

The title of this morning's sermon is, *"Do Babies Go to Heaven When They Die?"*

On Sunday mornings we paused our verse-by-verse study through Luke's Gospel for a few sermons on babies going to heaven to set us up to understand **Luke 18:15**. This is where Jesus declared the kingdom of God belongs to babies. Next week we will be back in Luke.

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This morning's sermon is going to build off the previous sermons. The previous sermons laid the foundation for this sermon. So, let me briefly review what we learned...

The first sermon was titled, *"Are Children Innocent?"*

This sermon was about babies being innocent.

The second sermon was titled, *"The Biblical Age of Accountability."*

This sermon was about babies not being able to choose between good and evil until they reach the age of accountability.

The third sermon was titled, *"Sin Is Not Imputed Where There Is No Law."*

Babies are the picture of selfishness. They throw fits, yell, and scream when they don't get what they want. There's no denying that their behavior is wrong. The third sermon was about their sin not being imputed to them.

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Now here's the thing...

If all these things are true:

- Babies are innocent.
- They can't choose between good and evil.
- They haven't reached the age of accountability.
- Their sin is not imputed to them.

We should see examples of saved babies in the Bible...and we do! And this brings us to lesson one...

Yes we do, and this brings us to lesson one...

### **Lesson One: There are saved babies in the Bible.**

There are not many examples of saved babies in the Bible:

- Don't focus on the fact that there are not many saved babies in the Bible.
- Instead, focus on the fact that there ARE saved babies in the Bible.

In other words, even if there was only one saved baby in the Bible, that would be significant, because it demonstrates that a baby can be saved.

First example: David...

**Psalm 22:10 On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God.**

David didn't say he knew God had faith in God, as those are impossibilities for babies. But he did make two points...

First, he said he was cast on God from his birth. This sounds like he was saved when he was born.

But then he backs up even further and says God had been his God when was in the womb. To say God is someone's God is Old Testament salvific language. David said he was saved before he was born.

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Second example: the prophet Jeremiah...

**Jeremiah 1:5 [God said,] “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”**

God said two things to Jeremiah and the second doesn't necessarily mean he was saved...

God said **before you were born I consecrated you**, or some translations, such as the KJV and NKJV say sanctified, which means set apart. That's how it's translated in the NIV. This can simply mean that God set Jeremiah apart as a prophet as it said right after that.

But at the beginning of the verse God said he knew Jeremiah. Again, this is Old Testament salvation language.

This language is carried forward in the New Testament. Speaking to believers Paul said...

**Galatians 4:9 Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God,**

When people are unbelievers, on the day of judgment Jesus will say to them...

**Matthew 7:23 “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”**

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Also, you might have noticed that God said he knew Jeremiah BEFORE forming him in the womb.

This is foreknowledge, which we also see in the New Testament...

**Ephesians 1:4 [God] chose us in [Christ] BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, that we should be holy and blameless before him.**

Or...

**1 Peter 1:2 Those who are elect...2 according to THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF GOD the Father,**

The idea is just like God foreknew and chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, he foreknew and chose Jeremiah unto salvation before he was even in the womb.

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The third and probably most well-known example of a saved baby is John the Baptist...

**Luke 1:15 [The angel Gabriel said, “John] will be great before the Lord. And he must not drink wine or strong drink, and HE WILL BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT, EVEN FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB.**

If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, you're saved, and John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit before he was born!

Wayne Grudem said, *“We might say that John the Baptist was ‘born again’ before he was born!”*

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We are not saved by works, but works are evidence of salvation, and we are given evidence of John's salvation...

**Luke 1:41 When Elizabeth [John's mother] heard the greeting of Mary, the baby [referring to John] leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.**

Salvation always produces fruit, and [John's] leaping was evidence of his regeneration.

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And there is one more incredible example, not just of a saved baby, but an example of babies going to heaven when they die. Turn to **2 Samuel 12**.

I believe more people cling to this account when they have lost a child to be encouraged they will see their child again, than any other in Scripture.

We are going to read through the passage quickly and then I will share my thoughts toward the end.

Here's the background. David committed adultery with Bathsheba and tried to hide his sin by murdering her husband, Uriah. God spoke to David through the prophet Nathan. Look at **2 Samuel 12:14**...

**2 Samuel 12:14 Nevertheless, because by this deed you have utterly scorned the Lord, the child who is born to you shall die."**

David receives the news the child will die and skip to **verse 16** to see his response...

