

## **LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #80** "Election of Dying Infants" (Introduction) (Scriptures from NKJV)

Matthew 18:14 -

***Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.***

### **INTRODUCTION:** Preliminary

It has now been about eighteen weeks since I retired from the pastoral ministry and interrupted our series to take a sabbatical. I will soon be 75 years old, and I plan to place my future focus on the internet ministry, along with writing and some conference speaking. As time and health allows, I plan on placing two new lessons in the present series on the internet each month.

### **INTRODUCTION:** Actual

This series began with the design of covering the Reformed and Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination which has the nickname "The Five Points of Calvinism." We began by using some material from Lorraine Boettner's book on the topic. As I progressed, I began to ask myself, "Why does the public need another book on the "Five Points" when there are so many good books available?" I then decided to do what I am now doing, and that is what I am calling "the fleshing out method." This involves going through the Scriptures in a chronological manner and pointing out the sovereignty of God all along the way from the fall of man and the angels in the Garden of Eden until the completion of His eternal purpose in the bringing about of the eternal state.

We have examined the definition of our topic in Lessons 1 and 2. Then we examined the plan of God in Lessons 3 and 4. In Lessons 5-8, we looked at such topics as God's providence and His foreknowledge. We gave an outline of the various theological systems and their approach to the topic of salvation. In Lesson 9, we briefly covered the "Five Points of Calvinism," using the theme of "Tulip" - Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, and Preservation and Perseverance of the Saints. In Lessons 10-15, we covered total depravity and inability.

In Lessons 16-23, we examined the election and reprobation of men comprising Adam's race. In Lessons 24-79, we looked at the election of angels. In so doing, we followed the fall of the angels and the warfare which began between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God which was announced in Genesis 3:15. We just concluded this in Lessons 78 and 79 with the ascension of Christ and the eternal purpose of God in Christ to destroy the work of Satan's kingdom and establish a race of perfect angels and men who will become His perfect servants in a happy and holy state of sinlessness and righteousness.

We are now ready to continue on with the doctrine of "The Unconditional Election of Infants who Die In Infancy." This is what we are calling the second of three hard doctrines which are (1) The Election of Angels, (2) The Election of Infants, and (3) The Destiny of the Un-evangelized.

While I have made a thorough research of the many writings on the topic down through the centuries, I wish to acknowledge the helpfulness of two books which have been the most helpful. They are "*The Theology of Infant Salvation*" by R. A. Webb, and "*The History and Theology of Calvinism*" by Curt Daniel.

#### **A. THE BASIC QUESTION: "ARE DYING INFANTS ELECT?"**

1. Back in 1985 I developed a series of nineteen messages on the topic entitled "Infant Salvation." Some of the material in that series will be repeated in the present series. In that series we dealt with the question in this form, "Are dying infants saved?" The two questions are related. If they are saved, then they are elect, for only the elect will be saved. To state it in another way, if they are elect, then they will most assuredly be saved. In II Thessalonians 2:13-14, we read, "***But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.***"

2. I am now covering it under the second point of Calvinism for the reason that I believe that the Reformed or Calvinistic doctrine of election provides the only solid Biblical answer as to how dying infants can be saved. All other systems of theology offer only partial or incorrect answers. I will also correct the slander which the opponents of Calvinism make when they say that Calvinism teaches that all dying infants are reprobate and go to Hell. That simply is not true. I have never read of a single Calvinist who has taught that all dying infants go to Hell. I personally have been charged by a number of pastors with believing this before they ever asked me what I believed!

3. There are about five options open to the answering of the question. They are:

First: We simply don't know. The Scriptures do not reveal the answer.

NOTE: This is what the vast majority of my pastoral associates believe. Most do so without having devoted themselves to any extensive research on the subject.

Second: All dying infants are lost. I have never encountered any theologian

who asserts this. It is merely an option.

Third: Only baptized infants are saved, but unbaptized dying infants are lost. This is held by those who hold to sacramental grace which is needed to regenerate the infant who is born with original sin and stands in need of cleansing.

Fourth: All baptized infants are definitely saved, but we do not know about the rest. This has been the position of some Calvinists such as Francis Turretin, Herman Hoeksema, and some of the older Reformed theologians. When the critics of Calvinism read these writers, they then proceed to ascribe this view to all Calvinists by saying that Calvinism in general teaches there are infants in Hell. This view merely says that we don't know what is the destiny of unbaptized infants.

