

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #81

"Election of Dying Infants - Human Growth and Development" (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: This is the second in the series of lessons dealing with the topic of the "Election of Dying Infants." We gave a general introduction to the topic in the first lesson. In it we raised the basic question, "Are Dying Infants Elect?" We then gave five possible options open to the answering of the question: They are:

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

Second: All dying infants are lost. This is merely an option.

Third: Only baptized infants are saved.

Fourth: All baptized infants are saved, but we do not know about the rest.

Fifth: All dying infants are elect and saved whether baptized or not.

We then looked at the basic difficulty in handling the subject, namely the absence of explicit statements to be found in the Bible regarding the issue. We then gave the meanings of "explicit" and "implicit," and stated there are numerous implicit statements in the Bible by which we can reach a conclusion on the matter.

We also looked at the basic problem which the Bible presents when it affirms the relationship between original sin and infant death. Infants are not born innocent. They are guilty of having a sinful nature from the point of conception and thus subject to punishment. Since God requires repentance and faith out of moral beings before they can be saved, how can infants repent and believe?

We then gave four basic propositions which must be maintained if we are to address the subject within the framework of the Bible. 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 Christ's redemption to them prior to death.

We are now ready to address our topic which deals with our understanding of what constitutes our makeup as human beings, made in the moral image of God. Human beings, along with angels, possess a God-consciousness which makes them separate from the animal creation. While animals possess a self-consciousness, which enables them to discern themselves as distinct, separate beings from other beings, they do not possess a consciousness of God to whom they are morally accountable. All moral creatures will give an account of their actions, some in this life, all others on the final judgment day.

A. DEFINITION OF A HUMAN BEING

1. Natural revelation

a. We will cover this first from the standpoint of natural revelation, followed by Biblical revelation. Natural revelation is that which has been discovered by science (knowledge). Biblical revelation is the special revelation given in the Bible and acquired by the science of Theology based on the analogy of faith.

b. Natural revelation informs us that the human child is a composite being, having both a body and a soul which are held together in an organic union by a vital bond. The body is compiled of organs and powers. The science of physiology is the systematic arrangement of this physical phenomena or appearance. In a similar manner, the soul has its own group of faculties consisting of thinking, feeling, and willing. The science of psychology is devoted to describing this group of mental phenomena. So to, life in its mysterious and intangible way, presents a third group of phenomena which is treated by the science of biology.

c. The child's physiological, psychological, and biological history seems to possess concurrent and parallel stages and periods of development. The body, soul and life seem to come into being in the same instant and from that time on, share a common fortune. For each of these three elements, the body, soul and life, there is an embryonic, or prenatal period of growth; for each there is an infantile period of progress and increase; for each a still higher and more advanced stage moving towards maturity, which we call youth-hood; for each, the mature stage of manhood; for each, old age of senility and decline; and for each, a finality ending in death. At this point special revelation illumines the grave, and shows that there will be a resurrection for the body, immortality for the soul, and endless life throughout the ages for human life, either in eternal joy or eternal torment. It is from special revelation we learn that God's creative power secures the survival of the soul after death, preserves the body even though it has dissolved into dust, and ordains a resurrection when the two shall be joined again in life everlasting.

2. Biblical Revelation. Biblical or special revelation confirms and enlarges upon what is revealed in natural. This is set forth in Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:7.

a. Genesis 1:26-28 - ***"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'"***

b. Genesis 2:7 - ***"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."***

Here we are told that God created man in His own image. That is not a physical image, but a moral image. God has wisdom or a mind. He has a heart or affections, and He has a will by which to make choices. Thus He is a rational Being, and it is in that rationality that man is created, being far superior to that of the lower creatures composed of animals and plants. God created man out of the dust of the ground, thus he is part physical. Man is a spiritual being in that God breathed into him the breath of life. Also, man is a soulish being in that he now possesses a living soul. Thus man is seen in the Bible as a composite being.

