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Bare Bones Series

Where Do Babies Go When They Die?

Session One

Today we are talking about what happens when children die before they are old enough to understand the gospel. In this study, “children” refers to the following 4 categories: 1) babies who die before birth, 2) those who die at childbirth, 3) very young children who cannot understand the gospel, and 4) those with some mental incapacity which persists.

So, here is the Key Message: Children will be resurrected and given eternal life within the program in force when they died. They will not, however, be eligible for reward.

Five spiritual benefits from this study:

1. Confidence in God’s justice

This should have been generated in us from Romans 8, our sonship establishment, where we learned that we can trust God in all His attributes, all He says and all He does. Therefore, we can trust God to do right when it comes to children who have not trusted Christ.

2. Knowledge of God’s wisdom

This is what sonship is all about; having our Father’s wisdom installed in our inner man so we can think like God. If we ever find ourselves on the other side of an issue from God, then we are on the wrong side. Either there is something we don’t understand, or sin is successfully at work in us.

3. Hope in resurrection

This doctrine will produce a confident expectation that we will see them again (if we are JUEL) and be with them forever.

4. Comfort to overcome grief

This doctrine will produce a consolation for us, so that we are not overcome by our sorrow. It will also equip us to comfort others who have suffered the loss of a child.

5. Strengthen our inner man

As we endure this suffering with patience (trusting the doctrine is true) and faith (to trust God’s word), we strengthen our inner man and lay the groundwork for future growth and strength.

Every event of adversity or suffering is an opportunity for God to establish a track record of trust and confidence we can rest in.

I know people who have lost children at birth or shortly after, and I have done their funerals.

The question people always want to know is: where are they now and what will happen to them? Does the Bible have anything to say about this issue? It does, and in fact, it says quite a bit if you know how to look for it.

In the first 10 verses of chapter 2, the main thing Paul is doing is contrasting who we were before we were saved with who we are after we are saved.

But there is a phrase tucked away in vs. 3 which leads us into this study.

Ephesians 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; **and were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others.

What does Paul mean when he says that before we were saved, we were “children of wrath?” The wrath has to do with God’s righteous judgment against our sin. The fact that Paul says we are children of wrath “by nature,” may make you think that we are “children of wrath” from birth. But are we?

If a baby dies at birth, or as a very young child, is God dealing with them as “children of wrath?” In other words, what will happen to them and where will they spend eternity? I believe the Bible teaches that every infant and young child who dies, will be given eternal life.

I am not saying they are righteous or holy; they are not. Neither are they justified unto eternal life (JUEL). They have not trusted Christ as their Savior. Even so, God is not holding them accountable as “children of wrath.” And I would like to make my case for this.

My first point is that babies and children are not “children of wrath” in actuality. If so, what are they? They are “innocent.”

In the book of Jeremiah, the prophet is calling out the people of Israel for making their children pass through fire, as they sacrifice them to the false god Molech.

Jeremiah 2:34 Also in thy skirts is found **the blood of the souls of the poor innocents**: I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these.

The blood of those being found “in their skirts” is referring to the large quantity of blood shed, inasmuch as the skirts of their garments are filled with it, as if they had walked in blood.

The last part of vs. 34, “I have not found it by secret search, but upon all these” is a reference to the publicness and notoriety of their sin of sacrificing their newborn and very young children. It

was everywhere among the people of Israel (which is why the prophet did not find it by “secret search.” And God calls those children “innocents.”

When it comes to being “children of wrath,” one of two things is true:

- 1) Either, we are not considered to be children of wrath until we have reached, what is often referred to as, “the age of accountability.”
- 2) Or, we are considered to be “children of wrath” from birth, but God deals differently with the “innocent.”

No matter which way we think it is, the outcome is the same, infants and young children who die during Israel’s program will be resurrected to have eternal life, and those who die in this dispensation of Gentile grace (DoGG) will be raised at the blessed hope (BH) and spend eternity with us in the HP.

What is the “age of accountability?” Some say that 12 is the age because of the account of Jesus, when He was 12, sitting among the doctors in Israel, asking them questions and answering their questions (Luke 2:42-46).

Others think 13, because in the Hebrew culture, this is when children are considered to be adults.

Actually, the term “age of accountability” is inaccurate, for it is not an actual “age” at all, but refers to a time when a child becomes mentally aware of his actions being good or evil. Some reach this “knowledge of good and evil” earlier than others, so it is technically not an age.

Let’s address the first idea; we are not considered to be children of wrath until we understand good and evil.

Reason #1: When God refers to infants and very young children, He does not refer to them with terms such as “children of wrath.”

Yes, children are born into this world with a sin nature, and children do sin, but they are unaware of their sin. Because they are not capable of making a moral choice between good or evil, they are not viewed as “children of wrath.” As a proof, children are never referred to in this way, but adults are.

Once we come to understand “good and evil,” we become accountable before God for our sins, and we therefore become “children of wrath.” So, what would we be, if we are not “children of wrath?” We have already seen it; the bible uses the term “innocents.”

Now I will grant you that the term “innocents” when referring to these young children is not specifically used in the New Testament. But when speaking of the same young children, the Bible never uses the term “children of wrath” either. That is a term reserved for those who

understand good and evil, and are therefore accountable before God for their sins; they are called “children of wrath.”

Of the 19 definitions for “innocent” given in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the #1 definition: of persons: doing no evil; free from moral wrong, sin or guilt (in general)...

Definition # 2.a.

c1325–

esp. **A young child, as being free from actual sin, or unacquainted with evil** (see [A.1](#)); *spec.* in *plural* (with capital), the young children slain by Herod after the birth of Jesus (Matthew ii. 16), reckoned from early times as Christian martyrs (also called **the Holy Innocents**).

