**Biblical Data Regarding Who Baptizes**

*A quick and messy summary*

Out of roughly 95 NT uses of related terms concerning baptism, about 58 (almost 2/3) refer to John the Baptist (who had no recognized ecclesiastical authority) or his baptism. A few refer to baptism with the Holy Spirit and a few refer metaphorically to Jesus’ suffering.

Of remaining texts, concerning literal water baptism as evidence of commitment to Christ:

* Matt. 28:18-20 The command to baptize, as a key aspect of *making disciples*. So the key question is “**Who** did Jesus intend should be making disciples?”
* “in fact it was not Jesus who **bapti**zed, but his disciples.” John 4:2
* “Those who accepted his message were **bapti**zed, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.” Acts 2:41 Not specified who baptized. Extremely doubtful that the 12 apostles performed the baptism for all 3,000, especially if any confirmation of true faith was applied, beyond walking into the water. No other church officials had been appointed at that time.
* But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were **bapti**zed, both men and women. Acts 8:12 Again, not specified who baptized.
* “Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip **bapti**zed him.” Acts 8:36,38
* “Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was **bapti**zed,” Acts 9:18 Again, not specified who baptized.
* “So he ordered that they be **bapti**zed in the name of Jesus Christ.” Acts 10:48 Again, not specified who baptized, but it was clearly *not* Peter, the only person holding recognized authority in that situation.
* “When she and the members of her household were **bapti**zed, she invited us to her home.” Acts 16:15 Again, not specified who baptized.
* “At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were **bapti**zed.” Acts 16:33 Again, not specified who baptized (though in context, it must have been Paul or Silas).
* “Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were **bapti**zed.” Acts 18:8 Again, not specified who baptized.
* “On hearing this, they were **bapti**zed in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Acts 19:5 Again, not specified who baptized.
* “I thank God that I did not **bapti**ze any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were **bapti**zed in my name. (Yes, I also **bapti**zed the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I **bapti**zed anyone else.) 1 Corinthians 1:14
* All other references to baptism in the Epistles contain no reference to the person who did the baptizing of anyone.

**Summary comments:**

1. Other than John the Baptist, Philip and Paul, no text specifies who baptized anyone.
2. It appears the NT writers almost intentionally avoided the question of who “officiated at” or performed baptisms. A great number of the references use the passive voice; it does not seem to have been considered significant *who* performed the baptisms .
3. Both Paul (1 Cor.) and John’s Gospel mention the issue primarily in the negative: to specify that baptism was done primarily by others, not the person holding greatest spiritual authority in the situation.
4. No text (that I’m seeing) ever mentions any of the baptism cognates in connection with any term for a local church leader (elder, pastor, overseer).
5. Jesus’ command to make disciples includes “baptizing them,” thus the question of “who baptizes?” would seem to be closely connected to the question of “who makes disciples?”.
6. Any argument for limiting baptism to the clergy would seem to consist of an argument from silence plus an argument taking one logical step beyond Scripture’s teaching (i.e. “Baptism signifies entrance into the church, thus a local church leader should officiate”).