

IN RESPONSE - WHAT ABOUT ABORTED BABIES?

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The question has come to me several times in the past months. What happens to aborted babies? The question came up in a college class when we looked at Psalm 51:5. This text was read from the New International Version, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." The question was immediate, "Does this mean that infants dying in the womb or other infants which die are lost?" Further, "Are such infants condemned to hell?" As a member of the congregation I serve stated, "My conception of hell has never included babies!" Surely that is the case for a majority of us. But our personal conceptions are not the final authority. Rather, we must consider the teachings of Scripture. And what does the Bible say?

First of all, it must be acknowledged that all people are sinners when they are conceived and brought into this world. The Bible is very clear on this. In addition to Psalm 51:5 which was just quoted, we might look at Genesis 6:5 and Romans 3:12 and 23. But second, because all human beings are sinners at the point of conception, a person, any person, must be born again in order to enter God's kingdom, in order to enter into heaven. Jesus was very forthright with Nicodemus about this. "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.... He cannot enter into the kingdom of God.... Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:3, 5, and 7). This means that infants, whether in the womb or not, must be born again in order to enter heaven. "You must be born again" (John 3:7). There is no getting around this requirement!

But third, can infants in the womb be born again? Can they be regenerated by the Holy Spirit before actual birth? The answer is a resounding "Yes"! The chief example in Scripture is John the baptist. Luke 1:15 tells us "he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb."

In the fourth place, this is possible because the new birth is a sovereign act

of God. As individuals do not determine to be born the first time, so they do not determine their second birth from above! The new birth is not dependent upon human action or decision. John 3:8 confirms this, "The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going, so is everyone who is born of the Spirit." And the apostle John speaks similarly of the new birth in conjunction with faith in Christ in John 1:12-13, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." That is, those who trust in Christ are born again. And this new birth comes about through the sovereign work of God and not by "the will of man." Speaking of salvation, the apostle Paul tells us the same thing, "So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy" (Romans 9:16). The upshot is that infants within the womb or without the womb, and adults too, are dependent upon the sovereign mercy of God if they are to receive the new birth. And infants within the womb may indeed be born again!

Those who do not believe in sovereign election object to this view found in the Bible! They contend that infants enter the world "good." They maintain that it can only be the personal sin of an individual which can condemn them in God's sight. They therefore hold to an age of accountability before which, if an infant dies, it will be taken to heaven. The question then becomes: Must an infant confirm his or her actual standing before God by actual sinful conduct? To put it another way: Must all infants who are hell bound live to prove this by their conduct? And conversely, are all those who die in infancy, whether within or without the womb, heaven bound?

In response, from a careful study of Scripture, this would seem not to be the case. A. We do know that infants die. This is beyond dispute. Some die of

natural causes. Others die under the abortionist's knife. B. When we ask why infants die, the biblical answer is sin. Death is in the world because of sin. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12). The point is that infants die not so much because they have voluntarily sinned. Rather, infants are subject to death because they sinned in Adam and fell with him. "Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men" (Romans 5:18). And, "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:19). C. This means that infants are not "good." They are actually sinners. "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5, NIV). And so, because of the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to them, that is, put to their account, infants face death! Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians 15:22 where he asserts, "In Adam all die."

However, and fifth, the elect infants of believers have the promise that they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter proclaimed this on the Day of Pentecost. "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself'" (Acts 2:38-39). But sixth, we should note that the promise of the Spirit is given to believers and their children with this stipulation. God must call them. In other words, they must be among the elect of God (See Romans 8:29-30). We may therefore say with confidence that all elect infants who die, whether in the womb or not, are therefore regenerate, born again, and enter heaven. This is the position of the Westminster Confession of Faith. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated, and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth" (10:3).

But seventh, all the infants of believers are not necessarily elect infants. The Bible guides us at this point with the classic example of Jacob and Esau. “And not only this, but there was Rebekah also, when she had conceived twins by one man, our father Isaac; for though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything good or bad, in order that God’s purpose according to His choice might stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls, it was said to her, ‘The older will serve the younger,’ Just as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’” (Romans 9:10-13). The point is that only elect infants and all elect infants enter into heaven. And believing parents have the promise of God concerning the Spirit upon which they may lean and concerning which they may and should pray in appeal to God for fulfillment.

But eighth, the children of unbelievers have no such promise from God regarding the Holy Spirit. They are therefore in a much more precarious position than the children of believers. However, God may, in His sovereign good pleasure, cause the infants of unbelievers to be born again and thus take them from this life into heaven. This may in fact be the case with some of the victims of abortion. But we must face squarely the awesome truth that many of those who are aborted have no promise from God. They are not recipients of the new birth. They are eternally doomed! This is the disposition of many souls in the providence of our God! This is the teaching of Scripture!

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