Matthew 2:16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, **from two years old and under**, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Definition # 2.b.

1549–

(Holy) Innocents' Day, the 28th of December, observed as a church festival in commemoration of the slaughter of the Innocents. (Formerly called **Childermas**_{*n.*})¹

While the term “innocents” is not specifically used in the New Testament, the term is used in the Old Testament and was widely in use by preachers by the 5th century and onward, to describe very young children such as those in Matthew 2:16. My point is that the Bible, when referring to infants and very young children does not use terminology like “children of wrath” to describe them.

How does the Bible describe these children? It says they are those who “cannot discern good or evil.”

“Knowing good and evil” is an important expression. The Bible says that there is a time in a child’s life when he cannot differentiate between good and evil. That is, he is unaware of the moral implications of his actions.

¹ In the 5th century the church established December 28th as Childermas, a day to recall the atrocity of the killing of babies by Herod at the birth of Christ. This remembrance was done by whipping children first thing in the morning on that day. As time moved on, the custom in central Europe changed to young boys going door to door whipping girls with branches and twigs. In Belgium, it was a day in which the youngest child would collect the keys to every door in the house and lock the adults in whichever room they wandered, refusing to let them out until a sufficient bribe was offered.

In Deuteronomy 1, the “second giving of the law,” Moses is rehearsing with the people of Israel how they previously refused to go into the Promised Land for fear of the giants there. The people said to Moses, why have you led us here, so we and our children can die at the hands of these people?

Deuteronomy 1:34 And the LORD heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and swore, saying, ³⁵ Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I swear to give unto your fathers,

Deuteronomy 1:39 Moreover **your little ones**, which ye said should be a prey, and **your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil**, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰ But *as for* you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea.

Do you see who came under the judgment of God? It was the adults. But what of the children which had no knowledge of good and evil? They were the ones who were spared the judgment and went into the land. This is an example of how God did not hold them accountable.

Infants, and young children are “innocent” in a particular way before God. Why? Because they are morally incapable of understanding their actions. Yes, they have a sin nature, but they are unaware of evil. And that changes how God deals with them when it comes to judgment.

Isaiah talks about this time in a child’s life when he is not aware of his actions.

Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵ Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good. ¹⁶ For **before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good**, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

While there is a lot in this passage that is not easily dealt with, our only point in observing it is to say that the Bible observes a time “before a child can know to refuse evil and choose good.” This is a temporary state which every human goes through. While they are in that state, God looks at them differently with regard to their sins and His judgment.

As an example of this, take a look at Jonah 4. We know the backstory of Jonah. God wants Jonah to go to Nineveh, the capitol city of Assyria and warn them of God’s impending judgment against them, so they can repent. Jonah doesn’t want to do that because he wants God to destroy them, as Assyria is a threat to Israel.

Does God know they are a threat to Israel? He does. So, what could be the reason God wants to give them a chance to repent and avoid His judgment against them? God is going to tell that

reason to Jonah, and if Jonah is thinking about the situation like God is, he would want to give Nineveh a chance too.

So what is the reason God gives? It is for the sake of the children of Nineveh.

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are **more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand**; and also much cattle?

God is saying that Jonah should have pity on Nineveh simply on the basis of there being so many young children (innocents) in the city. If those young children are honestly “children of wrath” then why is God willing to give Nineveh a chance to repent based on how many children are there? It looks more like God wants to give them a chance because the children are innocent; they cannot discern good or evil.

Understand that if God judged the city, the children would be collateral damage, even though they are not the targets of His judgment. Would the children suffer if God judged Nineveh? Yes, but that would be a result of the sins of the adults which brought the judgment upon them. This knowledge should motivate a people not to bring God’s judgment upon them, out of love for their own children.

This is an example of what is being talked about in Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 5:9, and Numbers 14:18.

Exodus 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;**

Deuteronomy 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,**

Numbers 14:18 The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation..**

Do not confuse this with meaning that God is directly judging the children for the sins of their parents and grandparents. Sometimes people look at this verse and think that God is directly punishing the 3rd and 4th generation of children for something their great, great grandfather did. That is not what this is saying.

When God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, it does not mean God is directly punishing the kids, the grandkids, and the great grandkids for the sins of the fathers. It is saying

that when God punishes the father, the effects of His judgment can impact the 3rd and 4th generations. That is why it is “collateral damage.”

Let me give you an example. A man gets rich by stealing money. He buys a big house and expensive cars. He buys a boat and other properties. Let’s say that after years, he is caught and found guilty. He may go to prison. Also, his assets may be attached in order to pay restitution to those he stole from. He may lose his house and his expensive cars. He will probably lose his boat and other properties. If this happens, will his wife and children suffer? They will. Is the court trying to punish the children? No, it is punishing the man, but because they are connected to him, they will also suffer, even though they are not the target. This is the idea of Exodus 20. I don’t want God to be charged with doing something He isn’t doing.

Reason #2: Another reason we are not “children of disobedience” until we are conscious of good and evil is because all of the acts of disobedience listed in scripture, which bring the judgment of God upon men, are things which only “adults” do, and it would be silly to attribute these acts to young children. When I say “adults” I mean anyone who is consciously aware of good and evil.

2 Timothy 3:2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³ Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, ⁴ Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; ⁵ Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ⁶ For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ⁷ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

When you read this list, do you think of infants and young children? Of course not. You think of adults who have a measure of understanding.

Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, ²⁰ Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, ²¹ Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Again, do we think of young children when we see this list? We do not. The unsaved people who do these things are “children of wrath.”

Are you starting to see the truth of my premise? Can you see that God, in His justice, thinks about unaccountable children differently than those who are accountable?

Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

How can we implement God’s wisdom (of this issue) into our lives?