The growth and development of man's composite being is also affirmed in Scriptures.

c. John the Baptist - in Luke 1:80 we read, ***"So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel."*** Here is a reference to John as a child. It says that the child ***"grew,"*** that is, his body developed in physical proportions. We also read that he ***"became strong in spirit."*** This is referring to his soulish faculties. Both the physical and the spiritual developed together. He developed in both his physical and spiritual maturity before he appeared unto Israel.

d. Jesus - In Luke 2:40 we read of Jesus in His childhood humanity. ***"And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."*** ***"The child grew"*** is referring to His physical development. ***"And became strong in spirit"*** is referring to His spiritual or mental development. The expression, ***"filled with wisdom"*** modifies the meaning of ***"strong in spirit."*** Jesus grew

and increased in both His physical and psychological faculties as He developed from childhood unto adulthood. While He possessed the same humanity as Adam possessed, He did not come into the world mature like Adam. He had to develop into that state. Thus, in Luke 2:51-52 we read of Him, ***"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."*** This describes Jesus at age twelve, only the faculties are listed in reverse order from what they were in verse 40. They ***"increased in wisdom and stature."*** ***"Wisdom"*** is relating to His spiritual and psychological component, and ***"stature"*** to His physiological component. He grew up from that of an infant into that of an adult.

B. DIVIDING PERIODS OF DEVELOPMENT IN A HUMAN BEING.

1. The two periods of human development: Inasmuch as the human body and the human soul make their entry into life at the same moment and share a joint career through the epochal times of their existence, then human history is divided according to the development of its members into two distinct periods known as Infancy and Adulthood. The distinction between the two classes is not just physiological, but also psychological and moral.

As there is a moment in the process, however mysterious, when the physical component passes out of the immature state of infancy into a state of bodily adulthood, so there is some moment when the soul becomes mature in its intellectual and moral faculties. There is no set age of time when this occurs as it varies from person to person. The distinction between an embryo and an infant is not made by a sharp time of distinction. This is because the embryo gradually grows by finite development into that of the infant, and after the same manner, the infant grows into the adult in a spontaneously and mysteriously manner indiscernible by any final law or uniform schedule. The fact of this transmission is certain, but the time and method are mysterious and indefinable.

The Apostle Paul addresses this occurrence when he says in I Corinthians 13:11, ***"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things."*** Here Paul also describes his mental development from childhood to adulthood, and how he understood and spoke in the two periods of his life.

An infant is a physical and mental incompetent, in the process of becoming competent. He or she is on the way into a stage of growth when they will be able to grasp and make use of themselves; when their bodily and mental powers will be mature enough to

make use of the ends for which they were created, that is, when they will be able to “put away childish things,” and think, feel and act like mature human beings.

2. Definitions: The following are definitions relating to both the normal and abnormal occurrences in human development.

a. A Child is a person whose mind and body are, by reason of imperfect development, inferior in both physical and mental development.

b. An Adult is a person who has arrived at the point in growth where he is able to use and understand himself to a greater or lesser degree.

c. a Dwarf is a person of small physical stature manifesting an example of arrested bodily growth, while his mental development grows on into maturity.

d. An Idiot is a person whose mental development lingers in the realm of intellectual childhood, while his physical development grows on into maturity.

e. A Lunatic is a person who has developed into a state of physical and mental maturity, but whose mental faculties have, in some way or another, become damaged and abnormal in their operations.

3. Competency and Incompetency in the moral realm.

a. Competency: The possession of an adequate capacity to process evidence set before a person.

b. Incompetency: The lack of an adequate capacity to process evidence set before a person.

In reference to the topic of infant election unto salvation, R. A. Webb, D.D., former Professor of Systematic Theology, at Southwestern Presbyterian University in Clarksville, Tennessee, makes the following observations.

