

I have a few introductory points as we begin...

1. First, I know I discussed babies going to heaven four years ago when teaching through 2 Samuel. While I used those notes to prepare this message, you won't be hearing the same teaching. Every time I teach on something I try to edit it and improve it.
2. Second, I suspect we might all have some scriptural reasons to believe babies go to heaven. While I want discussion and contributes, if you mention something that I will cover later in my notes, I'll ask you to hold your thoughts until then so we aren't derailed.
  - a. For example, I'm sure many of you know about David's declaration to see his son. If you volunteer that, I'll invite you to hold the thoughts until we cover those verses. Otherwise we might be all over the place.

Next, I believe this teaching is very important for three reasons:

1. First, many of us have experienced miscarriages – or we will experience miscarriages – and we want to know what happened to those babies and whether we'll see them again.
2. Second, we all know people who have experienced miscarriages or even lost babies and we want to be able to comfort those people w/ the truth that they will see those babies again.
3. The final reason I believe this teaching is so important, is too many people's thoughts about babies going to heaven is born more out of wishful thinking or sentimentality than anything else:
  - a. We all want to believe babies go to heaven.
  - b. We'd probably say it seems right to us for babies to go to heaven.
  - c. But the real question isn't:
    - i. *Do we think babies go to heaven?*
    - ii. *Or Does it seem right to us that babies go to heaven?*
    - iii. The real question is, "*Does the bible TEACH babies go to heaven?*"
  - d. So I want you to know at the very beginning that even though I want to believe babies go to heaven – like I'm sure all of you want to believe as well – I don't believe that b/c it's what I want to believe. I believe it b/c that's what I believe the Bible teaches.

And there's one thing I'd like us to consider...

The reason we want to believe babies go to heaven is it's unimaginable for us to think of a baby being in hell.

This is actually an interesting thought b/c most scholars agree we won't spend eternity in the bodies we inhabit when we die. For example:

- If a 90yo woman dies, she doesn't spend eternity in a 90yo-looking eternal body. If people thought they'd spend eternity at the age they died, people might not want to live as long.
- Similarly if a baby dies, the baby doesn't spend eternity looking a few months old. So even though I don't believe babies go to hell, if they did, they wouldn't go there as babies.

So what age will we look like for eternity? Many scholars believe we'll be the age Adam and Eve were created. We don't know exactly what age that was, but we know they were old enough to work and procreate, so if I had to guess I'd say 20's or 30's?

So you could say even if babies went to hell, babies wouldn't really go to hell, or they wouldn't remain as babies in hell. So in that sense babies would never really go to hell.

But if it bothers us to think of babies going to hell, it should bother us just as much to think of anyone going to hell:

- Yes, it would be terrible for babies to go to hell, but we should think of how terrible it is for anyone to go to hell.
- If we're bothered by babies going to hell, we should be bothered by the reality of anyone going to hell.

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Now we're ready to begin and foundational to this discussion is an understanding of innocence.

Adam and Eve were created during what's known as the Dispensation of Innocence. We think of them being innocent b/c they hadn't yet sinned. That's partially true, but it's also true they were considered innocent b/c they couldn't yet choose between good and evil.

So to be perfectly clear, Adam and Eve were considered innocent b/c they couldn't yet choose or discern between good and evil.

And God wanted to preserve Adam and Eve's innocence. Look at **Gen 2:16**...

**Gen 2:16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."**

As long as Adam and Eve didn't eat from this tree, they would not be able to choose between god and evil and their innocence would be preserved.

I'm going to say this loosely b/c I don't want to pry too much into your parenting, but I do see a parenting lesson here. We can tell God wanted to preserve Adam and Eve's innocence, and we should try to preserve our children's innocence as well.

Of course our children are going to learn about things plenty of topics as they get older, but it's probably best for us to try to preserve their innocence as long as possible.

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The one verse demonstrating their innocence – or demonstrating their inability to choose between good and evil – is **Gen 2:25**...

**25 they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.**

They had so little knowledge of good and evil they didn't know there was anything wrong w/ what they were doing.

This verse is interesting b/c there are a number of verses later in Scripture that reveal this is the exact opposite of the way Adam and Eve should've felt. There are a number of verses that associate nakedness WITH shame:

- **Isa 47:3** Your nakedness shall be uncovered,  
Yes, your shame will be seen;
- **Nahum 3:5** “Behold, I *am* against you,” says the LORD of hosts;  
“I will lift your skirts over your face,  
I will show the nations your nakedness,  
And the kingdoms your shame
- **Micah 1:11** Pass by in naked shame, you inhabitant of Shaphir;
- **Rev 3:18** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.
- Also **Isa 20:4** and **Rev 16:15**

It's interesting there could be so much **shame** associated w/ being **naked** – even among ungodly people who aren't as prone to feeling shame – but it says Adam and Eve felt no shame.

The way to understand this is by considering how **shame** is created, or what leads to us feeling or experiencing **shame**. **Shame** can only be produced by the knowledge of – or consciousness – of doing something wrong. Let me give you a few simple examples...

- Let's say you enter the home of people who always take their shoes off, but you don't know that, so you enter w/ your shoes on and start walking around. When the owner of the house says, “We always take off our shoes” you feel some shame and apologize. But you didn't feel shame before that b/c you didn't know you had done anything wrong.
- Have you ever started eating, and then found out everyone wanted to say grace?
- Once our family went to pick blueberries, and the woman told us on the phone we could go down to the orchard, pick the blueberries, and then bring them to the orchard and pay for them. When I got down there she confronted us in the orchard and said we were supposed to first go to the counter and get a bucket. We had brought our own containers to use. We felt shame when she accused us of trying to steal from her.

The point is you feel shame when you realize you did something wrong, but until you know you did something wrong you don't feel any shame. It's the knowledge of doing something wrong that produces shame.

So something somewhat interesting about this situation is since Adam and Eve didn't yet know right from wrong, or they didn't yet know good from evil, when God said not to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they just had to trust Him or obey out of faith...b/c they couldn't tell that it was wrong to eat from it.

Look at **Gen 3:5**....

**Gen 3:5 (Satan said), “For God knows that in the day you eat of it (referring to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”**

This was true! Satan was telling the truth. As you’ve probably heard before, Satan always wants to deceive people by mixing together an amount of truth and lies. That’s why JW, Mormons and all the cults have so many Christian elements.

**<sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.**

Now notice the first thing that happens after they eat...

**<sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.**

The NLT says **they suddenly felt SHAME at their nakedness.**

Their eyes were opened to the difference between good and evil. They realized it was wrong to be naked, so they clothed themselves.

Skip down to **verse 11...**

**Gen 3:11 [God] said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”**

God asked this b/c the only way they could know there was something wrong w/ being naked was if they ate from the tree.

Now here’s the question:

- What was it that told them there was something wrong w/ being naked?
- What had they acquired that allowed them to **choose** – or discern – **between good and evil?**

They had received consciences. Their innocence was lost, and now they had consciences that allowed them to choose between good and evil. The moment they ate they lost their innocence and developed consciences. That’s why the dispensation after the Dispensation of Innocence is the Dispensation of Conscience.

Now if you think about babies for a moment, you can see two things:

1. You can see their innocence.
2. You can see their lack of conscience.

Do babies ever feel any shame whatsoever?

- They're very much like Adam and Eve in **Gen 2:25**. They feel no shame walking around w/o any clothes on. They feel no shame associated w/ having their diapers changed and having anyone see them. They never say:
  - *Hey, I don't want you to see me like this!*
  - *Hey, quit looking at me!*
- They feel no shame eating, making a huge mess of themselves and everything around them.
- They feel no shame throwing things, possibly breaking things.
- They feel no shame screaming and throwing fits.
- They don't feel guilty or ashamed for keeping their mother up all night...and probably most of the rest of the house.

