

### **Accountability after Death of Children and of the “Childlike” or Retarded**

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, (see 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 acknowledgment of Him as our Savior and Lord (Rom.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 satisfying answer.

In Matthew 19:14 the Lord Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Also, in Luke 19:10, our Lord in addressing Zacchaeus, an adult, 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 the “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 (Jn 1:12, 13) 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.