

—Study 45—

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?



by F. Paul Haney

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Christ Fellowship Ministries

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• “I have a child (a son) who died 6 days after his birth. If you are saying that our present lifetime is indeed humanity's only chance for salvation, please help me figure out how the Bible explains God's saving plan for my son. I believe our One God is a merciful and just God and won't allow my child to lose his chance of eternal life despite his not being able to come into the age of awareness of his Creator's grand plan and offer of sonship to mankind.”

• “The doctors said my son was born without a brain. We were broken-hearted when we found out. His head got large with the fluid. He died at about 3 ½ years, and we were broken-hearted again. ... I wanted to know why.”

• “I have a friend who was taught that when babies die before they can be baptized, they go to hell. Are there any Bible verses about this? How can I help him?”

• “What happens to babies or children who die before they reach the age of accountability? What about stillborn babies?” “Instant Heaven!”

• “That same day of the accident, the heartbroken parents met with their pastor. Seeking to comfort them, the pastor said: ‘Maria and Tricia are with Jesus now. They are filled with joy and you will see them again one day.’ ”

SALVATION OF CHILDREN IS A COMMON CONCERN among parents, especially those who are Christian and know something of a promise or a reward in the afterlife. Many parents have agonized over the uncertain fate of their dead children. Untold anguish visits those who have lost children. On any given day in the world, tiny coffins are carried to the burying grounds. In some cases, babies are blown to bits or burned to death and nothing is left to bury. At least those who are able to bury their children have the comfort of saying “Goodbye.” One distressing epitaph from Hillside Cemetery (Colorado) goes like this: *“Oh my son, my son. Would God that I had died for thee. Oh my son, my son!”* One more: *“Another little darling babe is sheltered in the grave; God needed one more angel child amidst his shining band. And so he bent with loving smile and clasped our darling's hand.”* Finally: *“But Oh! For the Touch of a Vanished Hand and the Sound of a Voice that is Stilled.”* This kind of anguish is inconsolable.

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On one hand, the Bible and many church organizations indicate that humanity has only one chance to get right with God. On the other hand, organizations tell us that people like Hitler and similar monstrous criminals who *"evidently did not really know Jesus personally"* will get another chance at life and salvation, since they somehow missed or bungled their first chance. Supporters of this latter position suggest that after the Messiah returns to earth, all children, especially those under a mysterious "age of accountability," mentally retarded or defective persons, and even aborted fetuses, not to mention all people who have not heard the name of Jesus, will have their *first* opportunity to mature, know Christ, become saved in a world without satanic distractions, and eventually receive eternal life. This grand design necessarily requires any number of physical resurrections about which the Bible is silent. The second-chance doctrine for adults brings on enormous problems. (See our free *Study #44-A, No Second Chance.*) Additional Christian organizations will flat-out tell you that God will save any and all children, and that those babies that have died have already gone directly to Heaven and are now living in an angelic kingdom. This represents Universal Infant Salvation. No one tells us how these "immortal" babies are being cared for, who is doing it, or if they even need any care. The Bible is also silent on Universal Salvation for babies.

Pain and suffering is not so bad when it appears to serve a good purpose, or when a good conclusion can be predicted. But how can the pain and suffering of the loss of a beloved child serve any good purpose? Most grieving parents will tell you that no good purpose was served in the loss of their child, even those folks who think "God took the child." I agree. Yet, we have Christian preachers in churches around the world who, in an effort to ease the pain of such a loss, will suggest that God *did* take the child for *his* purposes. In placing the blame on God, they want you to believe that your child is in a "better" place now and further, that the death of the child was not your fault. (The last point is largely true.) They are sincerely trying to make sense of your loss. That better place is, of course, heaven. Others modify the scriptures to make it appear that God is testing you. They are also blaming God for your loss in an attempt to help you.

Billions of fetuses at various stages of growth, some recognizable as pre-born human babies, others not recognizable, have been aborted and eliminated world wide. Many are disposed of by cremation. Some are just tossed out or flushed down a drain. Thousands of pre-born and *viable* late-term babies have been, and are being legally destroyed. Under the protection of the law, "Partial-Birth Abortion" in the United States (and presumably elsewhere) is rampant. This particularly fiendish, brutal, and monstrous activity occurs at the hands of doctors whose avowed credo (Hippocratic Oath to the gods¹) is: "Do no harm." But the method of destruction is relatively simple and apparently, the money is good. A brief description of partial-birth abortion: Turn the baby around in the birth canal so that the feet and torso are hanging out of the birth mother, reach inside, drill a hole in the skull, suck the brains out of the full- or near-full-term baby (while he kicks and squirms to try to fight off his medical attackers), and crush the skull. Lo and behold, the baby is "born" dead. This appalling, shameful, and murderous procedure is called "partial-birth" abortion" for a very good reason: another few

¹ **Hippocratic Oath -- Classical Version:** I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment this oath and this covenant: ... I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; I will keep them from harm and injustice. I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness I will guard my life and my art. ... *Translation from the Greek by Ludwig Edelstein. From The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation, by Ludwig Edelstein. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943. (There are modern versions, also.)*

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inches of travel and the baby would be born alive, essentially full-term. In March, 2005, the United States Congress held an unprecedented emergency session, rapidly passing a special and questionable law to protect one woman, Terri Schiavo, from certain death. The President rose up in the middle of the night to sign it into law, stating that we “ought to err on the side of life,” while at the very same time, probably on the very same day, brutal partial-birth abortions were taking place (and still are) in this nation under our very noses with little or no outcry, and none, to my knowledge, from the White House and few, if any, from the Congress. How inconsistent politicians are! Sadly, for those all but born children that are being put to death for no medical reasons whatsoever, it is neither politically convenient nor politically beneficial to prevent their deaths.

Millions, even billions of children under, say, twelve years of age the world over have died and not been baptized (immersed) into Christ. (Infant baptism is not scriptural.) Millions of adults around the world have never even heard the name Jesus Christ, and fewer still have heard his true name, Yahshua ha Massiach. Are these babies and adults lost and destined for a never-ending life of torture in a hellfire? As a people, we cry out against torture (however mild) of prisoners—it seems so terrible to *even humiliate* some prisoners. Some of us hate others for mistreating animals and we jail them, yet most Christians do not bat an eye at the prospect of millions of “sinners” (whose only crime might have been to not know Christ or maybe to have rejected the orthodox view of him) suffering for an *endless* eternity of torture in a fire that blisters but does not destroy. No matter; few professing Christians seem to have a problem with endless torture for “sinners.”

Parts of the issue of infant salvation are basic to the orthodox view of salvation and the nature of human beings that are extended to include children. Some conclusions regarding the salvation of dead babies, idiots, and incapables, living and dying in moral incompetency, have been based upon the teaching of “Original Sin” and whether or not it is a valid biblical doctrine. Other expositors draw conclusions based upon the teaching of the supposed “immortality” of the “soul.” Still more conclusions come by way of distinctive church doctrines that propose a “second” chance at life and thus a “first” chance (*they say*) at salvation. Then there is the premise that babies are “innocent” and since they were unable to sin before they died, they are therefore blameless and unaccountable. These children go to heaven immediately, it is said. Sentimentality and emotionalism permeate the issue before us. All of these points, and more, such as moral enslavement, will be explored in this study.

Over the years, countless billions of persons have not reached maturity, but have died in thousands of ways. Where are their “souls” today, if indeed they had souls? It is said that about 25 percent of all conceptions do not complete the 20th week of pregnancy. They die in the womb. Death at birth (stillborn) happens millions of times a year around the globe. One health organization reported that 4,350,000 babies died at birth in the year 1999, but many experts believe the actual figure is much higher (*Safe in the Arms of God, truth from heaven about the death of a child, ©2003, p.4, by John MacAurthur*). John MacAurthur states: “*We need answers rooted in truth.*” Exactly correct! Objective truth on this issue would be refreshing but it is as scarce as hen’s teeth, as my mother would say. What we now have, in large part, is subjective personal emotionalism sprinkled with opinion and conjecture.

The issue of death, but especially the death of children, is the most difficult and heart rending issue I have personally had to face as a father, a minister, and a pastor. But the difficulty of a task is no excuse for avoiding it.

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LIFE IS NOT PROBATIONARY

A. Life as we know it, with respect to religious issues and matters, is not probationary or provisional: it is *not* a trial run. You only get one shot at life. The apostle Paul wrote that believers ARE *now* in a “race” (**Acts 20:24; 1Cor.9:24; 2Tim.4:7; Heb.12:1**). (Unbelievers that sit on the religious sidelines are still part of the race.) Paul did not suggest that the race was a trial run. We are to run the race set before us. So, Paul did not think that what we are going through in this world is an experiment. Today is the day of salvation; not tomorrow, next week, or in another life. While you are breathing and alive, you are in the race. Today is your day of *opportunity* for salvation (**Lk.19:9**). **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1Pet.5:8)**. Satan is no respecter of persons—he will devour the heathen just as he devours church people. We are all in a race.

The race is not postponed until after you die. When you are born, you enter the race for survival. And this survival is not merely physical—it is spiritual. **“We then, as workers together with him [Christ] also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain, for he says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2Cor.6:1-2, NKJV)**. The NIV: **“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation.”** If today is the day of salvation for believers, what can be the destiny of unbelievers? They will die in their sins (**Jn.8:24**). **“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ ” (1Pet.4:17-18)**. Please do not squander your opportunity.

