

Do Infants Go To Heaven or Hell

Doctrinal Conviction of Pastor-Teacher Paul B. Phair

The Scripture clearly teaches that all mankind is born with original sin because of Adam's fall (Rm. 5:12,15-19; I Cor. 15:21,22). Thus all are under the condemnation of God and have an inherent inclination to sin. This being true, do infants who die go to hell? There have been a variety of answers to this important question. Some are the following:

- 1A Arminianism - Romans 5:15-19 says that in Adam all became corrupt and guilty but also in Christ all Adamic guilt is removed. No infants are under condemnation therefore, and those who die go to be with Christ.
- 2A Sacramentarian - God has deposited all saving grace in the sacraments of the church. Regeneration is brought about through baptism. No adult or infant is saved without it.
- 3A Some Reformed - Death in infancy is a sign of election. Some affirm this only for children of the "covenant," children of believing parents in the church who have been baptized. The children of Christian parents are sometimes held to have a potential faith ("seed") already in their subconscious, which would have expressed itself had they lived.
- 4A Strong's View (and others, including Phair) - Although born with original sin, infants have no actual sin (conscious, responsible sin) and so a relative innocence. As such they are objects of special divine compassion. There is not a different ground of their salvation, but a different way of applying Christ's atonement to them.
 - 1B Scriptural inferences:
 - 1C A different principle of judgment for unaccountable children is at work when the parents who sinned died in the wilderness, but the children who did not know good from evil could enter the promised land (Deut. 1:39; cf. Num. 14:29-31).
 - 2C Christ died for all, including infants (2 Cor. 5:15).
 - 3C Christ exemplified God's special compassion for children (Mt. 18:2-5, 10, 14; 19:14).
 - 4C While children who die cannot return to us, we can to them (2 Sam. 12:23).
 - 2B The Distinction between condemnation and punishment
 - 1C In Adam the sentence of condemnation is passed upon the whole human race, but it is executed (effectual) only upon those who responsibly sin, i.e., reject revealed truth. (Infants, mentally incompetent people are not punished eternally simply for Adam's sin).

- 2C There is an important distinction between being justifiably found guilty of a crime worthy of death and the actual execution of the sentence of death, the experiencing of the penalty. Guilt is one thing; penalty is another.
- 3C The penalty of eternal punishment is assigned scripturally only to those who, like Satan, have knowingly and deliberately turned away from God's revealed will in nature and Scripture. Punishment is regularly said to be according to the individual's works. One who could not know the difference between good and evil can hardly be punished on this basis. "Each person was judged according to what he had done." (Rev. 20:13). The lake of fire is not for infants who died, but for Satan, demons, "the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolators and all liars" (Rev. 21:8).
- 4C Grounds of responsibility
- 1D Knowledge of God in nature (Rom. 1:18-32) and the human heart (Rom. 2:14-15).
- 2D Knowledge of Moses' law (Rom. 2:13; 2:17-3:20).
- 3D The Gospel of Christ.
- 5C Degrees of punishment according to extent of light
- 1D Mt. 11:20-24
- 2D Lk. 12:47-51
- 3D Lk. 20:17-18
- 3B Conclusion: Only those who responsibly sin and reject God's revealed truth are eternally punished; infants are not capable of doing this. While infants are under condemnation because of Adam's sin, they are not punished; rather they are objects of special divine compassion.

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