

Do Infants Need To Be Baptized?

Bible Answers About Salvation

Most people are not aware that infants are sprinkled, calling it baptism, because of the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity. Walter Conner, in his book *Christian Doctrine*, a presentation of Baptist theology for ministers and laymen alike, states:

"Makes it not only possible that he may sin on account of his power of choice, but certain that he will sin on account of his moral weakness and inherent tendency toward evil. This depravity of man's nature is inherent and universal.... But in saying that depravity is inherent in human nature is meant that man as fallen is born depraved."

John Wesley wrote:

"If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are proper subjects of baptism; seeing, in the ordinary way, they cannot be saved, unless this be washed away by baptism" (*Treatise on Baptism, Doctrinal Tracts*, p. 252).

To be depraved is to be marked by corruption or evil. The doctrine of "total hereditary depravity" means that everyone is born not only with the guilt but also the depravity (wickedness) of his ancestors. This doctrine means that no unregenerate person can properly evaluate the evidence which God has given to man and, as a result, obey the gospel (thus being "born again," becoming a child of God) without a direct, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit upon him. We would not deny that many become depraved, but we do deny that babies are born depraved.

Babies are not born depraved because Jesus said this of little children coming to him: "forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:15, 16) They are so pure that they are in a safe condition and do not need salvation. This becomes even more important when we read these words of Jesus, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3) According to the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity, this ought to read, "Except ye turn, and become totally depraved as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." If Adam's posterity inherited the corrupt nature described after the fall, then why do not children of Christians inherit their parents' purified natures after their conversion? In speaking of his deceased baby, King David said, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Sam. 12:23). David knew his baby was in a safe condition. The baby was not guilty of any sin, for it had not transgressed God's law, and "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 Jno. 3:4).

Too, if we are guilty of Adam's first sin, why are we not guilty of not only all of Adam's sins, but also of all our ancestors' sins? But God said, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him,

and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him." (Ezekiel 18:20) Clearly, the principle is established that the sins we bear are the sins we do. In the Bible the definition of sin is not something you inherit, but a thing which adheres to a person for his own act. It is simply a person's own violation of a law of God, and you and I simply did not eat of the forbidden fruit, for Eden was gone when we arrived on this earth (I John 3:4).

Even if sprinkling and pouring were baptism (and they are not) it would not be proper to baptize infants for many reasons, some of which follow:

1. The Bible does not say infants were baptized.
2. Those who administer what they call infant baptism say they do it in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, but the Godhead does not authorize the baptizing of infants. If so, where?
3. The will of an infant cannot be involved in its being sprinkled for baptism.
4. To be scripturally baptized one must first hear and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and therefore be convicted of sin and then repent or turn from sin and confess faith in Christ as the Son of God. (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-38,41; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10) An infant can do none of these.

Infants do not bear the iniquity of Adam or anyone else. Only when they grow up and transgress God's law will they possess the guilt of sin and become a subject of salvation.

In a strained effort to justify infant baptism, some have cited cases of "household" baptism (Acts 16:15; Acts 16:31,33; I Cor. 1:16) — as proof that infants were baptized. But there is absolutely no proof that any infants were baptized in any of these cases. There is no proof there were any infants in any of these households; and even if there were, there is nothing that suggests they were baptized since they cannot do what one must do in order to be saved.

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