

# Deceased Infant Salvation

## Scriptural Evidence Examined & Objections Addressed Plus Evidence of Historical Baptist Support

By  
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The topic of the eternal destiny of deceased infants is always timely. Despite advancements in medical care almost everyone is touched by infant mortality. Either we have suffered the tragedy of losing an infant ourselves, or we know someone who has.

19<sup>th</sup> Century English Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon lived in a day when infant death was a common occurrence. In the opening remarks of a sermon on the subject of deceased infant salvation he states:

*"Perhaps the larger proportion of this audience have at some time or other had to shed the briny tear over the child's little coffin;—it may be that through this subject consolation may be afforded to them."*<sup>i</sup>

I found Spurgeon's words tragically accurate while in Africa. Sadly, high rates of infant mortality there mean nearly every family has lost one or more children. With so many who personally have suffered the pain of losing a baby the message of deceased infant salvation was gladly received. Grieving parents were comforted and rejoiced to hear the good news of the gospel that their babies are with the Lord.

Scriptural understanding of this topic is important because it furnishes a rationale for hope for those who are concerned with the destiny of deceased infants. Peter instructs we always be ready **"to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."** [I Peter 3:15] God's word provides a sensible, cogent explanation for parents and loved ones to understand their baby was born again before he/she died. It supplies the why and how to hope for their child's salvation; which, by faith strengthens consolation and adds to assurance.

Knowing what the scriptures have to say about deceased infant salvation is particularly necessary because infants are incapable of providing outward evidences of gracious standing with God. This is not the case when born again adults die. Loved ones can recall memories of the deceased's faith and godliness as evidence he is with the Lord. But when babies die they leave behind no such memories. Their short lives render them unable to make a profession of faith, or faithfully do good works by which others may reasonably conclude they are saved. Were the

Bible silent on this issue lingering doubt would likely add to the sorrow of grieving parents and loved ones.

David's statement of hope regarding his deceased infant son, "**I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me**" [2 Samuel 12:23], is sometimes cited to assert direct revelation from God is the only method to inform grieving parents their baby is in heaven; and to also claim scripture is otherwise silent regarding the salvation of infants who die.<sup>1</sup> It is certain, whatever comfort and assurance David received came from God. But, his experience does not prove direct personal revelation is the sole method the Lord uses to assure grieving parents. In fact, the record of David's experience is evidence God's word supplies scriptural explanations that give reason for hope.

The Bible contains many other statements and examples indicating all who die in infancy are saved. The narrative of Herod's murderous effort to kill the Savior includes statements that give reason for hope to those who grieve for deceased infants. **Matthew 2:16-18** indicates Herod's atrocity was prophesied in the Old Testament. The prophecy includes an assurance all the children Herod murdered are included in the resurrection of the just. "**Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.**" [Jeremiah 31:16-17] This passage is especially significant because it provides an example of comprehensive deceased infant salvation: All the children Herod murdered are saved. Jeremiah's prophecy and Matthew's confirmation it was fulfilled give credibility to the assertion that all infants who die in infancy are saved. This is especially so, since there is no indication God invoked a special dispensation or made extraordinary provisions to give eternal salvation to the children Herod murdered.

It should be noted, the word infant is not limited to babies in this essay. What is said about infants may also apply to those who are mentally incompetent. Arguments asserting deceased infants are saved are intended to include any whose life experiences are significantly limited by short lifespan or mental incompetence.

Examination of God's word fails to reveal any special provisions in the covenant of grace by which deceased infants are saved from hell. In contrast, **the Bible contains significant evidence the wicked do not die at a young age or with only a very limited life experience.** An understanding of this point is important for two reasons. First, God not permitting the wicked to die young pertains to His providence, and not to any principles of the covenant of grace. This is why no special provisions are needed to save deceased infants. Second, it removes age as a factor in God saving deceased infants. **God does not save deceased infants**

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<sup>1</sup> Some commentaries suggest David's statement indicates he merely expected one day to join his son in the grave. However, the narrative indicates David made this statement to explain how he was consoled by the thought of reuniting one day with his son. It seems unlikely he would draw comfort from simply joining his son in death. A more plausible explanation is David was comforted by his hope and expectation to see the child again in the resurrection. *M.I.*

**based on their age. Rather, God longsuffers the wicked by not permitting them to die as infants.**

This work is an effort to address many of the questions sincere followers of Christ have raised regarding the doctrine of deceased infant salvation and how it harmonizes with the doctrines of grace. It also examines objections that are sometimes raised. In addition to scriptural arguments, historical references are supplied to assure readers the "old path" of the Baptist family embraced the biblical teaching that all who die in infancy are saved. I offer it in the hope that scriptural explanations and the record of Baptist history will inform and be a source of comfort to those who read it.

### **Scriptural Evidence**

The word of God specifically and without exception indicates grace alone is the sole means for saving sinners, including infants who die. In doing so it reveals everyone who is saved has the same need for salvation; and that they all are saved in precisely the same manner. No exceptions or special provisions are needed in the covenant of grace to save all deceased infants. They are not saved based on infant purity, innocence, or because they suffer martyrdom. They are not saved in consideration of believing parents. Neither does scripture teach baptism of infants assures their eternal happiness. The salvation of infants who die occurs by the same provisions and application of God's grace by which all others are saved.

In the March 3, 1938 edition of the *The Primitive Baptist*, Elder C. H. Cayce cited **Mark 10:15** to reject gospel means or agency in regeneration and affirm there is but one method for saving infants and adults alike. In doing so, he also denied the charge that historically, Primitive Baptists believed in infant damnation.

*"Those who argue that the Bible and preachers are necessary for the salvation of persons of Adam's race have, all along accused Old Baptists of preaching infant damnation -and the Old Baptists have always denied the charge. But here is the doctrine that has the idea of infant damnation in it -no preaching, no people saved. The infant is not in the reach of gospel preaching. If there is no salvation for any only for those who are in reach of gospel preaching, then there is no salvation for any infant. If the infant can be saved without gospel preaching, so can others be saved without it. The infant is saved without gospel preaching, and that is the way all other saved persons are saved. Jesus said 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.' Mark x. 15. The little child receives, enters into, the kingdom of God without the gospel, by being born into it. And if the adult does not receive it that way, or enter into it that way -the same way the little child does- he does not enter it at all."<sup>iii</sup>*

All of God's saving grace is needed to save every sinner, whether they are young or old. God's election according to His loving foreknowledge, His predestination of the elect to be conformed to the image of Christ as God's children through adoption to an eternal inheritance as joint heirs with Christ, His eternal justification of them by the shed blood of Christ Jesus, their regeneration by new birth to spiritual life by the effectual calling of the Spirit of God, and their resurrection in glory, all work together for undeniable goodness in all the objects of God's love who are called according to His purpose and so also love the Lord.<sup>2</sup> The working together of God's decrees of grace is comprehensive and consistent: They all work together; and, they do so in the same way for all who are embraced in God's covenant of grace.

Whether a child of God dies as an infant or lives to old age, the covenant of grace works the same. Election does not need special provisions to save all deceased infants. Regeneration and justification need not be altered to account for infants' inability to respond to the gospel. Eternal judgment does not wink at the sin nature of deceased infants so they can go to heaven.

### **Original Sin and Total Depravity**

Sin is present in all humanity. From the moment of conception everyone has a corrupt nature that permeates their whole body, soul and natural spirit. All men are sinners by nature. We all inherited our sin nature from Adam, humanity's seminal head. **"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."** [Romans 5:12] (See 1 Corinthians 15:22)

The death Adam experienced because of his sin became part of his being. Furthermore, as the father of all humanity the essence of his corrupt sin nature is passed down through all his descendants. **"For as in Adam all die."** [1Corinthians 15:22] Sin passes from parent to child. This means infants possess a sin nature from the moment of conception because they are descendents of Adam. In expressing the source of his corrupt nature, David confirmed the doctrine of original sin; showing sin is in man from the moment he is conceived: **"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."** [Psalms 51:5] By noting iniquity is present even before birth David's revelation repudiates a notion that babies are born innocent, or pure, and grow into sin. In Psalms 58 David indicates the same thought by indicating the wicked are wicked from birth. **"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."** [Psalms 58:3]<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:28-30 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." KJV

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 58:3-4 is sometimes used to assert the wicked die as infants. However the text only addresses their condition at birth. It says nothing about when the wicked die. From David's statement we understand human depravity is present from conception. But this fact alone fails to prove any of the wicked die in infancy.

The effect of original sin is total depravity.<sup>4</sup> Man is wholly polluted by sin. Statements by David and Paul capture the essential nature of man's complete corruption in sin. In Psalms chapters 14 and 53 David notes depraved man is wholly corrupt, does nothing that is good in God's sight, is filthy, and has no knowledge of God. Using the sense of David's words, Paul similarly characterizes the total depravity of the wicked. **"There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes."** [Romans 3:10-15]

Jesus' response to wicked men in John 8, indicates wholly depraved man does not love God. Instead, the wicked by nature possess an unwavering propensity for sinning that is a core principle governing all their beliefs, motives and deeds. The Savior states wicked men do not understand God's word because they lack the ability to discern spiritual things. They reject the things of God, including Christ Jesus, the Savior of sinners. **"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not."** [John 8:42-45]

Infant death is further evidence man possesses an active sin nature from conception. Paul's statement **"The wages of sin is death."** [Romans 6:23], indicates death is sin's toll on man. Sin is the root cause of death. Infant mortality tragically contradicts the notion of infant purity. It also disproves the theory sin is not counted to infants and children until they are able to choose between right and wrong, the so-called "age of accountability." Neither of these exceptions are able to stand in light of the facts that 1.)The wages of sin is death; and 2.) Infants die.

Infants are essentially no different than adults with regards to the presence of a corrupt sin nature. They may not knowingly and willingly commit sin, but this does not prove infants have any less sin nature than adults who willfully sin. Neither did Paul exclude infants when he indicated the depravity of man is comprehensive; that, it applies to all humanity. **"As it is written<sup>5</sup>, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God."** [Romans 3:10-11]

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<sup>4</sup> "Total depravity" is a term used to describe man's condition before he is born again. After the new birth, because of the washing of regeneration, renewing of the Holy Ghost and the indwelling of the Spirit of God, he is no longer totally depraved. He retains his sin nature, but not in his soul/spirit. However, since the Spirit of God never quickens the wicked they are totally depraved and remain so throughout their lives. MI

<sup>5</sup> Paul quotes the sense of David's words in Psalms 14:1-3 and 53:1-3

## **Election**

The doctrine of election teaches that before the world began God specifically loved and chose a number of people to be delivered from the condemnation He imposed because of sin. **“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” [Ephesians 1:4-6]**

In the Roman letter the Apostle Paul indicates God is sovereign, that is, self-governing and independent in the election of grace. **“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” [Romans 9:15-16]** The choice of who would be saved in particular was based wholly on God's own will, according to His purpose; so that nothing apart from God in any way influenced Him to choose one and pass by another. The phrase, **“not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,”** implies God's omniscience (all knowing) of particular individual's works or desires did not influence His choice of who would be saved.

