

# **HOW CAN YOU KNOW YOU ARE ETERNALLY SAVED? (OR CAN YOU KNOW?)**

## **A Baby Dedication**

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April 4, 2009

Having a newborn baby is a life-changing experience. Thus it is an awesome responsibility a mom and dad face in preparing that child for this life and for the one to come.

Having a baby seems to bring people closer to God, at least for a little while. A sense of awe and wonder that can't be described often accompanies a parents concerns for what is best for the child. Also mixed into a number of different emotions is the fear of God and a concern that the child be right with God and ready to meet him. Many religions offer baby "baptism" to parents as a practice that is believed by some to wash away original sin and make the baby a part of the family of God. This then relieves that parents fears.

"And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him."

It was adults who were baptized in the Bible. There is not one single story in all Scripture of one baby being baptized.

The person who was baptized was to be a believer first. Of his own free will, he had to receive Jesus Christ as his/her personal savior.

The word baptism means "to overwhelm, dip, submerge, immense." It does not mean "to pour or sprinkle."

The first recorded instance of "infant baptism" was when the Roman Emperor Valens insisted his dying son be "baptized" in the year 370 A.D. The church caved into his fears and baptized the infant. Today churches continue to cave into parental fears and "baptize" babies.

This is unscriptural. The mode of "sprinkling" was not sanctioned until 1311 A.D. by the Council of Ravenna. They had no right to change Scripture.

In the story of Acts 8:29-38, "they both went down into the water." Who? Two adults.

Luke 2:21-22, "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord."

Mary presented Jesus, her first born son to the Lord in Jerusalem. Jesus was not baptized till He was thirty years old.

Every parent should realize that children are a heritage from the Lord. They are a reward from

God. Psalms 127:3, “Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.”

I would recommend that parents take their children to Sabbath School and church on a weekly basis. Don't send them, take them. I also recommend that you strive to have a Christian home where each parent is a believer in Jesus Christ, a student of the Bible and a man or woman of prayer. No religious leader or religious ordinance or sacrament can make your child right with God. Only faith in Jesus Christ can save them when they are of age.

Fathers and mothers—face your responsibility! Ephesians 6:4, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

### **Message**

An e-mail came in to us recently from some thoughtful person somewhere:

You only can make real progress in your spiritual life when you get past the concern about your own personal salvation, and can start thinking about other people's. While you are struggling with the issue of whether or not you are going to make it, all your emotional energy is absorbed; you are held in bondage. A large part of our church family is in this situation, and consequently we are not making any significant impact in the developed world. Assurance of salvation is the dynamic that brings vitality and freedom to our own lives and empowers mission outreach. It allows us to speak with a certainty and conviction that impacts on others.

Well said! But how can we attain this certainty, or assurance?

Is there danger of trusting a false security that will end up in tragedy?

In order to keep us humble, does God want us in a kind of limbo?

We cannot evade inspired warnings about a false assurance. Jesus said: “When the Judgment Day comes, many will say to Me, ‘Lord, Lord! In Your name we spoke God's message, by Your name we drove out many demons and performed many miracles!’ Then I will say to them, ‘I never knew you.’” (Mt. 7:21, 22, GNB). Nothing could be worse than that! Luke tells it more vividly:

“Jesus answered them, ‘Do your best to go in through the narrow door because many people will surely try to go in but will not be able. . . . When you stand outside and begin to knock on the door and say, ‘Open the door for us, sir!’ He will answer you, ‘I don't know where you come from!’ Then you will answer, ‘We ate and drank with You; You taught in our town!’ But He will say again, ‘I don't know where you come from . . . . How you will cry and gnash your teeth . . . .’” (13:24-28, GNB).

There is a mysterious mix-up in the feelings of both classes in that last great Judgment Day. Each side thinks Jesus has mistakenly put them in the wrong place. When “the King will say to the people on His right, ‘Come, you that are blessed by My Father!’” they protest that there must be some mistake. You don't mean us, do You? “‘When, Lord, did we ever see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty, and give You a drink . . . ?’”

Suppose a young man comes home from school and his father says to him, "Bob I want you to take out the garbage and wash the car." These are the specific commandments of his father, and he does them. But suppose Bob overhears his father tell someone else that he is not feeling well and wishes someone would mow the yard and rake the leaves. So Bob does that, not because he is commanded to, but because he loves his father and wants to do not only his commandments but also his word.

They will be pleasantly surprised! But the other group are equally surprised. We don't deserve this! "The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help Me.' These, then, will be sent off to eternal punishment'" (Mt. 25:34-46, GNB).

Horror of horrors! How can we stress too much the danger of cherishing a false assurance?

But does God want us constantly worried? "Fear not, little flock," Jesus says; "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." But again, when we look at the context of His assurance, we find He talks about a condition: selling "what you have to give to the poor," obviously a built-in warning (Lk. 12:32, 33).