They have no knowledge of doing anything wrong. They don't feel any shame until they get older.

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Now in an effort to keep the flow of this message smoother, we're going to look at the verses supporting the innocence of babies – or their inability regarding choosing between good and evil – later. For now, let's go to **Romans 2** where the conscience is discussed more clearly, and we can see more reason why babies are innocent.

Here's the context so this makes sense...

Paul is discussing two groups of people, the Gentiles and Jews, and they both think they're free from judgment for different reasons. You could say they both think they're innocent. But Paul is going to let them know they're not innocent.

- The Gentiles think they're free from judgment – or innocent - b/c they don't have the law. They think they can't be held responsible b/c they didn't know better! They never received a law saying not to do it.
- The Jews think they're free from judgment – or innocent - b/c they DO have the law. They thought having the law meant they were good.

Let's look at **verse 12**...

**Rom 2:12or as many as have sinned without law (the Gentiles) will also perish without law,**

So Paul says even though the Gentiles haven't received the law they're still going to **perish** eternally, or be judged. They're not innocent. He'll explain why in **verses 14 and 15**.

<sup>12b</sup> **and as many as have sinned in (or with) the law (the Jews who received the law) will be judged by the law**

Even though Jews have the law, they're going to be judged or they're going to **perish** too...

<sup>13</sup> **(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;**

This might seem pretty obvious to us, but apparently it wasn't that obvious to the Jews: it's not enough to simply have the law. You have to obey it, which they didn't do! Having the law actually made them MORE accountable before God:

- Because having the law told them right from wrong...
- Or having the law made good and evil clear to them.

In a way, when the Jews received the Law, it was like Adam and Eve eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Now they had knowledge of good and evil.

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So Paul has explained why Jews will be judged – b/c they don't obey the law – and now he'll explain why Gentiles will be judged...

**14<sup>a</sup> for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law,**

This means obey parts of the law. Even people who have never heard of the Ten Commandments or read the Bible still recognize certain things – lying, stealing and murder – are wrong. In other words these people can choose between good and evil. They have kept the knowledge – or conscience – that was passed on to them from Adam and Eve.

**14<sup>b</sup> these (Gentiles), although not having the law, are a law to themselves,**

Right here Paul says Gentiles have a **law** too. Since their consciences tell them what's right and wrong – since their consciences allow them to choose between good and evil – their consciences are a law to them. When these people lie, cheat, steal, or murder, they're disobeying their consciences, or breaking the **law** God has given them.

**15<sup>a</sup> who show the work of the law written in their hearts,**

If they know it's wrong to lie, steal, murder, and commit adultery, they're showing **the law is written on their hearts...**

**15<sup>b</sup> their conscience also bearing witness,**

If you became a Christian later in life – like I did – you know even though you didn't have the Bible telling you right from wrong, you still knew certain things were wrong. Your conscience convicted you.

Before I was a Christian – before I ever learned God's Word – I still knew plenty of things that were wrong, but I did them anyway. That left me as guilty as before God as people who have the Bible memorized. This is why people w/o God's law – even people in the remotest areas of the world, farthest from civilization – are still guilty before God.

**15<sup>c</sup> and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*)**

Notice the words **accusing** and **excusing**. These are the two things our consciences do:

- **Accuse** us when we do something wrong.
- **Excuse** us when we do something right.

The point is even though people have consciences telling them certain things are wrong, do they obey their consciences and not do those things? We still disobey our consciences and do things we know we shouldn't do, which leaves us guilty before God.

Now what does all this have to do w/ babies?

Paul is showing the guilt of two groups: Jews and Gentiles are both guilty before God:

- Jews are guilty b/c they have the law, which they disobey.
- Gentiles are guilty b/c they have consciences – **a law to them** – which they disobey.

People are judged b/c they fall into one of the two categories Paul just discussed: either you know the law which you disobey or you have a conscience which you disobey.

But babies don't have either of these ways to recognize sin: they haven't received the law, and they don't yet have consciences. They can't yet choose between good and evil.

- They don't have the law to condemn them.
- They also aren't old enough yet to obey or disobey their consciences. They can't yet choose between good from evil, which leaves them exactly like Adam and Eve before The Fall. Which is what? INNOCENT!

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While we're in Romans, there's one more important verse we should look at...

**Rom 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,**

Paul is saying people are left w/o excuse b/c of their rejection of the revelation of God in creation. People look at creation, it reveals there's a Creator, but then people deny that Creator's existence.

It's hard to argue babies can have any appreciation of creation until they're older, and it's definitely hard to argue that they can have any appreciation of creation...especially while they're still in the womb!

Maybe they move around in the amniotic fluid and think, "*Wow this is amazing. I can't believe I'm growing in here. Somehow I was created and that Creator must be amazing!*" But I doubt it.

Paul goes on to say God should be worshiped as a result...

**<sup>21</sup> because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

In this verse man is condemned for two things:

1. Not **glorifying** or worshiping God
2. Not giving God **thanks**.

It's hard to argue that infants could **glorify** God or give Him **thanks**.

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So let me briefly summarize these verses in Romans. God's judgment seems to be based on – or people are not innocent – for three main reasons:

1. People violate God's law, which was the case w/ the Jews.
2. People violate their consciences, which was the case w/ the Gentiles.
3. People reject the revelation of God in creation.

But I'd argue babies aren't capable of these transgressions, or babies aren't capable of bringing judgment on themselves for these reasons.

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One point about children's innocence...

Even though babies are innocent, they're not perfect. If they were perfect like we will be in the future:

1. First, they wouldn't have sin natures, and they wouldn't be able to later sin.
2. Second, they wouldn't die. This might sound odd, but the fact that babies can die before they're born – the fact that they can die while still in the womb – is evidence of their sin natures and lack of perfection. If infants didn't have sin natures – and therefore didn't sin – they wouldn't die.
3. Third, being innocent isn't the same as being righteous. So even though babies are innocent, at some point they'll lose that innocence, and require the forgiveness and righteousness of Christ that's available by faith to be saved.

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Now none of this really means anything unless I have some Scripture to back up my claim that babies are innocent. So one of the obvious questions is:

- Are there some verses showing the innocence of children?
- Are there some verses showing children can't choose between good and evil?

## **CHILDREN SACRIFICED ARE IDENTIFIED AS INNOCENT**

One of the worst sins the Jews engaged in was child sacrifice. If it ever seems severe that God conquered the Jews using the nation of Babylon, remember they were sacrificing their children to Molech.

When God confronted the people through the prophet Jeremiah about sacrificing their babies as burnt offerings to Molech, He said...

**Jer 19:4 They have forsaken Me and...have burned incense...to other gods...and have filled this place WITH THE BLOOD OF THE INNOCENTS."**

So you have this declaration from God that these babies – even though they came from terribly evil families w/ terribly evil parents – were innocent. We can assume prior to their deaths they'd been



around the evil, idolatrous worship of their parents – even if only for a few days – yet God still identified them as **innocent**.

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Next please turn back to **Jer 2...**

God is speaking to the women and He says...

**Jer 2:34 “Why do you beautify your way to seek love?**

**Therefore you have also taught**

**The wicked women your ways.**

<sup>34</sup> **Also on your skirts is found**

**The blood of THE LIVES OF THE POOR INNOCENTS.**

**I have not found it by secret search,**

**But plainly on all these things.**

God calls these babies or infants **poor innocents**, and more than likely He’s referring to their poverty: these were financially **poor** people.

And there are two possibilities regarding the deaths of these **innocent** infants...

First, this could refer – like **Jer 19:4** – to children that have been sacrificed.