The Apostle Peter indicates the election of grace is according to God's foreknowledge. Those He chose are **“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup> [1 Peter 1:2]** This statement indicates God foreknowing is the starting point and an operational principle for Him choosing those He would save. It also infers that election is particular in that God foreknew each one He chose. All the parameters by which God made chose in the election of grace reside with and proceed from Him alone. He chose to make a choice from among the human race because He foreknew. And because He foreknew, He specifically chose whom He would save. In this way, election is **“according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.”**

Peter's use of foreknowledge conveys a more narrow meaning than omniscience.<sup>7</sup> God's foreknowing includes a principle of personal love. Love is God's motive for

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<sup>6</sup> “unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” denotes Christ's obedience to the Father in the atonement. No harm is done to the passage by interpreting this phrase “unto obedience even the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” *MI*

<sup>7</sup> Omniscience (also referred to as prescience) is God's attribute of knowing. It addresses the extent of His knowledge. God is all knowing. He knows all about all things both in the spiritual and natural realms, whether their existence be past, present or future. God's omniscience is sometimes presented as foreknowledge, knowledge from eternity past of all things future. However, scripture applies a narrower, more distinct meaning to foreknowledge in election. It is applied only to those God foreloved. The passage below explains the distinct application of God's foreknowledge in election. *MI*

*“There is another sort of “prescience”, or “foreknowledge”, the Scriptures speak of; on which the election of persons to eternal life is founded, and according to which it is, (Rom. 8:30; 1 Peter 1:2) which is not a foreknowledge of faith, holiness, and good works, and perseverance therein, as causes of it; for these are effects and fruits of election, which flow from it; no bare foreknowledge of persons, but as joined with love and affection to the objects of it; and which is not general, but special; “The Lord knows them that are his”, (2 Tim. 2:19) not in general, as he knows all men; but distinctly, and particularly, he loves them, approves of them, and delights in them, and takes a particular care of them; while of others he says, “I know you not”, (Matthew 7:23) that is, as his*

setting apart those He would save. God ever loved some of Adam's race and therefore chose to save them. In the Roman letter, Paul indicates God's foreknowledge in election is designation of His love for a portion, but not all, of the human family. **"that the purpose of God according to election might stand"..... "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."** [Roman's 9:11, 13]

The intimacy of God's foreknowledge is presented in connection to salvation in **Jeremiah 1:5** where God indicates he knew and loved the prophet before Jeremiah was conceived; **"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee...;"** and, **"The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."** [Jeremiah 31:3] The text also indicates God's foreknowing proceeds from eternity past and is without end.

God chose all He would save before the world began, before any he chose were born. **"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. [Ephesians 1:3-6]** Since God's choice in election occurred before the world or anyone in the world existed, all whom He chose begin life as infants. This means infants who die can be included in the election of grace.

Paul indicates election precedes natural birth in Romans 9 when noting God's sovereignty in choosing to love Jacob and hate Esau before before the twin brothers were born. **"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."** [Romans 9:8-13] Jacob was chosen and Esau passed by in the election before either was born. Jacob was numbered among the elect before he was born, during infancy, and for the remainder of his life.

It is occasionally suggested Esau being passed by in election before he was born, having not yet done good or evil, is evidence not all infants are elect and therefore not all deceased infants are saved. This line of reason takes the form of a conditional or *if/then* syllogism: If A is true, *Esau was passed over in election before he was born*; then, B is also true, *not all deceased infants are saved*. In this

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*beloved and chosen ones. But as this belongs to the doctrine of predestination, I shall defer it to its proper place."*  
Gill, John, Body of Divinity, Book 1, Ch.9, [www.pbministries.org/books/gill/Doctrinal\\_Divinity/Book\\_1/book1\\_09.htm](http://www.pbministries.org/books/gill/Doctrinal_Divinity/Book_1/book1_09.htm)

instance, according to scripture, the first assertion is correct. However, B, the conclusion, *not all deceased infants are saved*, is logically invalid. The premise does not prove the conclusion. Esau is proof the wicked are born and are infants for a time. However, his case does not prove the wicked die in infancy because Esau was an adult when he died.

We have already shown that God exercised mercy and compassion according to His sovereign will to save without consideration of the conditions, attitudes or behaviors of those chosen in election. This fact however, does not exclude a given group from being wholly numbered among the elect. (The salvation of all the infants Herod murdered proves this point.) In the same way God is sovereign choosing to pass over some in election, He is sovereign to choose any others, regardless of what characteristics they may have in common. As we have discussed in relation to Romans 9:15, all the criteria for election was self-imposed by God. This means all deceased infants could have been included in election as long as they were chosen according to God's criteria of foreknowledge and willingness to be merciful and compassionate; and without regard to any meritorious characteristic that is known to Him through omniscience.

According to His stated reason for choosing who would be saved God did not choose to save all deceased infants because he knew they would die in infancy. Such a basis would make dying in infancy a characteristic that merited God's favor. This would undermine the doctrines of election and original sin. However, it is possible some other factor could have a foreseen consequence of all infants who die being elect. But whatever the factor, it is must not alter the criteria God used for choosing in election ***Providentially, God longsuffering the wicked (non-elect) so they do not die in infancy is such a factor. The result of which is all who die in infancy are elect.***

### **Regeneration**

Effectual call, new birth, born again, new creature, quickened and regeneration are terms and words used to characterize God's work of grace in the hearts (souls) of the elect. The covenant of grace provides for all God's elect to be spiritually quickened (given spiritual life). **"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."** [Ephesians 2:1-6]

Spiritual quickening produces vital change. It transforms those who are dead in sin to new life in Christ. **"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."** [Romans 8:2] Spiritual life through regeneration is a new creation in the one who is born again. **"Therefore if**



**any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” [2 Corinthians 5:17] “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.” [Galatians 6:15]**

In the new birth, God personally, powerfully and efficiently changes His elect child. There is washing, renewing and indwelling by the Holy Ghost. **[Titus 3:5, Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:11]** Real change occurs. The child of God receives spiritual sensibility so that he can know the things of God. Furthermore he spiritually discerns Christ as His Savior. **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” [Romans 8:16-17]**

When a person is born again his attitude toward sin and sinning is changed. Prior to new birth he is deceitful and spews **“cursing and bitterness” (Romans 3:13)**. This condition exists from conception. But when a person is born again, although he still has a carnal nature in his flesh and is yet subject to the corruption of sin by natural death, in his new creature spirit, the child of God hates sin. **(Romans 7:14-15)** He is also able to do good works that please God. **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” [Ephesians 2:10]**

Everyone who is born again receives the indwelling of God. **“Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.” [I John 4:13]** **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” [I Corinthians 3:16]** God's presence effectually renews one's spirit; thereby changing attitudes and interests. The new creature spirit is focused on God. It bears witness conjointly with God that it is God's child. **“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God...” [Romans 8:16]** One's spirit bearing witness with God is evidence of spiritual life with God. Furthermore, the witness is faithful because it agrees with the Spirit of God that he/she is God's child. The new creature spirit believes and testifies God is his/her Father. He/she also believes Christ is his brother and Savior inasmuch as it witnesses with God to being **“joint-heirs with Christ.” [Romans 8:17]**

This witnessing is a purely spiritual phenomenon. Paul's description indicates that no rational understanding or decision in one's mind is necessary for our spirits to bear witness with God. This being so, a born again infant, even if yet unborn in the mother's womb, is able to spiritually bear witness with God that he is God's child and a join-heir with Christ.

According to Jesus' statement to Nicodemus regarding God's sovereignty in regeneration, everyone is born again in the same way. This means, Spirit/spirit conjoint witnessing occurs in everyone who is born again. **“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” [John 3:8]** This text also indicates regeneration is a direct and immediate

work of God. The Spirit quickens when and where it pleases without agents, external means, or instruments such as preachers or the gospel. A favorable response to the gospel is evidence regeneration has already occurred and not a facilitator of new birth.

As we have shown with regard to total depravity, wholly carnal man cannot receive or understand the things of the Spirit of God. He is therefore incapable of believing the gospel and deciding to accept Christ in order to be born again. In fact, scripture contains several narratives in which people were born again before any preacher reached them or they received the gospel in some other cogent manner. The Lord had already quickened Cornelius before sending Peter to him. When Peter was reluctant to preach the gospel to Cornelius, the Lord indicated the Roman centurion had already received the "washing of regeneration."<sup>8</sup> **"And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."** [Acts 10:15]

Rahab is another example of a saint of God who was born again before a preacher or the gospel reached her. She assisted the Israelites when they conquered Jericho. Her name is included in Hebrews chapter 11 as one who demonstrated great faith in God despite having never heard the gospel. **"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace."** [Hebrews 11:31] **These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.** [Hebrews 11:13] James mentions that works justified (in an experiential sense) Rahab, when by faith she protected the Israelites. **"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"** [James 2:5] Experiential justification by good works requires faith, which is a fruit of the Spirit of God (See Galatians 5:22). To possess the fruit of the Spirit one must have the Spirit. The Spirit of God indwells in regeneration. **"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"** [1 Corinthians 3:16]

Scripture also includes accounts of people who were born again when they were infants, or even before they were born. We have already mentioned Jeremiah, whom the Lord sanctified and called as a prophet before he was born. **"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations."** [Jeremiah 1:5] David, who testified in Psalms 51:5 that he was a sinner from the moment of his conception, also testified he was quickened by God and experienced hope, presumably of the resurrection, while a newborn baby. **"But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the**

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Titus 3:4-7 "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." KJV

**womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly."** [Psalms 22:9-10] John the Baptist demonstrated he was already born again while still in his mother's womb. When Mary brought the news to her cousin Elizabeth that she was with Child of the Holy Ghost and the Child was the Christ, John rejoiced. **"And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."** [John 1:41] John's natural birth occurred three months later.