Even His assurance to the one who "overcomes" that "the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life" comes with a built-in warning: the one who does not "overcome" will find his name is removed (Rev. 3:5).

No matter where we look in the Bible, assurance of salvation is balanced with similar warnings about

losing out. We can't run away from reality. Perhaps in the middle of some night we wonder, How do I know that I will "overcome"? How do I know that I can meet the test of the mark of the beast? How in the time of trouble can I live "in the sight of a holy God without an Intercessor"?

Some cheerfully answer, "We will die before that time! We prefer to go to heaven by the underground route; the subway gets you get there just the same without all that hassle of the time of trouble." Someone needs to tell them, "Shame on you! You are depriving Jesus of the witness He needs in the final struggle of the last days! You are thoroughly egocentric!"

God doesn't want us fearful and worried; it's bad for our health. Neither does He want us proud and arrogant. The ideal: a concern for the honor of God that transcends our fear for our own security, and then learning to think of others.

But how can we attain this happy balance? Here are some solid principles:

(1) The only person who has ever been promised such assurance is Jesus Himself. Paul gives us this surprising insight: "To Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many [plural], but as of one [singular], 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). There is only one "elect" person: "Behold! My Servant [singular] whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!" (Isa. 42:1). Anybody else who inherits eternal life will do so only "in Him." Incidentally, even Abraham gets a blessing only through His "Seed, which is Christ."

(2) The Father has adopted the human race “in Christ.” When John baptized Jesus and He heard that Voice from heaven say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,” the Father was speaking to you and me at the same time. He has “predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself” (Eph. 1:5). “The word that was spoken to Jesus at the Jordan, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,’ embraces humanity. God spoke to Jesus as our representative. . . . ‘He hath made us accepted in the Beloved’ [Eph. 1:6]” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 113). The word “us” that appears some twelve times in Ephesians 1 therefore means the entire human race! “We” are “blessed with all spiritual blessings,’ ‘chosen in Him,” “predestined to adoption” in Him, “we have redemption through [in] His blood, the forgiveness of sins,” “in Him . . . we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to [His] purpose.”

Corporations often ask their constituents to vote “by proxy.” The proxy is an authorized agent who votes on our behalf, your representative. The human race has only two proxies: Adam and Jesus Christ. Adam is the default proxy, for we are all born “in Adam.” However, God has appointed Jesus Christ as the proxy for all of Adam’s children. So *legally* all are “in Christ.” This is why all live temporarily on earth.

(3) Since Christ is the “second Adam,” the new Head of the human race, you don’t have to do anything in order to be “accepted in the Beloved.” If you were born on planet earth, the promise applies to you; but as a member of “humanity” you do have

to believe this Good News in order to realize the blessing!<sup>1</sup>

A certain rich man died and left no heirs. When his household goods were auctioned off, an elderly lady dressed in shabby garments was the only one to bid on the picture of the dead man’s son. It had been greatly cherished by the wealthy father because his only child had died at an early age. But the crowd that had gathered for the sale showed no interest in it. When the woman who bought the portrait was asked why she wanted it, she said she had been the boy’s nurse many years before and had loved him dearly. Later, she examined the picture closely and noticed a bulge in the heavy paper on the back. Making a small cut, she removed an envelope which turned out to be the man’s missing will. The document very clearly stated that he wanted to leave his property to the person who still held dear the memory of his beloved son. This woman is representative of any child of God, who because of love for His beloved Son, Jesus, receives the greatest inheritance known to humanity. Certainly every believer can give thanks for that today.

(4) This raises the question, “What Christ accomplished by His sacrifice?” When the Father sent Him to this earth, He gave Him a clear-cut job description: go down there and save that lost world! Says Jesus, “I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.” “I . . . came down from heaven .

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<sup>1</sup> Believing the Father’s promise of acceptance will motivate the believer to do all manner of good works, “constrained” by the love of Christ

. . . [to] give . . . My flesh . . . for the life of the world.” Then in His prayer before His death He made the solemn claim: “Father, . . . I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 12:47; 6:51; 17:4). Thus Jesus’ true title is, “the Savior of the world,” “the Savior of all men” (John 4:42; 1 Tim. 4:10). Magnificent achievement!

(5) Now, if Christ accomplished what He was sent to do, then it follows logically that He has chosen everyone to be saved. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:3, 4).

A poor old widow, living in the Scottish Highlands, was called upon one day by a gentleman who had heard that she was in need. The old lady complained of her condition, and remarked that her son was in Australia and doing well. “But does he do nothing to help you?” inquired the visitor. “No, nothing,” was the reply. “He writes me regularly once a month, but only sends me a little picture with his letter.” The gentleman asked to see one of the pictures that she had received, and found each one of them to be a draft for ten pounds. This is the condition of many of God’s children. He has given us many “exceeding great and precious promises,” which we either are ignorant of or fail to appropriate. Many of them seem to be pretty pictures of an ideal peace and rest, but are not appropriated as practical helps in daily life. And not one of these promises is more neglected than the assurance of salvation.