Ellicott said, *“The general meaning is clear, and points to the guilt of Israel in offering her children in horrid sacrifice to Molech.”*

But more than likely this refers to women murdering their babies through abortions. The Cambridge Bible said, *“The allusion may be to deaths due to miscarriage of justice or the result of exaction.”*

This is the likely interpretation for a few reasons:

- The mention of **the blood on [their] skirts** pictures women aborting their babies and having blood on their **skirts** as a result.
- The mention of them being **poor** gives the idea they didn’t think they could afford more children.
- Also, and I hate to have to tell you this, but it’s true: it wasn’t uncommon when people were **poor** and starving to murder their children and eat them. There are a few verses in Scripture where God said the people would do this if they disobeyed Him b/c they would be so poor and impoverished, and these Jews were disobeying God and they were poor and impoverished:
  - **Lev 26:29 You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters.**
  - **Deut 28:53 You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.**

- **Eze 5:10 You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you.**

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Next please turn to **2 Kin 21**.

The evilest king in the OT was Manasseh, and his worst sin was sacrificing – not just children – but his own children...

**2 Kin 21:6 Also [Manasseh] made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke *Him* to anger.**

The parallel account in **2 Chr 33** says he sacrificed more than one of his sons: **2 Chr 33:6 Also HE CAUSED HIS SONS TO PASS THROUGH THE FIRE in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.**

Now skip down to **verse 16**...

**2 Kin 21:16 Moreover Manasseh SHED VERY MUCH INNOCENT BLOOD, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.**

I believe this is referring to the blood of the children he sacrificed.

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Please turn to **Psalm 106**. The context of this verse is it looks back at Israel's rebelliousness during their history.

We're going to look at the verses discussing them mingling w/ the Canaanites and learning their practices, including child sacrifice.

Let's start at **verse 34**...

**Psa 106:34 They (the Israelites) did not destroy the peoples,  
Concerning whom the LORD had commanded them,**

**Verse 38** makes it clear this is referring to the Canaanites. In our sermons recently I discussed the wickedness of the Canaanites and their false religions. One of their worst sins was child sacrifice, which the Israelites learned from them.

**<sup>35</sup> But they (the Israelites) mingled with the Gentiles (or Canaanites)**

**And learned their works;**

**<sup>36</sup> They served their idols,**

**Which became a snare to them.**

**<sup>37</sup> They even sacrificed their sons  
and their daughters to demons,  
<sup>38</sup> AND SHED INNOCENT BLOOD,  
THE BLOOD OF THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS,  
Whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan;  
And the land was polluted with blood.**

Again, we see when these children were sacrificed, they were identified as being **innocent**. That's definitely not how God would describe the rest of the Israelites who were performing these sacrifices.

### **CHILDREN CAN'T DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.**

If it's true that children are innocent or don't have consciences, then it's also true that:

- They have no knowledge of good and evil
- Or they can't discern or choose between good and evil.

A few places support this. First, please turn to **Num 14**.

In **Num 14** the nation of Israel rebelled against God when the 12 spies come back w/ a report about the enemies in the land. God told the people they would not get to enter the land b/c of their unbelief, but in **Num 14:31** He said something interesting...

**Num 14:31 But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised.**

Now the obvious question is if these **little ones** or infants were as guilty as their parents, why weren't they judged? Why did they get to enter the land? We aren't told in Numbers, but when Moses recounts Israel's history to the nation in Deuteronomy right before they enter the land God reveals why the infants were able to enter...

**Deut 1:39 Moreover your little ones and your children, who you say will be victims, who TODAY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.**

Even notice the way it's worded: it says **TODAY** they have no knowledge of good and evil. It won't always be that way. At some point they'll have that knowledge, but at this point they didn't. That's why when their parents rebelled, they weren't guilty b/c they didn't rebel w/ their parents. They weren't old enough to obey their consciences. They weren't able to choose evil like their parents.

The most important part of this is they were able to avoid the judgment their parents experienced b/c of their inability to choose between **good and evil**.

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Next please turn to **Isa 7**.

Let me provide the context for these verses...

Ahaz is the king of Judah and he's terrified of being attacked by two kings, Rezin and Pekah. So God gives Ahaz a sign that w/in a few years both of these kings will be dead so he has nothing to worry about...

**<sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**

This is probably the most famous verse in the Bible regarding Jesus' birth.

Ahaz lived about 700 years before Jesus was born, so the question is how would this be a **sign** to him? Isaiah clearly said, **the Lord Himself will give YOU a sign.**

I don't want to go into a lengthy detour, but prophecy often has a near, partial fulfillment and a future, complete fulfillment.

- The future, greater or complete fulfillment is Jesus, the true and greater Son born of a Virgin.
- The near, partial fulfillment took place in Isaiah and Ahaz's day and that's what I want to discuss...

In Isaiah and Ahaz's day there was a young woman who was currently a virgin, and she would end up giving birth to a child and he would be called **Immanuel**. Jesus was the true and greater **Immanuel** in that He was literally "God With Us." In Isaiah's day you could look at **Immanuel** and say, "Oh how cute, a little baby. His name means God With Us" but with Jesus you'd say, "Whoa. God became a Man; He's really with us."

To catch the real beauty of this is the child born in Isaiah's day pictured the deliverance God would provide His people with from the two evil kings...and that was a cool deliverance and all, but if these people died they could still go to hell, which isn't much of a deliverance. Jesus though, was going to provide God's people w/ the true and greater deliverance, a deliverance from their sin, which is an eternal deliverance.

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So the way this worked for Ahaz is But 700 years earlier there was a child w/ this name, and when Ahaz saw this young lady, who at the time was a virgin, have a child and give him this name, it would be clear to Ahaz that God's future prophecy regarding Rezin and Pekah would be dead.

To be clear, the woman wouldn't remain a virgin to have the child; there's nothing miraculous or supernatural about the birth of this child, other than the fact God predicted it. His name, **Immanuel**, means God With Us, communicating to Ahaz that God really was with him and the rest of the Jews during this terrifying time.

Now regarding this child it says...

**<sup>15</sup> Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.**

This is worded a little awkwardly in the NKJV. What it's actually saying is he won't be eating **curds and honey** UNTIL he can choose between good and evil:

- **ESV He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.**
- **NAS He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good.**

The important point to notice is before He can eat **curds and honey**, He can't choose between **good and evil**. Now that point is made even clearer...

**<sup>16</sup> For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.**

God clearly says there's some period of time where the child can't choose between good and evil.

To explain the prophecy it's during this time – where the child can't choose between good and evil – that Pekah and Rezin - the two kings Ahaz is afraid of – will die.

When children are able to **discern between good and evil**, we often refer to this as the age of accountability. There are a few ways to ask this:

- *When does the age of accountability begin?*
- *When do children develop consciences?*
- *When can a child choose between good and evil?*
- *When do children lose their innocence?*

Wayne Grudem said, *“We must realize that a child's sinful nature manifests itself very early, certainly within the first two years of a child's life, as anyone who has raised children can affirm.”*

Isaiah 7 supports this in that this chapter takes place in 735BC. Pekah and Rezin both died in 732 BC, when **Immanuel** was probably 2ish, before he could choose between good and evil. So here are two thoughts:

1. First, I suspect this age probably changes from child to child, since all children develop differently.
2. Second, while I can't tell you when exactly children lose their innocence, they seem to lose it pretty early.

The good news about this is children can have a strong, saving faith at very young ages. They might not have a huge amount of knowledge or wisdom, but we're not saved by knowledge or wisdom: we're saved by faith, which children can have in abundance.

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Next please turn to Jonah 4.

God sent Jonah to the Ninevites. They repented and God mercifully forgave them, which angered Jonah who wanted to see them destroyed b/c of their wickedness. The book ends w/ God rebuking Jonah w/ these words...

