

THOUGHTS ON “INFANT SALVATION”

Introduction

Do the scriptures support “infant salvation”? This position holds that all “infants” go to heaven when they die at a young age. There is only one way that men, women, or children are saved to heaven. Certain persons (the elect) were chosen by God to salvation before the world began, the elect are justified before God only by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and all the elect will be regenerated by the Spirit in the new birth in the exact same manner. Therefore, if infants are saved to heaven, then that means they are among the elect that were chosen in Christ before the world began, and just as all other persons among the elect, they are justified by the blood of Jesus Christ, and born again by the Spirit at some point before their death.

There is no precise way to define who actually is an “infant” that might be included in our definition of “infant salvation”. The scriptures are mostly silent on the age of the child that this might apply to – although we have inferences to 7 days old and then up to 2 years old. I think it’s quite presumptuous to choose some “nebulous age” that might determine who is counted among this number because then we have essentially adopted the unscriptural age of accountability. However, since it’s not our responsibility to determine who is or who is not among God’s elect in any instance (and the same applies for young children who pass away), we must offer this explanation in very broad terms based on the light of the information that we are actually given in the scriptures.

The term “infant salvation” that is used to teach the universal salvation of all the young infants might imply that we believe that infants are saved in a different manner from all other elect persons, similar to the unbiblical age of accountability doctrine. It is my opinion that “infant salvation” is not the best term to describe this position because most people will assume it is essentially the unscriptural age of accountability doctrine. This requires one to explain the position of “infant salvation” in a very detailed manner to distinguish this teaching from the age of accountability and to finally conclude that infants are saved in the exact same manner as all other persons. Rather this belief just concludes that all the infants who are saved are among God’s elect. Therefore, I would state this position as *“the hope and belief that children who die in infancy are among God’s elect”*. When it is stated in this manner, we convey that there is not a different manner or method of salvation for infants, but rather we believe that these saved infants are among God’s elect and therefore were chosen, were saved, and were regenerated in the exact same manner as all other persons elected by God.

It’s also important to note that those who die at a young age and that we believe are among God’s elect were not chosen by God because of the date of their death. They were just as unworthy of God’s loving choice to save them as all other men. No man deserved to be saved and therefore salvation is by grace – by God’s unmerited favor bestowed upon undeserving sinners. Therefore, any who were infants at their time of death that were among God’s elect were chosen for the same reason as any other elect person: because God loved them and because God sovereignly purposed to choose them, *“even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight”* (Matt. 11:26).

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Scriptural Support

There are quite a few scriptures that give us reason to believe that many, if not all, that die in infancy, or at a very young age, are among God’s elect.

A. Death of King David’s Son

After David commits adultery with Bathsheba and she conceives, David is told by the prophet Nathan that his illegitimate son will die as a judgment of his sin (2 Sam. 12:14). David fasts and prays in hopes that God will spare his son, but the child died 7 days after being born (2 Sam. 12:18). In 2 Sam. 12:23, King David expressed a belief that he would see his son again – *“can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”* So David understood that the child would never come back and return to live with him, but David had an expectation that he would go unto his son and see him again. David was a man after God’s own heart and was certainly a child of God and among the elect, so therefore we can conclude that David had a hope – a confident expectation (he expected it to happen) – to see his son again in heaven. While this could be the sentimental thoughts of a grieving father, since the Holy Spirit inspired this scripture and allowed this comment to be inscribed into God’s canon of scripture, it gives us a similar hope that children who die at a very young age (7 days after birth in this instance, 2 Sam. 12:18) are among God’s elect who go to heaven, just as King David had that hope and expectation.