Pray Jesus’ prayer He taught us, “Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Mt. 6:10, KJV)!

Christ by His death “has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). That’s the second death! If it were the first, how could one explain that the cemeteries are full? Christ died your second death (Heb. 2:9) which means you don’t have to die it!

(6) Then how can it be that so many people at last will be lost? The answer: they have chosen to resist and reject what Christ has given them by means of His sacrifice. “All those who hate Me love death” (Prov. 8:36). “He who does not believe in Him is condemned already. . . This is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light” (Jn. 3:18, 19).

The story of Esau illustrates the problem. He was given, and had every right to hold on to, the birthright (which entailed vast wealth and unspeakable honor). But he “despised” it (Gen 25:34). No one in heaven or earth could have deprived him of this birthright, but he sold it for a measly luncheon entree (“who for one morsel of food sold his birthright,” (Heb. 12:16). Hang on to what God has given you!

(7) But what does it mean to be “in Christ” experientially? All who are “in Christ” by faith inherit the birthright, “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16). But to be “in Christ” experientially does not mean the mere formality of a legal adoption (which applies to “all men”), but it’s a choice to identify with Him through living faith, a

choice to enter into His feelings and His experience, to be one with Him.

Paul says those who are “joint heirs with Christ” are those who “suffer with Him” (vs. 17). In other words, they, will identify with Him, in Him—there’s no other word. There is no salvation in their suffering alone (billions do that); these choose to realize a oneness with Him. But before they can make such a choice they must believe His oneness with them—and that’s what the gospel is all about. The objective gospel truth precedes the subjective experience. They appreciate His nearness to us, and reject the false doctrine of His farness from us. They come into Him; they “partake of His sufferings” (1 Pet. 4:13); they appreciate what it cost Him to save us; they kneel with Him in Gethsemane and watch Him sweat drops of blood in His agony; they begin to sense the horror of great darkness that enveloped Him as He hung on His cross; they cry with Him, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Their souls become welded to His in the white-hot heat of heart-identity. And nothing can ever separate them!

Perhaps the clearest picture is that of a bride entering into the experiences, the heart-longings, yes, the pain, of her bridegroom, sharing his very life. And that is the ultimate mature experience of Christ’s true church (Rev. 19:7, 8).

The church is like a little girl growing up to be a bride. No bridegroom in his right mind would marry the flower girl at a wedding, no matter how beautiful she might be. He wants a bride who is mature and who can appreciate him and stand beside him as a

wife. Revelation records the grandest note in the triumphant anthem of praise: “Let us be glad and rejoice, . . . for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints” (Revelation 19:7, 8). Christ’s church, His bride, grows to maturity of faith as the result of the last outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on the earth, the “latter rain” of righteousness.

This will mean new truths, new understandings of God’s character. “The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day” (Proverbs 4:18, NIV). Only those who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” can see and appreciate the latter rain of the Spirit when He comes.

No TV program or movie can offer events as thrilling as God’s plan to prepare men and women to be Christ’s grown-up bride. The righteousness that covers them is a garment given them; they will never claim an iota as their own. At last God will have a mature people who appreciate the sacrifice of the Lamb. All those who will welcome the Son of man coming on the white cloud will have outgrown their self-centered desires for personal rewards. Christ’s bride will never marry Him for a meal ticket. A higher motivation has captured their hearts. “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Corinthians 5:14). Theirs will be the bride’s concern for her Husband’s honor and vindication.

Then when you have identified yourself with Christ, a phenomenon begins to take place. You

stop worrying about your own eternal security, and you begin feeling a deep concern for His success in His “great controversy with Satan.” You find your own personal assurance of eternal salvation by forgetting about it—you are caught up in an infinitely greater concern.

“A woman came to Dr. Chalmers one day and said: Dr. Chalmers, I cannot get my child to come to the Savior. I’ve talked and talked to her, but it’s no use.’ The doctor thought to himself and said, ‘Let me talk with your daughter by myself, and we will see what may be done.’ One day he met with the daughter and engaged her in conversation. ‘You have been bothered a good deal about the matter of your soul, haven’t you? Suppose I say to your mother that you don’t want to be talked to about the matter for a whole year, how will that do?’ The Scottish young lady hesitated a little then replied: ‘Well, I don’t think it would be safe to put the matter off for a whole year. Something might happen! I might die before then.’ ‘Yes, that’s so,” replied the doctor. ‘Suppose we say six months.’ The daughter didn’t think that even that would be safe.’ ‘Well, then, how about three months?’ After a brief hesitation the daughter replied, ‘I don’t think it is safe to put it off at all.’ They knelt together and in a few moments the daughter was radiantly saved.”