**Jonah 4:11 Should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left?**

Jonah wanted to see the entire city destroyed – probably like Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed – but God says there are 120,000 people in the city would be destroyed too, and he’s talking about the children. He says they aren’t old enough yet to know right from left, or to **discern** between good and evil.

If you think about babies they’re the picture of being undiscerning:

- They’ll put anything in their mouths.
- They’ll stick things in electrical sockets.
- They’ll crawl right off elevated places.

And just like they lack discernment in these areas, they lack spiritual discernment.

The important thing to notice is God wanted these children to avoid judgment or punishment b/c they didn’t know better.

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And this brings us to the next point I want us to consider...

**GOD’S PATTERN IN SCRIPTURE INVOLVES SPARING THE CHILDREN OF UNBELIEVERS FROM JUDGMENT.**

When large groups of adults are punished in Scripture, God’s often makes sure the infants are spared:

- When the generation of Israelites died in the wilderness, God made sure the infants weren’t punished along w/ their parents b/c they, “had no knowledge of good and evil.”
- When the Ninevites were going to be destroyed, God told Jonah He didn’t want the 120,000 infants to be killed b/c they couldn’t discern between good and evil (**discern between their right hand and their left**).

And another other example occurred w/ Korah...

**Numbers 16** records the rebellion of Korah, a Levite, and Dathan, Abiram and On, all Reubenites. They revolted against the authority of Moses and Aaron (both Levites). They wanted to remove Moses and Aaron’s authority and increase their own.

Their rebellion was an attempt to discredit the authority of Moses and Aaron’s service as High Priest and to increase their authority and position. In rising up against Moses and Aaron, the Lord’s appointed leaders, they were also rising up against the Lord. Their rebellion was judged by God in one of the most unique judgments in Scripture...

**Num 16:31** Now it came to pass, as he (Moses) finished speaking all these words, that the ground split apart under them,<sup>32</sup> and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all *their* goods.<sup>33</sup> So they and all those with them went down alive into the pit; the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the assembly.<sup>34</sup> Then all Israel who *were* around them fled at their cry, for they said, “Lest the earth swallow us up *also!*”

Now upon first reading it looks like all the children died too, since it mentions their **households** being swallowed up too. But skip to **Num 26**. Here’s the context...

This is the Second Census of the nation, after the old generation died. In **verse 9** the men who joined Korah are discussed as well as Korah himself...

**9** The sons of Eliab *were* Nemuel, Dathan, and Abiram. These *are* the Dathan and Abiram, representatives of the congregation, who contended against Moses and Aaron in the company of Korah, when they contended against the LORD;<sup>10</sup> and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up together with Korah when that company died, when the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men; and they became a sign.<sup>11</sup> **NEVERTHELESS THE CHILDREN OF KORAH DID NOT DIE.**

So interestingly God spared the children. This would make sense if we consider they were innocent. They couldn’t choose between good and evil. They didn’t willingly rebel w/ their parents.

So even when it comes to unbelievers, like Korah or the Ninevites, God wants to spare their children from judgment.

Here’s one thing to consider...

Think of the glorious reality of this for Muslim and Hindu and Buddhist countries where we see so many babies dying.

The reason we I decided to teach on this was we discussed God’s command for Israel to destroy all of the Canaanites and Amalekites, even their children. I submitted to you that they were a tremendous example of God’s mercy, b/c they were the only Canaanites and Amalekites who were saved. They were taken to be w/ the Lord before they embraced the wickedness of their parents that would’ve separated them from the Lord for eternity.

### **CHILDREN IDENTIFIED AS GOOD OR JUST OR GOD’S CHILDREN**

There are also two places where infants are killed and they’re spoken of in a way that makes them sound good, just, or righteous.

Please turn to **1 Kings 14**.

Jeroboam was the very wicked king of the northern kingdom of Israel. He's the one who set up the golden calves and led the nation into an idolatry they never recovered from. As a result, God was going to cut off his line, meaning all of his sons would die. The greatest desire of every king was for his line to continue to reign, but that won't happen for Jeroboam. His son Nadab would reign, and that's it. After that Baasha would begin a new dynasty.

When God pronounced this judgment on Jeroboam He said something very interesting to him...

**1 Kin 14:10 Therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone.**

God is saying all of Jeroboam's sons would die.

**<sup>11</sup> The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the LORD has spoken!"**

Nobody from Jeroboam's house would be buried, which to an Israelite was a punishment almost worse than death.

**<sup>12</sup> Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die.**

Jeroboam had an infant or baby son, and perhaps Jeroboam thought or hoped this child would live, but God let him know even he would die. It's somewhat similar to David's situation when his infant child died.

**<sup>13</sup> And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him,**

Even though Jeroboam and all his descendants would be unburied, this child would be buried, and here's why...

**13b for (now listen to this...) he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because IN HIM THERE IS FOUND SOMETHING GOOD toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.**

Why was the child buried when nobody else related to Jeroboam was buried? B/c there was something different about this baby: there was something good found in him. Where did that good come from? I don't think he could've done anything as an infant to be declared good. His innocence is what was good. It doesn't mean that child had done anything good or had been righteous.

It simply means in Jeroboam's family this child was the only individual good thing from Jeroboam's family or this child was the only individual that was pleasing to God:

- **ESV in him there is found something pleasing to the LORD**



- **NLT this child is the only good thing that the LORD, the God of Israel, sees in the entire family of Jeroboam.**

What was good or pleasing about this child? Its innocence!

The most thing to notice is this child of Jeroboam was able to avoid the judgment he and his other children experienced.

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Next please turn to **Lam 4**.

The context is the prophet Jeremiah wrote Lamentations after Babylon destroyed Jerusalem. He lamented over the judgment of the Jews as well as the terrible sins they committed.

Like I mentioned before, one of the worst sins the Jews committed was the sacrifice of their children. They did this as a form of worship to false gods, so it was the **prophets** and **priests** of these evil religions that presided over these children being sacrificed.

Look at **Lam 4:13**...

**<sup>13</sup> Because of the sins of her prophets  
And the iniquities of her priests,  
Who shed in her midst  
THE BLOOD OF THE JUST.**

The NLT says **shedding innocent blood**, and most other translations – NIV, ESV, NAS – say **the blood of the righteous**.

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Next please turn to **Eze 16**.

The context for this passage is Ezekiel was the prophet to the Jews in exile in Babylon. He was discussing their spiritual adultery w/ them that led to their judgment. God talks to them about the different ways they worshiped these gods in **verses 15-19**, then he starts discussing them sacrificing their children in **verse 20**...

**Eze 16:20** “Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them (the idols) to be devoured. *Were your acts of harlotry a small matter,* <sup>21</sup> *that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire?*”

God calls these sacrificed children, “**My children**,” which is a title reserved for believers. There are definitely people who are not considered “God’s children.”

- Jesus told the religious leaders they were children of the devil (John 8:44).
- If you remember when the nation of Israel was unbelieving, God would regularly tell Moses they were Moses’ people instead of saying His people.

Since these children belonged to God, when they were sacrificed, more than likely they went to be w/ Him b/c they were His.

## **JOB'S DESIRE HEB 5 SOLID FOOD**

There are also two other places in Scripture that seem to speak to the situation and are worth mentioning...

Please turn to **Job 3**.

In Job's depression he wished he had died at birth so he could avoid the suffering of this life. Listen to these verses and then I'll explain their significance...

**Job 3:11 "Why did I not die at birth?  
Why did I *not* perish when I came from the womb?  
<sup>12</sup> Why did the knees receive me?  
Or why the breasts, that I should nurse?  
<sup>13</sup> For now I would have lain still and been quiet,  
I would have been asleep;**

Job said that dying at birth meant experiencing peace and rest. This clearly wouldn't be the case if he went to hell. He clearly didn't expect eternal judgment.

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Next please turn to **Heb 5**.

There's one other indirect verse in the NT...

