

Accountability after the death of babies, children, and still born

Question:

“What happens to babies or children who die before they reach the age of accountability?
What about still born babies?”

Answer:

We have every reason to believe, from the Word of God, that children who die before they reach the age of accountability go to be with Christ in heaven.

1. The strongest scriptural proof of this is found in Luke 18:16:

“But Jesus called them unto Him, and said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God.’”

Notice especially the last words, “. . . of such is the kingdom of God.” Heaven is populated by little children and by those who become like little children through the simplicity of their faith. See also Mark 10:13.

This is further stated in Matthew 18:3,

“. . . except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Adults must become like little children in order to enter the kingdom of heaven. Little children do not have to become like adults.

2. Although children are born in a state of sin, it is commonly believed that they are sheltered by the blood of Christ. If they die before they reach the age of accountability, that means that they have never had the opportunity to accept or reject the Savior. Although they might know nothing about the work of the Lord Jesus, God knows about it, and He reckons the value of that work to them.

The sufficiency of the work of Christ is taught in Romans 5:12-21. In commenting on these verses, Dr. Ironside quotes an epitaph on a tombstone of four children in Scotland:

“Bold infidelity, turn pale and die.
Beneath this stone four sleeping infants lie:
Say, are they lost or saved?
If death’s by sin, they sinned, for they are here.
If heaven’s by works, in heaven they can’t appear.
Reason, ah, how depraved!
Turn to the Bible’s sacred page, the knot’s untied:
They died, for Adam sinned; they live, for Jesus died.”

3. Another further suggestion that children are safe in Christ is this. When the Lord Jesus was

speaking of His ministry to adults, like Zacchaeus, He said, “. . . *the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*” (Lk 19:10). When He was referring to children, however, He left out the word “seek.” He simply said, “. . . *the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost*” (Mt. 18:11). The thought here is that little children have not wandered away from Him, needing to be sought. But, they are lost, and He comes to save them. Adults need to be sought before they can be saved.

4. Another verse that bears on this subject is Matthew 18:10,

“Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you, that *in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*”

Little children are here said to be represented by angels before the throne of God.

5. The Bible does not directly answer the question as to still born babies. Although they may never have had life in the normal sense, yet they lived within the mother's womb. We can safely trust them to God with the confidence that the Judge of all the earth will do what is right (see Gen. 18:25).

6. The age of accountability will vary with different children. It is impossible to know what it is in any particular case. Therefore, we ought to be faithful in presenting the gospel to children as soon as they are able to understand.