There are those who tell us that **2Cor.6:1-2** ought to be changed to read “now is *A* day of salvation” based mostly on **Isa.49:8**, but this is an error. They say: *“This is not the only day of salvation—some will be resurrected for another day of salvation, even future days of salvation.”* But the sense of the 2Corinthian passage is that the day of salvation began when the Messiah was revealed and this “day” (or interval of time) will end when the Messiah returns in judgment. Paul’s pleading, *“Do not receive the grace of God in vain”* was stated because now is the accepted time! Some are trying to support a bizarre church doctrine that there are *additional times* of salvation in the future “during the millennium”—in effect, suggesting that this life is only a trial period for most people—that the “vast majority” of people will be saved later. They say if a person has not received all the facts (or the truth) about salvation (as *they* determine those facts and the truth), then these persons “have not received their one chance.” But I ask: *“Since when is God obligated to give anyone a “chance” at salvation? Who are you to tell God his business?”* Salvation is now—God offers it today. When you die (as an adult) your race has been run, no matter what generation you lived in. This is the real deal. For those who are alive, today is the present “age of grace.” It will last until you die or until the resurrection to judgment.

The problem of the salvation of children has been addressed in some fashion or another by virtually every Christian organization (and I suppose all peoples in all lands) the world over. And most Christian church groups, to my knowledge, have made some kind of provision for salvation of children, especially the very young and innocent, when it comes to their untimely and tragic deaths and their ultimate salvation. The New Testament (NT), we understand, teaches that children are of special value (and they are!!), so it is rather incredible that the NT does not teach a clear path to salvation for them as it does for adults. Therefore, the salvation of ignorant and supposedly innocent babies is a difficult issue to address. Worse, *because there are no clear cut biblical answers* to the question of the salvation of children, many church

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organizations have chosen to create solutions that develop into *traditional* answers. This is unfortunate, because any conclusions about infant or child salvation, then, necessarily devolve to opinion, a best guess, an educated guess, conjecture, best analysis, church tradition/doctrine or simply to a personal desire or need for satisfaction. Some groups turn a blind eye to the lack of biblical evidence but they do so due to a real heartfelt desire to help grieving parents, and to a genuine desire to solve a nearly unsolvable puzzle. Church leaders unwisely contribute to biblical ignorance by establishing and spreading extra-biblical church doctrines. Some admit the lack of scriptural evidence but then contend (using human reasoning) that God's mercy or grace *automatically* extends to babies. Or they might suggest that God *just would not allow* babies to "go to hell." (Most consider hell to be a place of endless torture; another error established by orthodox tradition.) These extra-biblical teachings then develop into full blown church or denominational dogma that mostly ignorant people simply accept as biblical truth.

It has been written that the Catholic Church has a role as "Protector of Divine Revelation." If this notion is believed by the faithful, then anything the Roman Church pronounces will be accepted as coming from God himself, regardless how incomprehensible it is. Better, I think, is to be honest and candid about the issue of infant salvation, as tough as that may be for all concerned. Biblical honesty is not always the most popular path to tread, but it is the best. That path can be perilous for the traveler. The Bible, I remind you, cannot, *and does not*, answer all of life's questions—it was not designed to do so. Nor is this writing the final word of the subject; there are a number of books that espouse the "babies are in heaven" doctrine that you can purchase that might better suit your purposes.

Interestingly, the Old Testament (OT) in Hebrew or Greek (LXX), the only word of God that all the apostles, disciples, and Christ read (they had no New Testament), tells of a number of times when God authorized the utter destruction of babies, children, and "youths" along with adults (**Deut.3:6; 2Ki.2:23**). And Yahweh God is the architect of his biblical law. Why has God not clearly defined the issue of infant salvation?

Respecting the law, it is said that the more "**Points of Reference**" we have, the better prepared we are to deal with life's unfortunate events as they occur. In this case, more is better. But wait. This lofty ideal has brought society a bewildering array of laws that cover nearly every phase of life and every step we take and we, as a litigious society, have become smothered in the complexity of the law and naturally, lawsuits.

Respecting the Bible, "points of reference" are relatively scattered and not so well defined. As a result, believers have more freedom to work within the biblical system than in general society. But this too has its faults. Uncertainty in certain areas, Sabbath activities, for instance, the most visible form of possible "legalism," can be confusing and fraught with unnecessary inconvenience. Some religious people want more definition and more biblical control. But Yahweh our God knew what he was doing in limiting "points of reference." First century Judaism added a myriad of "points of reference" to biblical law. The more "points of reference" we have, the less we need to rely on guesses or speculation and the more defined the law becomes. But as a result, the first century AD term "Pharisee" became equivalent to "legalism." The Pharisees and their associated society wound up depending upon the law to dictate nearly their every move. They were in a box. And they were legalistic. No longer was a citizen of Judea able to move about between the borders of the law and make personal decisions, especially regarding the Sabbath—they were strictly accountable to manmade definitions and interpretations—they were slaves to false doctrines. Freedom of choice was stifled and the spirit of God was quenched. Today, this technique is

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being practiced by Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, as well as other groups that claim freedom in Christ. You must believe certain doctrines to be considered a Christian and this also even by virtually all cultic fringe groups. As a result of authoritarian church leadership, those who must have an answer for every question, doctrines have been created for children dying in their infancy or minority. But on this point, it has been said that we should never attribute to malice, those things that can be adequately explained by ignorance, foolishness, or sheer stupidity, so if possible, we should tread softly upon the doctrines of men: *they are not necessarily doctrines of demons*. Now, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, so God may have a plan that has yet to be revealed.

What about the children? Well, children are no different than anyone else. They die. They die in war, by disease, by accident, and some are murdered. But their deaths are always sad, tragic, and untimely. And when they die, nothing we can say or do helps very much. Nothing about the death of a child is humanly justifiable or consoling. We expect older people to eventually die, like our parents, but not our children. Embodied within our children's lives are our hopes and dreams—even as extensions of ourselves and *our* unfulfilled dreams. The death of older persons, on the other hand, those who have lived a full and rich life, is fitting, though also sad; they have accomplished much, and now their time has arrived. The death of older persons is often merciful. Because of the extent of ongoing pain and suffering of the elderly, and the fact that they just may never recover, we, and they, often look forward to their escape. Then they slip into a deep sleep and are gone. But such is not the case with our children. When they become victims of serious accidents or inexplicable diseases, we hope and pray and wring our hands for their complete recovery, and we fully expect that their young and growing bodies can overcome the deadly illnesses that ravage them. In the years before medicines like Penicillin and simple antiseptic hygiene, common minor childhood diseases killed an awful lot of children. Yet, even with miracle medicines, the dreadful fact is that children do die and they will continue to die. Our loving bonds with our children cause us to call out in our grief for answers and understanding. "Why did God take my child?!" John MacArthur's book, *Safe in the Arms of God, truth from heaven about the death of a child*, does not help us find the answers. Clearly, this is a polarizing issue.

Make no mistake. Biblical answers regarding beloved children that have died untimely deaths, as best we can honestly develop them from the Bible, will not satisfy many anguished parents. I have no misconceptions about this. But if your child has died, you are not alone in your sorrow. Yet I am not satisfied even with my own conclusions after years of contemplation, listening to hundreds of sermons, and study. I also have a dead son; one who died a violent death at the hands of an apparent drunken driver who just happened to be an off-duty police detective driving his pickup truck at midnight. Because answers developed from the Bible are not satisfactory, many religious groups have hastily created doctrines suggesting what they consider to be "satisfactory" solutions. I find this activity, though done sincerely to help, to be less than upright and honest. Although presumably done with the best of intentions (they are not really trying to fool anybody) it is unwise to create biblical doctrines that in the end deceive people. But as usual, the church *must* have answers to all of life's problems. One ministry even suggests that a church *without* answers to every problem is a poor church. This is an astonishingly foolish statement. However, created solutions, and that is what many churches offer, can become doctrinal traps or tar-pits if and when the facts are finally known. I am reminded of the child who finally discovered there is no Santa Clause who said, "I'm going to look into this Jesus Christ business, too!" Created solutions, however clever or self-satisfying they may be in the short term, simply conceal the truth and lead people down a delusional path. If I tell you that your dead baby is in heaven awaiting your

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arrival, even watching us from up there, that might console you a bit and I will have escaped any obligation to offer an unpleasant in-depth explanation. But would such an artful dodge be true? No, it would not. You would begin to question God. You would be wondering why God *unfairly* “took” the child away from you. Couldn’t God have let the child live longer? “What was his rush?” you might angrily cry. The answer would be that God did not take your child at all and we need to stop blaming God for our personal losses.

Another Christian organization believes that God is testing us in these matters. When a child dies, when terrible accidents happen, when storms blow our homes away, and when waters inundate our communities, God, it is said, is *testing* us as Christians. I strongly disagree with the “testing” doctrine. But hold on. God tested Job, didn’t he? God had Satan destroy Job’s home and family to see how Job would react, right? I don’t think so. I think that the book of Job is more allegorical than anything else. There are other lessons in that book.

ABOUT TESTING AND TEMPTING

B. According to those who talk about the Bible, we humans, especially believers, are tested by God from time to time. To escape the idea that God does the actual testing, some preachers will say that God “allows” testing and temptations to enter our lives. The term “God allows” is an evasive term. It is a copout or a dodge; a term of avoidance. In the greater sense, if we believe that God is all-powerful (omnipotent) and rules the world, then, yes, in that limited sense, in that abstract or theoretical sense, God *allows* suffering and testing. After all, God created us to feel pain—it was deliberate. But I do not believe God *allows* painful testing or suffering in the *direct* sense. Used in the *abstract* and carrying this to its logical extension, God, who has all power, is to blame for all suffering. If he allows it, he could prevent it, the logic goes. And if he could prevent it, then he can be blamed for allowing it. But this is circular reasoning. Ergo, the accident was not our fault; God could have slowed our car as we barreled down the highway. God could have kept me awake as I drove all night. The answer to this riddle is that “time and chance” happen to all of us.

“I returned and saw under the sun that the race *is* not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happens to them all. For man also does not know his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so *are* the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly on them” (Eccl.9:11-12). Solomon tells us that as we go along in this life, events will occur based on where we happen to be at any given moment.

