

## WHY I BELIEVE

### Infants Are Saved

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- a. The Scriptures are not always as clear as we would like them to be on the subject of infant salvation. Therefore, some of the statements on infant salvation will be based on logical inference rather than dogmatic declarations of the Bible. NOTE: Perhaps it is a good thing that the Bible is not too clear on this, for it causes us to reset the destinies of our children back in to the hands of a sovereign God who does all things right and well.
- b. The major confessions of historic Protestantism state, “Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth . . .” (Westminster Confession of Faith.)

#### II. THE PROTESTANT POSITION THAT ALL INFANTS WHO DIE ARE SAVED

- A. Introduction: The position that all those dying in infancy, whether baptized or unbaptized, are saved has been the general position of most Reformed theologians. Even most of the strict Calvinists have taken this position.
  1. Baptist: “I believe there will be more in Heaven than in Hell . . . I have never read that there will be in hell a great multitude, which no man can number. I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to Paradise.” (C.H. Spurgeon, A Defense of Calvinism)
  2. Presbyterian: “All who die in infancy are saved. This is inferred from what the Bible teaches of the analogy between Adam and Christ. ‘As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many (oi polloi – pantes) were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many (oi polloi – pantes) be made righteous.’ (Rom. V. 18-19). We have no right to put any limit on these general terms, except what the Bible itself places upon them. The Scriptures nowhere exclude any class of infants, baptized or unbaptized, born in Christian or

in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents, from the benefits of the redemption of Christ. All the descendants of Adam, except Christ, are under condemnation; all the descendants of Adam, except those of whom it is expressly revealed that they cannot inherit the kingdom of God, are saved. This appears to be the clear meaning of the Apostle, and therefore he does not hesitate to say that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, that the benefits of redemption far exceed the evils of the fall; that the number of the saved far exceeds the number of the lost.” (Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology).

3. Episcopalian: “‘Of such as little children,’ the kingdom of God in glory will be largely composed. The salvation of all who die in infancy may confidently be expected. Though sin has abounded, grace has much more abounded. (Rom. v. 20). The number of those in the world who die before they ‘know good from evil’ is exceedingly great. It is surely not too much to believe that a very large portion of the glorified inhabitants of heaven, will be found at length to be little children.” (J.C. Ryle, Expository Thoughts on the Gospels).

B. Biblical Support

1. Questionable Passages

a. Matt. 18:3-5, 10, 14

- i. “‘Little children’ are children: Heaven is the possession of all children who die before the age of accountability. It is not God’s emotional will that any little children should perish; therefore, children are saved.  
OBJECTION: This view does not fit the context.
- ii. “‘Little children’ are mature disciples: This context is a lesson in humility for true disciples of Christ. The disciples, jockeying for positions of preeminence in the kingdom decided that they would let Jesus settle the issue (18:1). Christ takes a child as an object lesson to illustrate His point (18:2). These disciples (learners) must be converted (turned) and become like children (in humility and simplicity) or they will never enter into the kingdom, much less have positions in it (18:3-5). The key thought is that the disciples were to become as little children in their attitude of faith. The “little

ones” are true disciples who have believed (Matt. 10:42). Each true disciple has a guardian angel (18:10) and they have been saved by Christ (18:11) and Christ paid a great price for all His disciples (18:12-13). It is not God’s will that one of the true disciples of Christ should perish (18:14). Furthermore, the context is about mature believers who are to have a simple, childlike faith. Notice carefully that Christ took one child as an object lesson and then speaks about children, indicating that He is speaking about the true disciples who believe (Matt. 10:42 – disciples are called little children). Furthermore, it seems that this context has nothing to do with infant salvation but is a lesson on humility for the disciples.

- b. Rev. 7:9: For these who interpret the Book of Revelation symbolically, they teach this verse says men from every nation, kindred and people will be saved. This could only happen if infants were saved. For there are many tribes which have passed out of existence and never heard the gospel. **OBJECTION**: A futurist in interpretation of the Book of Revelation would say that in context Revelation 7 refers to the Gentiles who will be saved and die as martyrs in the Tribulation period and has nothing to do with infant salvation. During this period, there will be world-wide evangelism.

