



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Hope and Truth Concerning the Death of a Child

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, March 25, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **Tuesday, March 25, 8:30 PM in Office #225**
(Sen. Wayne Wallingford's office)

Horatio G. Spafford, an attorney, lost his only son in 1871. A few months later, his large real estate investment went up in flames in the Great Chicago Fire of that year. He sent his wife and daughters to Europe and had hoped to join them a few days later. The ship carrying his family was struck and he lost all four daughters. His wife survived and telegraphed back to Chicago, "Saved alone". He immediately departed to be with his wife, tracking over the same route that his family had taken a few days earlier. He penned the following familiar hymn shortly after this tragic event:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

*It is well, with my soul,
It is well, with my soul,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

In our last study, the question was brought up concerning the fate of babies and young children who pass away. My immediate answer was that all are in heaven enjoying the glorious presence of God. I promised to give an explanation at our next gathering. This is that explanation.

INTRODUCTION

The second funeral that I ever performed was of the son of very dear friends. The baby lived 17 minutes. The family knew that if he was born alive he would only live a few minutes, barring a miracle from God. But in God's infinite wisdom, a miracle did not come and John Gregory Hall was ushered into the glorious presence of God.

I am sure that similar situations have affected every person who is reading this study—whether you yourself have suffered the loss of baby or young child, or you have walked with friends and family through this tragic event.

Numerous questions pop into our thoughts when these events occur: Why? What is God doing? Is there something that I have done which caused this? These are just a few.

One of the important questions, which lies heavily on the grieving hearts of loved ones, is "WHERE IS MY CHILD?" Is he or she in heaven? Even though the other questions may linger and answers may never come, the answer to this question can bring much peace in the midst of the tragedy and confusion.

While the other questions are worthy of examination, we want to take a look at the Scripture's answer to the question concerning the salvation and destination of babies, young children and mentally-handicapped adults (whose intellect is that of child) who die.

When faced with a mournful situation such as these, mere sentimentality does not give a substantial hope and wrong ideas cause confusion. True comfort comes from knowing the truth and the truth concerning these issues come from God's Word—the Holy Bible.

And the Bible teaches that unborn babies, infants, young children and those who are mentally handicapped go straight in the presence of God when they pass from this life in death.¹

GOD'S VIEW OF CHILDREN

It is true that there is no one passage which states "Babies are with me when they die", thus saith the LORD." But by examining Scripture, a strong case can be made for the salvation of these little ones. The first thing to notice is God's great love and concern for children.

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS, LOBBYISTS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #225

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

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God's love is seen in the formation of a child (cf. Jeremiah 1:4-5):

Psalm 139:13-16 For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth; Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

God's love is seen in His wrath against those who offered up their children to the pagan gods. Through Jeremiah, God declared a coming wrath and punishment upon the people of Judah and Jerusalem "because they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent and have built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal, a thing which I never commanded or spoke of, nor did it *ever* enter My mind" (Jeremiah 19:4-5). God's care for these children was seen as His anger burned hot at the heinous actions against them.

The disciples of Jesus actually tried to keep children away from their busy mentor. But He stated,

Mark 10:14-16 "Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." And He took them in His arms and began blessing them, laying His hands on them.

Children are not second rate people to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. They are watched over and cared for by the Sovereign King. Woe to those who hurt or hinder them. They are tremendously loved by God.

GOD'S VIEW OF INNOCENCE

Unfortunately, babies are born with a sinful nature. Because of Adam's sinful choice in the garden, all of humanity has been infected with this "sin" virus (Romans 5:12-19), "born with corrupt motives, ambitions, attitudes, desires, and objectives latent in the heart."² Therefore, babies and children,

like all the rest of humanity are saved solely by the grace of God and not by any decisions made or works accomplished. It is still the blood of Jesus Christ that takes away the sin, guilt and punishment of those whom God has saved.

With that in mind, though, the Bible teaches that people do not miss heaven simply because they have a sin nature. Those who incur the wrath of God are those who have committed sinful actions.

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Again, John MacArthur writes,

Nowhere in the Bible is anyone ever threatened with hell merely for the guilt inherited from Adam. Instead, whenever Scripture describes the inhabitants of hell, the stress is on their *willful* acts of sin and rebellion (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:6; Rev. 21:8; 22:15). Scripture always connects condemnation with works of unrighteousness—willful sin.³

Babies do not have a record of these sins. They have not committed the rebellious acts which deserve God's wrath. Yes, they have a sin nature which will direct them as they grow up to rebel against God. But if they pass away early, they will not have a "rap sheet" before God which will incur His divine punishment.