As mentioned, scripture relates that a group of toddlers and infants were born again in regeneration around the time Jesus was born. The prophecy concerning the infants Herod murdered indicates they all will be raised to be with the Lord when Jesus comes again. Matthew's gospel indicates the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning Rachel weeping for her children literally applied to mothers grieving for their babies who were murdered by Herod. **"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."** [Matthew 2:17-18] The prophecy, recorded in Jeremiah, contains an assurance from God to the sorrowing mothers. **"Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border."** [Jeremiah 31:15-17]

Jeremiah's prophecy does not simply mean the children would return to Bethlehem to live normal lives. Scripture provides no evidence such a thing happened. Dr. John Gill suggests "their own border" refers to "*the heavenly Canaan*" where in the resurrection they will " *dwell with Christ for evermore.*"<sup>iii</sup> Matthew Henry, in his commentary of Matthew reaches a similar conclusion to Dr. Gill but makes a much broader application:

*"There is hope concerning children removed by death that they shall return to their own border, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before."*<sup>iv</sup>

Charles Spurgeon also understood the prophecy of Jeremiah to give reason for hope by mothers who suffer the loss of a baby. In his commentary of Matthew's gospel Spurgeon implies deceased infants are saved.

*"Our Rachels still; but holy women who know the Lord Jesus, do not now say concerning their little ones that 'they are not.' They know that their children are, and they know where they are, and they expect to meet them again in glory."*<sup>v</sup>

Some have suggested fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy is evidence God extends what they term as "prevenient grace" to deceased infants. The word prevenient means coming before, preceding, previous. The Oxford dictionary includes an additional, theological definition. *"The grace of God that precedes repentance and conversion, predisposing the heart to seek God previous to any motion or desire on the part of the recipient."*<sup>vi</sup>

Followers of the teachings of Jacobus Arminius have applied this definition to all human beings. They assert prevenient grace is a natural ability all people have to believe in Christ that precedes actual regeneration. They maintain it is a gift from God that enables people to decide to accept Christ as their Savior by natural reasoning. The decision is formed by intellectual comprehension of a historical construct of Jesus Christ along with explanations of the plan of salvation that is presented to the mind through the gospel.

Theories of universal atonement and free-willism form the basis for the Arminian concept of prevenient grace. They teach it is the means whereby in response to the gospel one may choose to believe and be saved. Because of their theory of free-willism, Arminians believe prevenient grace is resistible in adults; merely rendering people capable of choosing to accept the offer of salvation provided by the gospel. However, adults may choose to reject salvation by refusing to believe.

Arminianism also reasons there is an irresistible version of prevenient grace that is directly applied and is a means of saving those who die that are mentally incapable of deciding to accept Christ. Therefore, should one die in infancy he is saved by a direct, immediate and irresistible work of prevenient grace in regeneration. If he lives to adulthood prevenient grace merely enables him by free-will to choose to believe the message of the gospel, and be saved.

In a treatise on the subject Dr. William W. Combs, Academic Dean & Professor of New Testament, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, provides the following statement concerning prevenient grace.

*"In the modern day, however, prevenient grace is mostly identified with the views of Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) and, especially, John Wesley (1703–1791). As used by them and modern day Arminians, prevenient grace is grace that enables depraved man to believe and be saved, but it does not guarantee such since it may be rejected. Prevenient grace is sufficient for salvation but not efficacious (irresistible)."*<sup>vii</sup>

Dr. David Miller PhD., executive director of Apologetics Press, a non-profit organization that supplies materials in apologetics to the churches of Christ (Church of Christ denomination) explains "age of accountability" doctrine that is substituted for prevenient grace for infants.

*"The only time in a person's life when he or she is spiritually **alive** in the absence of law is before he or she is a responsible, accountable adult. A person is not subject to the law of God until he or she is mature enough to understand and to be responsible for behavior. Here is the "age of accountability" to which so many have made reference over the years..' \*\*\* 'This "age of accountability" is not pinpointed in Scripture as a specific age—for obvious reasons: it naturally differs from person to person since it depends upon a variety of social and environmental factors. Children mature at different rates and ages as their spirits are fashioned, shaped, and molded by parents, teachers, and life's experiences.'"*<sup>iii</sup>

A dual mode salvation scheme is clearly indicated in article 9 of the Wesleyan Creed. The Wesleyan denomination sprung from the Methodists around 1843. It is part of the Holiness Movement, but is also part of the World Methodist Council. The denomination describes its theological heritage as "Arminian-Wesleyan." The two methods of salvation presented in their statement of faith relating to atonement are justification by faith for those past an age of accountability and unconditional salvation for the mentally incompetent and children under the age of accountability.

*"This atonement is sufficient for every individual of Adam's race. It is unconditionally effective in the salvation of those mentally incompetent from birth, of those converted persons who have become mentally incompetent, and of children under the age of accountability. But it is effective for the salvation of those who reach the age of accountability only when they repent and exercise faith in Christ."*<sup>x</sup>

John Calvin's doctrine is closely aligned with the teachings of Augustine of Hippo, a fifth century philosopher and Catholic theologian. Calvinism embraces a concept of irresistible grace in contrast to Arminian prevenient grace. However, in one way it is similar to Arminian theology regarding the means of regeneration. Both teach one must hear the gospel and believe in order to be born again. Calvinists promote a notion of saving faith; which occurs in reaction to hearing the gospel. They maintain God's primary method of new birth is by means of hearing the gospel; whereby, one believes savingly (by saving faith), and repents. Under the heading of "According to Calvinism," The Center for Reformed Theology and Apologetics explains preaching the gospel is God's means of conveying "Irresistible Grace," the "I" in the so-called TULIP doctrine.<sup>9</sup>

*The result of God's Irresistible Grace is the certain response by the elect to the inward call of the Holy Spirit, when the outward call is given by the evangelist or minister of the Word of God. Christ, himself, teaches that all whom God has elected will come to a knowledge of him (John 6:37). Men come to Christ in salvation when the Father calls them (John 6:44), and the very Spirit of God leads God's beloved to repentance (Romans 8:14). What a comfort it is to know that the*

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<sup>9</sup> TULIP; Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Preservation of the Saints.

*gospel of Christ will penetrate our hard, sinful hearts and wondrously save us through the gracious inward call of the Holy Spirit (I Peter 5:10)<sup>x</sup>*

In his book, The Confession of Faith: A Commentary of the Entire Westminster Confession of Faith, reformed theologian A. A. Hodges, Distinguished Chair of Systematic Theology at Princeton University from 1878 to 1886, affirms his belief that the gospel is the ordinary means by which God communicates saving faith. In chapter 14 titled, "Of Saving Faith," he wrote:

*That faith is ordinarily wrought by the Spirit through the ministry of the Word is plain -- (1.) From the direct assertion of Scripture: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ..... So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Rom. x. 12 -- 17. (2.) The preaching of the gospel is the ordinary way in which its truth is most effectually brought to bear upon the hearts and consciences of men. Faith is the act of the regenerated soul, and, as we have seen (ch. x., sections 1, 2 and 4), the Spirit uses the revealed truth of God as his instrument in regeneration and sanctification, and sane adult men never come to the experience of the benefits of Christ's salvation who are destitute of some knowledge of his person and world."<sup>xi</sup>*

Unlike Arminians, the followers of Calvin believe atonement applies to the elect only. Calvin rejected free-willism; instead, believing in total depravity of all humanity as a consequence of original sin. Although Calvinists assert all the elect must and will hear the gospel, believe savingly, and be born again, they agree with Arminians that infants who die in infancy are saved apart from gospel means.

Historically, Calvinists have relied on their covenant theology doctrine to assure believing parents their deceased infants are saved. This issue was specifically addressed by leaders of the Reformed Church at the Synod of Dort in 1619 in response to the "Five Points of Remonstrance" submitted by followers of Jacobus Arminius. In Article 17 entitled "The Salvation of the Infants of Believers" the Reformed Canon states:

*"Since we must make judgments about God's will from his Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but by virtue of the gracious covenant in which they together with their parents are included, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom God calls out of this life in infancy."<sup>xii</sup>*

This reading of article 17 led critics to infer Calvinist reformed theology teaches some deceased infant are non-elect and go to eternal torment. However, this interpretation has been consistently and rigorously denied by Presbyterian theologians. Dr. Loraine Boetner, a former student of C. W. Hodge, denies the

charge by citing an article by Dr. W. A. Craig that appeared in the January, 1931 edition of Christianity Today.

*"It has often been charged that the Westminster Confession in stating that "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ" (Chap. X, Sec. 3), implies that there are non-elect infants, who, dying in infancy, are lost, and that the Presbyterian Church has taught that some dying in infancy are lost. Concerning this Dr. Craig says: 'The history of the phrase 'Elect infants dying in infancy' makes clear that the contrast implied was not between 'elect infants dying in infancy' and 'non-elect infants dying in infancy,' but rather between 'elect infants dying in infancy' and 'elect infants living to grow up.'"*<sup>xiii</sup>

In 1903, in an effort to clarify the meaning intended by the writers of the Westminster Confession and to "guard against misunderstanding furthered by unfriendly controversialists" the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. added a declaratory statement to their creed.

*"With reference to Chapter X, Section 3, of the Confession of Faith, that it is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all who die in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases."*<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Boetner again cites the Christianity Today article by Dr. Craig to explain the significance of the addendum adopted by The Presbyterian Church U.S.A..