**Heb 5:13 For everyone who partakes *only* of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. <sup>14</sup> But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.**

The author of Hebrews is using some physical realities to illustrate a spiritual truth...

He recognizes that **discerning [between] good and evil** is something that takes place only after people have grown or matured. He contrasts the spiritual **babe** in **verse 13** w/ the spiritually mature – or person of **full age** in **verse 14**, pointing out that it's only a mature person who can **discern between good and evil**.

He says this b/c it's recognized and accepted that babies don't have the maturity to **discern [between] good and evil**.

Something similar took place w/ Solomon in **1 Kin 3**...

**1 Kin 3:7 [Solomon prayed,] “Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I AM A LITTLE CHILD; I do not know *how* to go out or come in. <sup>8</sup> And Your servant *is* in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted. <sup>9</sup> Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, THAT I MAY DISCERN BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?”**

Again [**discerning**] between good and evil is associated w/ maturity. Solomon asked for a mind that would allow him to choose between good and evil.

The important point is we know if Solomon didn't think he had this mind at the age he became king, we definitely know infants don't have this mind at their age.

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Now w/ this said, let me make two other points...

First, this doesn't mean babies don't have sin natures. We know babies have sin natures, b/c from the moment they're born they're the picture of selfishness. We know they choose evil. We know they choose disobedience.

**BUT** they're not guilty in the same sense as those who deliberately, willfully sin against their consciences (the Gentiles) or God's law (the Jews). As a result, they have lower – or no – accountability.

I don't want this to be lengthy, but it's worth understanding God's judgment is based off our accountability, and our accountability is determined by our knowledge. Here are a few verses defending the idea of God judgment based off knowledge...

When Jesus was on the cross, He prayed God would forgive the people crucifying Him b/c of their ignorance...

**Luke 23:34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”**

Jesus wasn't praying that they were forgiven for all their sins, but He was praying that they be forgiven for the sin they were committing at that moment: crucifying Him, b/c they didn't know He was the Son of God.

When Peter gave his second sermon in **Acts 3** after healing the lame man he told the Jews...

**Acts 3:14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.** So he clearly describes them doing some terrible stuff, but then **verse 17** he says...

**“Yet now, brethren, I know that you did *it* in ignorance, as *did* also your rulers.**

Peter allowed them to feel less guilt b/c even though they did something terrible, they didn't know they were doing something THAT terrible.

We know Paul was terrible to Christians before he became on, and he acted ignorantly and he received greater mercy as a result:

- **Acts 26:9** “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He was convinced he was doing the right thing.
- When he explained his actions to Timothy: **1 Tim 1:13** **although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.**

Another example is in **Heb 3** discussing the rebellion of the Israelites in the wilderness...

In **Heb 3:9b** [God said they], “saw My works for forty years.”

They had every reason to believe. They were accountable. They should've known better. They'd heard the Gospel: They had the means to believe, but they chose unbelief, and it's this **unbelief** that gave them **evil hearts**.

Then God discusses their rebellion in **verses 10** and **11**. Then in **verse 12** He says...

**12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;**

It says if any of them are unbelieving, it's b/c they have **an evil heart**. This is interesting, b/c if we think of the word **evil**, we're usually quick to think of actions or behaviors. We don't usually think of unbelief as a characteristic of having an **evil heart**, but their hearts were evil b/c of their accountability. They'd seen God's works for 40 years. As a result they had very high accountability. So when they rebelled on the border of the Promised Land at Kadesh Barnea, it revealed the evil of their hearts.

Important to our discussion is the reality that if they hadn't seen so much – if they didn't have so much knowledge – they wouldn't be considered so evil. God seems to have mercy – or more mercy – for those who act in ignorance.

The way this relates to children is they have no knowledge, and therefore they have no accountability. They're the picture of ignorance. This is why they aren't held accountable.

## **GOD'S CHARACTER**

Studying the attributes of God helps us understand how God works, and I would say His attributes argue against babies going to hell.

The first attributes I'd ask you to consider are God's goodness.

It's tough to argue that a good God would punish an unborn child w/ an eternity in hell. You might be quick to say, "You're supposed to use verses and not just make speculations." My point is I think the verses that describe God as being good and gracious argue against Him sending babies to hell.

The second attribute I would ask you to consider is God's justice, and this is particularly interesting...

If people wanted to argue that babies don't – or shouldn't – get to go to heaven, they'll most often discuss God's justice. They'll say, "God is just. He must punish sin." That's true! Then they'll say, "And babies are sinners, so God must judge them!" And this is where I disagree.

What's interesting is God's character – especially His justice – is one of the strongest evidences arguments for babies going to heaven.

If you believe babies are innocent, God's justice argues against babies going to heaven, b/c a God of pure justice wouldn't punish babies for sins they haven't committed. An unborn baby hasn't had the opportunity to sin and therefore wouldn't be subject to the judgment reserved for those who willfully, consciously sin.

Let me provide some verses to show you what I mean...

Numerous places in Scripture reveal people don't inherit the Kingdom of God b/c of sins they voluntarily and consciously engage in. For example:

- **1 Cor 6:9-10 Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.**
- **Gal 5:19-21 Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**
- **Eph 5:5 No fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of God.**

Paul is doing a couple things in these verses:

- He's making it clear that people who ARE these things can't inherit the Kingdom of God.
- He's making it clear hell is reserved for unregenerate people who knowingly and willingly engage in these sins.

So here's the question: would anyone argue that babies ARE these things? Nobody looks at a baby and say it's a fornicator, idolater, adulterer, homosexual, drunkard, extortioner, or reviler.

There are also some verses in Revelation that describe people who go to hell, or find themselves in the lake of fire, or find themselves outside the **New Jerusalem**...

**Rev 21:8 The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.**

So just like the people in the previous verses are said not to inherit the Kingdom of God, this verse says these are the people who will find themselves in the lake of fire. But nobody would say an infant is cowardly, abominable, a murderer, sexually immoral, a sorcerer, etc.

Similarly...

**Rev 22:15 outside [the New Jerusalem] are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.**

Nobody would say an infant is one of these individuals and should be **outside the New Jerusalem** as a result.

You could say it like this...

- God sends people to hell for being the people listed in these verses, but even though we know everyone will at some point become the people listed in these verses, we know infants are not YET the people listed in these verses.
- Or you could say God sends people to hell for DOING the things listed in these verses, but infants haven't done these things yet.

God's judgment seems to be based on deliberately, willfully committing sins like fornication, theft, murder, covetousness and anything else listed in these verses, but infants haven't committed these sins.

R.A. Webb wrote a book called The Theology of Infant Salvation and he said, *"If an infant went to hell for no other reason than original sin...it would know suffering but it would have no understanding of the reason for its suffering...the whole meaning and significance of its suffering would be to it a conscious mystery.... Such an infant would know it was in hell, but it would not be able to explain why it was there."*

Webb's point is since an infant hasn't consciously engaged in the sins we know to be evil, there would be no understanding of having sinned against God; therefore, there would be no understanding of God's judgment and why its in hell.

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There's also a principle in Scripture that factors in to this...

**THE SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE THAT SIN ISN'T IMPUTED ABSENT OF KNOWLEDGE**

We've already discussed that infants can – and do – sin. You don't have to be around an infant very long to see they're the picture of selfishness. So I'm not going to argue that they're innocent b/c they don't sin. This obviously begs the question, *"If infants sin, how can they be considered innocent?"*

We've already discussed one way: they're innocent b/c...

- They don't know – or can't choose – between good and evil.
- They don't have the knowledge of good and evil.

If they don't have this knowledge, then one other reason they might be considered innocent is this...

Their sin isn't counted – or held – against them, b/c of their lack of knowledge. Scripture seems to teach that sin isn't imputed – or it isn't counted against people – in the absence of knowledge?