B. Infants slain by Herod near Jesus’ birth

The wise men from the east came to Herod inquiring of the King of the Jews. They leave and find Jesus Christ as a “young child” (Matt. 2:8,11,13,14) but do not inform Herod as they were instructed to do. Feeling threatened that there might be someone out there to usurp Herod from his rule in Judea, Herod orders all male children under the age of 2 years old to be slain (Matt. 2:16). This was in fulfillment of the prophesy in Jer. 31:15 of these killings, and that verse is quoted again in the New Testament account in Matt. 2:17-18. However, after this prophesy of the children’s death is given in Jer. 31:15, God gives comfort in the successive verses to the grieving mothers in Jer. 31:16-17. The children who died will *“come again from the land of the enemy”* (Jer. 31:16), and since the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:26), this leads us to believe that those who died in this particular instance, will not suffer the second death and therefore are among God’s elect that will be with God in heaven. The mothers are offered *“hope in thine end... that thy children shall come again to their own border”* (Jer. 31:17). This prophesy offers hope to the grieving mothers that even though their children had been slain innocently at a very young age that the children will be saved to heaven.

This prophesy in Jer. 31:15-17 does seem to affirm that all those infants – who were male children from 2 years of age and under – who died in Herod’s murder are among God’s elect who were saved to heaven, having already been born again. However, I do not think this verse alone gives a universal principle that all children 2 years of age and under are among God’s elect. This prophesy seems to be dealing with this specific circumstance to give hope to grieving mothers who saw their sons killed by Herod.

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C. Job’s Belief of the Condition of Miscarriages and Newborns

In essentially all of Job chapter 3, Job laments that he had ever been born because of the difficulty he was encountering in his life at that time. In verses 11-12, he wishes that he had died as soon as he was born or died when he was still a nursing infant. In verse 13, he believes, in the depressed state that he was in, that it would have been better for him to have died as a newborn instead of him suffering the difficulty he was currently in because if he had died as a newborn, then *“had I been at rest”*. (Note that there is no rest for the wicked in death, only torment forever in hell and then ultimately in the lake of fire. There is no cessation of torment in hell (see the rich man in Luke 16:23-31) and the non-elect endure everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46). The scriptures affirm there is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 48:22, 57:20-21). Therefore, Job did not believe that a newborn, still a nursing infant, or an untimely birth who never saw the light, would be in hell. Rather, he believed they would be in heaven where they would be at rest and at peace.)

In verse 16, he declares that it would have even been better if he had been a miscarriage, *“as infants which never saw light”*. The reason he believes that it would have been better for him to have died as a newborn, or a miscarriage before he actually was born, was because the place where those who pass away in that manner go after their death is a place of peace and rest – *“There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest”* (Job 3:17). This certainly states Job’s belief – which was inscribed into the scriptures under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – that all that die in the womb and those who die as a newborn go to heaven to be at rest. Job further describes the abode of the deceased newborn or miscarried child – *“There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul”* (Job 3:18-20). Those verses give a pretty good description of what we believe heaven will be like, so Job further emphasizes his belief that the final destination of the newborns and miscarried or aborted children is a place of rest in heaven with God. Also, Eccl. 6:3 infers, just as Job 3:16-17 does, that the final condition of the child who dies in an untimely birth is better than the condition of a man who lives a full life of a hundred years but has no burial. These verses give a very strong indication that all who die before their natural birth, and those who die in a newborn state (particularly those who are still in a state of nursing) are among God’s elect and go to heaven when they die.

The New Birth

When Adam sinned in the garden, his sin was imparted onto all of his posterity; this is the doctrine of original sin (Rom. 5:12-18). Therefore, all children – both boys and girls, without exception – receive a nature of sin from their parents. Ps. 51:5 – *“Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”* Because of Adam’s sin, all babies enter this world as “sinners by nature” and when they have enough time alive here on this earth they all manifest that they are “sinners by practice”. Children who die in infancy are not “innocent” before God. They do not get a free pass to heaven. The only way for a sinner to be saved – whether they are a 1 week old child who dies in the womb or a 105 year old man who dies in a hospital – the only way of salvation is by Jesus Christ alone (John 14:6, Acts 4:12).