2. Clear Passages

- a. Luke 18:15-17; Matt. 19:13-14; Mark 10:13-16: Matthew and Mark identify these the Lord blessed as “children” (paidia) but Luke definitely identifies all or at least some as “infants” (brephe). Christ laid hands on these infants and prayed for them, indicating special spiritual blessing and privilege for them. The Lord said to the parents of these children “of such is the kingdom of God.” The words “of such” (toiouton) can be translated “such” or “such like” but the context is about children, not a child-like faith, even though this is an after thought and applied to mature adults (Luke 18:17). NOTE: It is significant to note that those who brought these children to Jesus for blessing were probably believing parents or they would not have asked Christ to bless them.
- b. II Sam. 12:23
  - i. A few expositors take this verse to mean that David would go to Sheol (the grave) to be with his son, but they see no reason to believe this verse teaches infant salvation.
  - ii. However, it seems far better to take this verse as meaning that David would go to heaven to see his son. The context is about

the loss of David's child because of David's sin. David pleaded with God to spare the child but accepted God's will when he died. David found comfort in God's will but he also found comfort that he would see his son again in eternity. He longed for reunion with the child but it was impossible in this life but was an expectant hope that the child would be seen in the next life. David, a true believer, would go to see his child in eternity. There would be no comfort for David if he knew his son was damned. NOTE: What a comfort it is for believing parents to know if they lose a child in infancy that they will see it again in eternity.

"How are you to recognize them (children who die in infancy), how are you to commune with them, in what place they shall be, in what condition of consciousness, you cannot tell, but "you shall go to them;" the separation shall be but temporary, and who can conceive the joy of reunion, reunion never to be broken by separation any more." (Expositor's Bible)

- c. Job 3:11-13: Job as a mature adult was lamenting his birth because of the troubles he was going through. If he would have died in infancy he would have had "quiet" and "been at rest." Had he died as a baby and gone to hell, there would have been no rest for him there, for there is no rest in hell. Obviously Job thought his death in infancy would have placed him in the rest of Paradise.

#### C. Theological Support

1. Sinfulness of Children: While babies are saved who die in infancy, they are not saved because they are innocent but because of God's pure grace. Children are sinners by imputation and transmission of Adam's sin, but God in grace chooses to save infants because they cannot possibly respond to the terms of faith imposed upon the adult portion of the race.
2. Age of Accountability: The Bible seems to imply an age of accountability. Children who die before this age are numbered among God's elect and pass into heaven. This age of accountability varies with the individual child.
  - a. Old Testament: The age 20 in the O.T. becomes very significant. At this age children made their first sin offering (Ex. 3:11-16); children gave their money to the Lord's work (Ex. 38:26); Jewish boys went to war (Num. 1:3); judicial punishment was meted out to offenders (Num. 14:29; 32:11); and young men of the tribe of Levi became priests (I Chron. 23:24). The most significant passages on accountability at age 20 are found in Deut. 1:39 and Num. 14:29 which

state all adults 20 and over were not permitted to enter into the land because of their rebellion. POINT: It would be foolish to state dogmatically that the age of accountability is 20 but it seems to be a significant age.

- b. Personality: Man is made in the image of God - will (to choose for God); intellect (to know God) and emotion (to love God). The age of accountability comes when the personality is fully developed so as to choose against God or for him.
- c. Jewish Tradition: According to Jewish tradition a child accepted the responsibility of the Mosaic Law at age 12.
- d. Conclusion? When is the age of accountability? God only knows. This varies with the individual, but it should encourage Christian parents to instruct their children in spiritual things at an early age and seek to lead them to Christ.

- 3. God's Sovereignty: God is free to save whom He will and upon such terms as He chooses to impose. It appears that in grace God does act directly in behalf of those who die in infancy. Since infants are saved, it may be concluded that they are among the elect. Apparently children are regenerated at the moment of death.

I gather that all babies are born in sin and are in need of redemption. If babies stand in need of redemption, then it takes the same power to save them as it does an adult. A baby who dies must enter into Heaven through the same door as an adult, and that door is Jesus Christ. Therefore babies must be saved through and by the quickening work of the Holy Spirit who regenerates them the same as he does an adult. I believe that salvation is of the Lord from start to finish, and that the Lord does not need the cooperation of the sinner whether it be an adult or a baby. If free will and cooperation is needed, then I would hold no hope of any baby or adult ever being saved, but thanks be unto our God, that it is not true, so that we can say that the Son quickeneth whom He will (Jn. 5:21)." (Austin Fields, The Baptist Examiner)

C. Logical Support

- 1. The commands to believe and repent are for people capable of doing these acts. Why would God hold an infant accountable who cannot believe?
- 2. This position seems to be more compatible with the justice of God.

III. OBJECTIONS TO THE POSITION THAT ALL INFANTS ARE SAVED

- a. This position leads one to conclude that infanticide would be more merciful than letting a child grow up and be lost forever if he does not believe.
- b. This position forces one to conclude that a person can be saved at an early age and lost at a later age. Can a person be elect and non-elect at different stages of his life?
- c. This position answers the question of salvation by grace but does not really explain the through faith aspect of salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Can a child be saved without faith being exercised?