But God “tested” the Israelites. **“Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not’ ” (Ex.16:4).** This testing was not a test of pain and misfortune, but a testing or a proving of the people such that God answered their desires for food, and then stood back to see which way they would walk. Of course, some of the stiff-necked Israelites went astray. But this was not a test of deprivation of homes, lands, and loved ones. (*Test: H.5254, a primitive root; to test, by implication to attempt: adventure, assay, prove, tempt, try.*)

Satan is said to *tempt* humans, but the truth be known, we humans often go out of our way to be tempted because of our lack of control. **“Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (1Cor.7:5; cf. Matt.4:1; Mk.1:13;).** God cannot be *tempted* and God does not *tempt* anyone with evil. **“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’**

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for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire (Jas.1:13-14). So, it is a personal desire, an inner drive and corruption, or a choice that causes temptations to come along. A person has a bent or a leaning in a negative direction and as soon as an opportunity presents itself, that person might sin. [*Tempt, Gk.3985, to test (objectively), that is, endeavor, scrutinize, entice, discipline: assay, examine, go about, prove, tempt, try.*] According to Webster, to “tempt” is: To incite or solicit to an evil act; to entice to something wrong by presenting arguments that are plausible or convincing, or by the offer of some pleasure or apparent advantage as the inducement,” to “provoke or incite,” a “trial by examination,” “judgment or distinction,” or “try or prove.” In **Gen.22:1-3** God tempted (tested) Abraham in the sense we are tested every day. **Deut.6:16** states: **“You shall not tempt the Lord your God.”**

On the other hand, the definition of “test” is: *“To compare with a standard; to try; to prove the truth or genuineness of any thing by experiment or by some fixed principle or standard; as, to test the soundness of a principle; to test the validity of an argument.”* In this sense we are being tested daily. It is my strong belief that God does not test us with the loss of our children so as to see what we might do or how we might react. The notion of this kind of testing is preposterous.

As unpleasant as biblical truth might actually be, we *must* deal with it. This is a realistic and rational view of the matter. We have incomplete information from the Bible on nearly any given subject and this one is no different. Yet, although satisfactory biblical answers are hard to come by, there are indications of what God might do regarding the children. I will delve into this. But first, look at some responses to a few relevant questions by an orthodox trinitarian ministry. One huge response to the death of a child is the idea that every person has residing within himself at birth, a separate entity called the “immortal soul.” If this superstition is true, then no person can ever truly die and we will all live forever either in a blissful heaven or a torturous hell. I, like many other thinking persons, reject the immortal soul concept as biblically vacuous. The logical end of this doctrine is that Jesus Christ, if truly born of a woman, also had an immortal soul, besides being “God,” and therefore doubly did not die.

THE IMMORTAL SOUL DOCTRINE

C. Virtually every orthodox Christian preacher who suggests that dead babies are saved does so based upon the superstitious “immortal soul” doctrine. That is, since the “soul” (a separate conscious unit from the child) is immortal, it must go either to hell forever or to heaven forever leaving the body behind and nobody wants to hear of an innocent baby going to a hellish torture pit. Yet, the Bible states that only God has immortality (**1Tim.6:13-16**).

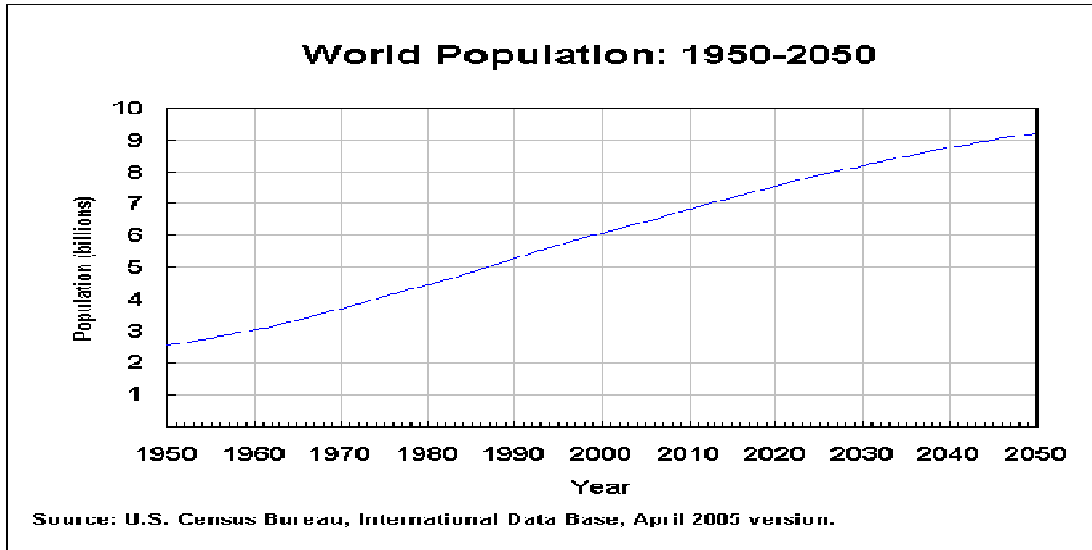
Microsoft Encarta: “Early Judaism considered the human personality as a whole, without making a sharp distinction between body and soul. By the Middle Ages, however, the soul was defined in Judaism as the principle of life and was considered capable of surviving bodily decay. The Christian doctrine of the soul has been strongly influenced by the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Most Christians believe that each individual has an immortal soul and that the human personality as a whole, composed of soul and resurrected body, may through faith be granted God’s presence in the afterlife. The Neoplatonic theory of the soul as prisoner in a material body prevailed in Christian thought until the advent of the 13th-century theologian Thomas Aquinas, who accepted Aristotle’s analysis of the soul and body as two conceptually distinguishable elements of a single substance.” Ergo, the original “Immortal Soul” concept is extra-biblical.

If “souls” are “immortal” and cannot die, if each human has only one soul, then it follows that souls must be stockpiled somewhere, maybe in a warehouse

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in heaven. Over the centuries the population of the earth has grown tremendously, doubling in size more frequently than before. This means that a fresh supply of *eternal*/souls has to be made available, since they are not reusable. They have to come from somewhere. *Eternal: without beginning or end, existing through all time, everlasting, timeless, forever the same.*



In 1950, the world needed to receive about 2 ½ billion eternal souls from the heavenly warehouse. By the time 2050 rolls around, some additional 7 ½ billion eternal souls are going to be needed. Does God just generate *eternal* and *immortal* souls and send them to earth to locate a body? Since they are eternal, they must have existed forever like “Gods” and just “assume” flesh and an identity. When the flesh dies, they go back to heaven with their new identity. —Or how does that work?

Larry King, renowned interviewer, interviewed John MacArthur, Jr. some time ago and during the interview, the death of children came up. Larry asked John: *“What about a two-year-old baby crushed at the bottom of the World Trade Center?”* John answered: *“Instant heaven.”* King replied with another question: *“He wasn’t a sinner?”* John again answered: *“Instant heaven.”* MacArthur explained later: *“Life begins at conception—that is clear in Scripture. This is what the Bible teaches without question. So any death from the point of conception on is the death of a person and persons have eternal souls.”* * He went on: *“The latest statistics from the year 1999 indicate 4,350,000 babies died—in that year—infant mortality. A study that concludes 4,350,000 babies died is based upon statistical information and estimates are that the figures are so low that they actuality may be more than that figure—by double! Since most losses during pregnancy may not even be reported. The highest rates of infant mortality are found in the poorest and most primitive nations, and at the same time, the most pagan nations: mostly in Africa and Asia. Take 4,350,000 in the year 1999 and just keep adding the years and you can see the numbers of deaths are massive, staggering.*

“And these are, as I said, eternal souls! The question about ‘Where are they?’ then is of monumental significance: they’re either populating hell at an incredible rate or they’re populating heaven at an equally incredible rate or getting divided into heaven and hell.

[MacArthur’s answer assumes that these people have eternal (always living) or immortal (never-dying non-mortal or physical) souls, but the Bible tells us that souls can die, and that animals are souls just as humans are souls, or

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breathing, living beings. People do not *have* souls; they *are* souls, and souls are not immortal or eternal. (There is, however, one single verse that mentions some sort of a "spirit" in man that goes back to the Father when we die (**Eccl.12:7**). Yet, it is not referred to as an "immortal," conscious, or alert spirit there or anywhere else.) It is very puzzling that such a great God of Creation that we accept, one who is said to be omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnipresent (in all places at the same time) could not look ahead far enough to realize that some *incorrigible* people (at the very least!) ought to be annihilated. Rather, many imply that this God deliberately created immortal, ever-living human beings that would be punished by torture and burned for eternity for their sins. Excessive, out of all proportion punishment, is attributed to God. Against all reasonableness, such punishment is shunned even in *our* courts. But most Christians accept torture of someone else as ok for God. FPH]

"This is a question that needs to be answered. It needs to be answered on the large scale and it needs to be answered on the individual scale. A parent has the right to know! 'Where is my baby? Where is my child? Where is that adult child of mine whose mind never developed and who for all intents and purposes mentally is still an infant?'" The host, Larry King, had little to say on the subject after this.

In his book, MacArthur writes: *"My response to Larry King was not an out-of-the-blue response to an out-of-the-blue question. It was a statement of my true conviction based upon a thorough and careful study of Scripture through the years" (ibid.p7).*

He says his answer was based on a *"thorough and careful study of the Scriptures."* This is outrageous. Obviously, when nothing is said in the Bible regarding the actual salvation of infants or about small children going to heaven, or about "immortal" or "eternal" souls, one wonders what "Scriptures" Mr. MacArthur has been carefully studying! I have also thoroughly studied the Bible, reading and studying it several times over in its entirety in a number of versions, but I have never found a passage that tells us or even suggests that babies or children go *instantly* to heaven when they die. This idea is nonsense. I have never found a biblical doctrine supporting a conscious, dynamic, or thinking immortal soul that goes sailing off to meet God. I have also read MacArthur's book. He often cites King David's or others' writings about David as proof for his position that children go instantly to heaven when they die.

