

## WHAT HAPPENS TO INFANTS OR THE UNBORN WHEN THEY DIE?

After much prayer, reading and meditation, I would like to offer the following concerning the subject of "What happens to infants and the unborn when they die?"

Let us first consider five basic positions that are held by Bible students concerning the subject:

(1) The age of accountability. This is a common belief by many. This position suggests that all the unborn and infants below a certain age are unaccountable for their actions and considered innocent (without sin) until they reach a certain age. Many who hold this position will use the age of twelve as a general time. Some will say that accountability will start when one feels the conviction of sin, at which time they must make a decision for Christ in order to be saved.

This position cannot be supported by the Bible as there simply is no verse of scripture that teaches an "age of accountability". According to Psalm 51:5, David was convinced he was a sinner by nature in his mother's womb. In Job 14:4 we read, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." According to Job, no sinful person can (beyond natural ability) bring forth a sinless person. It required the work of the Holy Spirit and a virgin for our Lord to come into this world perfect and sinless. If it were possible for a normal man and woman, through the natural means of conception, to bring forth a sinless person, then the miraculous work of the virgin birth would not have been necessary.

(2) Head of household salvation. This position, which is commonly held by Catholic and other Protestant groups, suggests that if the father or mother of the household will be obedient to certain requirements it will be credited to the children until they reach a particular age. These groups will cite Acts 16:15 (Lydia and her house), Acts 16:33 (Jailor and his house) and Hebrews 11:7 (Noah and his house) to prove their position.

Since it is by grace we are saved and not by our works, why or how could a father or mother by their works eternally save their children. According to the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:18-19, it is by the "righteousness of one" that we are justified in the sight of God. The "one" is none other than Jesus Christ our Lord.

(3) Infant Baptism, or infant sprinkling. This position, which is held by Catholics and many Protestant groups, suggests that infants must be baptized or sprinkled with water to secure their place in heaven.

This position cannot be supported by scripture, since God's Word requires a professing believer in Jesus Christ to be a proper candidate for baptism. In Acts 8:36, the eunuch asked Philip, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered in the next verse, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

(4) Evidential position. This position suggests that we, as children of God, judge all things through evidence and knowledge of truth (1 Cor 2:15). That we are able, through the evidence seen, to make a judgment in hope of eternal life.

In Galatians 5:22-23 the Apostle Paul writes, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." When reading these two verses, one should pay attention to these being the "fruit of", not the "root of" the Spirit. When fruit is manifested in a person's life, it is evidence of life, not the source of life. So we are able to conclude that, in an evidential context, when "fruit" is seen, it indicates the person is a born again child of God.

The subject of "Evidence of Salvation" is taught throughout the scriptures. In 1 John 4:1 and John 5:24 we learn that believing in Jesus is an evidence of eternal salvation. In John 13:35 it's the love

one to another, In Psalms 73:5 it's the conviction of sin, in 1 Corinthians 2:14 it's the receiving of spiritual things (such as the gospel), and in Psalms 10:4 it's the believing in God. In all the examples provided we are given hope and knowledge of salvation through evidence.

Now that we have set forth a definition of the Evidential position, let us consider the scriptural evidence, that, when the unborn and infants die, they are born again children of God.

(a) In scripture, there is never a wicked person who dies in infancy. Every time a wicked person dies in the Bible, they are in a mature state. The first person in scripture that can be termed as a non-elect is Cain, the son of Adam and Eve. By the information of Genesis chapter 4 alone, we are able to see him as an adult, not an infant. In Genesis chapter 25, it's a man named Esau. Esau, who is the twin brother of Jacob, is used by the Apostle in Romans 9:13 to teach the subject of election. Without question, Esau's soul and spirit is in hell today, but he didn't die as an infant. Esau died as an adult, a mature man. In Isaiah chapter 14 we find another wicked man dying and being cast into hell. In Isaiah 14:9 we read of the "chief ones of the earth" that were in hell when the adult man arrived. Notice the text does not imply or say they were wicked infants, but "chief ones" of the earth. All of these were mature adults. I could go on, but I think the reader should be able to readily understand the point: there is no wicked person in scripture who dies in infancy.

(b) When we read about infants dying in scripture, there is always evidence and hope of grace. In 2 Samuel 11:27 we read about a son born to David and Bathsheba. This son died at a very young age. By comparing 2 Samuel 11:27 with 2 Samuel 12:18, we are able to conclude that this child was in an infant state. According to 2 Samuel 12:23, David believed that his son's soul went to heaven. David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." In Matthew 2:16-18 we read of the time when Herod had all the children "two years old and under" murdered. According to Matthew 2:17-18, the scripture in Jeremiah 31:15-16 was fulfilled at that time. In Jeremiah 31:16, the mothers were comforted by knowing that their infants would come again from the "land of the enemy." In 1 Corinthians 15:26 we learn that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Since the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death, the only way those infants could "come again from the land of the enemy", is if their soul went immediately to heaven and their bodies will be raised again on the last day.