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The sinful nature that all babies receive from their parents at birth is not fit to live in God’s presence in His eternal kingdom, and therefore this nature must be changed before one can enter into heaven. All of God’s children are born again in the same manner, by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in their heart – *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* (John 3:8). There is not a different method of cleansing the corrupt nature of the infant that is different from the adult. Infants must be born again to inherit heaven, and infants are born again in the same way as every other elect person. Therefore, because infants are sinners – they are not innocent and are sinners because they would not die if they were not sinners (*“sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death”*, James 1:15), infants die because they are sinners – they must be born again and receive a new divine nature at some point in their life before their death to be able to enter into heaven with God, the same as any other elect person. There are certain examples in scripture of babies being born again in their mother’s womb, or showing evidence of the new birth as newborn infants.

A. John the Baptist

John the Baptist was born to Zacharias and Elizabeth, who was Mary’s cousin. The angel announced the birth of John to Zacharias and declared that John would be *“filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb”* (Luke 1:15). Then John shows evidence of the Holy Ghost’s regeneration before his birth as he *“leaped for joy”* (Luke 1:44) while still in the womb of Elizabeth at the salutation of Mary, who was then expecting and carrying Jesus Christ. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) so he was manifesting the evidence of the Spirit’s new birth in his life, even before his natural birth while still in the womb of his mother. John’s “leaping for joy” occurred when he was 6 months old after his conception (Luke 1:36), and still 3 months before his natural birth (Luke 1:56-57). It was prophesied that John would be filled with Holy Ghost before his natural birth, and he showed evidence of the Spirit of God’s new birth, even while he was still in the womb of his mother.

B. King David

King David was presumably born again as a newborn, at least when he was still nursing, because *“thou [God] didst make me to hope when I was on my mother’s breast”* (Ps. 22:9b). David had a hope in God when he was still a nursing infant. Furthermore, God was declared to be his God from his birth: *“thou art my God from my mother’s belly”* (Ps. 22:10b). David also shows evidences of the new birth as a newborn infant, if not from even before then, while he was still in his mother’s belly. It should be noted that this was the same David who inherited the original sin of his parents – *“in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Ps. 51:55, which was written by David) – but he still had a hope in God and God was his God, even as a newborn. His original sin nature that he inherited from his parents was changed by the new birth, before or soon after his natural birth.

C. Jeremiah

God “knew” Jeremiah before he was born (Jer. 1:5). God’s intimate “knowing” of men is only reserved for His children. The sheep “know” Jesus Christ (John 10:14,27); all of God’s children will “know the Lord” (Heb. 8:11); and the non-elect are those that Jesus Christ says “I never knew you”

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(Matt. 7:23, 25:41). Furthermore, Jeremiah was “sanctified” (set apart for a holy usage) while was still in his mother’s womb (Jer. 1:5). Both God’s intimate knowledge and God’s sanctification of Jeremiah testifies that he was a child of God (and presumably born again) before he was even born from his mother’s womb.

Long Life of the Wicked

In general, the wicked (the non-elect) are associated with living a long and full life. While we cannot know who the elect and non-elect are with full certainty, there are a few people in scripture that are expressly marked as being wicked, and they all lived to a full, mature adult life: Cain (1 John 3:12), Esau (Rom. 9:13, Mal. 1:3), Judas (John 6:70-71), certain wicked Pharisees (John 8:44), and the rich man who goes to torment after his death (Luke 16:22-31). Furthermore, many verses indicate that the wicked live a long life: *“Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?”* (Job 21:7 and 8-15 continues the same thought). Isaiah 14:9 indicates that it is *“all the chief ones of the earth”* that are in hell. The only ones ascending to those chief positions of power here in the world are adults that certainly have progressed beyond infancy. The wicked in Psalm 73 have prosperity and riches (v.3,7,12) which infants cannot accumulate. Therefore, we see that the scriptures do indicate that the wicked do typically live long and prosperous lives.

However, this does not teach a universal principle that all the wicked without exception live to an old age because the opposite is true as well. There are instances where the wicked are cut off at an early, maybe even a young age, due to their profound wickedness. *“And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.”* (Ps. 94:23, see also Ps. 37:28). God may even cut their normal life span in half due to their wickedness: *“bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days”* (Ps. 55:23). *“The years of the wicked shall be shortened”* (Prov. 10:27b). There are examples of God slaying men at an early or premature age due to their wickedness: Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1-2); Er (Gen. 38:7) and Onan (Gen. 38:8-10), Judah’s sons; and Herod (Acts 12:21-23). It should be noted that infants have not grown mature enough physically or cognitively to commit the egregious sins that caused God to slay these men, to cut off their lives early due to their sin.

