltless," and was used extensively by Paul in his letter to the Romans. In that particular epistle, Paul taught that the person who had faith in Jesus would be justified by His blood (Romans 3:25-26).

It is true that Christ died for our justification. But He also was raised for that purpose. His **death** denotes a present reality, while His **resurrection** refers to a reality yet to come. Those who obey the law **are** justified (Romans 2:13), but through Christ's obedience, many

**will be** justified (Romans 5:19). Justification is both a past and a future event. The declaration of guiltlessness will occur in the last day, when all nations shall gather before God to be judged.

Again, it is true that believers have been justified by the blood of the cross. But that justification must be **confirmed** by God's verdict on the Day of Judgment. This reality was affirmed by Paul when he wrote in Romans 8:33-34: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

If it were true that Christ lies moldering in a Palestinian grave, there would be no one to intercede for us on the great Day of Judgment, and His death would be utterly meaningless. We cannot be saved by a dead Savior! But it is **not** true that Christ is still in the tomb. He has been raised. And His resurrection is just as central to salvation as His crucifixion, because it is the resurrection which proves that Christ lives, and living, continually makes intercession for us.

**Alden Bass**

## IN THE NEWS

Over the last couple of weeks, three new dinosaur finds were reported. A new kind of sauropod, named *Sauwastsea emilieae*, was discovered in Montana. Estimated to be 50 feet long, this dinosaur is the first new sauropod ever described from Montana. Additionally, a "wrinkle face" abelisaurid dinosaur was found in the northern region of Africa. Prior to this discovery, this type of carnivorous dinosaur was unknown to the African continent. This discovery has researchers scratching their heads as to when Africa might have split from a supposed supercontinent.

And lastly, a perfectly preserved embryo of a pterosaur was found inside its fossilized egg in the Liaoning province of northeastern China. Not officially a dinosaur—since dinosaurs are defined as strictly land-dwelling creatures—this amazing flying reptile is the first pterosaur embryo ever located. Michael Hopkins noted: "...researchers in China have uncovered the remains of a life that was snatched away before it had ever begun" (2004). Scientists believe that the pterosaur was just about to hatch when something terrible happened. This discovery confirms the long-standing theory that these winged creatures laid eggs rather than giving birth to live young. The researchers who discovered this creature observed: "Preservation of such delicate tissues with the skel-

eton and eggshell probably indicates that the embryo was killed and deposited quickly as a result of a natural disaster, such as a volcanic eruption" (Wang and Zhou, 2004, 429:621).

Notice what these three reports did **not** contain. There were no feather-covered dinosaurs to support the dinosaur-to-birds theory. There were no transitional forms—no half scales, half feathers. All of the creatures were described as fully functional animals that were adapted to their environment.

Yet, just days before these discoveries were reported, Kyle Butt and Eric Lyons of our offices watched as feathers were being affixed to dinosaur replicas in the Dinosaur Museum in Blanding, Utah. Bones are interesting facts, but the evolutionary interpretations lack scientific verification. These discoveries show that there is much still to learn about these amazing creatures.

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