Moral incompetency is grounded in *mental* incompetency; because conscience is the mind acting in the specific sphere of ethical things. The same intellect, which cognizes the facts of chemistry, perceives moral distinctions; the same sensibility, which feels moral emotions, loves friends, or hates enemies; the same will, which puts forth moral volitions, chooses to eat food, or drink water. The conscience is but the moral side of the soul. Consequently that soul is morally competent as long as it has the use of its faculties. *Infants*

and *idiots* are morally incompetent because they have not an intelligent and efficient grasp upon their mental faculties. *Lunatics* are moral incompetents during the period of their insanity, though they may have been moral competents prior to their derangement, and may have been the moral causes of their insanity. But those *heathen* adults, who are in the normal and balanced possession of their faculties, are not moral infants, nor moral idiots, nor moral incompetents. To pronounce any class of persons moral incompetents there must be an antecedent mental deficiency—a deficiency due to incomplete growth, or arrested development, or constitutional derangement. That heathen adult, who speaks as a man, understands as a man, and thinks as a man, is a responsible moral fool; and the plea of moral infancy, or moral idiocy, or moral insanity, in apology for his wicked life, is barred by the fact that he has sound mental faculties, and is equipped with all the intellectual furniture necessary for him to speak correctly, understand soundly, and think truly. I cannot reduce this portion of the race to the class of moral incapables, because they are not mentally incomplete. (Webb, *The Theology of Infant Salvation*, p. 5, Sprinkle Publications, Harrisonburg, Virginia).

4. The Biblical distinctions between those who are incompetent and those who are competent.

We will now refer to a few of the scriptures referring to the topic and make a few brief observations, as we will cover these in a later lesson.

a. Deuteronomy 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."***

Here, God is recalling to Israel their time of unbelief when they refused to capture the land of Canaan for fear their children might be killed in the war. God describes these ***"little ones as children . . . who have no knowledge of good and evil;"*** That is, they were not only physically incapable of defending themselves in battle, but were morally incompetent. This means they could not be held responsible for their actions.

b. Jonah 4:11 - ***"And 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—and much livestock?"***

Here we find Jonah upset because God did not carry out His threat to destroy the city of Nineveh. God asserts His sovereign right to show pity whenever and wherever He wills. He then informs Jonah there were 120,000 persons in the city who had not reached enough maturity to discern the difference between their right and left hands. Thus they did not need to repent like the adults because they were incapable of repenting. They comprised a certain class of persons who were distinct from others. They were like the

cattle or livestock who were incompetent in moral matters. In later lessons, we will show that all infants, dying in infancy, are elect as a distinct class of humanity to be spared from hell on the day of judgment.

c. Nehemiah 8:1-3 - ***"Now all the people gathered together as one man in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate; and they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law."***

The setting here involves a return of some of the people from Babylonian captivity. Under Ezra and Nehemiah, the responsibility was given to restore the worship of God. This was partly accomplished by the public reading of the Book of the Law of Moses. Notice who was included when this reading took place. It was ***"the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding."*** This means that only those who possessed the mental abilities to understand the spiritual and moral issues before them were included in the assembly. This would eliminate the infants and children along with the idiots and the lunatics. Thus all the mentally incompetent were not required to attend the service. The point is that only the mentally competent are held responsible for that which is contained in the revelation of God. Then we read in 8:8 - ***"So they read distinctly from the book, in the Law of God; and they gave the sense, and helped them to understand the reading."***

We further read in Nehemiah 9:2-3 that ***"Then those of Israelite lineage separated themselves from all foreigners; and they stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one-fourth of the day; and for another fourth they confessed and worshiped the Lord their God."*** Notice who it was that ***"confessed their sins"*** and ***"worshiped the Lord their God."*** It was those who possessed the mental ability and maturity to hear and understand the reading of the Book of the Law. Those who could not do so were excluded from the responsibilities set forth by God in the Book!

The conclusion is that none of the moral incompetents will be judged by God on the final day of judgment when the "Book of Life" is opened and men are judged. This is clearly established in Revelation 20:11-15 - ***"Then I saw a great white throne and Him***

who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. More will be said later on this subject in future lessons.

We leave this as a challenge to those views which hold that it is possible for infants to perish in hell due to their original sin in Adam, and whether they have been baptized or not! Those holding to infant damnation must address the natural and Biblical data presented in today's lesson.