However, long life in itself is not a proof that one is wicked. Many godly men in scripture not only lived long lives but were very rich and prosperous as well. Abraham *“died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years”* (Gen. 25:8). David died an old man too, at age 70, and is commended for it (1 Chron. 23:1). Furthermore, God added 15 years to the life of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:5), and long life is even given as a blessing from God from obedience to His law and honoring one’s parents (Eph. 6:1-3). Therefore, it is very clear that long life in itself does not prove that one is wicked or non-elect. Abraham, Job, David, Solomon, Boaz, and many other godly men were rich with material goods, so riches alone does not indict one as non-elect. Therefore, riches cannot be used as a definitive measure of one as non-elect either.

Therefore, I consider the length of life as a measure of if one is non-elect as essentially a wash. While the scriptures do indicate that the wicked will live a long life, there are plenty of indications that the elect children of God will love a long life too, and God even promises to extend their lifespan based on their

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obedience. Therefore, both elect and non-elect can live long lives and gain material riches, so this cannot be used as a definite proof that all wicked grow old and live past infancy.

Workers of Iniquity

The non-elect are condemned at the end of time because of their works, having offended God's law and receiving the just penalty of their offense which is eternal damnation. While men are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5) and are born as “sinners by nature”, those who are condemned to punishment at the end of time are those who have been “sinners by practice” – in other words they have actively committed the works of sin. At the end of time before the great white throne of judgment, the wicked are “*judged every man according to their works*” (Rev. 20:13, 12); they are not judged according to their sinful nature, but are judged according to their sinful works. Jesus declares that he will cast out false ungodly professors at the end of time by declaring “*depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Matt. 7:23, see also Luke 13:27 and Ps. 6:8). God “*hatest all workers of iniquity*” (Ps. 5:5). The wicked are always characterized by their actively performing the works of sin and iniquity (Rom. 3:10-18, Ps. 10:2-11, Ps. 73:6-9, 2 Pet. 2:9-13). Those who are raised in the “*resurrection of damnation*” are “*they that have done evil*” (John 5:29).

Also, it should be noted that the case against the wicked in God's courtroom (the Rev. 20:11-15 judgment before God's great white throne) will be overwhelming guilty. That means that, in general, those who are condemned to eternal punishment are habitual sinners who have wrought evil and iniquity perpetually in their life. This supports the case that the wicked (the non-elect) will most likely live to adulthood and commit many evil actions. While a child can lie (Ps. 58:3 – which is a sin worthy of eternal damnation, Rev. 21:8) and can be afraid (Rev. 21:8), the majority of sins that characterize the non-elect are “mature”, even “adult”, sins – not actions that infants can even commit: fornicators (1 Cor. 6:9), idolaters (1 Cor. 6:9), adulterers (1 Cor. 6:9), effeminate (1 Cor. 6:9), abusers of themselves with mankind (1 Cor. 6:9), thieves (1 Cor. 6:10), covetous (1 Cor. 6:10), drunkards (1 Cor. 6:10), revilers (1 Cor. 6:10), extortioners (1 Cor. 6:10), unbelieving (Rev. 21:8), and murderers (Rev. 21:8).

