

## WHAT ABOUT BAPTIZING BABIES?

By Calvin Chapman

Introduction: Baby baptism is a common practice found in many churches today. But, an important question must be asked: Does baptizing babies fulfill the original purposes for baptism that the Lord established? Does it accomplish God's intended goals for baptism as stated in God's Word? When we look at what the Bible teaches about baptism and babies, I believe the answer will be quite clear.

God's opinion is infinitely superior to man's opinion. So God's Word, the Bible, is the dependable authority rather than our fallible human understandings and doctrines: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart; and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."(Proverbs 3:5-6 NASV)

### **I. Baptism is for putting the old, sinful man to death so that we should no longer be slaves to Satan:**

*"What shall we say, then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;" (Romans 6:1-6 NASV)*

Babies are pure, with no evil. Why? Because they are like God and there is no evil in God. When God made Adam and Eve, He made them like Himself: "*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule..."* (Genesis 1:26 NASV)

And, God is still in the human-making business: "*For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb"* (Psalms 139:13 NIV).

*"the Lord...stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth and forms the spirit of man within him." (Zechariah 12:1 NKJV)*

God is the spiritual parent of all humans: "*We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!"* (Hebrews 12:9 NIV)

It takes three to make a baby: a man, a woman, and God. Humans are not the spiritual parents of their children. That explains why a baby with a good spiritual nature can be born to two sinful people. The human spirit still comes directly from God and, when the body dies, the spirit goes back to God: "*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7 KJV) Truly, God has no grandchildren.*

Humans are still being made in God's likeness: *"With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness." (James 3:9 NIV)*

As a result, babies do not come into this world with a sinful, satanic spiritual nature but with the pure nature of God. Baptizing a baby does not put an "old, sinful man" to death because there is not yet a "sinful man" to put to death. So, this purpose is not fulfilled in infant baptism.

## **II. Baptism is for entering the kingdom of God by being born again:**

*"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:3-5 NKJV)*

*"He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit," (Titus 3:5 NIV)*

Because babies come into the world with the nature of God, they are ALREADY a part of God's Kingdom: *"Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)*

*"And He said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'" (Matthew 18:3 NIV)*

So, nobody is added to God's kingdom when a baby is baptized. Because, the babies already belong to God.

## **III. Baptism is for the forgiveness and washing away of sins:**

*"Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38 NIV)*

*"And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name.'" (Acts 22:16 NIV)*

*"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word." (Ephesians 5:25-26 NIV)*

As we have shown in the above point, babies don't need cleansing. They are pure because they are like God. They don't have any sin from which they need to repent or be cleansed. So, nobody is cleansed when a baby is baptized.

#### **IV. Baptism = saving step of faith:**

*"and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also - not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ". (1 Peter 3:21 NIV)*

*"having been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2:12 NIV)*

Baptism is for those who need to be saved by faith in God. It is that point in a person's life where their faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus becomes strong enough that they respond to God. Baptism is God's way of allowing the individual to come to Him for spiritual resurrection. When we are baptized, our spirit is telling God: "Father, I believe it's through Your power that the tomb of Jesus became empty. And I trust that You can raise up my spirit from the dead the way that You raised Your Son's body from the dead. So, through my faith I am placing myself in Your powerful hands as You have instructed through baptism. Please put my old sinful man to death and, through Your spirit, raise me up to walk the new life of Christ."

But, baptism without faith accomplishes nothing. Besides, babies are not lost, so how could they be saved?

## VERSES USED TO TEACH INHERITED SINFULNESS:

God is a Person of truth and consistency (Titus 1:2). As a result the Bible, the Word of God, does not contradict itself. The Holy Scriptures will not teach in one place that babies are born with God's pure nature and then teach in another place that infants receive the evil nature of Satan at conception. That would be inconsistent.

There are verses that might seem to teach that babies are born with a sinful nature, especially if the one reading those verses already believes in inherited sinfulness. But, careful examination reveals that the message, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, is consistently the same: all humans are of divine origin, made in God's image and likeness. So, all babies start out good.

Let us now look at verses that are often wrongly used to prove that humans are sinful from conception:

**1. Romans 3:12,23** - "*All have turned aside, together they have become useless...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" (NASB)

This verse is often quoted to support the idea that babies are born with sin or a sinful nature. But, in order to go astray, you must first be going in the right direction. In order to become useless, you must first have been useful. In order to fall, you must first start from a high position. Scripture confirms this:

*"Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."* (Ecclesiastes 7:29 NASB)

Also, one of the hymns of Israel proclaims the high position where God places man:

*"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,*

*The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;*

*What is man that You take thought of him,*

*And the son of man that You care for him?*

*Yet You have made him a little lower than God,*

*And You crown him with glory and majesty!*

*(Psalms 8:3-5 NASB)*

What a lofty position God has given man! But, what a high position from which to fall!