*"It is obvious that the Declaratory Statement goes beyond the teaching of Chapter X, Section 3 of the Confession of Faith inasmuch as it states positively that all who die in infancy are saved. Some hold that the Declaratory Statement goes beyond the Scripture in teaching that all those dying in infancy are saved; but, be that as it may, it makes it impossible for any person to even plausibly maintain that Presbyterians teach that there are non-elect infants who die in infancy. No doubt there have been individual Presbyterians who held that some of those who die in infancy have been lost; but such was never the official teaching of the Presbyterian Church and as matters now stand such a position is contradicted by the Church's creed."*<sup>xiv</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The Presbyterian Westminster Confession of 1646 and the Baptist London Confession of 1689 use identical wording for Article X, Section 3. It is interesting to note Baptists moved to clarify the meaning of the statement three years before the Presbyterians. In 1900 Primitive Baptists met in Fulton, KY and added the following statement as a footnote to the London Confession: "We understand this section to teach that all persons dying in infancy are of the elect, and will therefore be saved. We do not understand from this that infants and insane persons are saved in a manner different from the manner in which all other elect persons are saved. The word "others" in Section 4 has no reference to infants, but adults who are subjects of the ministry of the Word." Whereas the Baptists adopted language from the Presbyterians when they composed Article X, Section 3 of their confession, one must wonder if the American Presbyterians followed the lead of the Baptists in adopting a statement to clarify its meaning. MI

Like Arminian theology, Calvinism includes a concept of "condition of accountability," to supplement its doctrine of gospel means in regeneration as God's ordinary method for saving. They maintain God's elect who have the intellectual ability to understand the gospel are saved by God's "ordinary means" for producing saving faith. So, when a child matures to the point of knowing right from wrong and is able to understand the gospel, if he is elect he will hear the gospel and believe savingly. In this regard, Calvinism and Arminianism agree that eternal justification in general is based upon one's faithful response to constructs of Christ and salvation that are presented by the gospel. And like their Arminian counterparts Calvinists also generally agree that God saves those who die in infancy by a pure work of grace that occurs apart from hearing and responding favorably to the gospel.

Well known baptistic Calvinist, John MacArthur, pastor of Grace Community Church and president of The Master's College and Seminary, characterizes the Calvinist idea of accountability and infant innocence in summarizing the main points of a message he delivered titled "The Salvation of Infants Who Die."

*"So here's a final summary: all children who die before they reach the condition of accountability, by which they convincingly understand their sin and corruption and embrace the gospel by faith, are graciously saved eternally by God through the work of Jesus Christ, being elect by sovereign choice, innocent of willful sin, rebellion, and unbelief, by which works they would be justly condemned to eternal punishment. So, when an infant dies, he or she is elect to eternal salvation and eternal glory." <sup>xv</sup>*

In part 2 of the same message MacArthur recaps points he previously covered and asserts God employs two different methods by which He saves; one for adults, which is by faith, and another for deceased infants, which is by sovereign grace alone!

*"And the fourth question we asked: by what means are infants saved when they die in a condition prior to accountability? The answer: they are saved through the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ--His death for them--because He bore the wrath of God for them as for all who could and would believe. They are saved then by grace, by sovereign grace. The only difference between their salvation and ours is faith is a part of ours\_ It's not a part of theirs. But then again, faith is something we contribute; faith is a gift from God. So they are saved by grace in sovereign election so that the work of Christ is freely applied to them. Ours is justification by faith; theirs is justification without faith because without the knowledge and ability to understand convincingly sin and salvation, they cannot exercise that faith." <sup>xvi</sup>*

**An obvious issue shared by Calvinism and Arminianism is both rely on two methods for regeneration in order to affirm their beliefs that infants who die in infancy are saved.** Both must include an addendum to their core teaching



that a person is justified by their faith in response to the gospel. Because infants are incapable of employing faith as a means to gain regeneration, Calvinism and Arminianism substitute a pure work of the Spirit of God, absent human instrumentality and gospel means, as an additional method for saving. Both positions sidestep the consequence of original sin. Romans chapter 5 states all humanity came under God's judgment of condemnation through Adam's transgression. **"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation..." [Romans 5:18]** This text clearly refutes a theory of age of accountability; that man is not accountable for sin until he has the *"ability to understand convincingly sin and salvation."* The inadequacy of Arminian and Calvinist doctrines to have adults and infants saved in the same manner is an obvious weakness in their respective salvation dogmas.

In John 3:7-8, Jesus indicates everyone is born again in the same way when He compared the unpredictability of the wind to God's sovereignty in regeneration. **"Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. [John 3:7-8]** Jesus' statement discloses that man is unable to predict the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit of giving spiritual life. We cannot know the Spirit's comings and goings; "whence it cometh," "whither it goeth." This means man cannot have an active role in the work of regeneration. He cannot reasonably expect to receive eternal life if he believes; because expecting salvation is tantamount to predicting the coming and going of the Spirit of God to save. Jesus implied this is impossible to do. This text teaches the Holy Ghost is sovereign and works alone; doing so unannounced. By direct and immediate action and without the use of external agents or means, the Spirit of God accomplishes the same work of grace the same way in all to whom He gives spiritual life in Christ. Jesus' statement, **"so is every one that is born of the Spirit,"** indicates God employs but one method of regeneration that is the same for all whom He quickens. Whether they are born again in adulthood or while still infants all the elect experience spiritual quickening by the same divine procedure of a direct and immediate operation of the Holy Spirit.

The quickened infant, even if yet in a mother's womb, is born again in the same way, by the same power that quickened David on his mother's breast, John in his mother's womb, the thief on the cross, Paul on the Damascus road, Cornelius and all others of His elect. Nothing more, less, or different is needed to bring change to the partially formed heart of an unborn child as John, the murderous heart of Paul, and railing heart of the thief. Each instance of regeneration noted, of David, John the Baptist, Paul and the thief on the cross, and all other new births, occur by precisely the same operation of the Holy Ghost; which is unassisted by human will or activity and wholly unpredictable by human senses. The Spirit works directly, without means outside Himself and without instrumentalities to assist. He instantly quickens, cleanses and renews. At one instant the sinner is dead in sins and at the next he is alive in Christ. **"So is everyone that is born of the Spirit."**

The late Elder C. H. Cayce took up the question of deceased infant salvation on many occasions both with respect to their eternal security and also to refute the idea of two methods of regeneration, one being gospel means applied to adults; and the other a direct and immediate work of grace applied to infants. In regards to both issues, in the September 1, 1925 edition of The Primitive Baptist, Elder Cayce addressed an inquiry about his response to two questions from an earlier edition of the paper.<sup>xvii</sup> He had responded no to both questions. The questions were:

*"Do non-elect die in infancy?" "No"*

*"Is every person, when an infant, a child of God" "No"*

Elder Cayce used **Mark 10:15** and **Luke 18:17** to explain why he answered no to the questions. We understand him to be addressing the means of new birth. He maintained that everyone receives the Kingdom of God, is born again, in the same way; that adults receive the kingdom the same way as infants receive it.

*"The Master does not say, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as this little child,' referring to some special or particular child, but 'as a little child.' He uses the indefinite article -a.*

*'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as A little child,' etc. If an adult receives the kingdom of God as a little child, then a little child does not miss it. If a little child misses the kingdom of God, and you receive it as a little child, then you miss it too. Therefore, if a little child misses the kingdom, it will be a universal damnation for all the adult race of Adam. If one of the adult family of Adam is saved, or receives the kingdom, then a little child does not miss it.*

*From our understanding of the matter, no other Scripture is necessary to prove our position.*<sup>xviii</sup>

It is important to keep in mind the two questions in order to better understand Elder Cayce's explanation. He is responding to whether non-elect die in infancy and whether everyone is a child of God during their infancy. He answered no to both questions.

His explanation of **Mark 10:15** and **Luke 17:18** implies infants and adults are saved the same way; and that all deceased infants are saved. One can also draw an inference from his answer that the wicked do not die in infancy. His conclusions are based on a logical inference drawn from Jesus' statement that all who receive the Kingdom of God do so in the same way any infant receives it. The inference is: If the Kingdom of God is composed of persons who receive it like any infant receives it, then those who die in infancy receive the Kingdom of God. This is so because they are wholly like infants, the likes of whom compose the Kingdom. Elder Cayce's argument is reasonable in that it is unlikely the Savior (the Word who has perfect ability to communicate) would use infants in general, as indicated by His use of an indefinite article in the phrase "a little child," as His example of how one must be in order to receive the Kingdom of God, if any deceased infants are excluded from entering.

Elder Cayce did not stipulate the basis by which he concluded non-elect do not die in infancy. Perhaps, in his own mind he believed he had said enough for his readers to understand his assertion. Indeed, his explanation provides enough information to plausibly infer as much. If Elder Cayce's explanation demonstrates all infants who die in infancy are born again; and if one accepts that everyone who is born again is elect; then it can be reasonably inferred the non-elect do not die in infancy.

### **Resurrection and Final Judgment**

Several texts suggest an extremely large number of people are included in the covenant of grace and will experience the resurrection of life when Jesus comes again. God promised Abraham his seed would be as numerous as **"the dust of the earth" [Genesis 13:16]**, the stars in heaven (**See Genesis 15:5**) and **"as the sand which is upon the sea shore" [Genesis 22:17]**. Paul reveals the promise God made to Abraham applies to all who were chosen in Christ Jesus. **"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." [Galatians 3:29]** The Lord's assurance of Christ's coming to Jeremiah the prophet also refers to an extremely large number of people included in the covenant. **"As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me." [Jeremiah 33:22]**<sup>11</sup> John's revelation from God also describes an innumerable population in heaven from all nations and families. **"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;..." [Revelations 7:9];** and **"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands." [Revelations 5:11]**<sup>12</sup>

In **Colossians 1:18**, Paul indicates Christ Jesus will be preeminent in all things. He will be *"first in rank or influence" and "hold first place."*<sup>xi</sup> He is preeminent as the **"firstborn from the dead."** Having preeminence in all things means Christ will *"hold first place"* in the number of saints raised from the dead. The number of people who will reign with Him in the resurrection will be larger than those who do not. Christ will be preeminent in the resurrection by raising more people to the resurrection of life than are raised to the resurrection of damnation.

These texts all prophecy heaven will have a large population. This lends support to deceased infant salvation given that large numbers of infants have died throughout

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<sup>11</sup> *New Testament references to Christ as David's seed confirms Jeremiah's prophecy refers to those who are included in His atonement. In Romans 1:3 Paul describes Jesus Christ as the seed of David. In 2 Timothy 2:8 he does so again when reminding Christ was raised from the dead. The portion of the prophecy referring to Levites, who were priests under the Mosaic Law, is consistent with New Testament references to the priesthood of God's elect. (See Revelations 1:6 and 1 Peter 2:9). MI*

<sup>12</sup> *See also Daniel 7:10 "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."*

the millennia as indicated by historically short average lifespans, and high rates of infant mortality and miscarriages.<sup>13</sup>

In his commentary of the Gospel According to Luke, 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican Bishop J. C. Ryle suggests **Luke 18:16** infers a large percentage of heaven's occupants are deceased infants.