**2 Samuel 12:16 David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground. 17 And the elders of his house stood beside him, to raise him from the ground, but he would not, nor did he eat food with them. 18 On the seventh day the child died. And the servants of David were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said, "Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spoke to him, and he did not listen to us. How then can we say to him the child is dead? He may do himself some harm."**

When the child was alive David fasted and spent all day and night on the ground praying. His servants were thinking: "If David was that upset about the possibility of the child dying, he might really do something drastic if he finds out the child is dead."

It doesn't mean David was suicidal, but his servants thought he might be!

But watch what happened when he received the news...

**2 Samuel 12:19 But when David saw that his servants were whispering together, David understood that the child was dead. And David said to his servants, "Is the child dead?" They said, "He is dead." 20 Then David arose from the earth and washed and anointed himself and changed his clothes. And he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. He then went to his own house. And when he asked, they set food before him, and he ate.**

A child's death might be the most painful experience for anyone to go through. I remember when my brother died, my assistant principal said it's a parent's worst nightmare to have to bury a child.

That's what David had to do, but interestingly if I had to use one word to describe David it wouldn't be anguished, suffering, or afflicted. Instead, it would be the word peace. David looks like he is at peace.

He did the opposite of what his servants expected. Instead of doing himself harm he cleaned himself up, ceased fasting, and had something to eat. **2 Samuel 12:20** even says **[David]then went to his own house.**

This confused the servants...

**2 Samuel 12:21 Then his servants said to him, "What is this thing that you have done? You fasted and wept for the child while he was alive; but when the child died, you arose and ate food." 22 He said, "While the child was**

still alive, I fasted and wept, for I said, ‘Who knows whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ 23 But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I SHALL GO TO HIM, BUT HE WILL NOT RETURN TO ME.”

And this brings us to lesson three...

### Lesson Two: David knew his baby would be in heaven.

Look at the certainty with which David spoke: **I shall go to him**. He didn’t encourage himself with these words as though they were a possibility. To him they were a certainty.

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I know that instead of thinking David would go to be with the child in heaven, some people think David meant, “I shall go to the grave, like he went to the grave.” In other words, some people think David was simply saying he would join the child in death.

There are four reasons that this argument is wrong, and I want to go through them so we can be confident if we are ever in David’s place and lose a child, or we must counsel someone who has lost a child. This way we will be equipped to do so.

First, if David only meant that he would die someday like his son, that doesn’t really make sense. There’s no reason for him to say something so blatantly obvious. Of course, he’s going to die someday too.

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Second, one of the main reasons some people think David was only saying he would join his son in the grave is, as we have discussed before, the next life was veiled or shadowy in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, people commonly said they were going to the grave or Sheol, without saying that they were going to heaven or hell.

But few people in the Old Testament, if any, had as much revelation as David. He understood that for him the next life meant going to heaven. He wrote...

**Psalm 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I SHALL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOREVER.**

David knew death wasn’t simply going to the grave. For him, it was going to heaven, and he expected his baby to be there with him.

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The third reason it is wrong to think David simply thought he would join his son in death, is the context. David was mourning and he encouraged himself with the reality that he would see his son again. There’s nothing comforting about simply saying, “*My son died and I’m going to die too.*”

If he only thought that he and his son were going to the grave, then his grief would have continued. Instead, his words about going to be with his son caused a dramatic change that allowed him to return to the normal routine of life.

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The fourth reason it is wrong to think David simply expected to join the child in death is revealed when we contrast his response to this child’s death with Absalom’s death.

Turn a few chapters to the right to **2 Samuel 18:33**.

Here’s the background:

- Absalom was a murderer. He murdered his own half-brother Amnon for raping Absalom’s sister Tamar.
- He was a usurper. He manipulated the people and stole the throne from David.
- He was an adulterer. He took David’s wives and had his way with them on the rooftop before the people.

Not that God could not or would not forgive a man like Absalom, but there is no evidence of Absalom humbling himself or repenting. He died as wickedly as he lived.

If David expected to simply go to the grave with his sons, then when he received the news that Absalom died, we would read something like...

David said, *“Absalom is dead. Finally, the rebellion is over. The land is at peace. I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.”*

Instead, look at **2 Samuel 18:33**...

**2 Samuel 18:33 And the king was deeply moved and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. And as he went, he said, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!”**

The Hebrew word for **deeply moved** is [rāgāz](#), and it, “implies a violent trembling.” It is the word to describe an earthquake elsewhere in Scripture. Basically, David was completely undone by the news.

**2 Samuel 19:1 It was told Joab, “Behold, the king is weeping and mourning for Absalom.” 2 So the victory that day was turned into mourning for all the people, for the people heard that day, “The king is grieving for his son.” 3 And the people stole into the city that day as people steal in who are ashamed when they flee in battle.**

This is bad. **Verse 33** says David was in the **chamber over the gate**. The people could hear his wailing while they entered the city.