In 2Samuel, David is told that because he killed Uriah the Hittite and stole his wife Bathsheba, his own son would surely die, among other things. So, the child took sick and died. David fasted while the child lay dying but as soon as the child died, David cleaned up, ate, and went about his business. The servants were mortified. They said, "How come?" **"And he said, 'While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, 'Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?' But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2Sam.12:22-23).** The obvious question should be, "Where was the child that David could go to him?" Well, the child was in his grave. This is the obvious sense of the passage. Like the child, David would go to the grave. We must not read anything like an immortal soul flitting off into heaven somewhere into this passage. MacArthur thinks otherwise. There was nothing that David could do now to bring him back. MacArthur rejects the obvious answer because, I believe, of his preconceived (generally orthodox) Christian notion about the "immortality" of the soul. He writes that *"God is present in every conception. He is intimately involved in every moment of every life he allows to be conceived. God superintends and guards every life he allows to exist. He places every life into the context of his eternal plan and purpose" (ibid.p.22).* Under these conditions, it is impossible that orthodox writers can even entertain the idea that children *do*

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not go to heaven at death; rather, they *must not* suggest that innocent babies go to a torturous hell to suffer forever. Orthodox writers are stuck with eternal life in blissful heaven or eternal life in a tortuous hell. The choice is obvious. Who is going to send eternal children to be tortured eternally? Not me.

MacAurthur maintains: *"The decision about whether a baby lives or dies is God's decision. He allows conception. He allows birth. He also allows death at birth. ... No death or life occurs apart from the purposes of God. God is actively involved in every feature of every life, including whether a child is born or dies in the womb, and whether a child lives past birth or dies at birth"* (*ibid.*, p. 17).

This is incredible. The writer lays the foundation that God is responsible for the death of your baby, because God is *actively, not passively*, involved with every aspect of life from birth to death. There is an important distinction here. If God is *actively* involved at every moment of every life, then like the Roman emperor in his Coliseum, God could turn thumbs up or down at *any time* regarding the death of *any* person. Like an early telephone switchboard operator, God is constantly pulling plugs on people, cutting them off from life. Later, MacAurthur will suggest that even *Downs Syndrome* babies are gifts from God for *those* parents (*ibid.*, pp. 24-25). These babies, he suggests, are essentially "tests" from God. Thus, God is testing people by supplying them with deformed, disadvantaged, and debilitated children. I am not buying this.

In his book, MacAurthur claims special knowledge about David. He says David *knew* that *their* eternal future was with God (*ibid.*, pp. 94-95). MacAurthur knows no such thing. There is no biblical proof for this conclusion; it is pure speculation. David wrote some Psalms about himself seeing God (**Ps. 23:6; 17:15; 16:9-11**). Now, the Psalms usually do not represent doctrinal positions; they reflect the writers' views of God. Psalms and other writings are often written in symbolic poetic language or hymns, which are imaginative and figurative, which express a certain experience of God, but do not provide objective information about God himself. Based on these passages and based on the Roman Catholic tradition that everyone from conception has an *immortal* soul, MacAurthur imagines: *"David knew that at his death he would be going into the near presence of the Lord, and he also knew that this was the eternal home for his baby."* What rubbish! Supposition is built upon supposition, like a house of cards, which then somehow twist themselves into solid facts. Conclusions based upon tradition, supposition, and assumptions do not qualify as facts. The writer has spun a make-believe tale of cosmic proportions.

Yet, admitted within MacAurthur's book is the biblical position with respect to "Original Sin" that classifies all persons from birth as sinners, even from their conception. He writes: *"The principle of iniquity is embedded in the heart of every human being. Every person is born morally corrupt and born with an irresistible bent toward evil. Any notion that a child is morally neutral, or that a baby is born without a predisposition to sin, is contrary to Scripture. When Scripture refers to children as "innocent," it does not mean they are untainted by the fallenness or guilt we all inherit from Adam (Rom. 5:1-9). [That is: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.] If infants were not sinful or morally corrupt, they would not die at all! ... Sin is the killer, the destroyer of life. ... Everyone has an automatic propensity or 'bent' toward rebelling against God the very same way Adam and Eve rebelled against him. The spirit of rebellion resides in every human heart—more blatantly and overtly in some, more subtly in others, but resident in all, nonetheless. Any child who lives to the point of making a responsible moral choice will make the choice to sin. It is in his or her nature"* (*ibid.*, pp. 69-70). I generally agree with this position.

The doctrine of Original Sin, however, does not suggest that we all partake of Adam's personal *guilt*, but that *because* of his sin, the moral character and nature of all mankind has been corrupted. Therefore, all human flesh is

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corrupted and the natural mind of man is enmity or hostile toward God. **“Because the carnal [fleshly] mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom.8:7). The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer.17:9).** This condition is sometimes referred to as the “fall” of man, meaning his (Adam’s) fall from God’s grace. Biblical passages that support Original Sin are numerous. See section “**I**” for some more of these passages and more commentary.

Questions regarding the death of babies are agonizing, but it is easy (and religiously safe) to glibly *respond* that children will go straight to heaven (never to hell!) at death or, according to other church organizations, will be resurrected and allowed to live a full and useful life after which they will be given an opportunity to know God and be saved. *This is what we want to hear and as usual, many preachers will tell you what you want to hear.* But it is *infinitely* much harder to prove such doctrines from the Holy Bible—actually, it is *impossible* to support these doctrines, either scenario, from the Bible. How and why does God resurrect an under-developed three-month fetus that has been aborted, spontaneously by the female body or the one aborted by the mother on purpose in a medical procedure or at home with drugs? And then preachers tell us that God is going to set it on a path to birth and maturity? And does the developing fetus go into the original mother’s womb, a special substitute womb, or no womb at all? What if the birth mother had six abortions? How are those pre-born babies handled if they go straight to heaven (instant heaven), since from conception, according to MacArthur, they are *eternal* and *immortal* beings?

What a surprise that will be for the birth mother, especially if she is being tortured in the fires of hell forever at the time (eternal hellfire torture is what orthodox Christianity teaches, see “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”), and according to general Christian doctrine, perhaps for aborting the very same fetus or a dozen others! How about two-day old babies in heaven or partial-birth abortion babies? Who takes care of them, feeds them, and nurtures them (or the billions of them) to adulthood? How about unborn babies? Do they just remain fetuses (in every minute stage of development) or just turn into chubby infants with wings, perhaps, as cupid-like cherubs? Where are these billions of dead children, wanted and unwanted babies, and the many millions of even *spontaneously* aborted fetuses right now? Are they lost and gone forever? Or are they waiting in a huge nursery for all those mothers to join them in heavenly bliss? What if the mothers are sinners? Some of these children, in fact the greatest portion of them, will never see their mothers again, that is, if hell is a reality in any sense, be it eternal separation from God, eternal torture, or complete and final annihilation.

If any person (an adult) refuses to believe and be saved, he is called “incorrigible” by certain church groups. They suggest that this person, distinctly in the minority, is subject to death and/or annihilation at the “resurrection of the wicked.” At some point (at the end of time, they say) this person will be destroyed after Christ returns, and after a protracted period of blissful existence. So, some groups teach a nearly universal salvation scheme wherein only the most hardcore sinners (the *incorrigible*) will be destroyed in the lake of fire and virtually all children (under some arbitrary “age of accountability”) will be saved. As parents (and I am a parent with one dead child to date), it is comforting to believe that all our children will be saved. I want my children to be saved. I want to be comforted in the “age to come.” I want my still-born twin brothers to grow up and be saved. I never met them. And I want to feel good about their future. Notice how many times the word “I” appeared above. But, we have to face the reality of this issue squarely and not shy away from it. We cannot and must not give in to emotionalism and human reasoning and refuse biblical facts that might

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be contrary to our heart's desires. This is a tough issue. If the Bible states that all children are saved, let's look at that and rejoice together, but if the Bible is silent regarding their salvation, then let's accept this fact and not try to create a doctrine out of whole cloth just for our personal comfort. We can weep together when the time comes. Life is tough enough without deliberately fooling ourselves or allowing religious people, however well-meaning they may be, to deceive us.

TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

D. The Bible indicates that there are only two kinds of people in the world. The two are believers and unbelievers; the saved and the lost. The Bible does not indicate that there is a third kind that exists in an in-between neutral state, or on the fence in a state of being neither saint nor sinner. The Bible clearly states: **"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** No equivocation exists here. The Bible does not state that only adults are sinners and fall short of the glory of God, while innocent babies and children are "under the grace" of God. So, if all are sinners in one fashion or another, then this same "all" are under the penalty of death, because the wages of sin is death. This is simple enough. *How* all might have come to be sinners is another issue, but the fact is, no regular human is sinless, regardless of his age.

"For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). On one hand we have death (limited or conditional life) and on the other we have eternal life. And this refers to the state of a person at death or the state of a saved person versus an unsaved person. Further, it is clear from the Bible that *no sinner* will inherit the kingdom of God or immortality; they will not be saved—they are lost. The Bible is silent regarding mentally deficient people or others of like handicap, so I have no answers to offer in their various cases. I would *like* to say that they will be considered special, but that would be an empty and dishonest gesture. Under natural conditions, these people would have probably died at or shortly after childbirth, being unable to adequately fend for themselves in a fiercely competitive world. Yet, God has been quoted as saying that he will be merciful and compassionate upon whomever he will, and in this, we should always take comfort and have hope. Who knows if God will save the one we love?

"For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.' So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy" (Rom.9:15-16). This very passage is a passage of hope.

PROXY BAPTISM

E. The apostle Paul spoke of some people being baptized "for the dead." **"Now when all things are made subject to him, then the Son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, [so] that God may be all in all. Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?" (1Cor.15:28-29).** Obviously, people were being baptized on behalf of the dead in the hope of the resurrection. This is a puzzling passage, but on its face, it would seem that appealing to God on behalf of deceased children is not outside the realm of possibility, whether by intercessory prayer or by substitute or "proxy" baptism. On this last point, I just do not know the answer. I do understand baptism to be *normally* done with a penitent who has some understanding of the ceremony, has repented, and who agrees with the procedure. Babies, infants, and many "young persons" have no understanding of such events. Just as obviously, I think, the people being baptized in this case were Christians or believers, and the children or others who were dead would undoubtedly be the children of believers, or other believers or relatives, loved ones who had not had

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an opportunity to be baptized. A heathen, pagan or irreligious person would hardly be baptized into Christ for himself, let alone anyone else.

