

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUNG CHILDREN WHO DIE? – PART 2

2 Samuel 12:23 “But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.”

In part 1 of this devotional we addressed the fact that every person is born with a sin nature that can only be changed through a personal relationship with Christ. To establish that relationship, you must be mature enough to understand the difference between righteousness and sin, not just good and bad. Very young children learn to fear being naughty because it results in punishment, but that is rarely the level of maturity in which they understand the spiritual issues of sin.

If you are a Christian parent you should be concerned about the spiritual development of your children. Introduce them to Christian values, prayer, worship, and Bible stories at the earliest possible age. But it is also important not to make assumptions about their spiritual state simply because they can recite Bible verses or sing worship songs. Their ability to fully understand spiritual matters, their need for salvation, and the importance of holiness will come a little later in their development; perhaps later than you desire. It helps to realize that even adults can sit in church all their lives and never attain that level of understanding. Be patient, diligent, and prayerful; pray over your children constantly seeking God's protection from temptation, and pray for wisdom for yourself as their teacher and example.

So, what happens to children who die before they can make informed decisions to follow Jesus? What happens to babies that die through miscarriage, in infancy, or illness at age three? What happens to a child killed by abortion or in an accident? In today's verse, King David seems to have understood the security of young children when he wrote of his own baby's death. David is certain that he will one day see his son again in heaven.

The Bible does not directly address the fate of young children. However, we believe through various clues in scripture, such as today's verse, that until a child is old enough to decide for himself to submit to God, he is secure by virtue of God's love for the child. In part 1 we cited 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’” The verse implies that young children are kingdom citizens, at least until they are mature enough to reject Christ and take responsibility for their own fate. That will be a different age for each child because we mature at different rates. Your responsibility is to teach your children about Jesus and to obey him, and await their own decision.

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