Because of David’s grief everyone was robbed of the joy they should have felt following their victory. Instead, they felt **ashamed**.

And his grieving continued...

**2 Samuel 19:4 The king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, “O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!”**

Notice two things...

First, David never said, **“I shall go to him,”** like he did with the other child. David knew they were going to two different places. He knew better than anyone that he would not see Absalom again.

Eternal damnation was veiled in the Old Testament, but perhaps David knew about it. If he did, he knew that Absalom deserved it. So, David grieved for Absalom the way that any believing parent would grieve for an unbelieving child who died.

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Second, in **2 Samuel 18:33** David said, **“Would I had died instead of you.”**

David wanted to die in Absalom’s place, more than likely because he wanted Absalom to live longer so he could turn his life around.

This could also be why David made the terrible request about Absalom before going to battle...

**2 Samuel 18:5 And the king ordered Joab and Abishai and Ittai, “Deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom.” And all the people heard when the king gave orders to all the commanders about Absalom.**

David didn't want Absalom to die, knowing he knew he would be separated from God.

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Now even if we're convinced babies go to heaven, we are left with a dilemma...

We are saved by grace through faith, but unborn babies go to heaven.

There are only two possibilities:

1. Unborn babies exercise saving faith.
2. Unborn babies do NOT exercise saving faith.

I don't see how unborn babies could exercise saving faith, so I go with the second possibility. And this brings us to lesson four...

### Lesson Three: Babies can go to heaven without exercising personal faith.

Let me share the verses with you that possibly support this, and I say possible because:

- We know babies go to heaven when they die,
- But we don't know exactly how they get there without exercising personal faith.

So, all I can do is give you the verses that I believe best explain this.

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Also, let me give you an idea what my studying looks like...

I have lots of commentaries, but I commonly use four for each sermon. Assuming those four commentaries allow me to understand a passage well, which is often the case, I don't look at other commentaries. As you know, even using just four commentaries we move slowly through passages.

But when I encounter something that is harder to understand, such as HOW babies can go to heaven without exercising saving faith, I look at many commentaries.

To be clear, I have not been looking at more commentaries to see whether babies go to heaven when they die. That's a settled issue based on what you have heard me teach in the previous sermons. I have been looking at additional commentaries to see HOW babies who die go to heaven when they can't exercise saving faith.

Part of the reason I'm convinced babies who die go to heaven without exercising saving faith is because of all the commentaries I read.

Let me share some quotes with you...

Wayne Grudem, who authored the premier Systematic Theology book wrote, and I quote...

*"It certainly is possible for God to bring regeneration (that is, new spiritual life) to an infant even before he or she is born...God is able to save infants in an unusual way, APART FROM THEIR HEARING AND UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL, by bringing regeneration to them very early, SOMETIMES EVEN BEFORE BIRTH. This regeneration is probably also followed at once by an [emerging], intuitive awareness of God and trust in Him at an extremely early age, but this is something we simply cannot understand...When infants are born they show an instinctive trust in their mothers, and we [should insist] they would also have an intuitive awareness of God, and if God gives it, an intuitive ability to trust in Him as well."*<sup>1</sup> [close quote].

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The second quote I want to share with you requires a quick read through **Romans 10:13-17**, which is one of the clearest descriptions of the way people are saved by hearing the gospel...

**Romans 10:13** For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Now Paul works backward explaining how people can call on the name of the Lord to be saved...

**Romans 10:14** How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? **15** And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

Finally, he writes...

**Romans 10:17** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

The faith necessary for salvation comes from hearing the Gospel. This is the COMMON way people are saved, but not the ONLY way.

Here’s the second quote, from John Calvin, who referenced **Romans 10**...

*“Faith cometh by hearing, the use of which infants have not yet obtained, nor can they be fit to know God...But [in Romans 10 Paul] is only describing the usual [way] the Lord [calls] his people, and [he is] not laying down a rule, for which no other method can be substituted. Many [infants God] certainly has called and endued with the true knowledge of himself, by internal means, by the illumination of the Spirit, without the intervention of preaching...Since some [infants] whom death hurries away in the first moments...pass into life eternal, they are certainly admitted to behold the immediate presence of God...I would not rashly affirm that they are endued with the same faith which we experience.”<sup>ii</sup>*

Two points...

First, John Calvin said **Romans 10** describes the common way people are saved, but not the way babies are saved.

Second, he said babies are regenerated, but without the faith adults have.

Now the obvious question is: What verses can this be based on?

I will share a few verses this week, and more next week when we find ourselves back in **Luke 18**.

For now, consider this verse...