*"Of such as little children," the kingdom of God in glory will be largely composed. The salvation of all who die in infancy may confidently be expected. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. (Rom. 5:20.) The number of those in the world who die before they "know good from evil" is exceedingly great. It is surely not too much to believe that a very large proportion of the glorified inhabitants of heaven will be found at length to be little children.*"<sup>xxx</sup>

The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead includes a final judgment in which the just will be forever with the Lord; separated from the unjust, the wicked, who will be condemned to hell. Jesus' prophecy regarding final judgment indicates the wicked will be judged according to the things they have done. **"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."** [John 5:28-29]

The language of the Savior's statement distinguishes doing good by the righteous from a pattern of the wicked continually doing evil. In the phrase "done good" the Greek word for done is *poiēw*, *poy-eh'-o*. It means to make or do.<sup>xxi14</sup> In contrast, the Greek word for done in the phrase "done evil" is *prassw* *pras'-so*. It means: "to exercise, practice, to be busy with, carry on."<sup>xxii15</sup> *Prasso* conveys the idea of one who is wholly occupied in doing; in the case of the wicked, doing evil. The evildoers, who are condemned to a **"resurrection of damnation,"** are those who habitually or repeatedly do evil. They practice evil. It busies them. They are exercised by evil. Strong's specifically notes the difference in the two verbs indicating *poiēw* *poy-eh'-o* applies to a single deed and *prassw* *pras'-so* as "to practise," i.e. perform repeatedly or habitually (thus differing from 4160, which properly refers to a single act).<sup>xxiii</sup>

The wicked are condemned to hell because they are sinners by nature AND for the sins they commit. When Jesus described end time judgment He depicted the wicked as those who have busied themselves committing many sins by referring to

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<sup>13</sup> Measure of the number of infants dying under one year of age, usually expressed as the number of deaths per 1,000 live births. [www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Infant%20Mortality%20Rate](http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Infant%20Mortality%20Rate) .

According to National Institute of Health research, approximately 31% of pregnancies result in miscarriage. Of this number 66% of women are unaware they miscarried because it occurred before they were aware they were pregnant. [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=3393170](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed?term=3393170)

<sup>14</sup> 4160, *poiēw* *poy-eh'-o*, apparently a prolonged form of an obsolete primary; TDNT-6:458,895; v, 1) to make, to produce, 2a) to act rightly, do well

<sup>15</sup> 4238, *prassw* *pras'-so* a root word; TDNT-6:632,927; 1) to exercise, practise, to be busy with, carry on, 1a) to undertake, to do, 2) to accomplish, perform, 2a) to commit

them as "workers of iniquity" [Luke 13:27] and "ye that work iniquity" [Matthew 7:23]. They are condemned for doing evil habitually and perpetually. According to scripture, God's criteria for condemning the wicked to hell is because they are all sinners as a consequence of original sin through Adam's transgression. (See Romans 5:16-18.) However, His judgment against them is not based simply on circumstantial evidence of them being Adam's descendants. Tangible evidence will be presented as to the undeniable guilt of each person condemned to eternal torment in hell; (as indicated by statements made by Jesus cited above and also by John in Revelations (See Revelations 20:12). In addition to possessing a sin nature, the many willful acts of sinning done by the wicked, the fact each one busied himself committing sin whether by deed, motive or imagination, will provide factual proof of their just condemnation. In the resurrection of the unjust when God pronounces final judgment against them, He will present a record of the plethora of personal sinning done by each one to prove they are justly condemned.

A significant point rises from the fact that all the wicked are "**judged every man according to their works.**" (See also Revelations 20:12-13, II Corinthians 11:15) Since doing evil works is a common feature of all who are justly condemned to hell, the wicked must possess mental competence and sufficient time on earth to continually contemplate sin and busy themselves sinning. Several individuals in scripture of whom it is reasonably presumed were wicked and condemned to hell fit this standard of God's judgment. It fits Cain, who murdered his brother; Cain, for whom God had not respect or for his offering, because he committed sin: "sin lieth at the door" (See Genesis 4:5-10). It also fits Esau, who was a profane man who sold his birthright for a bit of food (See Hebrews 12:6); who hated his brother Jacob and plotted his murder (See Genesis 20:41). It fits Pharaoh who, in an effort to control Hebrew population, ordered the murders of their infant sons (See Exodus 1:15-22). It fits Herod, who was also a mass murderer of infants (See Matthew 2:16). It fits the thief on the cross, who though justly condemned, was impenitent and continued railing against Christ (See Luke 23:39-41).

Paul's description of human depravity in Romans 3:10-18, as previously quoted, describes the attitudes and behaviors of those who are totally depraved. It is consistent with Jesus' use of *prasso* when describing the wicked, who are condemned to hell in the final judgment. The wicked are more than occasional or reluctant sinners as indicated by Paul's description in Romans chapter 3. They practice sin. They are prone to do violence; "**their feet are swift to shed blood.**" They only do evil; "**there is none that doeth good.**" Their pattern of behavior is to commit sins; "**Destruction and misery are in their ways.**" It is their practice of sinning for which the wicked are condemned to hell. They will be judged "**according to their works**" because they have "**done evil.**"

John's revelation of the end time indicates the wicked are judged from "**the books**" "**according to their works.**" "**And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.**" [Revelations 20:12] This text plainly indicates the wicked are eternally

condemned because they are totally depraved; which is proven by the indisputable record of their wicked works.

Records of lives that are replete of habitual, perpetual sinning that God will use as evidence to condemn the wicked to hell cannot be produced to prove deceased unborn infants and babies will face the same condemnation. Because they were short lived, no records of lives full of sinning, of them having "done evil" as "workers of iniquity," will exist against deceased infants as evidence to prove their just condemnation. And since scripture indicates God will produce such a record against each one He condemns, logically, it cannot follow any who die in infancy will be in hell.

One might suggest while an infant does not fit Jesus' description in John 5:28-29 that is implied by his use of *prasso* in the phrase "done evil" to indicate habitual and continual sinning, neither does he fit Jesus use of *poieho* in the phrase "done good." Consistency seems to demand if an infant lacks the mental capacity to discern to habitually and repeatedly do evil works(done evil), he similarly lacks the ability to do even a single good work (done good).

However, there is one act of faith, one good work that is done by everyone who is born again regardless of age and/or mental condition. As previously discussed, on a spiritual level, from the moment of new birth, the new creature spirit of every child of God does faithfully bear witness, jointly testifies, with the Spirit of God that he is God's child and a joint-heir with Christ. **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ..." [Romans 8:16-17]** Faithful spiritual witnessing is a good thing done by everyone who is born again.

As stated at the beginning of this topic, scripture indicates ***God does not permit the wicked to die as infants.*** He longsuffers their presence. Job provides a description of the wicked that is consistent with God longsuffering their existence on earth. **"Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?." [Job 21:7-15]**

A central theme of Job's description of the wicked focuses on their longevity. According to Job, the wicked are long lived. They grow to adulthood, as indicated by his statement **"the wicked live, become old."** He also implies they live to adulthood by noting they marry and have children and are in other ways successful by worldly standards. Job's portrayal of the wicked is consistent with Jesus' depiction of them habitually and perpetually doing evil, but adds the sense they do

so over a full lifespan. When taken together descriptions of the wicked provide by Jesus, John, Paul and Job seem to indicate they live full lives; which is contrary to notions they die in infancy.

David shares Job's assessment of the wicked. His description in **Psalms, chapter 10** can only be applied to those who live long enough to demonstrate a pattern of habitual, repeated sinning. According to David the wicked **"boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous;.....in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor....he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.....He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones."** David describes the wicked as leading self-indulgent lives. They are "strong ones" who cunningly plot, oppress, and murder. His description cannot reasonably be applied to the life experiences of any who die as infants.

Another description of the wicked as people who live to adulthood is presented in Psalms 73. Like Job's description, **Psalms 73** focuses on the prosperity of the wicked; although David does note their habitual and repeated sinning with the statement, **"violence covereth them as a garment."** **"I saw the prosperity of the wicked"....."they have more than heart could wish"....."these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches."** As with the their propensity for doing violence, their prosperity cannot reasonably be applied to infants who die.

One might ask, how can it be the wicked do not die in infancy? One answer is that scripture plainly teaches God preserves and prolongs life according to His purposes. Examples of the Lord preserving life are numerous and include Job (**See Job 2:5**), Daniel (**See Daniel 6:16-21**) and the nation of Israel when they were being pursued by Pharaoh's army to name a few (**See Exodus 14:10-14**). The Lord also prolonged Hezekiah's life (**See II Kings 20:6**).

Dr. John Gill believed **Exodus 9:16** indicates God prolonged Pharaoh's life. **"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth."** [**Exodus 9:16**] Dr. Gill's comments below suggest God's purpose in preventing Pharaoh from dying from the pestilence and plagues was to manifest the power and glory of His righteous judgment when He later destroyed the Egyptian ruler.

*"And in very deed for this cause' Or but truly or verily; instead of smiting thee with the pestilence, and cutting thee off out of the land of the living, 'I have raised thee up'; made thee to stand, to continue in being; I have preserved thine from perishing by the former plagues, and have reserved thee for greater judgments and sorer punishments..... 'For to shew in thee my power' in working miracles, inflicting judgments one after another, and especially in destroying him and his host in the Red sea..... 'that my name may be declared throughout all the earth' as it has been more by that last action than by all the rest of the plagues; though, in all, his*

*sovereignty, wisdom, power, patience, longsuffering, and justice, are most visibly displayed and glorified.*<sup>xxiv</sup>

In Notes on The Old and New Testaments, Alfred Barnes agrees with Dr. Gill's explanation. He notes the phrase "**raised thee up**" indicates "God kept Pharaoh standing," i.e. permitted him to live and hold out until His own purpose was accomplished.<sup>xxv</sup>

However, Dr. Gill's explanation alone does not explain why the wicked are not permitted to die young. According to Paul, God longsuffers them. "**What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.**" [Romans 9:22] In the resurrection God will justly condemn to hell those who are "**fitted to destruction.**" The verb "to fit" in this text means "to completely equip, to outfit."<sup>xxvi</sup> It is passive; meaning something else equips the vessels of wrath. It is habitual, perpetual sinning that equips the wicked for destruction. God endures the wicked until their sinning completely outfits them for destruction. They all live sin filled lives so that when they are judged none can reply to God, in effect, "I never willfully committed sin. So why do you condemn me to hell?" By longsuffering the wicked the righteousness and glory of God's judgment is obvious to all, including those He condemns to hell.

