

What the Bible says about Infant Baptism

The bible tells us that baptism is appropriately administered only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ.

An infant is under the age of accountability and therefore cannot communicate a profession of faith.

Therefore, Saddleback church does not baptize infants. We dedicate infants and young children through a prayer of commitment in the company of the parents, extended family and friends.

“Does a child need baptism to be purified from original sin?” More specifically, what is often asked is, “Will my infant go to heaven if he or she dies before the age of accountability?” The answer according to our understanding of the bible is, “Yes.” Read further. We are not saying that original sin is forgiven, but the infant does receive special dispensation from God.

Original Sin

Does this apply to infants as well?

The Scripture seems to teach that though we are all born in sin and naturally sin, God’s grace extends to infants, extending special redemptive mercy to them (look under Consequences of Sin, for infants) if they die before the age of accountability. It does not mean they are sinless, it just means God’s grace would provide heaven for infants. Look at II Sam. 12:23. David is saying that his infant son died and went to heaven.

Gen 3:6

6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

NIV

Psa 51:5

5 Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

NIV

Gen 6:5

5 The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

NIV

Rom 5:18

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

NIV

Ps 58:3

3 Even from birth the wicked go astray;
from the womb they are wayward and speak lies.

NIV

Consequences of Sin

Does that mean that an infant will suffer the consequences of sin like an adult?

For Adults:

Rom 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

NIV

For infants:

Heb 11:7

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

NIV

2 Sam 12:23

23 But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

NIV

While scripture is silent on consequences of sin for an infant (before the age of accountability), it seems clear that the pattern is clear that God redeems children under that age of accountability.

Remedy of Sin

There is only one remedy of sin. It's Jesus Christ.

Eph 2:3-10

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

NIV

Why did some households get baptized in Acts?

Scripture does not authorize the baptism of infants or young children. Even in the scriptural accounts of the baptisms of the households of Cornelius, Stephanas, and the Philippian jailer (Acts chapters 10 and 16; and 1 Corinthians 1:16), it is evident that no infants could have been included. For example:

- An infant is incapable of **fearing God**. (Acts 10:2 states the individuals baptized in the household of Cornelius feared God).
- An infant is incapable of **believing God**. (Acts 16:32, the account of the baptism of Stephanas' household, says they believed God.)
- An infant cannot **hear the gospel**. (The accounts of the baptisms of the households of both Cornelius and Stephanas, in Acts 10:33 and 16:32, says they heard the gospel.)
- An infant cannot **accept the message of salvation**. (Acts 11:12-14 says this is necessary.)
- In the account of the household of Cornelius, it clearly states that all (each member) had **received the Holy Spirit** (Acts 10:44-46). This would be impossible for a baby or very young child.