(c) Job 21:7-14. In Job 21:7 we read, "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?", and in Romans 9:22, "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:..." According to these two verses of scripture the wicked live to be old. How do the wicked live to be old, you ask? God, in His power, will not suffer a wicked person to die in infancy. This is not saying that God, before the foundation of the world, predestinated the age of years that people would live, but is simply declaring God's ability in temporal intervention. In Isaiah 38:5 God added 15 years to Hezekiah's life. If the Lord, in His sovereign power, can add 15 years to someone's life, God is able to intervene and give natural life to a wicked person.

(d) The Vindication of God's Throne (meaning - God will be declared Just, Holy and Right in all of His doings). Even though the transgression of Adam, which caused us all to be conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12), is enough for us to be separated from God forever, In order for God's Throne to be vindicated and for Him to be declared just in all His doings (Deut 32:4, Psalm 51:4, Romans 3:4), there must be an active doing or work of sin beyond the parameter of the law. In 1 John 3:4 we read that "sin is the transgression of the law." A transgression is an action that is beyond a given parameter. Even though every infant is conceived in the nature of sin, they are not

sinner by works until they actively commit sin in their lives. If the Lord asked an angel to hold an unborn infant up before Him and said even though you never committed an active sin, you are condemned to eternal torment because of the nature you possess, a person could comment, you never gave me a chance to do better. But, if the wicked person stands before God with a conscious mind of his or her actions, the Lord cannot be charged with an unjust judgment. The wicked will still hate God, but will have no place of argument before the Righteous and Holy Throne of God.

Whether we are considering the Final Judgment of the wicked in Matthew 25:41-46, John 5:28-29, or Revelation 20:11-15, the language is clear. The wicked are judged, not only according to the nature of sin, but by "their works" and what they "did" and have "done".

(5) The last position is that some deceased infants are the elect and some are not. This position suggests that some of the infants who are killed in abortion and die in infancy are not the elect of God. In my humble opinion, this position resembles the doctrine of reprobation that has been and is held by many Reformed Protestants. The doctrine of reprobation adheres to believing God ordained some to heaven, and some to eternal torment, which is actually the same as the double predestination position the Primitive Baptist have stood against throughout the ages. According to scripture, the Lord predestinated His people to heaven in Christ Jesus, not to eternal torment. The works of sin will send us to everlasting fire. Since this position says that some deceased infants are in everlasting torment without any works of sin of their own, the only conclusion would be that they were ordained to such, which is contrary to the Bible. As one of my father's in the ministry said, "that may not be the doctrine of reprobation exactly, but it's so close it makes my skin crawl." In my humble estimation, this position is not consistent with what the scripture says about my God. The God of the Bible is Just and Holy in all His doings. God has never, nor will He ever, give room for His throne to be mocked by men. Every person in eternal torment will consciously know why they are there. Isaiah 14:10 says the wicked in hell "speak and say", which declares they have an ability of communication that only comes through maturity.

Now let us consider some oppositions of the evidential or # 4 position

(a) Some say, by teaching the evidential position, you are really teaching the Age of Accountability. If one who adheres to the evidential position declares that he or she believes that all people are sinners by nature at conception, there is simply no justification of someone accusing that person of teaching the age of accountability. The evidential position is not saying that anyone is free from the accountability of sin, it is just weighing in the truth of scripture to conclude that the deceased infant was a saved by grace child of promise.

(b) Some say, if the Bible says that God has a people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;..." (Rev 5:9), doesn't that disqualify a person believing that all deceased infants are the people of God?

If two people looked around at a congregation gathered at the Church House on Sunday morning, would the same comment apply? I think not. We believe that the congregation of believers are all children of God by the evidence which they have shown. The reason we are able to conclude that all deceased infants are saved by grace children of God is because of evidence. So the conclusion is, there is no difference in a person believing all deceased infants are children of God and a person believing that the entire Church body are children of God.

(c) Some say, if John the Baptist's leaping for joy in Elisabeth's womb (Luke 1:41) is considered a good work, would that not prove that infants can do evil works in the womb?

John, when he leaped for joy, did not have a developed mind to respond to the gospel. He was

undeveloped in body and mind at 6 months old. I've never seen a new born infant that I thought understood the gospel. But it was John, being "filled with the Holy Ghost", who leaped. The Spirit of God within John caused the leap, not his conscious mind that perceived the words of Mary. The portion of scripture, in the Gospel According to Luke, is one that proves a person can be "Born Again", even while in the mother's womb, which actually strengthens the "evidential" position concerning deceased infants.

In closing, I would like to ask the reader if they have ever conversed at length with any mother or father who have lost an infant in death? The pain and anguish is tremendous to say the least. I am so thankful that God, in His Holy Word, has given us comfort concerning this anguish. The Apostle Paul tells Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:8 to "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord". If I believed that some deceased infants went to eternal torment, I would be ashamed to preach that at a funeral service of an infant who has passed. But adhering to the evidential position will leave no one ashamed to preach because this position declares the Grace of God our Savior has saved the infant. I'm convinced of this evidential position dear reader, and am willing to die giving comfort and hope to the families who have lost their infants in death. And at the end of the day, if someone wants to charge me with "giving hope and comfort", I will be happy to stand "Guilty as Charged".

In Hope of the Resurrection Day,  
Elder Ronnie B. Loudermilk