

### X.6. Lambs to Rams: What About Infants?

If we are to settle any Biblical discussion we need to refer to the Bible for the answers or accept that man can manipulate the Holy Writ in whatever way he wants to ‘prove’ his own doctrine on any matter. This would require us to have “all readiness of mind” (*Act 17:11*) like the brethren of ancient Berea in making a comprehensive search into the facts that will always be facts since with God, there “is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (*Jas 1:17*).

That said, nowhere in the New Testament is there recorded one incident of an infant baptism. So often there are those who will point to certain passages to ‘prove’ their misguided yet false teaching that infants are born with sin and need to be washed to remove it via the immersion process. Of such passages they use Acts 2:39 with reference to “your children” (*Gk.5043*) as if “children” in this passage refers to infants when in fact it refers to the obedient “posterity” of generations to come (*Thayer*). Other similar passages are Act 16 and Lydia’s “household” (*v. 15*) and of the Philippian jailor’s “house” in verse 31. The Greek word in each of these two verses is the same (*3624*) and Thayer defines it as “the inmates of a house, all persons forming one family, a household”. Paul told the jailer that he needed to first “believe” and according to the original Koine (*common*) Greek language, which they understood, it means, in this context, “to *entrust* (especially one’s spiritual well-being to Christ)” (*Gk.4100*). To assume the jailer even had infants in his house to begin with is a stretch to try and make application that infants are subject to obedience. Can an infant or toddler even understand their “spiritual well-being” let alone even know Who Jesus is before being taught? Can they repent and confess Jesus as Lord? What sins would they be repenting of? These and other passages don’t specifically mention the nature of infants, which we will deal with here shortly.

When Jesus stated in the Great Commission (*Mat 28:19-20*) that the disciples were to “teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”

He was focusing their attention on “foreign nations not worshipping the true God, pagans, Gentiles” (*Thayer*). This is a general term focusing on unbelievers and since infants don’t have the capacity to believe (*Mk 16:16*) it would not apply to them.

Therefore, we need to establish the fact that children are born innocent, having a clean conscience since they have yet to sin, and that there is a process a person needs to undertake before being “qualified” (*Col 1:12*) to enter the “kingdom of His dear Son” (*v. 13*). Baptism, with reference to 1 Pet 3:21, “doth also now save us” by producing “a good conscience toward God”. According to Psalm 106:37-38, the Jews who sacrificed “their sons and their daughters unto devils” were shedding “innocent blood” (*see also Pro 6:16-19*). Children under the O.T. weren’t born sinful because their “fathers” had yet to make the Law “known to their children” (*Ps 78:5-8*). They didn’t know good and evil since they weren’t yet taught the Law (*Rom 7:7*). They were born into the Old Covenant by means of inheritance and were taught the Law as commanded by Moses (*Deu 11:18-21*). Under the New Covenant those who understand are first taught (*Heb 8:11*) before becoming part of “the Israel of God” (*Gal 6:16*).

One might ask about David’s statement in Psalm 51:5 where he stated that he was “shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”. According to Wayne Jackson of the Christian Courier, “First, David’s descriptive is a poetic affirmation, charged with the drama of hyperbole. The language merely suggests that, relatively speaking, the bulk of one’s life is characterized by sin. The passage does not literally affirm that infants are conceived in sin and birthed in iniquity.” This Psalm has to do with the environment David was conceived in, was introduced to and ultimately was effected by when he eventually understood good and evil.

In Mat 18 Jesus deals with two separate individuals when He referred to “this little child” and “one of these little ones which believe in Me”.

“Children are, to a great extent, destitute of ambition, pride, and haughtiness. They are characteristically humble and teachable. By requiring His disciples to be like them, He did not intend to express any opinion about the native moral character of children, but simply that in these respects they must become like them.” Albert Barnes

Concerning “these little ones which believe in Me” (*v. 6*) Barnes wrote that they are “Christians manifesting the spirit of little children”. Read also 1 Jn 2:1, 12, 18 and 28 for clarity on Barnes’ comment. Jesus also chided His disciples on another occasion when they hindered parents from bringing their infants to Him. Remember, a clean conscience is an attribute of the kingdom of God.

Luk 18:15 And they brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them: but when *His* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called them *unto Him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for **of such is the kingdom of God**. 17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God **as a little child** shall in no wise enter therein. (*Emp. added*)

To “receive the kingdom of God as a little child” shows that such a mindset is of the utmost necessity; for the mature it is a byproduct of obedience to the ordinance of baptism (*1 Pet 3:21*).

