

Do Babies (& the Mentally Handicapped) Go to Heaven When They Die?

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Introduction: Open your Bible's to begin with to **Romans 5:12**.

When I first came to this church, someone here had asked me what happens to a mentally handicapped person when they die. They had known and been close to someone like that. You know I am preparing for this debate, and I am covering this in the debate, so I want to speak on the subject, "Do Babies (& the Mentally Handicapped) Go to Heaven when they Die"?

What we are going to see tonight is the span of God's redemption and mercy. How do you account for the fact that a baby is (as my wife put it) both a "stinker" and very "precious" at the same time? We are going to see the love, mercy, and justice of God tonight. First let us look at Romans 5.

Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". Skip down to verses **18-19**, "Therefore 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. 19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

[Prayer for Guidance]

The question we have tonight is, if we are all sinners because of Adam's sin, how can babies go to heaven? That is a seriously important question. My hope is to speak from the Word of God and to give hope to all parents who have lost babies and little children, and to help us understand what happens with the severely mentally handicapped when they die.

Let's talk about the AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY. I believe God is merciful to babies and little children, but *not because they are innocent*. Let me say I believe babies go to heaven when they die, but not because of a sentimental notion that babies aren't participants in the Fall.

- I. There is no question that all humanity participated in Adam's fall. According to the verses we just read in **Romans 5**, children are participants in the Fall of Adam, and the death of infants prove that. We know that all humans are brought forth through physical birth in sin.
 - **Psalm 51:5** states that we all come into the world as sinners: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me" (NASB, ESV). The word "brought forth" according to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old*

Testament, means, "writhing in labor pains".¹ The word "iniquity" (according to the same source) means "to bend, twist, distort" or "to sin".² We are all born with a crooked, with a selfish heart bent away from God. This verse is a good description in the Old Testament how we are "made sinners" through Adam.

- The corruption is not God's work, but it comes through our parents' loins. **Ephesians 2:2** says that everyone that is not in Christ are "children of disobedience".
- **Psalm 58:3** says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." This verse teaches that the nature of people are fallen from their wombs. Matthew Henry says about this verse: "**wickedness is bred in the bone with them; they brought it into the world with them**; they have in their natures a strong inclination to it; they learned it from their wicked parents, and have been trained up in it by a bad education".

If babies were born innocent or pure or morally neutral, there would be no basis for their death. The very fact that they die indicates that the sin of Adam has had an effect upon them. "The wages of sin is death" (**Romans 3:23**). It is in their inherited sin nature that the seeds of death are planted. **So we must ask:**

- II. How does God deal with not only babies, but all persons that do not have the mental capacity to comprehend the depth of sin or the person of God?

The judgment of God is based on a person's knowledge of sin and God. **Luke 12:48**, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required". The Scriptures teach that we learn about sin through our conscience, through creation, and directly through the Word of God. If we have none of these, we have to ask, are we accountable? Are babies, little children, and mentally handicapped people accountable for being sinners?

- A. Let me say first of all regarding accountability of a child: Scripture is clear that all who have the capacity to comprehend God's creation in nature are certainly without excuse. At what age that occurs, no one knows, but it is through nature we can comprehend the existence of God. [HEADING FOR THIS SLIDE: Only Those With Ability to Comprehend are Without Excuse] **Romans 1:19-20**—"For what can be known about God is plain to them [**that is, to mankind**], because God has shown it to them. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. **So they are without excuse**" (ESV). I believe this verse implies that those who cannot comprehend God through the creation because of mental incapability or whose conscience is not yet developed to discern sinful actions are safe. Only those who can have mental capacity are without excuse. All others are safe, even though because of Adam's sin, they sin, but without full knowledge.

¹Harris, R. Laird ; Harris, Robert Laird ; Archer, Gleason Leonard ; Waltke, Bruce K.: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 270

²Ibid.

B. Second, all people are judged according to their actual works. A baby has committed no sins in the womb, and so he is safe. **Romans 9:11** speaks of Jacob and Esau being in the womb "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil". **Revelation 12:20** speaks of judgment day. John writes, "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). The sin of Adam is not brought out, but they will be judged "according to their [own] works". Children in the womb have done no wrong of their own. I believe we can imply that heathen nations from all around the globe who have had stillborn births and miscarriages will have their children in heaven. There will be a multitude without number.

Charles Spurgeon said, "I rejoice to know that the souls of all infants, as soon as they die, speed their way to paradise. Think what a multitude there is of them."

C. Thirdly, those who have no knowledge of good and evil, who do not have a fully developed conscience, will not be held accountable even though they do evil. Mac quoted **Deuteronomy 1:39-40**, "Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had **no knowledge between good and evil**, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. 40 But *as for* you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea." It is true that these verses imply that the younger a child is, the more he or she lacks knowledge of what is and is not sin. But this verse does not teach that they do no good or evil. They simply lack knowledge that what they do is sin. These verses imply that infants and little children do not know good or evil and hence lack the capacity to make morally informed and thus responsible choices.

D. Fourth, Scripture generally indicates that babies will go to heaven.

- When David says "I will go to him, but he will not return to me" (**2 Sam 12:23**) after the death of his son, what else can he mean? That he will be buried next to his son? No, the joy and confidence that David has in this passage indicates that this baby went to be with God.
- In **Job 3:16-17**, Job says he wishes he were like a stillborn child because they enter into rest. Job wishes he could die and go to heaven. Listen to his words: "as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. 17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling; and there the weary be at rest."

E. So it is because of the above reasons that I believe though children inherit a sinful nature from Adam, I do not believe that children will be judged for Adam's sin.

- Only those who can have mental capacity are without excuse (Romans 1:19-20).
- People are judged according to their works. Babies in the womb specifically have no works (Romans 9:11).
- Those who have no knowledge of good and evil, who do not have a fully developed conscience, will not be held accountable even though they do evil (Deuteronomy 1:39-40).

- Scripture generally indicates that babies will go to heaven.

Conclusion: As we close, let me give you the words of Charles Haddon Spurgeon: "There may have existed somewhere in some corner of the earth, a miscreant" --a criminal-- "who would dare to say that there were infants in hell, but I have never met with him, nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person! ...I say we hold that all infants who die are elect of God and are therefore saved! We look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost."

Amen!