

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #82

“Election of Dying Infants - The General Consensus” **(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: In the previous message, we defined a human being as a composite being consisting of both physical and psychological powers combined in one organic union. Both of these powers begin at the inception of life and develop together throughout the growth of the individual into maturity, and then decline together in the period of old age. In a person’s infant stage of development, these powers manifest an underdeveloped, immature state of incompetency to perform actions which are otherwise associated with adult behavior. Thus, human history is divided according to the development of its members into two distinct periods known as Infancy and Adulthood.

In its infant physical state of immaturity, the person is unable to perform certain feats of strength and endurance, and is unable to produce other human beings. In its infant psychological state of immaturity, the person is unable to perform certain feats of knowledge and affections relating to persons and ideas, and is unable to discern between good and evil as it relates to the comprehension and consequences of certain moral issues relating to human behavior and responsibility. Both natural and Biblical law recognize the non-responsible stage of infant immaturity and withhold both rewards and punishment for actions performed in this stage. For example, if a four year-old child killed its father, human law would not hold the child responsible, but if the child grows to the age, lets say of twenty-one, then the law would extract punishment for the action.

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. It is then they will be able to ***“put away childish things and become a ‘man’”***; in using the words of Paul, the Apostle.

In the last lesson, we then gave three texts from the Old testament which showed that those residing in a state of moral incompetency are not held responsible for their actions. The texts were Deuteronomy 1:39; Jonah 4:11; Nehemiah 8:1-3, and Nehemiah 9:2,3. We concluded that infants will not be judged on the final day of judgment since the judgment will be based on works and infants cannot associate punishment based on their actions.

We now come to present the general consensus of opinion concerning the destiny of dead infants as expressed in individual, institutional, and systematic thought. In so doing, I wish

to acknowledge that much of the material has been taken from R. A. Webb's work on Infant Salvation, only I have paraphrased it and blended in my thoughts to bring it to date. We look at first:

A. THE COMMON CONSENSUS OF MANKIND.

The universal belief of the human race is that infants and all the mentally retarded, consisting of those incapable to discern good from evil, having lived and died in incompetency, are ultimately saved and glorified in heaven. Human reason is repulsed by the concept of an infant being sent to hell. Natural reason cannot discover any cause for the damnation of this class of persons. Natural affection automatically revolts against the idea of consigning to hell persons who are morally incompetent to distinguish their right hand from their left. The human conscience rejects the idea of the justice of inflicting eternal punishment upon persons who are incapable of understanding the reason why they are suffering at the hands of their Creator. While the universal belief of the human race is not infallible, there is at least a positive presumption of its correctness. It takes a daring person to butt their head against the common judgment of mankind, and the burden of proof that infants can perish in hell lies squarely on the shoulders of the person who dares to oppose the common consensus of the human race. There is not an explicit or implicit text of scripture which can be used to rebuff the majority view of humanity. I would ask, "Why would one wish to hold to such a position?"

B. THE COMMON CONSENSUS OF CHRISTENDOM.

That all infants and other moral incapables, living and dying in incompetency, are saved and go to heaven is a belief of the common faith of Christendom at large. There may be theologians and religious teachers here and there, who in order to defend some doctrine, have denied the position of the universal salvation of infants. The major doctrine which they feel stands in the way of the universal salvation of infants is that of original sin in Adam. This will be thoroughly discussed in later lessons of this series. While the consensus of the Christian church is not necessarily correct, it is extremely hazardous for any individual to depart from the highway of faith which has traveled through the centuries. The presumptions are certainly on the side of the people of God who have lived in fellowship with Christ and after prayer, honest study and inquiry, have come to the belief that heaven is the residing place of dead infants. Anyone who rejects the universal position of the Christian church does so at their risk, and must accept the responsibility of defending himself at the bar of sacred Scripture. One cannot even hide behind the idea of "I don't know," because that opens the door to a possibility of there being some infants in hell. If there exists such a possibility, the critics must prove it to be the case, and this they cannot

do as will be shown in the development of this series of lessons.