And just as certainly, believers would not have been going through proxy baptism for their enemies or unrepentant sinners. I would not be dogmatic regarding proxy baptism, especially with only one relevant passage, but it would seem that no harm could result if a person were baptized (totally immersed) for a dead loved one, even for a child or a baby. Since we know so little about this issue such an unusual baptism might be worthwhile. *Understand, I just do not know and can only speculate.* The baptism may or may not be successful or efficacious in the end and it may not make sense to some people. Undoubtedly it would be comforting for the loved ones left behind as well as being a testimony of faith before God. Even if many deem this act to be useless, it is not evil. Proxy baptism could do no harm and it might do some good. I would not condemn anyone for wanting to do go through a proxy baptism, whether I personally think it would be efficacious or not. Would I do the baptizing? Why not? This personal issue has never come to me before. But far be it from me to snatch even this hope, however small it might be, from a grieving parent.

My mother was a believer, but because of her age and poor physical condition (she died at 91+), she was unable to be baptized by full immersion although she was willing. What do we do? Would some other form of "baptism" be ok, like sprinkling? Probably this would be ok. Some would say that since she was not baptized, not immersed into the death of Christ nor raised in his resurrection, therefore the "cleansing waters" of baptism did not wash her and she was not in Christ nor was Christ in her. I am not so sure about that conclusion. What about the laying on of hands, something that is normally done after baptism? So, here we have a believer who died without being baptized. Is she now a candidate for proxy baptism? If proxy baptism is a real biblical teaching and it then becomes efficacious, then I would think so.

AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY OR COMING TO MAJORITY

F. A number of sub-issues arise from the main issue, the issue surrounding the salvation of babies and very young children. This one is the popular but mistaken "age of accountability." According to this theory, a child that dies before attaining this mysterious age of accountability will go to heaven, even though the child had never "received" Jesus Christ. Most Christian writers shy away from establishing any certain age. But one Christian writer suggests "*a person attains the age of accountability on his 20th birthday.*" His reasoning is as follows: "*During the 40 years of wandering, ONLY those Jews who were aged 20 years and older would die (Num. 14:29).*" This person shows his abject ignorance of the Old Testament by his teaching others that the people who left Egypt during the Exodus were all Jews. They were not. They were Israelites. If you do not understand this, write to me. How does one depend on ignorant, even stupid people, many of them preachers, for biblical understanding?

There is no "age of accountability" established in the Bible, either by inference or by specifics insofar as I can find and I have read and studied the Bible from cover to cover a number of times in different versions. So, having no guidelines in the Bible on this point, any establishment of such an age is purely arbitrary and becomes a personal or a church doctrine. One organization might suggest ten years of age, while another might use thirteen or eight. Another might suggest a sliding scale of age dependant upon the child's growth or maturity. This *sounds* reasonable. In any case, we cannot insert *any* age of accountability doctrine into the Bible—that would be bad theology and dishonest to boot. It would be teaching a lie. Yet, there are some preachers (as just cited) who insist that such an age exists. These people are not being honest. On the other hand, the religions that believe in the extra-biblical doctrine of the

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“immortality of the soul” would argue that because of that particular doctrine, no baby is lost, or indeed, *can* be lost. I disagree with the immortality of the soul doctrine because it is a false doctrine. It cannot be found in the Bible. **“The soul that sins shall die” (Ezek.18:20, RSV).** **“...man became a living being” (Gen.2:7, NKJV).** The KJV says: **“living soul.”** In either case, God told Adam he was going to die. **“...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Gen.2:17).** Adam did not die on that day, but remember that the *announcement* of a judgment is not the same as the *imposition* of the sentence.

According to one book on Roman Catholicism: *“In the past, infant mortality was so high that many babies did not survive birth or early childhood, so baptism as an infant insured that their souls would not perish” (Catholicism for Dummies).* Baptism (sprinkling) was an insurance policy. The baptized child had his Adamic sin (original sin) washed away by the water. To “perish” must mean to live in “Hell” for eternity, since orthodoxy teaches the immortality of the soul.

The wisest man on earth had no idea that dead people go instantly to heaven or hell. **“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Eccl.9:10).** He thought everyone just went into the grave. After all, when Adam sinned, God said: **“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen.3:19).** He was a living soul. Apparently God had no idea that people went to heaven or hell directly upon their deaths.

The Catholic Encyclopedia: *“By immortality is ordinarily understood the doctrine that the human soul will survive death, continuing in the possession of an endless conscious existence. ... The doctrine of immortality, strictly or properly understood, means personal immortality, the endless conscious existence of the individual soul. It implies that the being which survives shall preserve its personal identity and be connected by conscious memory with the previous life.”* The doctrine of the immortality of the soul comes from Roman Catholic teachings and mythology—but it *cannot* be found in the Bible.

In my view, there is no argument against the idea that a personal identity of some sort attaches to a resurrected person, so, some *essence* has to survive physical death, if it is to “sleep” until a resurrection. Just how the identity is preserved is unknown, but it must be preserved. Still, this idea does not justify creating an immortal soul doctrine that is conscious and alert.

Other ideas are offered in the book, *“The Theology of Infant Salvation”* by R.A. Webb, D.D. ©2003. Webb suggests (p.55) that the Christian parent of a child is not only the natural but the *federal*/sponsor of his minor children. Under the supposition that a father’s *covenant*/faith and obedience entitles him to claim salvation for his dead offspring, he writes that if his minor child dies in his minority, the benefits of the covenant may be held to accrue vicariously to him; but if the child lives to an age of self-action, and self-responsibility, his relations to the covenant cease to be vicarious and become personal. He suggests that this argument seems to be strong and plausible for the salvation of a particular class of dead infants, namely—the children of Christian parents, or the children of the covenant. But, by implication at least, he suggests that the dead children of unbelievers and pagans are lost. The writer has a good point.

Webb continues: *“At any rate, the reasoning fails to indicate any basis upon which the un-covenanted children who die in infancy are saved. It may be argued, with much plausibility, that only Christian parents are entitled to the comfort and joy of knowing that it is well with their dead children. ... If this reasoning be sound, then the Scriptures must be held to teach the certainty of the salvation of covenanted children dying in infancy, while they are silent about the final destiny of un-covenanted dead infants.”*

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Thus far, Webb seems to be refreshingly candid and the logic is plausible. (I hasten to add, however, on page 54, he states: *"The moment Abraham became a Jew by the covenant call of God..."*; so his gross error on this point has to be remembered. Abraham was never a Jew.)

Webb goes on to suggest that the Bible warrants setting up a system or doctrine that *implicates "the certain salvation of every child which dies in its moral minority, whether its parents be Christian or pagan."* This will ultimately be Webb's conclusion: *that universal salvation exists for all dead infants, idiots, and incapables dying in moral incompetency*, thus being under some arbitrary age of accountability. This form of salvation, even universal salvation, is couched upon the premise that human beings are all endued or provided with an *immortal soul* that will live on forever, either in a state of bliss or in a state of torture in hell. If in fact human beings do not have an immortal soul (which they do not), then the death of the wicked at the end of the age that die, death means *death*, period. It does not mean merely a "separation" from God, living in darkness, or an immortal life in a burning pit somewhere for all eternity. The wages of sin IS DEATH—it is not life—it is the opposite of life, the *permanent ending of all life in a person*. The GIFT of God is life; *the quality of distinguishing a living animal from a dead organism*. These two contrasting positions are not expounded upon much by orthodox Christianity. Indeed, most of Christendom seems to be stridently opposed to accepting the reality of the Bible on this point. **"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt.10:28)**. Both body and soul can die. Here, the term soul refers to the being of the person or his *breath*, not an immaterial ghost-like transparent spirit that wafts off to heaven. They are, in general, oblivious to the fact that biblical death is pretty much the same as the death we are familiar with today.

IS SALVATION OFFERED TO ALL MANKIND?

G. Another sub-issue is whether or not the Creator *did in fact* "offer salvation to all mankind" (or will so offer it) and *if in fact*, this is his "grand plan." I am not so sure he did or will. I am of the belief that the idea of obligated universal (or nearly universal) salvation is something of a church doctrine, rather than a biblical doctrine. If Yahweh does not offer salvation to every person, then it follows that a chance at salvation is not automatically extended for every child born or fetus aborted. The Bible does not tell me that salvation was offered to the entirety of mankind or that it will be so offered. They tell me that salvation is offered ONLY to those that God calls. The Bible suggests that God is selective in his calling. Certainly, **"Whoever calls on the Lord will be saved" (Rom.10:13)**, but does this mean that *everybody* will call on the Lord, or will be inclined to call? No. **Isaiah 64:7** states that as a result of God hiding his face from them, because of their iniquities, no one calls upon God. My point is this: to suggest that God is somehow obligated to save *anyone* person is to not understand the sovereignty of God. And to further suggest that God is somehow obligated to save babies because of their "innocence of age" or because they "deserve" salvation, is to add doctrines to the Bible that are just not there.

Does God call babies? The Bible is silent on this point but the answer seems to be no. He has called young men. But in no place I know of in the Bible suggests all or any babies are called into salvation or have a special relationship with God that will lead to immediate salvation. Jesus loved the children (and so do we all!) and gave examples of how believers are to be "as children," but he nowhere suggested that they have automatic salvation. As I understand the Bible, there is no guarantee that every person will be or deserves to be called by the Father, and this includes babies. **"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day"**

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(Jn.6:44). The calling is entirely in the Father's hands and he decides who will or will not be called into salvation, And further, there are no biblical passages that suggest only some are being called now (as firstfruits) and the great majority of persons will be called in the future (as a later harvest), as some fringe church organizations teach. But if we think the Creator offered salvation to all of mankind, then he surely would be obligated to see to that each person ever born had a chance to be saved. Yet, no passage sets out such a universal mode of salvation. One passage even suggests that all of mankind is *already* without an excuse before a holy God (**Rom.1:18ff**). I can only presume that this includes young children and babies.