However, infants can “perform” or “work iniquity” even from birth. They come forth from the womb speaking lies: “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.*” (Ps. 58:3). Therefore, this premise that infants do not “work iniquity” would only apply to those who die before natural birth, not to young infants because they all actively sin from the womb. However, it is my opinion, that in general, the wicked who are condemned before God will be habitual offenders of the “mature sins” listed above. This leads us to believe that most of the wicked will live beyond infancy to commit these adult sins. However, this does not fully absolve infants from being workers of iniquity. As Ps. 58:3 teaches us, even an infant can actively work iniquity and sin. Therefore, those children who die in a miscarriage or those who are aborted before they are naturally born or soon after, have not truly “worked iniquity” and I believe they are among God's elect (the untimely birth from Job 3:16-17 and David's 7 days old son from 2 Sam. 12:23 would be included in this number). For those who live beyond the newborn stage, such as those two years of age and under that were killed by Herod, we cannot say definitively that they have not worked iniquity, but since we have a scriptural reason to hope in their eternal rest and in conjunction with the wicked being presented as habitual mature offenders of God's law, we have a strong basis to hope that those young infants are among God's elect as well.

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God’s Longsuffering of the Wicked

God is portrayed as being longsuffering towards the wicked, and His longsuffering might indicate that he allows them to live longer in their life, as evidenced by verses such as Job 21:7 that we have already addressed. *“What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”* (Rom. 9:22). It appears that God allows the wicked to live longer lives in the world to make the case against them in the final judgment “open and shut” because they perpetuate so much habitual sin throughout their entire life they are proven overwhelmingly guilty. No one will be condemned to the eternal lake of fire for one sin or a minor technicality (although one sin would justly warrant eternal condemnation). Rather, the case against all the wicked will be profoundly overwhelming because they have lived a life so full of sin that is documented in multiple “books” in God’s courtroom (Rev. 20:11-15), there is no question that God is just in His determination of their eternal condemnation. While Rom. 9:22, does imply that God is usually longsuffering with the wicked which means that they will live a longer life and work iniquity in their life, this verse does not definitely state that all the wicked will live beyond infancy. Also, God’s longsuffering of the wicked does have a limit because He cut off the natural life of many men in judgment because of their wickedness, as we’ve already mentioned, and God decided to destroy the entire world in the great flood of Noah because of the wickedness of men. Therefore, while God is typically longsuffering with the wicked, this does not create a universal principle that all the wicked will live past infancy because God’s longsuffering only extends so far.

Just because we are not given an express instance of a known wicked, non-elect person dying at a young age and also that God is typically longsuffering with the wicked, does not create a universal principle that no wicked persons ever die in infancy. Those who believe in a “universal infant salvation” say that there is absolutely no wicked person who ever dies in infancy. However, these few instances of where non-elect men grew up to be mature adults and perpetuate their sin and God’s general method of being longsuffering to the wicked does not teach a universal, scriptural principle that no wicked person has ever died in infancy.

Scriptural Use of Children as Examples of Discipleship

Jesus rebuked his disciples who rejected the young children from coming and touching him, and Jesus said *“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.”* (Mark 10:13-14). Jesus places the little children – apparently here referring to toddlers who can “come to him” by walking to him, not just infants – as the primary example of humble discipleship. It is doubtful that Jesus would place little children as this type of example for the church and His disciples, if the majority of young children were the wicked non-elect.

Also, Jesus commends “babes” – infants who are still nursing – as an example of the group that God has ordained to receive God’s divine revelation of Jesus Christ in the new birth. *“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes”* (Matt. 11:25). Jesus also declares that babes and sucklings (nursing infants) were ordained for the praise of God (Matt. 21:16, Ps. 8:2). The same theme is

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presented in the New Testament epistles. God’s children in the church are compared to “newborn babes” in need of milk, the “sincere milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2, see also 1 Cor. 3:1-2, Heb. 5:12-14). It seems to me that if the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ consistently used babes and little children as examples of authentic discipleship then the majority of those little children would be among God’s elect.

Short Life of the Righteous

Sometimes God is gracious to allow the righteous to pass from this world to spare them from all the evil, wickedness, and heartache that is inevitable in living in this fallen, sinful, cursed world. *“The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come”* (Isaiah 57:1). It’s always tragic when someone dies at a young age, presumably before their time. In this passage, God gives us a small insight into one reason why a righteous person (particularly the elect who have been made righteous by Jesus Christ), might die earlier than the normal course of life. God can intervene providentially into any situation and save His children from natural death. However, God does not always choose to do that, and a young person sometimes passes away. God may have spared that young person from any number of future troubles and heartaches, and that righteous person was taken to heaven early as a blessing by God to him, not as a punishment to those that he left behind.

