

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUNG CHILDREN WHO DIE? – PART 1

Matthew 19:14 ... “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven’”

When we speak of the need for a Savior, we speak of the requirement that if we desire to be blessed by God and spend eternity with him in heaven, we must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and acknowledge that he died for our sins. However, a child that is three or five or seven years old may not be able to comprehend such teaching. Even a child of ten years of age may not be able to fully understand his or her need for a Savior, and make an informed decision to submit to Christ.

Each of us is born with a sin nature that can only be changed through a personal relationship with Christ. Each of us must establish that relationship directly with God. I cannot obtain it for you, nor can you obtain it for your children. A parent might boast that their two-year-old loves Jesus and understands the difference between sin and righteousness. That is a comforting thought, but the fact remains that a two-year-old lacks the mental maturity to understand those concepts. Very young children cannot love Jesus with any more depth than they love their favorite stuffed animal, or ice cream. Being able to sing Christian songs and memorize Bible verses, is not the same as understanding what they mean.

The response we see in very young children who are taught that being naughty is a sin, is really just fear of being caught and punished. The dramatic distinctions between sin and righteousness, and the eternal ramifications of each, will not be understood by the average child until around adolescence. And, that understanding can be delayed until the teen years.

Some churches practice child baptism, which they believe secures a child in Christ. However, the Bible teaches that each of us makes a personal decision to follow Christ. We cannot make that decision on someone’s behalf. Protestants practice child dedication, but that practice, too, can be misunderstood. Just as you cannot secure the future of children by baptizing them, neither can you secure them through dedication. Children eventually reach an age when they must decide for themselves if they will be Christ followers. The real value of dedication is when parents dedicate their own lives to leading their children to Jesus. And, the real value of baptism is to publicly declare your own decision to follow Christ, which cannot happen if you are too immature to make that decision.

I know you want an answer to the question: “What happens to young children who die,” but you will have to wait until part 2 of this devotional....three days from now. Sorry.

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