IS GOD OBLIGATED TO SAVE EVERYONE OR EVEN ANYONE?

H. Is God obligated to save anyone, let alone all of humanity? I don't think so. What would obligate him? Does God, *to be fair*, have to offer salvation to everyone if he offers it to one person or one group? I don't think so. Never forget, Yahweh God is supreme—he is sovereign. He chose a nation for himself. **“For you *are* a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for himself; a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because he would keep the oath which he swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt”** (Deut.7:6-8). God seems to limit salvation or favor or compassion to those he chooses and to no one else. But there is another point to be made here. **“For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then *it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy*”** (Rom.9:15-18). God saved only the Israelites and no others (except some who were willing to live as Israelites) from physical bondage and offered them a better life. Yet, God indicates that he shows mercy and has compassion upon whomever he wills, and this, my friend, is out of our hands.

Consider a large prison. Fifty murderers are on death row. Along comes the Governor one day and decides to pardon three prisoners. Was the Governor fair? He saved three people from sure death at the hands of the law but ignored another 47 who went on to serve out their sentences, as short as they might be on death row. Certainly, he *could have* pardoned everyone. They would have appreciated it. But he did not. He let them die. By the same token, all of humanity is on death row as sinners who deserve the death penalty. God will save some and let others die. Is that fair? The question is this: *Why should God save anyone?* Who are we to propose a level of fairness to God? What makes one person, even one child, any better than any other person or child such that God is obligated to offer them salvation? We love our children and hate to see them hurting. Is that a sufficient reason for God to save any child? Or should God just save them all? I know of people who have had young children die and it seems so unfair. But life is not fair and God is not obligated to be fair, either. We humans look at God and judge him as one of us—*he has to be fair according to our standards*. Who do we think we are? Why does God have to bow down to our needs or desires? Answer: *He does not*.

“But wait!” you might say. “Babies are not sinners. They haven't sinned against any one.” On this fine point you would be right. But because our children are technically children of the first Adam and have retained the guilt of Adam according to what is called “original sin,” and that the result of that “original” sin is death, no human is excused—not even babies.

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WHAT ABOUT ORIGINAL SIN?

I. Original Sin is one more controversial sub-issue. Some organizations reject OS as a biblical doctrine. The doctrine of Original Sin states that we are all “born into” sin. We are sinners at our birth because we are tainted with Adam’s sin of disobedience. (This appears to be the reason for infant “baptism” or sprinkling.) Being “born into sin” means that there is no “age of accountability,” since we are all sinful at birth (although without actually committing sin). If this is true, no one, not even a baby, deserves salvation, and salvation strictly relies on the grace of God, which, in any case, it does. David wrote: **“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psa.51:5).** Apparently David believed in original sin. And it is true that no person, regardless of his age, deserves salvation, compassion, or mercy—mankind is a fallen race. But Yahweh is a merciful God and gives mercy and compassion to whomever he will. It is this compassion that we depend upon for our salvation and never because of who we are, young or old, or because of good deeds. Some passages that support Original Sin: **Gen.8:21, Psa.58:3, Psa.143:2, Prov.20:9, Isa.48:8, Jer.17:9, Rom.5:12ff, Eph.2:3.**

The **Augsburg Confession of Faith** (1530), Lutheranism’s creed, asserts that: “. . . *all men, born according to nature, are born with sin, that is, without the fear of God, without confidence towards God and with concupiscence, and that this original disease or flaw is truly a sin, bringing condemnation and also eternal death to those who are not reborn through baptism and the Holy Spirit*” (Article II). This, of course, helps explain the practice of infant baptism as advocated by numerous sects.

“Original Sin: Baptism washes it away. Baptism imparts or infuses sanctifying grace: a special free gift from God; makes the baby a child of God and applies the merits of Jesus Christ to the new Christian personally. Catholicism believes that sanctifying grace allows human beings to enter heaven. It justifies them in the eyes of God. . . . Normally, you receive this special grace through the sacraments” (Catholicism for Dummies, p.96).

Judaism: The concept of *original sin* is probably derived from the episode in the Book of Genesis and is known as the *Chet HaRishon* (in Hebrew) (the “First Sin” of Adam and Eve). According to the account in Genesis 1-3, Adam and Eve lived in a state of intimate fellowship with God, and enjoyed a perfect harmony with one another and with nature. They were, however, forbidden by God to eat of the fruit of *“the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.”* God is shocked and outraged by what they did and curses the serpent (**Gen.3:9-15**).

This led to several dire consequences, including the loss of intimate fellowship with God, the condemning of man to eventual death, a distortion of the relationship between the man and the woman, and the loss of man’s harmonious relationship with nature. God curses both Adam (representing “Mankind”) and Eve (representing “Womankind”) and by implication their future descendants and expels them from the Garden of Eden (**Gen.3:16-24**). (Adam is said to be the “Federal” Head of mankind.)

All these consequences changed the world and were “inherited” by Adam and Eve’s descendents. However, people are not *sinful* by default, but all of history is a struggle to bring humanity back to the level Adam and Eve were on *before* they ate from the Tree of Knowledge. *Growing* into the role God planned for humanity required leaving Eden as an atonement for that act of disobeying God’s command. The *sin* of Adam and Eve was the disobeying of God’s command not to eat of the fruit. It is important to note that according to this tradition, Adam and Eve should have lived forever had they not sinned by eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. When God warned Adam that he would die should he (Adam) eat from the Tree “God gave the man a

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commandment, saying, **"You may definitely eat from every tree of the garden. But from the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, do not eat, for on the day you eat from it, you will definitely die"** (Gen.2:16-17).

The more modern liberal branches such as Reform Judaism and Conservative Judaism sees no "evil" other than the evil actions of human beings, so they disagree with Christian traditions that identify the serpent with Satan. Eve's only transgression was that she disobeyed God's order. It is also clear from the Hebrew that Adam was with her the entire time and at no time stopped her. Therefore, it is incorrect to blame Eve alone. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden and had to live ordinary, human lives. In other words, they had to "leave home" and grow up and live as responsible human beings. If they had never eaten from the forbidden tree, they would have never discovered their capacity to act with free will in the world. And according to the Jewish tradition, God doesn't want human beings who have no choice but to always choose to do what is good and right. When Adam and Eve lived in the Garden, they were like robots, without free will. Therefore, it was actually a blessing to have been expelled! Adam and Eve were the first humans to act on their free will—and this is ultimately what God wanted!

The New Testament teaching on original sin is briefly summarized by the Apostle Paul, who wrote: **"Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned."** (Rom.5:12, RSV).

The experience of original sin, and the spiritual pain it produces in the one who wishes to please God, is dramatically summed up by Paul in the following verses: **"I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"** (Rom.7:15-24).

The solution to this dilemma is stated by Paul in these terms: **"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit"** (Rom.8:3-4).

Though the New Testament doctrine of original sin is most clearly expressed by Paul, it is also implicit in the teachings of Jesus: for example in such words as: **"And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone'"** (Mk.10:18) and **"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing"** (Jn.15:5).

Catholicism: The *Chatecism of the Catholic Church* describes original sin as follows: *"Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command... He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good."* Further, by the *"unity of the human race,"* all men are implicated in Adam's sin, as all are implicated in Christ's justice. *Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand."*

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Scholastic theologians believed that original sin is passed through each generation of human being, because it affects the physical and material nature of man. These theologians teach that the soul is infused by God into the fertilized egg, which "stains" (macula) the soul. The teaching of the Immaculate Conception states that this staining was prevented in the conception of Mary.

The Eastern Orthodox Church teaching on Original Sin agrees strongly with the view presented above as being "Old Testament." In addition, the Church teaches that the specific *act* of the *Original Sin* is not the responsibility of all humanity. Instead, the *consequences* of that act exist and plague the world. *Original Sin* creates an environment within which it is simply not possible without direct Divine intervention for a human being to avoid some sort of actual committed sin some time in his or her life. In essence, it is a type of combined "spiritual environmental pollution" and "spiritual illness."

The Eastern Orthodox Church rejects the very common Western concept that *Original Sin* is some sort of inherited guilt. People are not presumed to bear personal responsibility for the acts of Adam.

Unbaptized Infants: Catholic Church: *"The fate of infants who die without baptism must be briefly considered here. The Catholic teaching is uncompromising on this point, that all who depart this life without baptism, be it of water, or blood, or desire, are perpetually excluded from the vision of God. (Neither are they buried in "hallowed" ground.) This teaching is based, as we have seen, on an unhealthy combination of Scripture, tradition, and the decrees of the Church. Moreover, that those who die in original sin, without ever having contracted any actual sin, are deprived of the happiness of heaven is stated explicitly in the Confession of Faith accepted at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. The same doctrine is found also in the Decree of Union of the Greeks. Many Catholic theologians have declared that infants dying without baptism are excluded from the beatific vision; but as to the exact state of these souls in the next world they are not agreed" (Catholic Encyclopedia).*

Some flatly deny the doctrine of original sin. They suggest that babies are held to be by nature "pure and stainless" and free from "every trace" of original sin—that no guilt applies to them from Adam. This is the "Blank Slate" teaching. Children, when born, they suggest, have no inclination to sin and are destitute of "native depravity" that gives an institutional bias toward an evil calling. Thus, the will of the infant upon reaching majority may elect a course of good or bad as it pleases. The Creator has given the child nothing but sheer power and free will; no original appetite for sin, and no inclination in any particular direction—the child is *amoral*, neither moral nor immoral.