The final judgment will manifest God's glory in judgment and power. In **I Corinthians 3:9** the Apostle Paul plainly indicates God is glorious in His administration of condemnation to sinners. "**For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.**" Final judgment and condemnation of the wicked will present an expression of the righteousness and holiness of God that hitherto was never seen, neither on earth nor in heaven. The wicked will be finally and fully subdued. They will be compelled to acknowledge Christ is Lord; and will then be forever punished for the things they have done.

Abraham's plea to God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah in order to save the just he presumed living there implied the patriarch believed God is righteous in judgment. "**That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?**" [Genesis 18:25]

David indicated God is righteous in judging sinners in Psalms 51. Having pled guilty by confessing his sins and acknowledging his transgressions against God, David declared God justly pronounces judgment. This text teaches the evidence of a person's guilt the Lord uses to pronounce guilt is so apparent it is obvious God is clear of injustice when He judges. "**Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.**" [Psalms 51:4]

Peter also acknowledged the righteousness of God's justice to punish the wicked with destruction for their sins. "**The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to**



**be punished..... But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time.” [II Peter 2:9-13] (See also Genesis 18:25, Psalms 7:11, 58:11, 75:7, 96:13 Ecclesiastes 3:17, Nahum 1:1-3, Hebrews 12:23, Revelations 18:8, 20:12)**

David wrote, **“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” [Psalms 10:4]** They refuse to acknowledge His authority; and even say **“there is no God” (Psalms 53:1)**. The unbelief and rebellion of the wicked will be gloriously addressed by God's righteous judgment when He finally and forever vanquishes the wicked to hell. In the final judgment when the righteous joyously bow and confess Christ, God's power will also be gloriously displayed when He humbles the wicked to bent knee, compelling they confess Jesus is God, and then vanquishes them to hell. **“ I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” [Isaiah 45:23] (See Also Romans 14:11-12, Philippians 2:10-11, Revelations 20:11-15)**

In the resurrection the wicked will be condemned to hell according to their works, for things they have done. God will justly and gloriously execute the sentence of their condemnation because their lives were replete of sinful behavior. The Lord will also display a hitherto unseen glorious expression of His perfect righteousness, absolute holiness, and immeasurable power by pouring out the full measure of His wrath on those whom Christ described as “workers of iniquity” to their utter, eternal subjugation.

### **Objections Addressed**

We have already discussed various texts that are sometimes cited in efforts to disprove all infants who die are saved. We have shown David's description of the wicked in **Psalms 58** speaks only to their condition of sin at birth; but is silent with regard to when they die. The same applies to **Psalms 51**. David only spoke of sin being present in him from conception. Neither text indicates some of the wicked die in infancy. These passages teach that original sin is common to all humanity from conception.

We have also considered election with regard to Jacob and Esau. It is presumed by some that God passing by Esau in election before either he or Jacob were born is evidence the wicked die in infancy. However, the passage does not at all address when the wicked die. **Romans 9:11-15**<sup>16</sup> proves God did not use foreseen merit as a criterion for whom He chose in election. This passage also indicates by

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<sup>16</sup> Romans 9:11-15 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. KJV

inference that the wicked are wicked from conception. It does not prove some of them die in infancy.

**Romans 9:11-15** is also sometimes cited to protest that deceased infant salvation alters God's criteria in election; which is, to have mercy and compassion on all those He foreloved and chose to save without having any regard to foreseen merit in them. The objection comes from a presumption that the only way deceased infants can be included in election is if God chose them because He foreknew they would die in infancy. However, the presumption fails to consider the effect of God not permitting the wicked, non-elect, to die as infants: **None of the wicked dying in infancy means only those who are elect die as infants.** This explanation of deceased infant salvation in no way changes the criteria God used to choose who would be saved.

Two accounts in scripture sometimes are used in an effort to prove the wicked can die in infancy. Some have cited the flood (**See Genesis chapters 6 - 9**) and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (**See Genesis chapters 18 - 19**) to maintain some infants who die in infancy are wicked, non-elect. Typically, a categorical argument is used. In syllogism it is stated as:

- A. Everyone killed in the flood and Sodom and Gomorrah were wicked.
- B. Infants were killed on both occasions.
- C. Some of the wicked (non-elect) die in infancy.

This syllogism is a categorical proposition composed of a major premise A, minor premise B, and conclusion C. For the syllogism to be valid both A and B must be true statements. Inasmuch as Scripture is claimed as a source of authority for the proposition it must supply conclusive evidence to indicate categories A and B are true statements for C to be a valid conclusion. However, if either A or B cannot be proven then C is an invalid conclusion

Typically, a major premise is more easily challenged because it is usually broader in scope than a minor premise, providing more opportunities to discover exceptions. However, because we are specifically focused on deceased infants and that is the subject of the minor premise B, we will examine whether scripture conclusively proves infants died in the flood or Sodom and Gomorrah.

There is no record in scripture that conclusively proves infants were present in the flood. The scriptural account and later references to the flood elsewhere in the Bible do not mention the presence of children. This alone renders the syllogism's conclusion invalid. However, scripture actually suggests the possibility no infants were present in the flood.

All three sons of Noah were married when God established his covenant with Noah and instructed him to begin construction of the ark (**See Genesis 6:18**). Yet, their wives were childless until after the flood (**See Genesis 10:1**). While it is possible it was merely a coincidence all three of Noah's daughters-in-law were barren for sometime before the flood, it seems

unlikely. A more likely explanation is the Lord closed their wombs until after the flood.

Scripture is clear there were no children in the ark. But this alone does not prove there were no infants on earth at the time. However, it does show that at least in the case of Noah's family the normal pattern of procreation was interrupted for sometime prior to the flood. This gives rise to the possibility the interruption was not limited to Noah's family.

Another place in scripture where the presence of infants just prior to the flood could have easily been included is Jesus' reference to how people lived while the ark was being prepared. He specifically mentioned marriage but omitted childbirth. **"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all."** [Luke 17:26-27] (See also Matthew 24:37-38)

One might suggest Jesus' mention of marriage infers the presence of infants. Absent the account of Noah's daughters-in-law such an inference might be reasonable. However, the fact they were childless gives pause to an otherwise sensible inference. Hesitancy is also plausible inasmuch as the Savior was describing typical life just prior to the flood and left out childbirth; which is an effect of marriage in normal circumstances.

God stopped procreation on another occasion. When Abraham was in Gerar and in fear for his life, he introduced Sara as his sister to Abimelech the king. Believing she was unwed, Abimelech took Sara for himself. The narrative reveals God **"closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech"** until the king restored Sara to Abraham. **"So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children. For the LORD had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah Abraham's wife [Genesis 20:16-17]** This account confirms God's willingness to stop procreation as judgment for sin; and supports the possibility reproduction was not occurring just prior to the flood.

Lack of a statement specifically stating procreation stopped for a time does not prove infants died in the flood. This is so because there is no mention of infants in the flood; and circumstantial evidence suggests a possibility procreation had stopped. The burden of proof rests on those who maintain infants were present. To assert they were present in the absence of scriptural affirmation commits the logical fallacy of arguing from silence. This being so, the minor premise of the syllogism, that infants died in the flood, is unproven. Therefore, the conclusion, that evidence from the flood proves some of the wicked die in infancy, is logically invalid.

Another account sometimes used in an effort to prove some of the wicked die in infancy is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. However, as with the narrative of the flood, God's word is silent as to the presence of children. Also, as with the flood narrative, close reading of the account gives reason to believe there were no children present when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

A description of its inhabitants is given when the angels appeared to remove Lot and his family. The description is absent any reference to children. **“But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter.”**

**[Genesis 19:4]** According to this text all the people from every quarter consisted of old and young men.

In addition, like Noah's daughters-in-law, Lot's daughters had husbands, but no children. **“And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law.”** **[Genesis 19:14]**. Lot explained why his daughters did not have children in verse 8; **“Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man...”** **[Genesis 19:8]**

Although married, Lot's daughters were virgins. The nature of the sinning that occurred in Sodom and Gomorrah may explain why they remained virgins after marriage. It is likely their husbands were homosexuals.<sup>17</sup> Scripture indicates all the men were given to homosexual behavior. **(See Genesis 19:1-8)** Also, the sons-in-law were not in the house with Lot and his family when all the men of the city were gathered outside demanding they be given the angels. **(See Genesis 19:4, 19:14)** No further mention of the sons-in-law suggests they perished in Sodom under God's judgment.

A third indication that procreation was not occurring in Sodom and Gomorrah is found in the narrative of his daughters getting Lot drunk to seduce him. They mistakenly believed he was the only man in the world who could procreate. **“And the firstborn said unto the younger, Our father is old, and there is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth: Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father.”** **[Genesis 19:32]** Such extraordinary ignorance is explainable if one accepts that procreation was not occurring in Sodom and Gomorrah; which caused the daughters to mistakenly assume such was the condition in the whole world. If this were the case, the only experience the daughters had with procreation was their own parents. It is possible to understand why they would have thought Lot was the only man on earth who could procreate if they were raised in a culture so completely given over to homosexual behavior that procreation had long since ceased; and their only knowledge of human reproduction was their own births.

When considered together, these circumstances build a strong case to suggest there were no children in Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed the cities. Once again, to argue children were present in the absence of scriptural evidence commits

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<sup>17</sup> Scripture does not say why the sons-in-law married Lot's daughters. Perhaps the marriages were arranged in return for political considerations (Lot was allowed to sit at the gate of the city; Genesis 19:1); or, financial gain from the daughters' dowries may have been the reason. Apparently, Lot was well-to-do. (See Genesis 13-8).

the logical fallacy of arguing from silence. And as is the case with the flood, the minor premise of the syllogism, that infants died in Sodom and Gomorrah, is unproven. Therefore, the conclusion, that some of the wicked die in infancy, is logically invalid.

Another objection sometimes raised against deceased infant salvation is it provides a rationale for abortion. The argument is: If all infants who die go to heaven, some will use this as a reason to abort an unborn child. Logically, the same rationale could apply to others who kill infants. By this line of reasoning Pharaoh and Herod killing hundreds or even thousands of infants actually worked for good in that it assured those slain a place in heaven.

This argument is a non-starter. It is based in fallacy. It is an emotion baiting, straw man argument. It requires we believe murderers are interested in serving God. While the wicked may falsely claim they kill infants to accomplish some imagined good, the motives of Herod and Pharaoh to murder children suggest otherwise. Neither displayed any concern for the future state of the infants they murdered. They murdered to suit their own purposes. This fact goes to the heart of the error of this argument. Those who murder do so as a matter of self-interest. They murder because it serves their selfish, malignant purposes.