**1 Timothy 4:10** God...is the Savior of all people, ESPECIALLY OF THOSE WHO BELIEVE.

It is significant it says **God is the Savior of all men...ESPECIALLY those who believe**, versus **God is the Savior of all men WHO believe**.

This implies God saves some who haven’t believed. This could include everyone who, through no fault of their own, can’t make the mental assent to believe, or, in other words, are unable to exercise saving faith.

I would put two groups in this special category of salvation: infants AND mentally handicapped people.

I will talk about mentally handicapped people more next week, but for now let me say that God could mercifully apply Christ’s sacrifice to these people.

Now let me be perfectly clear about what I am and am not saying:

- I am talking about people being saved without exercising personal faith.
- I am not talking about people being saved without Christ's sacrifice.

So, do we have any verses that allow us to believe God could extend Christ's sacrifice to people who haven't exercised personal faith?

Yes, and this brings us to lesson four...

#### **Lesson Four: Jesus's sacrifice is sufficient for all to be saved.**

First, please notice what this lesson does not and does say...

The lesson says Jesus's sacrifice COULD have paid for everyone's sins and reconciled everyone to God:

- We would never say that Christ's sacrifice was inadequate to save everyone.
- We would never say, "More people could have been saved if only Jesus's sacrifice was greater."

But the lesson does NOT say Jesus's sacrifice does save everyone.

Listen to these verses describing the sufficiency of Jesus's sacrifice for all...

**1 John 2:2 [Jesus] is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD.**

When John says **the propitiation for our sins**, the word **our** refers to believers. But then he also adds Jesus's death is sufficient for **the whole world**.

**John 1:29 [John] said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, WHO TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD!"**

We know this isn't as literal as it sounds, or nobody would go to hell. So, what did John mean? He meant Jesus's sacrifice was sufficient to take away the sins of the world...if everyone believed.

I don't want to comment on every verse, but here are more verses making the same point...

**John 6:51 [Jesus said, "The bread that I will give for THE LIFE OF THE WORLD is my flesh."**

**Romans 8:32 [God] did not spare his own Son but gave him up FOR US ALL.**

**2 Corinthians 5:15 [Jesus] died FOR ALL...19 in Christ God was reconciling THE WORLD TO HIMSELF.**

**1 Timothy 2:6 [Jesus] gave himself as A RANSOM FOR ALL.**

**Hebrews 2:9 By the grace of God [Jesus] might taste death FOR EVERYONE.**

**2 Peter 2:1 False teachers [deny] THE MASTER WHO BOUGHT THEM, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.**

This last verse needs an explanation because it sounds like God bought, or redeemed, false teachers, which is not true. Right after that Peter said they **bring swift destruction upon themselves** meaning they went to hell.

Instead, the verse is asserting the extensiveness of the redemption. Jesus's sacrifice was sufficient, even to save these false teachers, but they weren't saved because they didn't repent.



Now here's the application for babies going to heaven...

The fact that Jesus's death is sufficient for everyone's sins, this AT LEAST ALLOWS FOR the possibility of God applying that payment to those who were never capable of believing...such as infants and the mentally handicapped.

Here's the final quote...

[Gotquestions.org](#) wrote, *"What about babies and young children who never attain the ability to make the personal choice to believe in Jesus?...If someone is truly incapable of making a decision for or against Christ, then that one is extended God's mercy."* And in [another post](#): *"It could very well be that God, in His grace, applies the sacrifice of Christ to [babies who die]. We know Christ's blood is sufficient for such a thing. After all, Jesus died 'for the sins of the whole world.'"*

Let me add this...

We entered a difficult area:

- We know people are saved by faith.
- We know babies go to heaven if they die.

But we aren't told HOW babies go to heaven without exercising personal faith.

I've tried to explain this the best I can. If I have been at all wrong in this sermon about HOW this happens – babies going to heaven without exercising personal faith – it doesn't change the larger, more important truth that babies DO go to heaven.

I hope this truth encourages you if you lost a baby, and I hope it equips you to encourage others, especially if they lost a baby.

Now let me conclude with this...

I have been talking about Jesus dying for the sins of the world, and God mercifully applying that sacrifice to people who cannot exercise saving faith. But God does not apply that sacrifice to people who can believe, but don't...

**Matthew 25:46 [The unrighteous] will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.**

God held the unrighteous accountable for not exercising faith in Christ by sending them to eternal punishment.

The righteousness they needed is not a works-based righteousness. It is a righteousness that comes from faith...

**Romans 3:22 The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.**

God expects those who can believe in Christ to do so. When we do he gives us Christ's righteousness which is needed to go to heaven.

If you have any questions or I can pray for you in any way, I'll be up front after service and it would be a privilege to speak with you.

Let's pray.

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<sup>i</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, page 500.