But why is it then that upon reaching majority and adulthood we find no sinless person, no, not one? If children are morally neutral, how is it we have no sinless adults? It seems that it would be natural to have a few sinless adults, at least at some stage of their adulthood, if they were sinless as children. But we have none. No one is sinless! It is written that "none is righteous, no not one" "there is no man who does not sin," "there is not a righteous man on earth," "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." We adults are ALL commanded to repent of our sins. **"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained" (Acts 17:30-31a).** How did all of us, without exception, come to the point of sinfulness if we had no inclination in that direction in the first place? Well, the answer is that we *do* have an inclination to sin, even as a baby. That all have sinned is implied in the teaching that all need atonement. No one is naturally "at one" with God. It is written that the heart is desperately wicked and no one can know it (**Jer.17:9**) and that the *natural person* is against God. **"But**

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the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Cor.2:14). The “natural” person is the flesh and blood descendent of Adam and Eve as born into this world. **“There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. and so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being’ ” (1Cor.15:44b-45).** Adam was not awarded an immortal soul. He was a “natural” man.

In discussing two points: (1) that the sins of the fathers reflect upon the children and (2) that souls who sin shall die and are not immortal at all, the word of the Lord came to Ezekiel: **“Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine; the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek.18:4, NKJV).** [The word “soul” means a living being: H.5315, *nephesh; a breathing creature; animal; vitality; breath; body.*]

Continuing: **“Yet you say, ‘Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?’ Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all my statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself” (Ezek. 18:19-20).** Obviously, these sons that sin are adults capable of making personal decisions.

Souls are not immortal. They have been created. God created souls. And souls, as created entities, can die. In Genesis, the words “living being” and “soul” have been translated from the same Hebrew word *nephesh* (H.5315) meaning “a breathing creature” or “animal, body, breath, creature.” **“Neither shall he go in to any dead body [nephesh, soul] ...” (Lev.21:11, cf. Num.9:6; 19:11).** The soul is a body, dead or alive, or the breath thereof. “Soul” is a euphemism for life.

“And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Gen.2:7, NKJV). KJV: **“And man became a living soul.”** Man became a soul by virtue of God breathing life into him; he did not have a separate entity placed inside him called the “soul.” The “soul” is the “breath of life” that is in all mankind.

The discussion continues with respect to those who sin and turn away from their sin. Then the Lord says: **“For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God. ‘Therefore, turn and live!’ ” (Ezek.18:32).** God takes no pleasure in the death of anyone, even the wicked, so never ask the question: “Why did God take my son (or daughter)?” God did not take the child so God is not to be blamed for his death, as premature and devastating as it may be. But even so, we humans often blame God for the loss of their children, which idea is supported by the clergy, suggesting that we don’t know why God took the child, but that he must have wanted him at his side.

AS A TREE GROWS, SO GROWS THE CHILD

J. This maxim can be found in several parts of the Bible in one form or another. I used to think it meant that if you brought up a child as holy, the child would surely be holy and if you brought up the child as unholy, the child would surely be unholy. But a lot of other factors enter into the mix. Children brought up in the most unholy conditions may become holy adults and children brought up in holy conditions may become unholy adults. Some believe that the environment is largely responsible for the way a child winds up as an adult.

A proverb is a wise saying. **“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov.22:6).** This maxim does not always hold as true. Experience has shown that the Proverbs, although they represent good advice and ideal conditions, are not necessarily doctrinal

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statements that God meant for us to follow or accept rigidly. Consider this one: **“He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches, and he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty” (Prov.22:16).** In your experience, have those who oppress the poor *surely* come to poverty? Sometimes they do, but most times they do not. Some people read the Bible and accept it “literally.” The “literal” accepting of the Bible is a foolish idea—nobody really accepts the *whole* Bible literally—only *parts* of it. Biblical readers tend to accept what they have been taught to accept in a literal manner and many other passages are *interpreted* so as to fall within a doctrinal position. What version of the Bible do people accept literally? Consider: **“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your hearts” (Jer.4:4).** Where is the “foreskin” of your heart? Do you need a surgeon to remove it? Those who claim to accept the Bible “literally” must have a problem with this one.

“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to him, ‘Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’ But he said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is *one* greater than the temple. But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matt.12:1-8).

The word of God is technically that which God spoke (not Jesus). Doctrinal statements of the bible are primarily guidelines or teachings to live by—but because of mitigating factors, guidelines are not necessarily absolutes. David ate the showbread that was unlawful for him to eat, yet he was found blameless because he obeyed a higher law—that of serving food to his men. Mercy trumps sacrifice and this higher law of mercy and sacrifice frequently trumps a lower one. **“He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).**

Some Bible readers know the watering the ox passage (Lk.13:15) that supports mercy for an animal: if one’s ox needed water, the Sabbath was broken by watering it. Yet by giving the animal relief, one is blameless.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD (AND OF HEAVEN) IS IN HEAVEN?

K. One more proposal that is supposed to prove that dead infants, indeed, *all* infants go to heaven when they die is the mistaken belief that the Kingdom of God (or Kingdom of Heaven) is located in Heaven. The connection between this heavenly kingdom and dead children is made by lifting certain passages out of the Bible and applying them to the doctrine being promoted.

One person wrote: *“We have every reason to believe, from the word of God, that children who die before they reach the age of accountability go to be with Christ in heaven.”* Presumably, this includes stillborn babies. But upon what biblical testimony does this person stand for such a belief? He goes on:

“The strongest scriptural proof of this is found in Luke 18.”

“But Jesus called them to *him* and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom [932] of God’ ” (Lk.18:16; cf. Mk.10:13). The writer goes on: *“Notice especially the last words, ‘...of such is the kingdom of God.’ Heaven is populated by little children and by those who become like little children through the simplicity of their faith.”* The

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writer corrupts the underscored phrase saying: children go to a heavenly kingdom. The true rendering of this passage is a teaching that one must become humble and believing as a child, not critical and suspicious as adults often are.

In talking to some Jews, Jesus made this interesting statement: **“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the *basileia*^[932] of God has come upon you” (Matt.12:28)**. This is positively clear. The kingdom of God DID arrive on earth because Jesus DID cast out demons by the spirit of God. Any person or organization that claims otherwise is teaching a false doctrine. The “King” did not come upon them; the *basileia* (kingdom) came upon them. **“Therefore the *basileia* of heaven may be compared to a *basileus* (king)^[935] who wished to settle accounts with his servants” (Matt.18:23)**. The underlying Greek word *basileia* supports “kingdom,” not “king.” Notice the all-important context. **“But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: ‘Every *basileia* divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his *basileia* stand?’” (Matt.10:25-26)**.

The Kingdom of God was established in the first century AD. It will be consummated at some future time. (Send for our free *Study 02-A, 12 Bible Proofs: The Kingdom of God has Already been Established.*)

THEN WHAT PROVISION FOR SALVATION IS THERE FOR A CHILD?

L. Unless I missed something, of all the NT references to regeneration, salvation, and baptism, none have reference to children. They refer to adults. Does this mean that a child does not have to be “regenerated” or “born again” in order to obtain salvation? Baptism is the outward confession of an inward faith. Adults may be saved via regeneration, conversion, confession, forgiveness, etc., and eventually, they should be baptized. (The rite of salvation, sometimes called a “sacrament, does not save anyone.) Then in the resurrection, these saved adults rise to meet the Lord in the air. Yet, there seems to be no provision for salvation for the child that dies before he attains a point of understanding and conversion. The difficult questions: Are all babies lost and doomed to destruction in the fire because they have never had a chance to repent, or know Jesus? If a baby of a believer dies, it is automatically saved? What about the children of unbelievers? And if believers’ babies are saved, what provision is there biblically for the child to grow up and become an adult? Does *any* baby that dies prematurely have a chance at salvation, even in the next world? What hope is there for the parent believer to once again see his infant that died?

One Answer: Some have suggested that the dead infant will have a chance at salvation in the “world tomorrow” after the resurrection when Jesus returns to the earth. This scheme has children growing up during a 1,000 year millennial period, dying, and then being resurrected again, only this time to an immortal life. Satan is bound at this time, they say, and all babies will have a chance to know Jesus and decide for themselves what they want without interference from satanic activity. As a consequence, only incorrigible persons will not be saved—those who refuse the name of Jesus will be thrown into the lake of fire. This scenario cannot be found in the Bible and further, it essentially amounts to universal salvation.

Another Answer: It may well turn out that the loss of our children will remain a loss. Bear in mind that I have lost a child and my mother lost two babies. And as difficult as it may be to us and all the other millions of parents who have lost children and babies, and as much as we want them to live and grow up, it may never happen. The loss of loved ones is one of the frailties of human creaturely mortality—we are all going to die, some sooner and some later, and this includes babies. Many adults will not have had a chance to even read a Bible, let alone be saved.

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Then, we have to ask: Consider your motives. *Does the desire to hold onto a loved one, an adult or even a baby, mostly a product of our selfish desire to have what we want?* It has been written that we may lose all in this world, parents and children, yet we are to have more in the world to come.

“Then Peter began to say to him, ‘See, we have left all and followed you.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first’ ” (Matt.10:28-31).

Does the baby (who knew nothing) have a desire to grow up and experience life and death and salvation? Of course not. Then where does the desire come from? The desire comes from the parent who loves the child, desiring not only something for the child, but for himself, also. This is not necessarily a bad desire. But it can be a desire that captivates us and causes us to walk out into dangerous spiritual waters. Things that happen to our loved ones are generally outside our control and will often happen in spite of our pain, suffering, or desires. We suffer with them. We may not want to live without them. But the river of life relentlessly flows onward and there is no hope in returning to a point in the past, in that flowing river, and starting over. Right now, our future is such that all flesh will return to the dust from whence it came. This is the legacy of the first man Adam. But opposing this is the resurrection of the saints and possibly their children. This may be of little comfort to a grieving parent. But it is about all we have.

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN OF THE SAINTS?

III. An important sub-issue regarding children’s salvation has to do with children of the saints. Those (generally adults) who are saved or are in Christ are called “saints.” **(1)** Are certain children holy and special because their parents are holy and special? **(2)** Regarding babies and fetuses, is it possible that they will just go out of existence and not even be resurrected? **(3)** Are there any certain promises by God in the Bible respecting our children and their future? **(4)** What about the children of “sinners” or those who are not saved, called the “lost”?