Only a mentally unstable and/or emotionally unbalanced child of God who is beguiled by Satan could be so deluded as to claim scripture supplies a rationale for killing infants. Even with only a cursory review of scripture and scant understanding of doctrine it is clear God forbids murder. His word plainly and repeatedly teaches the principle of sanctity of life. It expressly forbids murder. It contains many accounts of God's hatred of religious doctrines that promote infanticide. **"Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods."** [Deuteronomy 12:31] (see also Leviticus 18:21, II Kings 3:27, 16:3, 2Chronicles 28:3. Psalms 106:38, Isaiah 57:5, Jeremiah 19:5, and Ezekiel 16:20) It also teaches, in general, unrepentant murderers go to hell; **"ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."** [I John 3:15] **"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."** [Revelations 21:8]

### **Historical Examination**

In matters of doctrinal beliefs historical arguments do carry some weight, albeit not so unless supported by scriptural roofs. History is valid as evidence of correct doctrinal teaching only to the degree its explanations and narratives squarely stand on and are upheld by biblical proof. This being said, historically, Baptists in general have endorsed the belief that all infants who die in infancy are eternally saved.

Those who departed from Baptists' scriptural and historical position on this topic have invented a number of alternative explanations as to what happens to the souls of deceased infants. As previously mentioned, some embrace the idea of infant purity, while others promote the covenant theology idea that deceased infants of believing parents receive a special dispensation of grace. Still others suggest that scripture is silent on this subject (in their opinions). They believe direct spiritual revelation on a case-by-case basis is the sole measure by which parents may understand their deceased child is in heaven. And finally, a few simply assert some number of infants will spend eternity burning in hell. (Whether the number of infants in hell is great or small they do not say.) Despite these and other aberrant doctrinal anomalies of recent invention, throughout researchable church history, the record shows in general that primitive Baptists and later Primitive Baptists have embraced scriptural teachings that uniformly and strongly suggest all infants who die in infancy are elect.

Our forefathers staunchly defended the doctrine of deceased infant salvation. They were persecuted by paedobaptists for steadfastly holding to the biblical teaching that baptism is reserved for believers only and not an instrument for regeneration nor a ritual foreordained by God that all the Elect will experience. Papists and Reformed paedobaptists alike have claimed our faith and practice condemns unbaptized infants to hell. In responding to their accusers Baptists have generally asserted all infants who die in infancy, regardless of baptismal status, go to heaven.

A search of church history reveals many accounts in which Baptists were brutally persecuted for refusing to submit their children to the Catholic invention of infant baptism. Jonathan Davis presents an account of Catholic persecution of primitive Baptists over the eternal destiny of deceased infants in his history of the Welsh Baptists.<sup>xxvii</sup>

*"Infant Baptism was in vogue long before this time in many parts of the world, but not in Britain. The ordinances of the gospel were then administered exclusively there, according to the primitive mode. Baptism by immersion, administered to those who professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Welsh people considered the only baptism of the New Testament. That was their unanimous sentiment as a nation, from the time the Christian religion was embraced by them in 62, until a considerable time after the year 600. As soon as any of them renounced paganism during that period, they embraced Christianity, not as corrupted by the Romans, but as founded by Christ and his apostles. This we assert to be a fact that cannot be controverted; for the proof of which, we refer our readers to the dispute between Austin and the ministers in Wales, sometime after the year 600. When Austin came from Rome to convert the Saxons from paganism to popery. Having succeeded in a great measure in England, he tried his experiments upon the Welsh; but was disappointed. At this period the Welsh were not ignorant pagans like the Saxons, but they were intelligent, well-informed Christians. It is true, they had no national religion; they had not connected church and*

*state together; for they believed that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world.*

*However, they agreed to meet with Austin, in an association held on the borders of Herefordshire. Austin said he would propose three things to the Welsh ministers and messengers of the different churches of the Principality. First, he proposed infant baptism. He was immediately answered by the Welsh, that they would keep this ordinance, as well as other things, as they had received them from the apostolic age. On hearing this, Austin was exceedingly wroth, and persuaded the Saxons to murder one thousand and two hundred of the Welsh ministers and delegates, there present; and many more afterwards were put to death, because they would not submit to infant baptism. The leading men being dead, king Cadwalader and the majority of the Welsh people submitted to popery; at that time more out of fear than love. Those good people that did not submit, were almost buried in its smoke; so that we know but little of them from that time to the Reformation."*

In 1689 and again in 1900 Baptists endorsed confessions of faith that clearly assert elect infants who die in infancy are regenerated:

*"Elect infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth."<sup>xxviii</sup>*

Persecution over the issue of the eternal destiny of deceased infants was not limited to Catholic abuse. In America, under authority of the Puritan Established Church in Massachusetts, Elders John Clarke and Obadiah Holmes were taken by night from the bedside of a sick church member, imprisoned and tried. Elder John Clark wrote of the outburst during their trial by John Endicott, Governor of the Colony.

*"At length the Governor stepped up, and told us we had denied infant baptism, being somewhat transported, he told me I had deserved death, and he would not have such trash brought into their jurisdiction."<sup>xxix</sup>*

The men were sentenced to pay a fine or receive public flogging. The Baptists in the area paid Elder Clarke's fine, however Elder Holmes denied Endicott's charge as false and refused the offer to pay his fine. He was cruelly and publicly beaten for teaching infant children do not require baptism to be saved.

As late as the mid nineteenth century Anglican leaders in the State Church of England continued persecuting Baptists who refused to surrender their children to their superstitious rite of infant baptism. Charles Spurgeon noted ongoing persecution of Baptists in citing the influence of Edward Bouverie Pusey<sup>xxx</sup>, an influential Anglican priest who insisted the Established Church refuse to perform funerals or allow burials of unbaptized deceased infants.

*"No; children are not saved because they are baptized, for if so, the Puseyite is quite right in refusing to bury our little children if they die unbaptized. Yes, the barbarian is quite right in driving the parent, as he does to this day, from the church yard of his own national Church, and telling him that his child may rot above-ground, and that it shall not be buried except it be at the dead of night, because the superstitious drops have never fallen on its brow. He is right enough if that baptism made the child a Christian, and if that child could not be saved without it."<sup>xxxix</sup>*

In 1900 a fraction of Primitive Baptists, numbered by their own count to be fifty-one Elders representing three hundred thirty-five churches, gathered in Fulton, Kentucky to review the 1689 London Confessio of Faith. Their stated purpose was to render the document more easily understandable, owing to changes in language over the span of more than 200 hundred years from its creation.

*"Language through the lapse of many years undergoes variations in applications and meanings, whereby certain clauses become more or less obscure in meaning. Wherever, in the opinion of this assembly, the meaning of a section was not apparent, footnotes were added to bring out the meaning."<sup>xxxix</sup>*

To this end several footnotes were added to clarify their interpretation of the compilers' original intent. With regard to Chapter X, Section 3 cited above, they inserted the following footnote.

*"We understand this section to teach that all persons dying in infancy are of the elect, and will therefore be saved. We do not understand from this that infants and insane persons are saved in a manner different from the manner in which all other elect persons are saved."<sup>xxxix</sup>*

Elder W.S. Craig in a pamphlet he published in the early 1900s titled "Infant Salvation" and also in his History of the Primitive Baptists<sup>xxxix</sup> published in 1925, asserts church history indicates Particular and Primitive Baptists have almost universally supported the teaching that all infants who die in infancy are elect and saved. In chapter 7 of his book, under the heading "A Few Notes on Infant Salvation" Elder Craig provides an extensive list of quotes to support the assertion that historically, the Baptists have generally held the Bible teaches all infants who die in infancy are saved. He begins by denying Primitive Baptist believe a doctrine that condemns deceased infants to hell.

*"Primitives Baptists have often been charged with believing in infant damnation. Some suppose that Election and Predestination will necessarily lead into the belief that some infants must be lost, when the truth is that only those who are Predestinarians really believe and hold to such views as is truly calculated to save dying infants. .... And in all my researches of Baptist History I have never found where*



*the Baptists have taken a different position. .... But as a matter of historical information I have thought it needful that I record some few notes on this subject."*

The following is a sample of the many quotes Elder Craig compiled from historians and Primitive Baptist and Particular Baptist worthies to support his assertion that throughout history the Baptist have generally held to the belief that all deceased infants are saved.

*"The doctrine of infant damnation was unknown to the early church." -Schaff-Herzog Cy. 2-1079-80.*

*"I am convinced that the souls of all departed infants whatever, baptized or unbaptized, are with God in glory." Toplady, Shedd's Theology , 1-714.*

*"Every child dying in infancy is saved. This is the doctrine of the Baptist denomination. Not of a few only, nor of our churches, and people of the present day alone. It is the doctrine which has been invariably held by us in all countries and in every age, it is the doctrine taught by the Word of God." Howell, pages 175-6*

*"The doctrine that all dying in infancy are saved was first taught by the Baptists. They held not only that an adult believer would be saved though he died without baptism, but that all dying in infancy were saved. This doctrine continually appears in the charges against Baptists who were put to death for their faith. For instance, Henry Craut, Justus Mueller, and John Peisker were beheaded at Jena in 1536, not by Roman Catholics, but by their Protestant brethren, the Lutherans. Among their announced views was the doctrine that 'all infants, even those of Turks, Gentiles and Hebrews, are saved without baptism.' The first time this doctrine appears in a non-Baptist creed it is mentioned only to be condemned. The Augsburg Confession of 1530 says: 'They (the churches putting forth this creed) condemn the Ana-baptists who reject the baptism of children and declare that children are saved without Baptism.'" -MacArthur, page 14*

*"Bible Baptists have always believed that all children who die in infancy are regenerated by the almighty grace of God and go directly home to the loving arms of Jesus." -Hassell, page 270.*

*"I believe that infants, dying in their infancy, are among the number of God's elect." -William Gadsby, Sermons, page 30*

*"The Bible teaches infant salvation, and Primitive Baptists preach it." -Pittman, The Church its Shadows and Substance, page 10.*

*"All that die in infancy are saved in heaven. I believe that." - J.R. Daily, Debate with Throgmorton. Page 156.*

In addition to the many quotes supplied by Elder Craig, further study of Baptist history produces citations to support his contention that the doctrine of deceased infant salvation has been consistently believed and staunchly defended by the Baptists.

