"INFANT BAPTISM, IS IT FROM GOD OR MAN?"

By Hoyt W. Allen, Jr.

The teaching of "infant baptism" is an outgrowth of a man-made doctrine "Original Sin.", which began in the 4th century by Augustine (Bishop in northern Africa). This doctrine teaches that an infant is born with the Original Sin of Adam and Eve. Therefore, unless the sin is removed - he is condemned forever. Augustine promoted infant baptism to take care of this matter.

However, children are born in a state of innocence, purity, and sinlessness. Children will not be punished for the sins of their parents or ancestors (Ezekiel 18:20; 28:15. Jesus taught the purity of children (Matthew 18:3). Each one shall give an account of himself to God (Romans 14:12).

I. THE NEED FOR BAPTISM IS NOT PRESENT IN INFANTS

A. Baptism is for "forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38; 22:16). An infant is incapable of sin since his mind does not function in the making of choices between right and wrong.

B. Baptism is an answer of a good conscience toward God (I Peter 3:21). An infant has no guilty conscience and therefore can do nothing in order to bring about an answer of a good conscience toward God.

C. Baptism is for salvation (Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21). An infant is not lost as he is incapable of sinning (I John 3:4).

II. THE PRE-REQUISITES FOR BAPTISM ARE NOT PRESENT IN INFANTS

A. Faith must precede baptism (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 8:37). An infant is incapable of believing in Christ. Faith is the intellectual acceptance of the evidences presented for the Lordship and deity of Christ. Anyone incapable of understanding is also incapable of faith. Faith cannot be accomplished by proxy.

B. Repentance must precede baptism (Acts 2:38). Repentance is a change of mind resulting in a change of life. An infant has no sin from which to repent.

C. Confession of faith should precede baptism (Acts 8:37). An infant is incapable of speech and cannot confess his faith before men (Matthew 10:32).

D. A baptismal candidate must be capable of being immersed, as Bible baptism is immersion (Acts 8:35-39).

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III. THE RESULTS OF BAPTISM ARE NOT POSSIBLE IN INFANTS

A. Baptism is no magic formula which automatically saves those who have submitted to it. This action must be performed upon one who has demonstrated an intelligent and willing faith. Baptism without the consent of the subject is an absurd situation (Mark 16:16). Why baptize a resistant sinner? Why baptize an infidel who does not believe in Christ? An infant has no more faith in his heart than an atheist.

B. Those who were baptized in New Testament times "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Can infants perform these acts of worship?

IV. THERE IS NO APOSTOLIC PRECEDENT FOR INFANT BAPTISM

A. No infant is mentioned as having been baptized in Biblical times. The "household baptisms" do not assume the presence of infants (See Acts 10 & 16).

B. Post-apostolic scholars agree that infant baptism is not taught in the Bible.

1. Jacobus (Congregationalist) "We have no record in the New Testament of the baptism of infants,"
2. Scott (Presbyterian) "The New Testament contains no explicit reference to the baptism of infants or small children."
3. Plummer (Church of England) "The recipients of Christian baptism were required to repent and believe."
4. Luther (Protestant Reformer) "It cannot be proved by the sacred Scriptures that infant baptism was instituted by Christ, or begun by the first Christians... ."

V. SOME SAY THE DEDICATION OF PARENTS FOR THE TASK OF REARING THEIR CHILDREN IN THE FEAR AND ADMONITION OF THE LORD - IS THE WAY TO GO.

A. Infant baptism does not allow children to render voluntary obedience to the Lord. If one has been sprinkled in infancy and comes to see "the way of the Lord more perfectly," his duty is to render obedience to the Lord in the light of his present understanding. This is no reflection on the sincerity of their parents, but one is obligated to follow the Scriptures as the infallible guide for one's life here and in eternity.

B. Infant sprinkling can also do much harm, in making people think they are already baptized and saved, and thus they have no interest in discussing the teaching of Scripture.

C. Some would substitute the idea of "infant baptism" with "infant dedication." However, each one can only dedicate oneself to the Lord, as dedication is personal. Christian parents need to promise to God that they will do all they can to bring their child up in the ways of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

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