### Baptism replaces circumcision?

Some have gone as far as to state that baptizing infants replaces circumcision using Col 2:11-12 as proof text. But, according to this teaching, if only males are circumcised, are female infants not to be immersed (*or sprinkled as done in the denominational world*)? Paul showed in his letter to the church at Colossae that baptism is similar to circumcision in that both are considered a removal of something; circumcision as

removal of the flesh and baptism as the “putting off the body of sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ”.

“Not by the fact that Christ was circumcised, but that we have that kind of circumcision which Christ established, to wit, the renouncing of sin.” Albert Barnes

### Infant baptism

In order to settle this discussion on infant baptism, we need to understand the original definition of the form of baptism and not as it is interpreted in the modern evolution of the English language. (*See chapter X.1.*)

Baptize- Gk.907- From a derivative of G911; to *makewhelmed* (that is, *fully wet*); used only (in the New Testament) of ceremonial *ablution*, especially (technically) of the ordinance of Christian *baptism*: - baptist, baptize, wash.

Thayer: “an immersion in water, performed as a sign of the removal of sin, and administered to those who, impelled by a desire for salvation, sought admission to the benefits of the Messiah’s kingdom.”

Therefore, the sprinkling of ‘holy water’ on an infant’s forehead with a branch of ‘hyssop’ is not found anywhere in scripture and is a manmade invention.

Wayne Jackson wrote:

The first hint of an inclination in this direction came in the 2nd century A.D. when Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 130-200), a religious leader in southern Gaul, declared that: “He [Christ] came to save, through means of himself, all who through him are born again unto God — infants, children, and boys and youths, and old men” (*Against Heresies* 2.22.4).

On the other hand, Tertullian in Africa (A.D. 160-220) opposed this inclination.

By the time of Cyprian (A.D. 200-258), a theologian in Carthage, the error of “infant sin” had taken a full grip on some who professed Christianity.

In the same general timeframe, Origen (A.D. 185-254), a teacher in both Alexandria and Caesarea, contended:

“Infants are baptized for the forgiveness of sins. Of what sins? Or when have they sinned? Or how can any reason of the laver in their case hold good, but according to that sense we mentioned even now- none is free from pollution, though the life be the length of one day upon the earth. And it is for that reason, because by the sacrament of baptism the pollution of our birth is taken away, that infants are baptized” (*Homily on Luke, 14:5*).

Source: christiancourier.com: “What is the history of infant sprinkling?”

### Conclusion

Via a “bereavement program” instituted by the congregation I now attend, I was able to meet with a Baptist couple who had very recently lost a child at birth. Having lost a newborn of my own in 1986 I had a personal connection with this couple. During the visit they were obviously distraught over the idea of not knowing where their child had gone once in the spirit realm since he was not baptized in what they felt was their Baptist tradition. But according to the “Baptist Study Addition” by W.A. Criswell and Paige Patterson; baptism “follows justification and is not a prerequisite for salvation” (*pg. 1544 on Acts 2:38*). Either way, their theology is incorrect since baptism is “for (*Gk.1519- εις- purpose*) the remission of sins” and not “because” (*Gk.1223- δια*) someone’s sins have been forgiven. And as Peter stated, those who are candidates for baptism once “pricked in their heart” (*showing regret*) need to “repent” which is something an infant cannot do and neither has

anything to repent of since they are innocent. Guilt only comes to those who have knowledge of good and evil (*Deu 1:39*) which comes with maturity in a sin filled environment and not at conception. *Charli Yana*

## X.6. Questions

1. What is required of us if we desire to have the facts in any discussion where the Bible determines doctrine? a) all readiness of mind; b) the ability to debate; c) a good study Bible.
2. In Acts 2:39, explain what “your children” is referring to. a) those of your household; b) your obedient posterity; c) children you have taught.
3. Why do some use Acts 16:31 to establish the need for infant baptism? a) they assume the Philippian jailer had infants at home; b) they refer to Roman Catholic tradition; c) if it’s in the Bible it must be true.
4. True or false: When Jesus gave the Great Commission, “all nations” included infants. a) true; b) false; c) the text does not say.
5. What do infants have that adults do not and how do adults acquire it? a) ignorance of sin that adults acquire through baptism; b) innocence, need to be justified through baptism for the remission of sin; c) pride, acquired through experience.
6. Name some things that adults have that are impossible to be found in infants. a) guilt and pride; b) haughtiness; c) both a and b.
7. True or false: Baptism replaces circumcision. a) true, b) false; c) the text does not say.

8. Since infants are guiltless, when does a person have the need to repent? a) when they grow into adulthood; b) once they reach puberty; c) once the knowledge of good and evil is recognized.