

INFANT BAPTISM

One of the most deceptive doctrines in the world today is the one which advocates infant baptism. Because of this, many a child grows to maturity believing that they have been scripturally baptized, when they have not! Of course, much of the strength in their belief is based on confidence in their parents: "My mother could not have done an unscriptural thing by having me baptized!"

Because we are all individually accountable unto God (Romans 14:12), we must search the Scriptures diligently to be sure that what we are religiously is in keeping with God's law of pardon. Search as you may, you will not find one case of infant baptism in the entire New Testament. So in order to study the subject, we must go to secular history to find its beginning.

The earliest reference of any kind to such a practice is in the work *AGAINST HERESIES II. xxii. 4* by Irenaeus (A.D. 180). "For he came to save all by means of himself - all, I say, who by him are born again to God - infants, children, adolescents, young men, and old men." At this time, and until the third century, this was exclusively immersion as shown by both art and the existence of baptisteries.

Although there were many who commented on the subject, pro and con, the first unambiguous reference to infant baptism was by Tertullian (A.D. 200), and he was opposed to it. In this same time frame we find Hippolytus writing: "And they shall baptize the little children first. And if they can answer for themselves, let them answer. But if they cannot, let their parents answer or someone from their family. And next they shall baptize the grown men; and last the women." (*Apostolic Tradition*, xxi. 3-5). Here we can see the formulation of modern-day practice among many denominations. Keep in mind however, that this was NOT under the direction of the Apostles, but rather, some 100 years after their death!

In the year 250 A.D., we see some seed sown by Cyprian which would result in another false doctrine: "If, when they come to believe, forgiveness of sins is granted even to the worst transgressors and to those who have previously sinned much against God, and if no one is held back from baptism and grace; how much less ought an infant to be held back, who having been born recently has not sinned, except in that being born physically according to Adam, he had contracted the contagion of the ancient death by his first birth. He approaches that much more easily to the reception of the forgiveness of sins because the sins remitted to him are not his own, but those of another." (*Epistle 58[64]*). Yes, the doctrine of the "Adamic Sin," "Hereditary Total Depravity," or "Once Saved, Always Saved," was

the RESULT of the doctrine of infant baptism. In North Africa, where Infant Baptism had its strongest support (and where it may well have begun), there was a conflict between Pelagius and Augustine, bishop of Hippo. Augustine argued in favor of the doctrine of Total Depravity and used the practice of infant baptism as proof. Since about 180 A.D. they had been moving in the direction of this as a general practice, and he contended that its purpose was in the remission of the Adamic Sin (ON THE MERITS AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AND ON THE BAPTISM OF INFANTS I:23,28,29; III:2,7 A.D. 400). History tells us that after the fifth century, infant baptism became almost a universal practice.

In all of this, we have yet to find divine precedent or instruction that would direct us to practice infant baptism today. John tells us that "...sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4). Paul says that "...where there is no law {there is} no transgression." (Romans 4:15). Since there is NO LAW that requires the baptism of infants, we cannot sin by failing to baptize them.

As we investigate the New Testament carefully on the subject, we find that TEACHING is inseparable from baptism (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15,16). Furthermore, the author of Hebrews says that "...without faith {it is} impossible to please" God! (Hebrews 11:6). And Paul says in Romans 10:17 that "faith {comes} by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." WHO were the ones baptized? "Those who gladly received his word were baptized..." (Acts 2:41). Now, how many infants can be taught the gospel and thus develop faith? NONE! How can they be fit subjects of baptism as it is taught in the Bible? THEY CAN NOT!

Those who were baptized on Pentecost were told to "repent" (Acts 2:38). How can a baby repent? Ezekiel says, "You {were} perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you." (Ezekiel 28:15). We can see then why Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3).

If you will consider the words of Cyprian concerning the baptism of an infant being for sins "not his own, but those of another," and look at the New Testament you will see the false nature of the doctrine he was teaching. Notice: Acts 22:16 "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." The Bible never talks about being baptized for the remission of the sins committed by someone else - but for YOUR OWN SINS!

Dear friend, will you risk the destiny of your soul on baptism you received when you had no choice (whether or not it was by immersion as the New Testament teaches)? Are you willing to place your eternal destiny in the hands of those who were following a man-made doctrine that did not begin until about 180 A.D., or will you go to the apostle's doctrine and be baptized for the remission of YOUR SINS today?

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