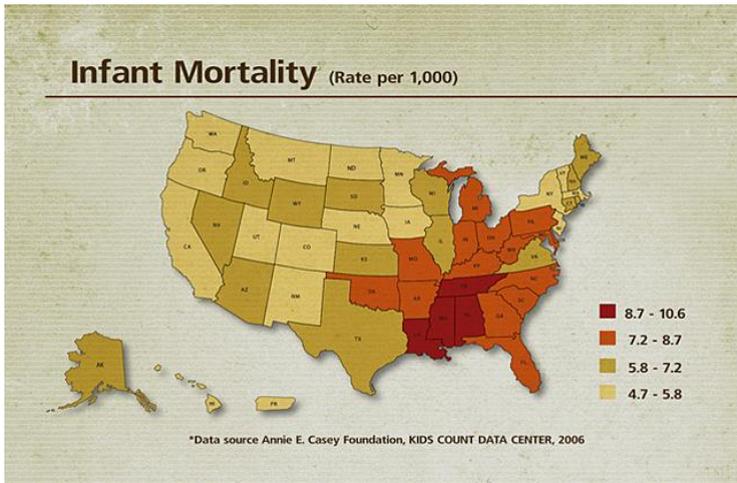


# Do Infants Who Die Go To Heaven?

Recommended readings: When A Baby Dies by Ronald Nash, Zondervan, 1999 and Safe In The Arms Of God by John McArthur, HarperCollins, 2003.



There are some events that happen in your life that make something that seems to be “abstract” very “concrete” in your life, to the point of making a profound impact in your life.

On APRIL 17 & 18 OF 1988, I went from the “high” of the birth of our 2<sup>nd</sup> child down into a deep emotional valley. Adam Armstrong Jussely was born @ 11 AM on a Sunday in Gadsden, AL. Immediately after birth, we knew something was wrong as this newborn was whisked away from us by the medical

personell @ the Hospital. Turned out that during the birthing process, Adam had contracted “group B strep” witch nowadays is now routinely tested for, but wasn’t back in the late 80’s. If “group B step” gets into any membrane of an infant, it robs the newborn of Oxygen & in many cases the infant dies from oxygen depravation. 15 Hours later, at the NICU of UAB Hospital, our 2<sup>nd</sup> child died. I was there. Carol had to stay in the hospital in Gadsden. What a heartbreaking chapter that was in the story of Carol & My’s marriage! To this day, on April 17-18 every year, there is in me a heaviness of heart that I feel b/c of that death.

Of course, I am not alone in this heartbreaking journey. Since then, many have joined me on this same sad path. I’m sure there’s people to whom I am speaking who either personally KNOW OF or have themselves experienced a miscarriage(s), a stillborn baby, an infant dying soon after birth, or perhaps have had an abortion. Seems like, according to the map, we are right in the epicenter of that profound emotional earthquake known as “infant mortality”.

The death of an infant, pre-born or otherwise, is profoundly heartbreaking – one of the greatest griefs a parent is called to bear. For Christian parents, there is the sure knowledge that our sovereign and merciful God is in control; but there’s also a pressing and practical question: “Is our baby in Heaven?” It’s a natural and unavoidable question, calling for our most careful and Biblical study and examination of our theology (what we believe about God). Moreover, the unspeakable anguish of a parent’s heart demands our honest and humble searching of the Scriptures.

Some Attempts at an answer

- **There’s the answer of SEMINATALISM.** This answer ignores the Bible’s teaching on the issue and attempts to establish DOCTRINE on the basis of what we HOPE MAY be true. Our HOPE, however well-intentioned our hope may be MUST be grounded in SCRIPTURE or else we’re simply whistling in the dark. We may hold on to HOPE, but unless our HOPE is ANCHORED in SOMETHING, our HOPE will not hold US!

- **There's the answer of UNIVERSALISM.** Universalism says that eventually EVERYBODY is saved. The BIBLE teaches a dual destiny for the human race. Those who are IN CHRIST (in a saving relationship with Jesus) go to be immediately with the Lord and will 1 day be raised from the grave & live in the new Heavens & the New Earth. Those who are NOT in Christ will suffer eternal & unspeakable punishment in the eternal fires of Hell. Universalism is a false promise, and it denies the Gospel.
- **There's the answer of WCF 10:3** *"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word."* Some people consider that answer to be a "dodge". Just sayin'

**Some church history "solutions" FYI** In early church history, *Ambrose* believed that BAPTIZED infants went to heaven, while unbaptized infants did not, but they DID receive immunity from the pains of hell. Of course, this assumes that (a) baptism saves and (b) that there's some "limbo" state people live in that's neither Heaven or hell. *Augustine* of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century agreed with *Ambrose*. Others diaout history have taught that infants will have an opportunity to come to Christ after death. *Gregory of Nyssa* & a growing # of contemporary theologians hold to that view. The WCF says that "ELECT" infants dying in infancy are saved. But that leaves a question unanswered, "Who are the ELECT" infants? Are they children of CHRISTIANS (the elect), OR are they part of the "elect" because God shows grace to those who are incapable of responding to the Gospel?