C. THE COMMON CONSENSUS OF GODLY INDIVIDUALS.

That infants and other moral incapables, living and dying in moral incompetency, are saved and go to heaven is not only the common consensus of mankind along with the common consensus of Christendom at large, it is also the common consensus of godly individuals who have advanced in their sanctification to the degree they possess a degree of spirituality wherein they both know and desire to be like God, and see things as God sees things. Among the saints of God, there are those who like Enoch, **"walk with God."** There are those who like David, are **"men after God's own heart,"** or those like Nathaniel who are said to be **"Israelites in whom there is no guile."**

Paul describes these stages of advancing spirituality residing in the saints of God in these words found in II Corinthians 3:18 which reads, **"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."** These saints may reach a stage of grace where they become so conscious of the thousands of their sins, they are willing to be damned for the glory of God, but never a one in Scripture had ever attained such an imagined level of spirituality where they were able to say "amen" to the damnation of their infants and mentally retarded children. Why do we not find one godly saint in the Bible who would endorse the idea of infant damnation? There is only one rational reason for this - the Spirit of God never developed them to this point of accepting such a belief because no one among this class of persons is ever damned in the workings of God with His moral creatures! We would think that if God desired to glorify Himself in the damnation of infants, that He would bring some of His chosen saints to accept, with joy, the concept of infant damnation. There is no Christian parent who is ever reconciled to the damnation of their infant or idiot child. Why is this? Because God has no such thing in store for their faith to ever have to accept. If there were any such height of spirituality, some of God's saints would by grace be elevated to it! There is no Christian parent who can follow the casket containing their little one, and believe that the pall-bearers of that little casket are devils from hell sent to conduct the body to the grave, and the little soul to the pit of hell!

D. THE COMMON CONSENSUS OF THE THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS.

The Belief that all infants and other incapables, who die in such a state, will be saved and go to heaven, is not only the common consensus of mankind, and the common consensus of Christendom or the church, along with the common consensus of godly individuals, it is the common consensus of the theological systems. These are:

- (1) The Pelagian or Rationalistic;
- (2) The Semi-Pelagian or Arminian;
- (3) The Ecclesiastical or Romish;
- (4) The Reformed or Calvinistic.

It is noteworthy that while each of these systems has its own distinctive way of articulating the position, and can be clearly differentiated from each other, they all agree upon the fact that infants, idiots and other incapables who live and die in moral incompetency, are not damned. While they fundamentally disagree regarding the reason by which they reach this conclusion, they are in agreement with the conclusion.

Pelagianism, for example, bases the salvation of this class of persons in their sinlessness;

Semi-Pelagianism believes the salvation is found in the universal atonement of Christ;

Romanists or Ecclesiastics believe the answer lies in the acts of the church; and The Calvinists or Reformed look to the imputation of Christ's righteousness and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

The foundation of the Pelagian system is ethical.

The foundation of the Semi-Pelagian is Christological.

The foundation of the Romanist is ecclesiastical, and

The foundation of the Calvinistic is evangelical.

The debate lies in the question, "which system can truly ground the doctrine that this class of persons are saved?"

E. MY APPROACH TO THE SUBJECT: BOTH EXPOSITORY AND POLEMICAL.

My approach to the subject of infants dying in infancy will be both expository and polemical. These two expressions are defined as follows.

1. Expository: Webster's Definition of Exposition "a laying open, a situation in which a thing is exposed or laid open, an explanation or interpretation, a laying open the sense or meaning of an author or of any passage in a writing; to clear of obscurity." (*Webster's Dictionary, 1828*).

In using the expository method, I will seek to discover and expose those principles of the Christian faith which form the foundations that Biblically, logically, rationally, and necessarily lead to the conclusion that all infants, and incapables dying in their

incompetency, are elected and finally saved in heaven.

2. Polemical - The second approach to our topic will be that of the polemical. Webster defines Polemical as: "(a) Controversial, disputative, intended to maintain an opinion or system in opposition to others; (b) engaged in supporting an opinion or system by controversy." Webster goes further to define a "polemic" as "a disputant; a controversist, one who writes in support of an opinion or system in opposition to another." (*Webster's Dictionary, 1828*). Thus by using the polemical approach, I will attempt to point out the errors in these reasonings which fail to base the doctrine upon those inferences which the Scriptures authorize.