Enoch’s life on earth was shortened because of his godliness. Enoch was translated directly into heaven when he was 365 years old (Gen. 5:23) at a time that almost every male of Adam’s lineage lived to almost 900 years old or longer. Enoch was granted “early access” into heaven to spare him from much of the wickedness of the world around him.

God told Josiah, a godly, righteous king of Judah, that he would be spared from experiencing the judgment of God upon Judah because of his repentance (2 Kings 22:20). God would wait until after Josiah’s death to bring the full wrath of His judgment upon Judah for their sins, but Josiah individually would be spared from that judgment because of his humble repentance before God.

This verse in Isaiah 57:1 again indicates that those who die at a young age are righteous, teaching us that they are made righteous before God by the blood of Jesus Christ and are among God’s elect. This is one more reason we have a strong basis to have hope that those who die at a young age are among God’s elect and are righteous before God.

Objections to a Universal Infant Salvation

Sodom and Gomorrah and the Flood of Noah

If all infants, with no exceptions, are among God’s elect and no wicked non-elect persons ever die in infancy, it’s difficult to reconcile this belief with the God-ordained destructions of the city of Sodom and Gomorrah and the world by flood in Noah’s life, where God would have slain His elect infants due to their wickedness.

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Sodom and Gomorrah was a city during Abraham’s time that had become so sinful that God destroyed it by fire and brimstone from heaven (Gen. 19). God declared to Abraham that He would spare the city if there were only 10 righteous in the entire city (Gen. 18:32), and since the city was destroyed, obviously, there were not 10 righteous in the entire city. Sodom and Gomorrah was known for its homosexual culture, and if that had progressed to permeate the entire culture, there is a possibility that there were no infants born into Sodom and therefore were no infants killed during the city’s destruction. This is possible but not probable, in my opinion. Therefore, we find that God did not view those infants (at least a minimum of 9 of them) as righteous. If that is the case, any infants were not viewed before God as righteous and therefore were most likely among the non-elect.

God declares that the culture in Noah’s time was so sinful that *“the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Gen. 6:5). This does declare that “man” was wicked, not necessarily infants, but this terminology seems to describe the entire culture outside of Noah, which could presumably include infants. All those who were alive at that time, outside of Noah and his family, were wicked and evil, and God destroyed all other persons by water, except for the eight persons of Noah’s family. If infants were killed during this great flood, then we would presume that they are included in the culture that only imagined evil continually. It is very difficult to believe that God would destroy His elect children who were infants in such a radical manner. Therefore, it is very reasonable to conclude that there were non-elect, wicked in heart infants who died in the flood of Noah.

Typically those who hold to universal infant salvation would say that there were no infants alive in Sodom and Gomorrah or alive in the world during the flood. There were certainly some peculiar circumstances regarding the marrying and bearing of children during both of these times (Elder Mike Ivey deals with these in his book *Eternal Security of Deceased Infants* from pages 58 to 63). While it is true that the scriptures indicate some peculiar reproductive patterns with married women not having children in both Sodom and Gomorrah and in the days of the flood, that is far from definitive proof that there were no infants in that land. While it is possible that there were no infants in either circumstance, in my opinion, it is not probable. Furthermore, the case that there were no infants cannot be definitely proven by scripture but is based mainly on inference and speculation.

Other Instances of God’s commands to slay Infants

In 1 Samuel 15:3, God commands King Saul through the prophet Samuel to slay all of the people of Amalek, without exception: *“Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass”*. King Saul did not follow the command exactly because he spared King Agag (1 Sam. 15:8) and the best of the livestock (1 Sam. 15:9). Saul did slay all the rest of the people except King Agag (1 Sam. 15:8). Therefore, Saul followed the command given to him by God to kill all of the *“infants and sucklings”* in Amalek.