Let me say this two ways:

- Scripture seems to teach that sin is imputed – or counted against people – by their knowledge of sin, or when there's knowledge of sin.
- Or Scripture seems to teach that sin is NOT imputed – or it isn't counted against people – in the absence of knowledge, or when there's no knowledge of sinning.

Here are some verses supporting this:

- **Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**
- **Rom 4:15 The law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is no* transgression.**
- **Rom 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.**

So this explains another possible reason infants are innocent...

Their sins aren't imputed or counted against them.

- We know infants sin.
- They're selfish.
- They get angry.
- They throw fits.

But they can still be considered innocent b/c their sins aren't imputed or counted against them.

It seems to be knowledge of good and evil that allows sin to be imputed, and without that knowledge – which babies don't have – sin isn't imputed.

Now what's the reason this doesn't work w/ adults? They have no knowledge of their sin:

- Whether through God's Law...
- Or through their consciences...

Which means their sin is imputed or counted against them!

----

Now there are a few questions or issues people have w/ the idea that babies go to heaven, and I want to try to address those concerns. First, let me say I completely understand these questions. People ask this not b/c they're opposed to babies going to heaven, but b/c they really wonder how it works.

**FIRST, WHAT ABOUT SIN NATURE?**

Understandably since we're born with sin natures – in other words even though infants are innocent like Adam and Eve were innocent – we aren't born like Adam and Eve in terms of not having sin natures. And if a child has a sin nature, how could it go to hell?

First, having a sin nature – or propensity to sin – is different than sinning. We all have sin natures, but it doesn't mean we're sinning every second.

Second, a couple of the strongest verses about having a sin nature, don't indicate sinfulness, but propensity to sin...

**Psa 51:5 [David said,] “I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.”**

Most scholars believe this was David's way of referring to being conceived w/ a sin nature as opposed to confessing sins he'd committed in the womb.

So even though David said he was **brought forth in iniquity** and **conceived in sin**, it's better to understand David is lamenting the fact that he has a sin nature.

Another psalm David wrote seems to substantiate this...

**Psa 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.**

David seems to be saying people start sinning some time AFTER they're born as opposed to in the womb.

## **SECOND, THE ABSENCE OF PERSONAL FAITH.**

We know we're saved by grace through faith. To put it simply, we know it's putting our faith in Christ that saves us, and this brings up an obvious dilemma: infants can't – or haven't – put their faith in Christ; therefore, how can they be saved? We're saved by grace through faith, but infants can't exercise personal faith in Christ.

I'd say this is the strongest difficulty associated w/ infant salvation, and it's an understandable dilemma.

**Romans 10:13-17** is one of the clearest discussions in Scripture of the way people receive the Gospel, and throughout it Paul draws on a number of OT verses to support his point...

**13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”<sup>[g]</sup>**

**<sup>14</sup> How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? <sup>15</sup> And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:**



**“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,<sup>[h]</sup>  
Who bring glad tidings of good things!”<sup>[i]</sup>**

**<sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?”<sup>[i]</sup>**

Then after this logical sequence he says...

**<sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

So the faith necessary for salvation comes from hearing the Word of God; specifically from hearing the Gospel. This is the COMMON way people are saved, by hearing the Gospel.

But I would say this isn't the ONLY way, and if you trust me for a moment I'll prove it to you Scripturally.

Here's a quote from John Calvin: *“While Romans 10:17 makes hearing the beginning of faith, Paul was only describing the usual method which the Lord uses in calling people to Himself. [Paul is] not laying down an invariable rule, for which no other method can be substituted.”*

In other words, John Calvin was saying God can save people apart from the exercising personal faith.

Now first, do we have any verses that could possibly support salvation apart from faith/belief?

There are two possibilities, and I say possibilities b/c I want to be clear that I'm not absolutely certain these verses are supporting salvation apart from exercising personal faith...

**1 Timothy 4:10 God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.**

It's significant the verse doesn't say, **“God, who is *the* Savior of all men WHO believe.** The word **“especially”** seems to imply some are saved apart from belief. And I would submit to you the ones saved apart from belief are infants and babies.

**1 John 2:2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**

When John says **the propitiation for our sins**, the word **our** is referring to believers. But then John says Christ's death is sufficient for all of mankind. Jesus' death was sufficient for all sins, not just the sins of those who specifically have come to Him in faith. The fact that Christ's death is sufficient for all sin would AT LEAST ALLOW FOR the possibility of God applying that payment to those who were never capable of believing.

Wayne Grudem also says, *“It is clear, therefore, that God is able to save infants in an unusual way, apart from their hearing and understanding the Gospel, by bringing regeneration to them very early, sometimes even before birth. This regeneration is probably also followed at once by an [emerging], intuitive awareness of God and trust in Him at an extremely early age, but this is something we*

*simply cannot understand. When infants are born they show an instinctive trust in their mothers, and we [should insist] they would also have an intuitive awareness of God, and if God gives it, an intuitive ability to trust in Him as well.”*

## **EXAMPLES OF SAVED INFANTS IN SCRIPTURE**

I can give you some instances in Scripture supporting what I’m saying that infants are saved apart from exercising personal faith.

First, David...

**Psa 22:10 I was cast upon You from birth.  
From My mother’s womb  
You have been My God.**

Notice David didn’t say He knew God or believed in God or had faith in God – as those are impossibilities for babies – but he did say from the time he was in his mother’s womb, God had been his God, an OT way to refer to saints. Also, just to be clear, David isn’t just saying he was saved from birth, he said from the time he was in his **mother’s womb**.

Second, Jeremiah...

**Jer 1:5 [God said,] “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you;  
Before you were born I sanctified you;  
I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”**

You might be quick to say this is just referring to God choosing Jeremiah to be a prophet while he was in the womb, but the phrases “**I knew you**” and “**I sanctified you**” are reserved for saved individuals.

Third, John the Baptist...there are two verses for him...

**Luke 1:15 [the angel Gabriel said,] “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. HE WILL ALSO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, EVEN FROM HIS MOTHER’S WOMB.”**

If you’re filled w/ the Holy Spirit, you’re saved, and John the Baptist was said to have the Holy Spirit WHILE he was in his mother’s womb! Wayne Grudem said, “*We might say that John the Baptist was ‘born again’ before he was born!*”

Then there was evidence of his salvation...

**Luke 1:41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Salvation always produces fruit or works, and his leaping was evidence of his salvation or regeneration.

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There's also two very instruction situations w/ two of David's sons...

I suspect the most famous situation that encourages people regarding seeing their children again took place when David lost a child...

**2 Sam 12:22-23 [David] 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?' <sup>23</sup> 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."**

First, it's important to establish that David knew he was going to heaven. If he didn't know he was going to heaven, then it wouldn't mean much to say he would see his son again...

In **Psa 23:6** David said, **"I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."**

Since David expected to go to heaven, the only way he could see the child is if the child was w/ him in heaven.

Some argue David was simply saying he'd join his son in death, but wasn't implying he'd see his son again. The problem w/ that is the context shows David was encouraged and comforted by what he said. If you're familiar w/ the account, David's words are the reason he was able to cease grieving. Look what was happening w/ him previously...

**2 Sam 12:16 David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. <sup>17</sup> So the elders of his house arose *and went* to him, to raise him up from the ground. But he would not, nor did he eat food with them. <sup>18</sup> Then on the seventh day it came to pass that the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead. For they said, "Indeed, while the child was alive, we spoke to him, and he would not heed our voice. How can we tell him that the child is dead? He may do some harm!"**

David was grieving so terribly, his servants thought he might do something drastic...possibly commit suicide. It doesn't mean David was suicidal, but he looked miserable enough his servants thought he might be!

