

BAPTISM OF INFANT

Infant baptism neither saves nor dedicates to a church - both conditions, of necessity, involve assent of mind and heart of the individual. If salvation were possible, the faithful actions of human beings would be required - if uncaring people, then loss of salvation would be involved. Such a loss is not consistent with the love of God, who is not willing (desiring) that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4). Salvation is by grace, through faith (Ephesians 2:8,9), and involves assent of mind and heart (Romans 10:9,10; John 3:16,18,36). Infant baptism (which is not a knowledgeable act of a believer) is of no significance - nor are the particular words mentioned by the one who does the baptizing, nor the method of baptism. It is the attitude of the heart (before God) which is significant for those who are mentally capable.

Accountability (before God) of children and the “childlike” retarded, after death? It appears there is no direct statement in the Bible about the status of those who die before reaching a state of accountability. The Bible tells the basis of salvation, and the way it is made effective in the individual, (see John 14:6). On God’s side, “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). There is no other basis on which He can or will forgive sins. On man’s side, it becomes effective through faith in Christ, and the acknowledgement of Him as our Savior and Lord (Romans 10:9,10).

The application presents no problem in the case of normal adults. But what about those

who die before they are mentally capable of making a decision? While Scripture does not answer directly, there are some indirect references which it is believed furnish a satisfactory answer.

In Matthew 19:14 the Lord Jesus said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Also, in Luke 19:10, our Lord is addressing Zaccaeus, an adult, and He said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” But in Matthew 18:11, where the subject of the passage is little children, He said, “The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.” (the words “to seek” not being used). This comparison seems very significant, and in the light of the statement in Matthew 19 it appears that those who die before reaching the mental and spiritual capability of understanding, are saved by the redemptive work of Christ.

It should be understood, however, that this is not because of the “innocence” of the child or “childlike” retarded, for Scripture plainly states in Ephesians 2:3 that we “were by nature the children of wrath even as others.” No one is innocent and many scriptures teach that all men need to be saved. In the case of a person reaching an age of accountability, he must receive Christ by faith (John 1:12 thru 14), in order to be saved. Therefore, it is concluded that a person who dies, before reaching the stage of development where capable of decision, is accepted by God because the death of Christ avails for him.