Also, the "all" that have sinned in Romans 3:23 cannot literally mean every human that has ever lived because Jesus was human (John 1:14, 1Timothy 2:5) and, though He was tempted in every way as we are, He never sinned. (Hebrews 4:15, Matthew 4:1-11) This part of Jesus' life also shows us that sin is not something physical that you are born with like a birth mark. Sin occurs when you give into temptation or fail when you are tested.

**2. Ephesians 2:1-3** - *"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest."* (NASV)

Because children come into the world with God's good nature, they are spiritually alive early in their existence before they become familiar with law and sin. The inspired Apostle Paul spoke of that time in his life: *"And I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive, and I died;"* (Romans 7:9 NASV). Earlier, God's word speaks of a time in children's lives when they *"have no knowledge of good or evil"* (Deuteronomy 1:39 NASV).

There is an evil, sinful nature that produces sin. It is the spiritual nature of Satan. Satan is the source of all sin:

*"The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3:8 NASB)

People who follow the devil are described as the devil's children because they partake of his spiritual nature:

*"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."* (John 8:44 NASB)

*"By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: any one who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."* (1 John 3:10 NASB)

But, the sinful nature is not an inherited nature. It is an acquired nature. It is acquired by participating in the world's ways, *"walking according to the course of this world"* because Satan is the ruler of this world. So the ways of this world are really Satan's ways:

*"the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me."* (John 14:30 NASB)

*"the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."* (1 John 5:19 NASB)

You don't have to be born with an evil nature to end up evil. You only need to submit to the rule of the evil one, as Adam and Eve did. In Ephesians 2:1-3, human sinfulness is explained by pointing to the evil spiritual ruler of the world into which humans are born, whose sinful ways they follow. Man's original nature is not pointed out as the problem.

This same word, "nature", is used in Romans 2:14 but here it focuses on the original, God-given nature of man: *"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness"* (KJV). In this passage, the nature of man is tied to a certain instinctive recognition of right and wrong flowing from his conscience rather than from God's laws revealed in His Word. Remote tribes that have never been in contact with the Bible still have codes of conduct reflecting right and wrong. This is a testimony to Creator in Whose image they are created.

**3. Genesis 8:21** - *"And the Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done."* (NASV)

This verse reveals God's thoughts immediately following the flood of Noah's time. But, it says exactly the opposite of inherited sinfulness and confirms that babies start out good. It does not say man is "evil from conception", but, points to a later time, "from youth". A human cannot be evil from conception and then, from youth, begin to go bad. So, it points to a change that happens after conception. When does youth start? Remember that David was a youth when he killed Goliath (1 Samuel 17:33).

**4. Psalms 51:5**- *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin my mother conceived me."* (NASB)

In explaining the evil in his life, David points to an environment of sin that he was brought forth into, something that his mother was "in" at his conception. Note that David did not say that he was a sinner at conception.

Also keep in mind that Psalms are songs that often contain poetry and symbolism. Sometimes a point is symbolically emphasized in a song. For example:

*"For thou, O Lord, art my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon Thee I have leaned from my birth; thou art He who took me from my mother's womb."* (Psalms 71:5-6 RSV) (see also Psalm 22:9-10) The singer describes himself as having trusted in God from birth, possibly because he cannot remember a time when he did not trust in God. But, this does not mean that infants function with the same awareness and conscious faith as adults. (See Romans 10:17) But, the overemphasizing makes the point of the depth of his faith.

This exaggeration helps us understand other verses like Psalm 58:3: *"The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth."* (NASV) Does this say that humans are conceived with Satan's evil nature? No, again it points to a change from good to bad, a departure from the original state when they go astray.

**5. Romans 5:19** - *"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous."* (KJV)

This is comparing the results of Adam's actions with Jesus' actions. But, does this teach that babies inherit a sinful nature at conception? It doesn't say how people are made sinners by Adam's disobedience. We do know that following Adam's example makes a person a sinner, and Christ's righteous example leads us into righteousness (1 John 3:7). This whole passage is a comparison between Jesus and Adam, "*who is a type of Him who was to come*" (5:14) This helps us to understand verses like Romans 5:12:

*"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned"* (NASV)

When the first people, Adam and Eve, turned away from their Creator and followed Satan, they were spiritually separated from God, the Source of life. So, their sin produced their spiritual death. This impacted more people than just the first two. When they chose to follow the evil one, Satan's rule came over the world. "*The whole world lies in the power of the evil one*" (1 John 5:19). Sin had entered the world, and Satan's power over man would only increase until the Savior would come. But, note that it does not say that Adam's sin was passed onto his offspring; rather, death was passed on. Death spread to all, not because Adam's sin was passed unto all, but because all sinned. In fact, later in this passage it speaks of "*those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense*" (5:14)

Ezekiel 18:20 states that each person is responsible for his own sin: "*The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*" (RSV) Sin is personal. And, each person is responsible for their own sin.

In conclusion, basic human nature is not evil. Only by following the evil one do we become evil. For more information about the nature of man and sharing in the Life of God through Jesus, contact Calvin Chapman at:

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