But you see his words were the only reason he was able to cease grieving so intensely and return to the normal routine of life. There's nothing comforting about saying, *"My son died and I'm going to die too."* If David was only saying he'd join his son in death, that wouldn't encourage him and cause this dramatic change in him.

Also, if he meant he'd only die like his son someday too, that doesn't really make sense. There's no reason for him to say something so blatantly obvious. Of course he's going to die someday too.

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Now while people consider David's words about this child, these words become even more powerful when we consider them in light of his words about another child.

Turn to **2 Sam 18:33** to see how David responded to Absalom's death...

The other part of this that needs to be considered is David's response to the death of one of his other sons, Absalom. When David heard about Absalom's death...

**2 Sam 18:33 Then the king was deeply moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept. And as he went, he said thus: "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!"**

Why the difference in mourning between the two sons? I think he knew he wouldn't see Absalom again. Few people in the OT had the spiritual revelation David had. He was aware of eternity w/ the LORD and he was aware of eternal separation from the Lord. And the only way you can explain this response from David is he knew Absalom would spend eternity separated from the LORD.

- This is why David didn't say, "**I shall go to him.**"
- This could be why David said, "**If only I had died in your place!**" Perhaps David wished Absalom lived longer so he could turn his life around.
- This could also be why David had made the terrible request about Absalom before going to battle: **2 Sam 18:5 Now the king had commanded Joab, Abishai, and Ittai, saying, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom."** David didn't want him to die, knowing he'd be separated from God.

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Another question...

Does anyone else fall into the category of "special salvation" besides babies? I would also probably say the mentally challenged. They might share a number of similarities with infants:

- Innocence.
- Inability to exercise personal faith.

Sadly our world has recently started singling out down syndrome children or mentally handicapped infants to be aborted. Parents want to find out if they're having a down syndrome child so they CAN abort it.

Before I share the verses w/ you that support my speculation, let me first discuss the word **chosen**. Most often when the word **chosen** is used in Scripture to refer to those chosen or elect for salvation: **Matt 20:16, 22:14 "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."**

Other times it refers to being **chosen** for a special purpose:

- **Matt 12:18 "Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My soul is well pleased! I will put My Spirit upon Him, And He will declare justice to the Gentiles.**
- **1 Pet 2:4 Coming to Him *as to* a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God *and* precious.**

- (also 2:9)

At least once it's also used of someone evil – Judas – but then it's obvious: **John 13:18** “I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.’

So one reason I think the mentally handicapped might be another case of special salvation is **1 Cor 1:27-28**...

**1 Cor 1:27-28** God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God HAS CHOSEN, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Even if these verses aren't talking about salvation, but choosing for some special purpose, it's hard to believe they could be specially chosen and not later saved.

So while I confess I'm being a little speculative w/ this next thought, I think it would seem like God to have a special place for them in heaven for those w/ down syndrome of the mentally handicapped. I won't be surprised if the mentally challenged go through this life despised, but have a glorious eternity in God's presence.

Something else to consider, is if we looked for individuals to compare mentally handicapped people to, we commonly say, “They're like a child.” It's common to discuss mentally handicapped people by saying, “They have the mind of a ??? year old.”

We see them having the innocence of children.

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Now I want to consider a pattern in Scripture that reveals the way God seems to typically work...

**GOD'S FREQUENT PATTERN INVOLVES SAVING THE CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS.**

Before we go any further, this lesson isn't meant to imply God DOESN'T save the children of unbelievers. In fact, I believe He does, which I'll cover in a moment. I just want you to see the evidence in Scripture regarding God saving the children of believers...

First, we see this pattern in the OT...

**Psa 103:17** But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
On those who fear Him, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS TO CHILDREN'S CHILDREN.

This verse is saying the righteousness of God is passed along to the children of the righteous.

Now here are some examples of this in Scripture...

Prior to the flood, God made sure to save the children of Noah...

**Gen 7:1 Then the LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen *that you are righteous* before Me in this generation**

Prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, God made sure to save Lot’s children. While we might not think of Lot as a believer, three times in 2 Peter 2:7-8 he’s identified as a **righteous** man...

**Gen 19:15 When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.”**

Prior to the destruction of Jericho, God made sure to save Rahab’s family. I mention this example b/c it seems to show that not just the children, but the household of believers can be saved...

The spies told Rahab in **Joshua 2:18 *when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home.*** This also

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Second, we see this pattern in the NT where God saves the children of believers...

There are a number of examples in the NT of parents believing and the salvation of the entire household being implied. Here are two things this doesn’t mean:

1. First, this doesn’t mean children are saved by the faith of their parents.
2. Second, this doesn’t mean children should be considered saved just b/c their parents are saved.

Instead, I think this is revealing a pattern that generally God saves the children of believing parents. When parents are saved, the entire household often comes to salvation as well...

After Jesus healed the nobleman’s son, **John 4:53b** says **And he himself believed, and his whole household.**

After Peter’s speech at Pentecost where he accused the Jews of crucifying their Messiah,

**Acts 2:37 Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?”**

**<sup>38</sup> Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is TO YOU AND TO YOUR CHILDREN, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”**

We can’t say the call to salvation was for everyone yet, b/c the primary call to the Gentiles didn’t take place until Acts 10, but at this point it seems God called the children to salvation too.

Then later when the Gentiles were called, Peter went to Cornelius' house. He believed and he and it seemed his entire household came to salvation as well...

In **Acts 11:14** Cornelius said an angel told him Peter would, “**tell [him] words by which [he] and all [his] household [would] be saved.**”

When Paul and Silas were in jail, in **Acts 16:31** they told the Philippian jailer, “**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.**”

Another example: **Acts 18:8** **Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household.**

A similar example is in **1 Cor 1:16** when Paul said, “**Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas.**”

Baptizing Stephanas' entire household implies they must've all been saved.

Possibly the strongest verse supporting the salvation of believers' children is **1 Cor 7:14...**

**14 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.**

It says the **unbelieving** spouse is **sanctified** by the **believing** spouse, so you'd expect it to say the children are **sanctified** by their **believing** parents, but instead it says **they are holy**. The word for **holy** is *hagios* and it means, “*most holy thing, a saint.*” This seems to be saying the infants of believing parents are saved.

Now we can't make a hard-and-fast rule that God always saves the children of believers. We all know children who grew up in Christian homes and rejected the Lord, and there are examples of this in Scripture too:

- Isaac had Esau.
- David had Amnon, Absalom and Adonijah.

So I don't think this verse is an absolute, but I think it shows the common trend w/ God to save the children of believers.

Wayne Grudem puts it like this, “*God's ordinary pattern or expected way in which He acts, is to bring the children of believers to Himself. With regard to believers' children who die very young, we have no reason to think that it would be otherwise.*”

**MARK 10:13-16 AND MATT 18:1-4 JESUS SAYS INFANTS ARE SAVED.**

The final passage showing infants going to heaven is also one of the strongest. Please turn to **Mark 10:13-16.**

**<sup>13a</sup> Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them;**

Jewish parents commonly sought out prominent rabbis to bless their babies. Even though it says **children** we should think of them as **infants**, which is how **children** is translated in **Luke 18:15** **Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.**

More than likely Mark said **little children** instead of children to emphasize that they were infants or babies instead of what we think of as **children**.

There are two other ways we know it's **infants** or babies instead of children:

1. If they were children, it would be hard to imagine Jesus picking them up in His arms.
2. Second, Jesus makes a declaration about these **infants** – about the **Kingdom of God** – belonging to them – and it's not a declaration that could be made to children. In other words, the **Kingdom of God** is promised to all **infants**, but it's not promised to all children as we'll see in a moment.

**13b but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.**

This is not one of the shining moments for the disciples. Whenever you wonder if God can use you, think of some of some of the things the disciples did and how they were still greatly used by God. When I look at the behavior of the disciples at times, I'm encouraged 😊.