God told the Israelites that the “children of Israel” are holy or special in his eyes. **“I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God” (Ex.29:45-46).** Here, God was very specific about this certain group of people. He said he would be their private God. He said he would dwell among them. He did not say that he would dwell among anyone else, among the Egyptians, for instance. God would dwell only among his chosen people, Israel. I hasten to add that the “Jews” are not *exclusively* God’s “chosen” people, regardless of what some claim. The tribe of Judah was only one of twelve tribes of Israelites.

“ ‘At the same time,’ says the LORD, ‘I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people’ ” (Jer.31:1). Here God reiterates his desire to be the God of the Israelites and the God of no one else! But this is not the end of the story. Read on. The twelve tribes of Israel were of the “seed” of the patriarch Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, whose name was changed to “Israel” and who had twelve sons.

“For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1Tim.2:3-4). Yahweh God *would like* to see all people saved, but a bit of

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reflection should tell us that all people will not be saved. Even some folks who consider themselves Christians will not be saved. **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!’ ”** (Matt.7:21-23). This is a warning for those who smugly think they are in God’s will. They should be careful where they stand, lest they fall (1Cor.10:12). Those who are out of the will of God are lost.

But there is hope for the believer. Here is the promise to the believer. **“And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise”** (Gal.3:29). Now, we come to the New Testament and discover that physical ancestry has given way to spiritual ancestry—that is, an individual becomes an Israelite through becoming one of the Messiah’s “sheep”—by partaking of the death of Christ by way of water baptism and arising in his resurrection—for this person, it is the *first* resurrection to life. This baptismal witness of *regeneration* establishes a personal relationship between certain persons and God. Children, however, generally have few, if any, opportunities to establish a relationship with God. Some get none.

I believe that God has made allowances for the children of believers—of the premature death of our children. I do not know anything about the future of any others such as mentally deficient, and so on; the Bible has *nothing* to say on the subject. I do not presume to speak on behalf handicapped infants or babies.

The apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians. He is addressing the issue of believers being married to those who do not believe. **“And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy”** (1Cor.7:13-14).

The *inference* here is that the children of believers, even if only one is a believer, are “holy” or set apart as special to God. The unbelieving spouse is “sanctified” (Gr.37) or made special by the believing spouse. This cannot mean, however, that the unbeliever has become saved or a Christian. The “holiness” of Gr.37 seems to refer to the union of the believer and unbeliever, of being “one flesh,” and the resultant offspring being the “one flesh” of that union, rather than to the spiritual state of the unbelieving spouse. The children of such a union are “hagios” (Gr.40), that is, *holy, physically pure, morally blameless, even a saint*. They seem to be in a higher category than the spouse but if the couple should separate, they might be considered “illegitimate” or unclean and defiled. In such a case, they would be themselves as children of unbelievers and suffer the fate of unbelievers, should they die in that condition. This is only speculation but the argument has been offered from various viewpoints. One supports the idea of infant baptism on the premise that they are “federally holy” and entitled to baptism on the faith of a parent. But the “federal holy” idea does not appear in the Bible. Nor are there any biblical writings promoting infant baptism. None. One might think infant baptism is right and legitimate, but a personal or church belief should not be set upon feeble supports or upon forced and unnatural interpretations of biblical writings.

Does this mean that if a believer’s children die prematurely, they will be saved? I do not know. I hope so. I think so. But the Bible is awfully and terribly silent on this. The Bible teaches no doctrine regarding a child’s salvation. Yet, because it is silent, we must not create doctrines that will make us feel better. We have to face this issue head on. If they are saved, how would a resurrection

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work if Jesus is coming back in *judgment* upon the world and there will be (seemingly) no human *utopia* on earth during which the children will grow up?

The Bible emphatically teaches that Jesus is coming back in judgment upon all the people and that this judgment occurs as soon as he arrives (**2Tim. 4:1**). Sheep will be separated from goats and some will be saved and some go to the fire.

“When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left.

“Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’

“Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’

“Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’

“And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt.31-46).

Some have created doctrines that attempt to negate these and similar passages and instead, find a doctrine that supports a 1,000 year utopia on earth with sufficient time for all children to come of age. What happens to those continually being born during this idyllic period seems to be that they have an easy time accepting Jesus and are later resurrection to in a “Family of Gods.”

The obscure passage of **Isa.65:20** that is often used to support the idea of a child living to 100, does not work. Much doctrine, especially on the subject of children that establishes a “period of after-resurrection probation” is based solely on human reasoning, not solid biblical foundations. The second-chance scheme would suspend the testimony of parables regarding the return of the Messiah. It would destroy other testimony. If we insist that that God **MUST** be “fair” and that *every human must* have a chance (as we define a chance) at salvation, then the issue is unsolvable and the question cannot be answered. I suggest that nowhere does God bind himself to our sense of fairness nor does he bind himself to the idea that every human **MUST** have a chance at salvation. It seems, on one hand, that salvation is based upon repentance and conversion, but on the other hand, certain children (not all) are deemed special in some sense. We are between a rock and a hard place on this one and I confess that a satisfactory solution is not at hand. I could refer to others who have set down commentary, like Barnes, Hodge, Robertson, or Clarke, or even Wesley who claims such

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children are Christians, but all that is argumentative and mostly involves their personal interpretations.

ON THE DELIBERATE KILLING OF INFANTS

N. Under the command of Yahweh, the ancient Israelites killed men, women and children. They killed babies, nursing mothers, and pregnant women. Since all this was done, in many cases, on the direct command of God, it appears in effect, that God killed babies. These passages cannot be ignored in drive to understand this issue. **"So we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor"** (Deut.2:34). No wonder some people think of the "Old Testament God" as a harsh God while the New Testament God (Christ), was loving and kind. This idea brought in *dualism*, the idea of two such independent Gods, one good and one bad.

"And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city" (Deut.3:6).

This is a serious command and one that the Israelites failed to carry out at times.

"And you shall destroy all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall have no pity on them; nor shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you" (Deut.7:16).

The Israelites were to kill everyone and destroy nearly everything. And the Lord made it all possible. One reason that the Israelites had so many problems is that they disobeyed Yahweh on a number of these events.

"For thus says the Lord God: 'Bring up an assembly against them, give them up to trouble and plunder. The assembly shall stone them with stones and execute them with their swords; they shall slay their sons and their daughters, and burn their houses with fire'" (Ezek.23:46-47).

The entire village and posterity were to be destroyed.

"Thus says the LORD of hosts: ... Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey" (1Sam.15:2-3). There can be no doubt about this command.

Assuming the correctness of general Christendom's teaching that all these people, men, women, and children, had immortal souls and that babies go to heaven upon their deaths, then presumably, all the adults went to hell to burn forever because they were pagans and the babies went to heaven, regardless. As an aside, the Commandment respecting killing should reflect murder, not just the killing of another human being. "Thou shall not kill" of the KJV (Ex.20:13) should be "You shall not murder" according to a literal translation. Nevertheless, God saw to it that men, women and babies were killed during the Old Testament times. It is strange if indeed as some tell it, that life is sacred, while we see that life was so "cheap" in the eyes of the Old Testament God, Yahweh, and that all these people could be eradicated from the earth in one or more warring campaigns. Did God sanction the *murder* of all these people, including women and "innocent" children?

The text is clear enough: God sanctioned the destruction of men, women, and infants, and the ones doing the killing were to have no pity on them. They were the agents of God. Passages like these have been used to support the idea of *dualism* or the doctrine that the OT God is harsh and evil but the NT God is kind and benevolent.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER: WHERE IS OUR HOPE?

O. Does God have a plan of salvation for babies who die prematurely, the mentally impaired, or who have lived without knowing Christ? The honest answer has to be based upon the written word. *I found no such plan.* Yet,

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because I have found no such plan clearly defined in the Bible, this does not mean that God has no plan at all. *Lack of evidence of a plan is not evidence of a lack of a plan.* Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. It merely means that Yahweh has not made this knowledge available to us.

Maybe I am wrong in my conclusions. But know this: God will have mercy and compassion upon whomever he will, and our feeble attempts to manipulate him may backfire. To try to manipulate God for our purposes is not smart.

Yahweh's compassion is the essence of our hope in this matter. While there seems to be some hope and promise in some sense, albeit limited, for children of believers, there is clearly no hope for unbelievers, not to mention the children of unbelievers. This conclusion may not be sufficient for grieving parents and may not satisfy; *it does not satisfy me,* I want to know more, but I think it is the only answer that candidly considers the whole counsel of God and does not give in to emotionalism or simple personal desire or needs.

I do not want to offer empty promises or ignorant and empty hope, which, in the end, is no hope at all—no hope is the hope of the hopeless. The hope that comes from man's doctrinal maneuverings and schemes is equal to whistling in the dark. Is this a tough answer? Yes, it is and it does not please me to present it. It just seems there must be more, but after a diligent of the Bible and other sources, I found none—no plan for the salvation of our infants and babies, save the speculation offered by many. In my research, I found no one expounding this particular view; the view I have just presented.

Those opinions I read were virtually all based on *human reasoning* that God, *just to be a loving God, must* save the children, or, that *because of an immortal soul,* the child just cannot go to hell and burn forever (the doctrine of an "immortal soul" comes from Hellenistic religions, *not* from the Holy Bible), or, that children will be resurrected to live out their lives in a utopian society on earth whereupon they may then make a choice. I reject these answers as unscriptural and as opinions of men, sincere or not. Of course, I may be alone in my conclusions regarding the fate of children. But this I know: *God can bear you up if you are willing to truly follow him in all cases.* Cast your cares upon Yahweh and recognize that there is much we have to learn. He knows better than we what we really need and need to know. He will give you comfort in your time of need. Trust Yahweh; he is your only source of strength.

—F. Paul Haney

End Notes