Fifth: All dying infants are saved and elect, whether baptized or not. This is the vast majority view held by Calvinists such as Charles Spurgeon, Charles Hodge, B.B. Warfield, A.M. Toplady, Ulrich Zwingli, Lewis Sperry Chafer, W.G.T. Shedd, Loraine Boettner, etc.

4. There is a classic statement found in the Reformed Confessions which expresses the Calvinistic position. This is found in the Westminster Confession (Presbyterian) and the 1689 Confession (Baptist). It states,

Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. So are also other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

Some of the non-Calvinist critics read this and feel that it insinuates there are some non-elect infants, but the Confessions do not say that. There are two views held by Reformed theologians on this statement.

First, that of the Majority View. This view holds that all infants dying in infancy are elect.

Second, that of the Minority View. This view holds that some infants dying in infancy are elect, but we do not know about the rest.

Note that neither view holds that it is certain that some infants dying in infancy are non-elect and perish in Hell. In 1903, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. approved a Declaratory Statement giving the official interpretation of this Article. It states:

It is not to be regarded as teaching that any who die in infancy are lost. We believe that all dying in infancy are included in the election of grace, and are

regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who works when and where and how He pleases.

I would reword the article in this manner:

All infants dying in infancy are elect and redeemed by Christ and regenerated by the Spirit prior to the moment of their death.

## **B. THE BASIC DIFFICULTY.**

1. This subject is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult, problem encountered by those who desire to base their religious beliefs upon the revelation contained in the Scriptures. The destiny of a dead infant is a testing problem for any system of theology relating to the Bible.

2. The silence of Scripture: This is due to the silence of Scripture on the subject. There are approximately one thousand verses in the Bible in which the ideas associated with the word, "child," occurs. Yet there is not a single text which clearly, explicitly, and dogmatically tells us what is the fate of infants dying in infancy. After the most careful examination of the Biblical grammar and exegesis is completed, we are left to rest our conclusion upon Biblical and theological inference rather than Biblical statement.

3. Explicit and Implicit meaning: The different meanings of the words "explicit" and "implicit" are given to us in *Webster's Dictionary*. First the word, "explicit:"  
Plain in language; open to the understanding, clear, not obscure or ambiguous; express, not merely implicit. An explicit proposition or declaration is that in which the words, in their acceptation express the true meaning of the person who utters them, and in which there is no ambiguity or disguise.

In contrast the word "implicit" means:

Implied, fairly to be understood, though not expressed in words.

The contrast between the two words can be illustrated in this manner. "Jim loves his wife Carolyn." This is an explicit statement of love. But when we say, "Jim gave his wife, Carolyn, a valentine on Valentine's Day," we are expressing an implicit statement of love. It is implied, though not clearly stated.

So while there are no explicit statements such as "all infants, dying in infancy are elect or saved," God has given us sufficient revelation from which we can legitimately conclude what the mind of God is on the matter. The words of Jesus in our text will serve as a springboard upon which to base our conclusions. Matthew 18:14 - **"Even so it is not the**

***will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish."***

This is the Word of God.

4. It is the written Word of God to which we must appeal. It is not sufficient to say, "I feel my baby is in heaven." Our feelings or desires are not the final authority on the matter. Neither can we say, "Well, it seems to me," or "My opinion is." We must stay within the framework of Scripture.

### **C. THE BASIC PROBLEM.**

The basic problem which the Bible presents to us concerning the issue of infant election or salvation, is the issue of infant death and original sin. Infants die, that is evident. ***"The wages of sin is death."*** (Romans 6:23). Infants enter this world born with original sin, having inherited a sinful nature from Adam. David said in Psalm 51:5, ***"In sin did my mother conceive me."*** Infants are not innocent. This means they are guilty from the point of conception. No infant is born holy. If they are fallen and guilty, then they are subject to punishment in the form of condemnation. God would be totally just to punish them if He so chose. But the question is, "Has God chosen to do so?" This is where the doctrine of unconditional election enters the picture.

Since God requires repentance and faith out of moral beings before they can be saved, how can infants repent and believe? The salvation of any infant, dying in infancy, presupposes their prior condemnation. It is at the point that the three major systems of theology enter the picture and attempt to answer the problem. As we stated in Lesson Seven, they are:

1. The Pelagian view denies original sin and total depravity.
2. The Semi-Pelagian or Arminian view affirms original sin and total depravity but denies total inability.
3. The Calvinistic view affirms original sin and both total depravity and inability.