**<sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.**

Let me share a few other translations w/ you:

- **NIV and NAS the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.**
- **NLT the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children.**
- **ESV to such belongs the kingdom of God.**

The words **of such** are very important. They show Jesus wasn't saying only these babies belong to **the kingdom of God**. He's saying every baby *like these babies* belongs to the **kingdom of God**.

Jesus is describing a category of people. He's saying the Kingdom of God belongs to a certain category of people who are like these children, b/c the Kingdom of God belongs to these children.

Notice it doesn't just say Jesus was **displeased**, it actually says He **was greatly displeased**. We might wonder why Jesus was so upset, and one reason could be they were destroying a spiritual truth He was trying to communicate, and the spiritual truth could be summed up like this...

- The children were supposed to be able to physically come to Him, but the greater spiritual reality is that babies have access to Him, not just in this life but in the next life.
- By preventing children from coming to Him physically, it would communicate they didn't have access to Him – He isn't available to Him – in this life, which would communicate the same inaccessibility in the next.



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Then Jesus goes even further and says people who aren't like infants won't receive the Kingdom of God themselves...

**<sup>15</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."**

The **Kingdom of God** so clearly belongs to infants, adults have to be like them to receive the Kingdom of God themselves! Infants are so fit for the Kingdom of God, if you're not like an infant, you don't even get to go to heaven!

And there's another place where Jesus says the same thing...

**Matt 18:1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"**

This is one of the low points for the disciples, and they're really about to be humbled...

**<sup>2</sup> Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, <sup>3</sup> and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.**

So Jesus actually talked about being **converted!** He's talking about conversion!

- **NLT unless you turn from your sins and become like little children**
- **ESV unless you turn and become like children**

We have to go back to being **like little children**. It's almost another way of saying we have to be born again!

**<sup>4</sup> Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

Now the obvious question is, "What is it about infants that makes them the picture of what we have to become like to be saved?" I think there are probably a few reasons...

1. First, Jesus gives the answer in **Matt 18:4**. He says **whoever humbles himself**. Infants have a wonderful humility. They don't brag, boast, or show off.
2. Second, infants have a love and kindness that can be lost as they get older.
3. Third, infants are very forgiving. You hear about adults not talking to friends or family members for months or years, but you never hear that about children.
4. Fourth, infants have a purity. Yes, they have sin natures that reveal themselves, but primarily they have pretty sincere motives, b/c their minds haven't been polluted by the world.
5. Fifth, there's a key word in **Mark 10:15** and it's the word **receive: whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child.**

- a. Children **receive** beautifully:
  - i. They're trusting, which is what faith is: faith is about trusting God. As your children get older you have to tell them NOT to be so trusting.
  - ii. Things are pretty simple to children: you tell children Jesus loves them and they believe it. They **receive** it very easily. You tell them Jesus loves them and wants to be their Savior and they easily and readily **receive** that.
- b. Plus, when you hear the word **receive** you probably think of a gift:
  - i. Infants **receive** salvation as a gift.
  - ii. There's nothing they've done to earn it or merit it: they simply receive it.

When our children were younger, sometimes when they heard people weren't Christians they would seem so confused:

- They wouldn't understand why someone wouldn't want to **RECEIVE** salvation.
- They wouldn't understand why someone wouldn't want to **RECEIVE** what Jesus did for them.

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But I think the biggest reason Jesus uses infants as the example of salvation, is they're the best example OF the Gospel in a sense...

- The Gospel is we're saved by grace.
- We're saved by faith apart from works.
- There's no effort or merit on our parts that save us.

Babies are the best picture of this, b/c they haven't done anything to deserve going to heaven.

Infants are the premier example of divine grace and unconditional election.

Some people struggle w/ infant salvation, b/c they say, "What has a baby done TO be saved?" The reality is, "What have any of us done to be saved?" You could say, "We're saved by repenting of our sins and turning to Christ?" But I would say that's not required from babies b/c they haven't sinned; they have no sins to turn from TO Christ.

But one point about this...

We want to make sure we understand everyone who's saved – whether in the womb or after the womb – is saved based on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, and their regeneration is still a result of God's mercy and grace.

My point is no matter how we think about infants being saved, we never want to think it takes place apart from what Christ has done on the cross. Infants might have less revelation of that, but it's still Christ work that saves them.

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Let me share two other points w/ you about this account that make it particularly interesting and relate to the discussion of infants going to heaven...

First, this took place in front of the religious leaders (according to verse 2). This would serve as a strong rebuke to their teachings that people were saved by good works or obedience to the law. The idea that babies could be saved was detestable to them, b/c it flew in the face of their teachings that heaven was reserved for people who deserved it like they thought – and taught – they did.

Second, this passage is in all 3 Synoptic Gospels and each time it's followed by the Story of the Rich Young Ruler. Please listen to these verses that reveal how this man is the OPPOSITE of a little or the opposite of what Jesus was teaching about inheriting the Kingdom of God...

**<sup>17</sup> Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”**

**<sup>18</sup> So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, *that is*, God. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”<sup>[c]</sup>**

**<sup>20</sup> And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.”**

He thinks He's going to **inherit eternal life** b/c He's been so obedient from childhood.

- He was the picture of self-righteousness and salvation by works.
- He wouldn't **receive** salvation as a gift. Instead he thinks he's earned it.

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The last verse in this account...

**<sup>16</sup> And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.**

Let me share two important points w/ you regarding Jesus blessing these infants:

1. Jesus blessed them, but didn't baptize them or recommend their baptism.
2. Jesus only blessed the saved; He never blessed anyone except those going to heaven and this makes perfect sense b/c:
  - a. How blessed could you really be if you weren't going to heaven?
  - b. How bad it would it look if Jesus blessed people and then they didn't go to heaven?

I'm not alone in interpreting this account as a guarantee of babies' salvation:

- John MacArthur believes this passage says infants (and those like them) inherit salvation.
- John Calvin said, *“The passage gives Kingdom citizenship to both children and those who are like children. Those little children have not yet any understanding to desire His blessing but when they are presented to Him, He gently and kindly receives them and dedicates them to the Father by a solemn act of blessing. It would be cruel to exclude that age from the grace of redemption. It is an irreligious audacity to drive from Christ's fold those whom He held in His arms and shut the door on them as strangers when He did not wish to forbid them.”*

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Let me conclude these teachings on infant salvation w/ two points...

First, since we see the salvation of infants apart from faith, it begs the question...

Can adults who don't exercise personal faith be saved? There are a few reasons I'd confidently say, "No!"

1. First, there are no examples in Scripture of adults saved apart from faith.
2. Second, adults lack one of the crucial elements babies have: innocence. Adults have committed the sins that I believe babies are unable to commit. In other words, adults have brought judgment on themselves through the ways God says people deserve judgment:
  - a. Adults willfully, deliberately sin against God's law.
  - b. Adults violate their consciences.
  - c. Adults reject the revelation of God in creation.
  - d. Adults are fornicators, liars, coveters, idolaters and the list goes on. Adults commit the sins these people commit.

So even though some people argue against babies going to heaven, no sound theologians argue for adults going to heaven apart from faith.

The only adults going to heaven are those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Only those adults approaching God like little children w/ humility and recognition that they've done nothing of any value or merit receive the Kingdom of God.

Second, even though we believe infants go to heaven, we don't have that same guarantee w/ our older children. They're sinners! They're not innocent! We need to do what we can to support their salvation:

- Pray for your children's salvation...
- Explain the Gospel very clearly to your children...
- Pray w/ your children...
- Read the Word w/ your children...
- Most importantly: make sure you live it out yourselves. Nothing turns children away from the faith faster than hypocrisy.

I hope if you've experienced a miscarriage or lost an infant in some other way, you can be comforted and encourage that the child is w/ the Lord!