In his book A body of Doctrinal Divinity, Dr. John Gill expresses his inclination to believe all infants who die in infancy are saved. In examining the doctrine of election Dr. Gill uses the case of deceased infants as an example of God exercising His sovereign will in mercy and compassion to choose whom He will have saved without regard to any moving cause in man such as belief, good works, infant innocence, or perseverance.

*"The truth of all this might be illustrated and confirmed by the case of infants dying in infancy; who, as soon as they are in the world, almost, are taken out of it. Now such a number as they are, can never be thought to be brought into being in vain and without some end to be answered, and which, no doubt, is the glory of God, who is and will be glorified in them, some way or another, as well as an adult person: now though their election is a secret to us, and unrevealed; it may be reasonably supposed, yea, in a judgment of charity it may rather be concluded, that they are all chosen, than that none are; and if it is allowed that any of them may be chosen it is enough to my present purpose; that since the election of them cannot be owing to their faith, holiness, obedience, good works, and perseverance, or to foresight of these things, which do not appear in them."*<sup>xxxv</sup>

Dr. Gill discusses God's punishment of sin in Book III. In addressing the presence of sin in infants owing to the effect of original sin in them, he stops well short of any inference that such as whom die in infancy may be condemned to burn in hell; and lends his own support to those who believe deceased infants are saved.

*"Some have fancied that all such infants are lost; which seems to have something in it shocking, especially to parents. And others think they are all saved, through the election of grace of God, the redeeming blood of Christ, and the regeneration of the blessed Spirit; to which I am much rather inclined, than to the former..."*<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Charles Spurgeon was a staunch defender of deceased infant salvation as a doctrine historically held by Baptists who embrace the doctrines of grace. Furthermore, he claimed those who accused Baptists of teaching that any who die in infancy may be eternally condemned were knowing liars.

*"Before I enter upon that I would make one observation. It has been wickedly, lyingly, and slanderously said of Calvinists, that we believe that some little children perish. Those who make the accusation know that their charge is false. I cannot even dare to hope, though I would wish to do so, that they ignorantly misrepresent us. They wickedly repeat what has been denied a thousand times, what they know is not true. \*\*\* Dr. Gill, who has been looked upon in late times as being a very standard of Calvinism, not to say of ultra-Calvinism<sup>‡</sup>, himself*

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<sup>‡</sup> Based on examination of their writings and sermons it seems some doctrinal differences existed between Gill and Spurgeon. Gill's doctrinal sentiments appear to be more closely associated with Primitive Baptists doctrine

*never hints for a moment the supposition that any infant has perished, but affirms of it that it is a dark and mysterious subject, but that it is his belief, and he thinks he has Scripture to warrant it, that they who have fallen asleep in infancy have not perished, but have been numbered with the chosen of God, and so have entered into eternal rest. We have never taught the contrary, and when the charge is brought, I repudiate it and say, "You may have said so, we never did, and you know we never did. If you dare to repeat the slander again, let the lie stand in scarlet on your very cheek if you be capable of a blush." We have never dreamed of such a thing. With very few and rare exceptions, so rare that I never heard of them except from the lips of slanderers, we have never imagined that infants dying as infants have perished, but we have believed that they enter into the paradise of God.*<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In 1935 Elder R. H. Pittman published a book titled Questions and Answers. It is a compilation of questions submitted by subscribers to the church periodicals, "The Gospel Messenger" and "The Advocate and Messenger." The questions are addressed by Elder Pittman and Elder Sylvester Hassell. Questions answered by Elder Pittman are followed by the initial "P." Several questions address the topic of the eternal destiny of deceased infants. These queries and the Elders' responses are presented below.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

*Q. What is the meaning of the language of God to Adam in the garden of Eden: "In the day that thou eatest thereof (that is, of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17)?*

*A. The literal translation is, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, dying, thou shalt die;" that is, as soon as Adam should partake of the forbidden fruit, he should become mortal, or begin to die, and at last, at the time appointed of God, he should die a natural death (Eccles. 3:2, Heb. 9:27). The death of Adam, when he ate the forbidden fruit, was a "death in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1-5); and all his posterity are involved in this death (Rom. 5:12); and, unless chosen, redeemed, and quickened by God, which will be manifested in a godly life unless they die in infancy, they will finally go down into the second or eternal death (II Thess. 1:7-10, Rev. 20:14, 21:8, 22:11).*

*Q. Do The Scriptures teach the doctrine of Infant Salvation?*

*A. Yes. All that is said about infants is favorable to their salvation. The Scriptures teach that salvation from sin is by grace. Human works do not save adults, much less infants, but grace does. David felt his child was saved. Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." P.*

*Q. Have you, during your ministerial life, ever found any one, claiming the name of Primitive (or "Hardshell") Baptist, that advocated the doctrine of "infant damnation?"*

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*that is sometimes referred to by detractors as hyper-Calvinism or in this case Ultra-Calvinism. Spurgeon, it seems was somewhat influenced by the teachings of Andrew Fuller and tended toward four point Calvinism. MI*

*A. I never have. Only those evil minded persons who misunderstand and hate us have ever made such an accusation. One evident cause of such misrepresentation is our belief of the scriptural doctrine of particular election and a special atonement, without which all mankind would be justly condemned and lost. The Scriptures do not plainly state that all who die before natural birth or in infancy are saved; but such passages as II Sam. 12:23; Matt. 18:2,3; Luke 18:15-17; Rom. 5:12-21; and Rev. 7:9, have perfectly satisfied nearly all Primitive Baptists that all who die before natural birth or in infancy are elect and redeemed of the Lord, and are everlastingly and graciously saved by Him, without any merit or works on their part, just as all of His other people are saved; and that water baptism or sprinkling or pouring has nothing whatever to do with the everlasting salvation of any human being, whether infant or adult.*

*Q. How are children saved? A preacher labored at great length last Sunday to prove that since the death of Christ all infants are born without sin.*

*A. Infants are saved by the death of Christ. Whatever change is necessary for them to enter the kingdom of heaven, God gives them. Repentance and faith (belief) are not necessary for they have not committed actual transgression but a new nature is necessary because they are born into the world with depraved, sinful natures. That preacher is wrong in his statement that since the death of Christ infants are born sinless and pure. P*

*Q. How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent? Does this mean that there is no salvation in heaven where there are no preachers to preach?*

*A. No. Paul was defending the preaching of the gospel, to the Gentiles. And remember, there is a gospel faith - a belief of gospel truths, separate and distinct from the faith of God's elect. The saving faith of God's elect may exist in those who never hear or understand the preaching of the gospel. Infants, idiots, the deaf, and millions cannot be reached by the preached gospel, and surely there is salvation for them. However, there is need for the preached gospel, and a belief of gospel truths is proof that such believer "hath everlasting life." The right living and right preaching of a minister also saves from false ways and false doctrines. In this sense they cannot believe and cannot be saved without the preacher, and there cannot be preaching unless one is sent to preach. P.*

In the twentieth century Elder C. H. Cayce was an outspoken proponent of deceased infant salvation. He taught this Bible doctrine with great conviction, citing many scriptures and presenting strong, lucid arguments to assert all infants who die in infancy are elect. Elder Cayce preached this doctrine and wrote of it on numerous occasions. In refuting an attack by a former Primitive Baptist preacher who was excluded for preaching gospel means, (that the gospel and preachers are God's means of accomplishing regeneration) Elder Cayce answered his charge by

pointing out his theory implied infants cannot be saved. He noted Primitive Baptists have always believed infants who die in infancy are elect.

*"Those who argue that the Bible and preachers are necessary for the salvation of persons of Adam's race have, all along, accused the Old Baptists of preaching infant damnation and the Old Baptists have always denied the charge. \*\*\* The infant is saved without gospel preaching, and that is the way all other saved persons are saved. \*\*\* The Lord has one way of regenerating his people, and that way is suited alike to the infant and to the adult."<sup>xxxix</sup>*

In September 1950 Elder J. D. Holder debated church of Christ preacher, Gus Nichols. Elder J. M. Bullard served as Elder Holder's moderator.<sup>18</sup> The subject of the debate was the means by which a man is saved. Elder Holder's position affirmed and defended the following assertion: *"The Scriptures teach that all for whom Christ died will be saved, or receive remission of sins, without the preached or written word, or any condition on their part."* Elder Nichol's position affirmed: *"The Scriptures teach that Christ died for all the sinful race of Adam, and that he offers the remission of alien sins, or salvation, to all alike, upon the conditions of faith, repentance, confession and baptism."* In the following statement Elder Holder responded to a challenge by Nichols, and affirmed his contention that scripture teaches all infants who die in infancy are elect and saved.

*"He wants to know now if all infants dying in infancy are 'elect'? Yes; do you say some of them go to hell as 'non-elect'? There never has an infant died in sin. There is a way to prove my position: When the Lord Jesus Christ comes to separate people who shall be consigned to hell, he says, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew you." Although infants have the sin of Adam by nature, as it is in their flesh, as in the fall of Adam—(Rom. 5:12), and his proposition says so (and I can prove it by Campbell if he denies it! I have Campbell's "Christian System," their articles of faith! And Campbell makes that idea just as strong as I do, on the condition of man in the fall!); all right, Sir: in the fall they are sinners by nature, but they are not sinners by practice. And all infants dying in infancy will live in heaven. Jesus said this, and I offer it as a negative argument: 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."<sup>xl</sup>*

In my own experience of more than 60 years among Primitive Baptists, the last 31 as a preacher of the gospel, in all my travels and having listened to many sermons (both in person and recorded), I cannot recall a single time I've heard a sound Old Baptist preacher deliver a sermon on this topic suggesting some infants who die in

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<sup>18</sup> Elders Holder and Bullard traveled widely and were held in high esteem among Primitive Baptists wherever they went. Both men were known for their depth of knowledge and soundness in the scriptures and considered strong defenders of Primitive Baptist faith and practice. *MI*

infancy are not saved. I must admit I have occasionally met brethren who were uncertain of biblical teachings of the future happiness of all deceased infants; and, a scant few who deny the doctrine of deceased infant salvation. The most memorable sermon I've heard on deceased infant salvation was delivered by Elder Sonny Pyles of Graham, TX in the 1980s. It gave me great comfort at the time and encouraged me to study the subject more diligently. A number of points Elder Pyles taught<sup>19</sup> that day are included in this essay.

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<sup>19</sup> I Timothy 2:2 "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." KJV

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