In essence, we will seek to exposit in a clear manner the material containing the ideas on the subject and expose the erroneous ideas which also exist on the subject.

F. MY CHALLENGE TO THE OPPONENTS OF THE VIEW OF THE UNIVERSAL SALVATION OF INFANTS.

I now wish to give a challenge to the opponents of the view of the universal salvation of infants. In the previous lesson, we raised the basic question, "Are Dying Infants Elect" or to put it another way, "Are Dying Infants Saved?" We then listed 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.

The fifth option supports the universal view, thus it can be eliminated from the discussion. The second option can also be eliminated in that no one holds the view that all dying infants are lost. This is merely an option and is used by some to slander the Calvinistic position. The remaining three can be reduced to two positions which are used to object to the universal salvation view. They are:

1. We simply do not know. The Scriptures do not reveal the answer.
2. The view that baptism is necessary to remove the infant's sinful nature which was transmitted from Adam.

The first objection comes from a sincere desire to uphold the integrity of Scripture. It holds

that only explicit statements in Scripture should be permitted to be used in the discussion. Since it believes that no such statements can be found in Scripture, we must not add to the Scripture what is not explicitly stated. An appeal is sometimes made to Revelation 22:18, 19 to support this objection. **"For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."** Thus it holds that it is best to remain ignorant on the subject rather than to add to the Bible what the Bible does not explicitly state.

My challenge to the "we don't know" view is as follows. The view opens itself up to at least two possibilities:

One: there is a possibility that all dying infants are saved.

Two: there is a possibility that some or all dying infants are lost due to their nature which they derived from Adam.

If it is the latter, then the view must address the moral-incompetence Scriptures which were given in the previous lesson. In Isaiah 7:15, 16 we have this explicit statement. **"Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. 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."** This is a Messianic prophecy concerning the Messiah. There could be several questions raised by the text, but our present interest is seen in the words concerning the child's incapability to **"know to refuse the evil and choose the good."** This is a sign of mental infancy in which the child is not responsible for its actions. No condemnation is extracted upon those who die in this state. While the infant is condemnable because of original sin, that sin must be transmitted into actual sins before the person can be judged at the final judgment for their works. This we covered in the previous lesson. The Scriptural data then allows us to reach the following conclusion: Infants dying in infancy are elected as a class to be spared from condemnation, and will not be found guilty at the final Day of Judgment. (Cf. Revelation 20:12, 13).

Since there are only two possible options facing those who hold the "we don't know" view, the possibility of an infant, dying in infancy, perishing in hell is no longer a viable option. The only alternative is that of the other option - all infants dying in infancy are elected unto salvation and go to heaven upon their death. The "we don't know" view now no longer exists. Those who hold to the view now "know!" All infants dying in infancy are saved as a class and go to heaven at the point of their death, be it a pre-natal or post-natal death!

The second view which rejects the universal view, is that "all baptized infants are saved, but

we do not know about the rest.” In a forthcoming lesson, I will show the error of sacramental grace and baptismal regeneration, but now I would only point out that the “we don’t know” reasoning applies to this view as the previous one, in that both objections seek to use the “we don’t know” argument if it can be called an argument.

I close the lesson today with a particular challenge to my Calvinist brethren who pride themselves in holding to a full and complete position on how God saves sinners. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the noted past professor and theologian, makes the following statement:

No theology is established or complete which does not account for the salvation of those who die in infancy. (Quoted by Curt Daniel in *The History and Theology of Calvinism*, p. 334).

I am writing on this question for two reasons. I want to know what the Bible says about this, and I want to be able to give an answer to the multitudes of people, primarily women, who ask “where is my child at who died in infancy?” I cannot understand how one can call himself a pastor and not seek to get an answer to this question. I ask anyone who considers himself a Bible teacher, to stop and ask himself, “How much time and study have I devoted to the subject?” In view of the fact that the belief that all infants dying in infancy is the:

1. Common Consensus of Mankind;
2. Common Consensus of Christendom;
3. Common Consensus of Godly Individuals; and
4. Common Consensus of The Theological System,

how is it that you still want to say, “I don’t know?”