God commanded the total destruction of the Canaanite people that Israel conquered (Deut. 7:16-24). God made this command to kill them because of their wickedness – *“for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out before thee”* (Deut. 9:5). Israel followed this command earlier as

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they conquered the Amorites as they killed all “*the men, the women, and the little ones*” of the Amorites and of the Amorite King Sihon (Deut. 2:34). As they entered Canaan, Israel destroyed the people of Jericho, “*man and woman, young and old*” (Josh. 6:21) and Israel “*utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai*” (Josh. 8:26). In all of these instances, with the destruction of the Amorites, the city of Jericho, and the city of Ai, God commanded Israel to kill even the infants, and it was due to the profound wickedness of these cities (“*for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee*” – Deut. 9:5). It would be very unreasonable to conclude that of all these cities that God destroyed for their wickedness, there was not one wicked non-elect infant in these cities. Clearly there was, and this would imply that non-elect, wicked children can die in infancy.

In Israel’s release from Egyptian bondage, in the tenth and final plague God slayed the firstborn of Egypt (Exod. 12:30). Inevitably, there would have been infants who were the firstborn children of Egyptian families at that time because every house had a least one child who was slain (Exod. 12:30). God Himself slew these firstborn, and most likely some infants, through His angel of death.

Finally, it should be noted that in prophecies against Israel, judgments are pronounced against the people, including the death of infants (Hosea 13:16, Hosea 9:11-16, Ezek. 9:5-7).

Historical Baptist Belief

Elder Mike Ivey presents the case that the historical belief of the Baptists – and the Primitive Baptists in America – has been affirming the position of “infant salvation”. He presents many quotes to prove that many sound elders in the church have held to this belief. This defense of infant salvation as the historical Baptist belief is presented in Elder Mike Ivey’s book *Eternal Security of Deceased Infants* from pages 67 to 85.

What is Infancy?

Those who hold to a “universal infant salvation” never define exactly who classifies as an infant and who is definitely among God’s elect. We have a biblical example that a 7 day old son of David is among God elect (2 Sam. 12:23). We have a biblical example that seems to indicate that the male children 2 years old and under in a certain case were among God elect (Jer. 31:15-17). Those are the only biblical examples that reflect the ages of the children. If one is 3 years old when he dies (beyond the biblical principle of 2 years old from Jer. 31:16-17), is he no longer under the universal principle that he is among God’s elect? What about age 4, 5, 6, and so on? Where is the cut-off for “infant salvation”? Then we reach the problem of picking an arbitrary number, and we have essentially adopted the equivalent of the unscriptural age of accountability doctrine. Therefore, it is impossible for us to make a clear determination and proper “cut-off” of who would even be counted among infant salvation for children that have been born and die at a young age. It is my opinion that the best we can do is rest on what do know in scripture and have a strong hope that these young children, regardless of what age they actually pass away, are among God’s elect.

THOUGHTS ON “INFANT SALVATION”

Conclusion

Therefore, in my opinion, we cannot say definitely, with a universal principle, that all children that die in some “nebulous infancy age” are among God elect. In my opinion, there are too many examples of God’s judgment against people for their wickedness – cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) and the world (Noah’s flood) that probably included infants, and other judgments commanding the death of infants due to wickedness (Saul with Amalek, Israel with Sihon and the Amorites, all inhabitants of Jericho and Ai) – for one to conclude that the non-elect wicked persons cannot die in infancy.

However, we can have a confident belief, from Job 3:16-17, that all that die in their mother’s womb are among God’s elect, especially since they are not true workers of iniquity as all the condemned non-elect will be at the final judgment. We can also have a confident belief from Job 3:11-13 and 2 Sam. 12:23 (7 days after birth) that newborns who pass away are most likely among God’s elect. Even though there is a possibility that the child who is born and dies at young age may be non-elect, we can have a hope, just as the grieving mothers in Judea who had their sons killed were to have hope (Jer. 31:15-17), that those children who die at a young age – particularly those who die at 2 years of age and younger – that they are most likely among God’s elect, especially when we consider that the wicked are typically associated with a long life and a perpetual lifestyle of working iniquity.