Our study will work through the several theories of infant salvation flowing out of these systems.

### **D. MY BASIC PRESUPPOSITION.**

My basic presupposition, which I hold and will seek to prove, is that "I consciously, intelligently, rationally, Biblically and sincerely believe that all infants and idiots, who live and die in moral incompetency, are ultimately saved and glorified in heaven."

#### **E. FOUR BASIC PROPOSITIONS WHICH MUST BE MAINTAINED.**

NOTE: If I am to prove my premise that all infants dying in infancy are saved, and at the same time be true to the Gospel scheme of redemption revealed in the Scriptures, I must maintain the following four propositions: They are:

One: All infants dying in infancy are by nature guilty, depraved, and worthy of condemnation.

Two: All infants dying in infancy, if saved at all, must be saved by the atonement of Christ, and in no other way.

Three: All infants dying in infancy, if saved at all, must be regenerated and sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Four: All infants dying in infancy, if saved at all, must be saved by an application of redemption to them prior to death.

NOTE: "All theories devised to explain the salvation of dead infants by ignoring or dodging any of these propositions will of necessity be foreordained to failure and will be found lacking and inadequate in the final analysis."

#### **F. FIVE BASIC REASONS FOR THIS STUDY.**

I have chosen to cover this topic in depth for five basic reasons.

One: To relate the death of Jesus Christ to the untold millions of infants who die each year, many of whom are either aborted by human choice or perish from natural miscarriages before they ever see the light of God's sun.

Two: To give a comforting hope to grieving parents who have lost a child in infancy.

Three: To give a clearer insight into the way God has chosen to save sinners.

Four: To defend the Calvinistic system of theology from two unjust criticisms.

- a. First: That the Calvinistic system of theology seeks to avoid the issue of dead infants because it has no adequate explanation.

b. Second: That the Calvinistic system of theology logically and confessedly implies the actual damnation of some or all dead infants.

Five: To show to the contrary that instead of implying that some dead infants are condemned to hell, Calvinism is the only system of theology which fairly and fully gives a Biblical, rational, and theological basis for the salvation of all infants who live and die in a state of moral incompetency.

## **G. OUR BASIC PROCEDURE.**

My basic procedure to the approach of the subject will be as follows:

First: We will look at the **common consensus** which exists on the subject.

Second: We will examine the **"Sinless Theory"** as held by those who express the Pelagian system.

Third: We will examine the **"incapable Theory"** also held by the Pelagian system. Both the Sinless and Incapable theories deny original sin in Adam.

Fourth: We will then examine the **"Character of God Theory"** which holds that the essence of God's nature is that of infinite and eternal love. This means that He is incapable of punishing anyone including infants, hence all mankind and angels will be saved. This is found in those who hold to a "Rationalistic View of Scripture" better nicknamed as "Liberalism."

Fifth: Next, we will examine the **"Children of God Theory"** which emphasizes the universal Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. This also flows out of Liberalism.

Sixth: The **"Universal Atonement Theory."** This view is held by the system of theology known as "Semi-Pelagian" or "Arminian." It is divided into two camps. 1<sup>st</sup>, that of Evangelical Arminianism, and 2<sup>nd</sup>, that of Sacramental Arminianism. The difference between these views will be presented and how they attempt to explain how infants are saved.

Seventh: The **"Baptismal Regeneration Theory."** This is the belief that Baptism begins the Christian life which removes original sin. Under this teaching, only infants who have been baptized are saved.

Eighth: This system involves what is known as the **"After Death Probation Theory."** This view holds that each person must define and decide his or her own destiny by their free choice and how that infants cannot make that choice in this life; they must be given an after death probationary period in which they can develop into such a state of maturity so as to determine their own destiny.

Ninth: Lastly, we will examine the **"Calvinist Theory."** This view holds that since the infant is born depraved and under the curse of God, it cannot save itself by any action of its own, then it can only be saved through Gospel means, namely unconditional election by the Father, particular redemption by the Son, and unconditional regeneration by the Spirit prior to its death.

#### **H. CONCLUSION.**

Well, I hope I have whet your appetites to join me on a pilgrimage into the subject of infant election unto salvation. As we progress, we will encounter the problems, the many views, and the solution as we stay within the framework of Scripture and see that God saves sinful infants the same way He saves sinful adults, namely through the Gospel.