*Westminster Confession of Faith* 1:6 says, "The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture . . . Is the Bible's teaching regarding the eternal disposition of infants dying pre-born or in infancy expressly stated or deduced? You will NOT find an explicit Scripture that reads "Infants dying in infancy go to be with the Lord," or "Infants dying in infancy go to hell." But then again, you will not find an EXPLICIT Scripture affirming the TRINITY, much yet using the actual word. The TRINITY is DEDUCED from Scripture. Could the final disposition of infants dying in infancy fall under the category of a ". . . good and necessary consequence deduced from Scripture . . . "?

#### **4 Biblical considerations will guide us as we seek to answer the question.**

##### **1. Consider the argument from GENERAL REVELATION.**

*Romans 1:20* says that people who receive God's "General Revelation" in nature and in God's Moral code written in their hearts yet REJECT that revelation are morally accountable for their REJECTION of the Truth. ***The question here is, Are Pre-borns and infants accountable to God and subject to His eternal wrath for REJECTING the Truth revealed in nature even though they have neither the capacity to RECEIVE nor REJECT God's general revelation?***

##### **2. Consider the argument from PRE-BIRTH REGENERATION.**

*Jeremiah 1:4-5; Luke 1:11-15.* The verses dealing with the prophet and with John the Presbyterian offer two examples of people who were, even while in their Mother's Womb, chosen for salvation before God even before they were born. They both received God's grace BEFORE birth. Had either child died in infancy, Biblically speaking, there would be no question about their eternal destiny. **Question is, is this something that only happened 2 times, or could these two men be examples of how God's grace sovereignly operates even before birth (we DO believe grace is operative before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1:4!)? Is there any real reason to believe that what happened in these 2 cases could not happen in other cases, also?**

### 3. Consider the argument from ACTUAL TRANSGRESSIONS JUDGMENT.

*1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-12.* This may be the strongest argument in favor of pre-born babies or infants dying in infancy going to be with the Lord. The consistent testimony of Scripture is that while we DID inherit Adam's sin NATURE (Psalm 51:5, "sinful @ birth . . ." that's my basic nature as a human being . . . there are no "innocent" children, we sin B/C we are SINNERS!), the CONSISTENT TESTIMONY of Scripture is that people are JUDGED by God on the basis of sins they have VOLUNTARILY and CONSCIOUSLY COMMITTED.

In other words, in the Bible, God's eternal judgment is ALWAYS based on conscious, deliberate REJECTION of divine revelation (that culminates in Christ) and WILLFUL disobedience. **The question here is, ARE INFANTS CAPABLE OF THIS CONSCIOUS REJECTION OF GOD'S REVELATION OR OF WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD'S REVELATION?** Yet there is no EXPLICIT account in Scripture of ANYONE being judged for ANY other reason than consciously and willfully REJECTING God's revelation on the Bible (& the Christ of whom the Bible speaks).

R. A. Webb, a theologian, infers from these Scriptures ". . . in God's providence, dead infants have been prevented from consciously committed SINS, and *there is NO ACCOUNT in Scripture of ANY OTHER JUDGMENT based on ANY OTHER GROUNDS besides conscious, willful rejection of God's Revelation (moral and of Christ).* No deceased infant is capable of willful rejection of God's revelation of Himself."

WHY in Scripture are people condemned to Hell? Consistently, for their REJECTION of God's REVELATION and their REFUSAL to believe (He who does not BELIEVE [an act of the will] is condemned already for refusing to believe, *John 3:18*). Is any infant capable of either receiving OR rejecting God's revelation? There is no account in Scripture of someone being condemned JUST BECAUSE of their sin nature.

Another side issue brought up often is, "WHAT ABOUT REPENTANCE AND FAITH?" Just remember that repentance and faith are EVIDENCES of regeneration and to not CAUSE one to be born again!

### 4. Consider the argument from a BIBLE NARRATIVE.

*2 Samuel 12:15-23*. The firstborn child David had from his illicit relationship with Bathsheba died. Let's read the narrative . . . Is "I shall go to him" simply a statement from David that after he had put his son in the ground in plot # 37 in Woodlawn Cemetary in Jerusalem that he hoped several years down the road people would bury David right beside him in Plot # 38? The Question here is FROM WHAT IS THIS BELIEVER DERIVING COMFORT? It seems that the comfort comes from knowing that he will one day be reunited with his son, in Heaven. Is this a statement true only of DAVID'S situation? Is it a statement that affirms that the infants of BELIEVERS go to Heaven? Or is it a statement affirming that ALL infants go to Heaven? The Bible doesn't say, but we know that if ONE infant went to heaven, then why should we assume that only ONE would EVER go?

Personally, I believe all of the above arguments, and especially #'s 3 & 4 , certainly seem to offer us hope that those who die pre-birth or in infancy are in fact safe in the arms of God!