

February, 2007

Pause Ponder Profit

“My Baby Is A Sinner?”

by Jim R. Everett

It would be the rarest of mothers that could look into the face of her newborn infant and honestly believe that this new life was born “the blackest of sinners.” But, whether she could or not does not prove that babies are born sinners. Calvin, following Augustine’s theology, believed babies to be sinners, because they, supposedly, inherited the sin of Adam. Others have affirmed that babies are sinners because they have sinned personally — either in a netherworld of pre-existence before being born into the world, or because they sin from the moment of birth. Neither postulation fits the scriptures’ teachings.

Since Paul said that “*all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23), some say that “all” necessarily includes babies. However, 1 John 3:4 says, “*Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of law.*” When examining everything the scripture says about sin and sinners, one understands that all are sinners who are capable of transgressing law. The

word “sinned” of Romans 3:23, involves action, and this action is that of transgressing. Babies are not capable of such action, therefore, are not sinners.

But do babies inherit sin? Romans 5:15-19, has been misused in efforts to prove that babies inherit sin. However, Paul, in this context, is making a comparison between the sin of Adam and the free gift of Christ. If one takes the position that all men are sinners, unconditionally, because they inherited the guilt of one man’s sin (Adam), then he must also accept the conclusion that all men are saved, unconditionally, by the one gift (Christ’s sacrifice). That argument would mean that men would be saved by Christ whether they want salvation or not — atheists, unrepentant men and, in fact, everyone. The truth is that a man becomes a sinner when he is capable of sin and chooses to transgress God’s law and a man is saved from sin when he chooses to obey Christ and accept the gift God provides through him (Cf. 1 Peter 1:22-25; Romans 6:17-18; Hebrews 5:8-9).

What about Psalms 51:5? — “*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.*” Careful examination shows that this passage says nothing about David being a sinner, or having sin, but would rather refer to the condition of the parent. David’s affirmation would not necessitate an adulterous relationship on the part of his parents, because all have sinned, therefore, the same statement could be made by all who are born. As human beings our parents sinned; hence, we are conceived in sin. But David doesn’t say that he was born sinning or that he inherited the guilt of his parents sin.

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Baptism Isn't For!

by Lowell Blasingame

No religious topic generates more controversy than water baptism. The problem isn't that the Bible hasn't spoken clearly and plainly. The real cause for the difficulty is because so many have drawn conclusions from their own feelings and opinions without consulting the Bible to see what it says.

All religious people agree that baptism is a command but there are differences over who are subjects of the command and for what purpose it is to be obeyed. Maybe we can remove some of the difficulty if we approach the study of the topic from the negative standpoint and point out some of the things that baptism isn't for.

Baptism Isn't For The Untaught. Jesus told his disciples to go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19) Teaching was to precede the baptizing and each case of conversion related in the book of Acts shows that persons were taught before they were baptized. Since baptism isn't for the untaught it follows that babies and irresponsible persons are not subject for baptism.

Baptism Isn't For Unbelievers. While Philip was teaching the eunuch, they came to a certain water and the eunuch asked what hindered him from being baptized. Philip's response was, "*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.*" (Acts 8:37) Jesus placed believing before baptism — "*He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*" (Mark 16:16) Since baptism isn't for unbelievers, it isn't for atheists or agnostics.

Baptism Isn't For The Impenitent. Sometimes I hear people say, "If I thought one

had to be baptized to be saved, I'd force that person to be baptized." But, wait friend — you've missed a point in the Bible teaching. One must repent before he is baptized . . . "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38) . . . and if you were to compel one to be baptized who has not repented, you would have forced him to submit to an act that isn't for him.

Baptism Isn't For Saved People. I know that many think that one is first saved, then baptized as a symbol or sign of his salvation but I want you to read carefully the following passages of scripture and take note of where baptism is placed in relationship to the blessing that is promised in each of them. (a) Mark 16:16 — Baptized — saved. (b) Acts 2:38 — Baptized — remission of sins. (c) Acts 22:16 — Baptized — washing away of sins.

In fact, in every passage of scripture in which baptism and a word corresponding to forgiveness appears, baptism always comes before that word, never after it. There is but one conclusion that can possibly be drawn and that is — baptism isn't for saved people.

Baptism Isn't For Christians. Some talk about baptism being a "Christian rite" or the "Christian ordinance" of baptism. Baptism is a command so in this sense it is a rite or ordinance but it isn't one for a Christian to obey. Let me show you that this is so. One does not become a Christian before he enters Christ for it is in Him that he becomes a new creature. (2 Corinthians 5:17) But he does not enter Christ until he is baptized into Him. (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:27) Therefore, it follows that one is not baptized as a Christian, one already in Christ, but in order to get into that One in whom he becomes a Christian.

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Baptism Isn't For The Sins Of A Child Of God. Often when I point out that baptism is for the remission of sins, I am asked, "Does this mean that a child of God must be baptized each time that he sins?" The answer is, "No, baptism isn't for the sins of the child of God."

Look at a Bible example that proves this. In Samaria, Simon heard Philip's preaching and was baptized. (Acts 8:13) Later, Simon sinned in trying to buy the power to impart miraculous gifts of the Spirit but he wasn't told to be baptized again. He was told to repent and pray that the thought of his heart might be forgiven. (Acts 8:18-23) Baptism isn't a command given to children of God for remission of their sins.

Baptism Wasn't For Old Testament Characters. "If Abraham, David and Moses were saved without baptism, does not that prove that I can be saved without it?" is another question I have had asked. Again, the answer is, "No, Christ gave the command to baptize just before He returned to heaven." Old Testament characters who had lived and died before it was given were not subject to obeying it. The same is true of the thief on the cross. He had been dead more than forty days when Christ gave this command. (Acts 1:1-3)

Baptism is a command now for us and we must obey Christ if we are to be saved. (Hebrews 5:9) It is for those who gladly receive the word (Acts 2:42) and show such by believing in Christ (John 8:24), repenting of their sins (Luke 13:3) and confessing their faith in Him as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32,33). If you are willing to do this, baptism is for you. If you aren't willing to do this, baptism isn't for you.

Contented Cows

by Larry Ray Hafley

A famous milk company used to advertise its product as, "The milk from contented cows." I heard about a little dairy down south that countered with, "Our cows are never contented. They are always trying to do better."

Christians sometimes become content and quit trying to do better. However, this spirit of complacency is contrary to the cross of Christ. As mature as the apostle Paul was, he did not depend upon the successes of the past — "*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended (to have gained the prize-LRH): but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*" (Phil. 3:13, 14). The concluding sentence pictures the runner as he sprints toward the finish line.

A Christian is only good as long as he grows. In Christ, development must be according to the motto, "Forward ever—backward never" (2 Pet. 3:18).

"Use it, or lose it," is true in the spiritual realm, too. Despite this, there are those who boldly began that are now chewing the cud of contentment in the devil's pasture. They are doomed to utter failure (Jn. 15:2-6).

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God's answer through Ezekiel — *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die: the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him,"* (18:20). The consequences of sin can be visited upon following generations, but the guilt of sin cannot be transferred from father to son or from son to father. The scripture teaches that a person is a sinner when he sins and not because of someone else's actions. Babies have not sinned and cannot inherit the sins of their fathers, therefore, are not sinners. And, yes, every mother can look into the innocent face of her infant and know that there is a new life, totally free from the taint of sin, because God says so.

Gospel Meeting

Speaker: Olin Kern

Sunday, March 4th

9:45 A.M. 10:45 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Mon. — Fri., March 5th — 9th

7:00 P.M.

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