A QUICK NOTE: Many of us have used or heard of the phrase "age of accountability". Dr. MacArthur rightfully notes that there is no "age" when all are accountable for their own wrong doings. Instead, he writes, there is a "condition of accountability" in which one is morally culpable. As a child matures, he or she begins to understand God's commands and that breaking them is a sin against God. He or she begins to realize that they are guilty

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before God and in need of a savior. One also understands the amazing grace of God that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the atoning sacrifice for all who believe.

Only God knows when a child arrives in this “condition of accountability”. Some never reach it. Some may grow into adult bodies, but mentally do not have the comprehension to grasp these things. To these, God does not hold as “guilty” but considers them “innocent” (He called children “innocents” in the above referenced passage of Jeremiah 19:4-7).

There is no passage in Scripture which teaches “infant damnation.” Instead, the Bible shows God’s great mercy to infants and children who die before they are accountable. It is true that they are born sinners by nature, but they are not sinners by choice and deeds. It is true that they are in need of a Savior. It is true that God has provided them (and all of us) a Savior—Jesus Christ. Therefore, if they die before they reach a state of moral accountability, God has graciously chosen them for salvation because they are innocent of willful sin and unbelief.

If you have had a child die before, during or shortly after childbirth or if you lost a child who was too young to grasp the distinction between good and evil, please be assured your little one is safely in the gracious arms of God.

GOD’S VIEW OF THE FUTURE

The biblical truth that our little ones are in the arms of God is of great comfort and encouragement. But the question may linger concerning the future: “Will I get to see my child again?”

We turn to the story of David’s loss in 2 Samuel 11-12 for the answer. Through the prophet Nathan, God declared that a consequence of the sin of adultery between David and Bathsheba and the murder of her husband was the death of the son conceived in this sin (2 Samuel 12:14). David found grace when he repented, but it did not remove the consequences.

The son was born and grew gravely ill. David prayed and fasted for God’s mercy, but the son passed away seven days later. When told of the passing, David got up, cleaned up, worshiped and ate a meal. His servants were amazed and asked why he did this. He replied, “While the child was *still* alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who knows, the LORD may be gracious to me, that the child may live.’ But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I

bring him back again? **I will go to him, but he will not return to me.**” (2 Samuel 12:22-23, emphasis mine).

While some may say that this is simply David’s way of saying that one day he will also die and enter the grave, the context of David’s life teaches something else.

David, in spite of his grievous sins, was a man after God’s own heart. He knew of his eternal future to “dwell in the house of the LORD forever” (Psalm 23:6) and that he “will see Your face in righteousness” (Psalm 17:15). It was David who penned, “For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever” (Psalm 16:10-11).

David knew that after his death he was going to spend eternity with God and he knew that his son would be in this eternal home, as well.⁴

CHILDREN ARE NOT SECOND RATE PEOPLE TO GOD THE FATHER AND HIS SON, JESUS CHRIST. THEY ARE WATCHED OVER AND CARED FOR BY THE SOVEREIGN KING.

If you are a child of God, whose faith and trust for salvation is in the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, you have the great hope of seeing and living eternally with the baby or child that you have lost to death. Let this be a great source of comfort as you look back at your loss; or let this truth from God be an anchor for a troubling time which may visit you in the future.

GOD’S VIEW OF SALVATION

All of mankind is in need of the grace of God. All inherited the sin nature because of Adam’s sin. Eventually, this sin nature will drive us to rebel and sin against God, our Creator and King. Thus, stirring up His holy anger which demands justice. And in due time, all people go the way of the grave and will face the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

From God’s perspective, every single person is deserving of this judgment. Our offense against His holy nature is so heinous that the punishment due is death and separation from Him.

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But in His great love and mercy, He shows His people grace. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to take on the punishment of death; to shed His own blood to appease His righteous wrath. Therefore, in His eye, His people are sinless. They are now clothed with the sinless, pure, holy garment of His Son. God views and treats them as He views and treats Jesus (1 John 4:17).

Babies, young children and those who do not have the mental capability to understand are still in need of a Savior for they have inherited a sin nature. But due to God's grace, they are covered by this same sacrifice.

¹ Much of this study is borrowed from the excellent book on this subject by Dr. John MacArthur "Safe in the Arms of God: Truth from Heaven about the Death of a Child" (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2003).

² MacArthur, 72.

The great promises discussed in this study are only to those who are true followers of God. One's child may be in heaven, but the parent, who does have a record of rebellion, sin and pride against God the Father, may not be headed to that destination. That parent does not have the hope to see his or her child for they will be located in different eternal states.

But this can be remedied, my friend. God, in His love, through His Son Jesus Christ, can forgive a person of his or her sins--are you interested?

³ MacArthur, 80.