

ARE BABIES BORN IN SIN?

By Mark Lindley

The old doctrine of Original Sin is still alive. Every now and then, one might hear a preacher state that we all have “Adam’s nature,” and that we are “born in sin.” The doctrine is referred to as Original Sin or Total Hereditary Depravity. Many denominations of our day believe it.

The doctrine suggests that after Adam sinned in the Garden, he passed on his “sin nature” to all people. Every baby is born “defiled in body and spirit,” and is “totally depraved,” not because the baby has sinned but because Adam sinned.

Some believe that Psalm 58 teaches this doctrine: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf adder that stops her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. Break their teeth, O God, in their

mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Lord.” (verses 3-6.) Based on this passage some have said that “babies speak lies” because they have inherited “Adam’s nature.”

Let me assure you that babies are pure, innocent, and are not born in sin! Further, babies have never inherited a “sinful nature” from Adam! This is an ugly, false doctrine that should be opposed by all who respect God’s Word.

Well, what about Psalm 58? I affirm that Psalm 58 does not teach Original Sin as seen by the following: 1) The passage is describing David’s enemies, not innocent babies; 2) The passage says that the ones under consideration “go” astray, not that they “are born” astray; 3) Newborn babies cannot talk, much less “speak lies”; 4) The ones David describes have “teeth,” but babies do not have teeth; 5) Neither Adam nor Adam’s “nature” is mentioned in this passage; 6) This

passage is an inspired exaggeration, designed to show the wickedness of David’s enemies who were also God’s enemies. Obviously, the language is not to be taken literally. Babies do not “literally” go astray “as soon” as they are born; rather, wicked men make wicked choices early in life and go astray. That is all the text teaches. No passage teaches that babies are born sinners!

Adam did not have a “sinful nature.” God created him pure and sinless. But Adam chose sin. This is precisely how people become sinners today. We choose sin and therefore commit sin. “Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4.) Sin is committed, not inherited.

— Ripley, MS

MIRACLES JESUS DID NOT PERFORM

By Randy Vaughn

Jesus’ four biographies tell of thirty-seven specific miracles He performed during His earthly ministry. He fed thousands with a few morsels. He stilled a tempest and walked on water. He healed the deaf, blind, and the lame. He even raised the dead.

There is much to gain from a study of the miracles Jesus performed, but let us examine some miracles Jesus did not do. There were miracles which were suggested, which He could have done, but which He refused to perform.

After fasting in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by Satan who said, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” That would have abused His power so He refused, saying, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:3-4.)

In Samaria, a village did not

receive Him. James and John asked, “Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” Jesus had more power than Elias; He could have called down fire. But He rebuked them, saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” (Luke 9:51-56.)

When the mob came to Gethsemane, Jesus said to Peter, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:51-54.) Here was another miracle Jesus did not perform.

At the trial, His enemies tried to make Him perform miracles, but He would not. His power was not intended to satisfy their wicked curiosity.

(Matthew 26:67-68; Luke 23:8-9.)

Finally, while crucified on the cross, Christ’s enemies taunted, “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:40) He was indeed the Son of God; and He had the power, but He chose to die that others might live.

A study of all the miracles of the New Testament validates the claims of Christ and His apostles. (John 20:30-31.) His works showed that He was God’s Son. (Hebrews 2:1-4.) The miracles that He did not do also show much of His compassion.

— Hinesville, GA

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

CHANGE YOURSELF

By Luke Bower

There is an old story of a king who ruled in a very rich nation. One day he set out to see all the land over which he ruled. After his journey, his feet hurt from the rocky roads on which he had traveled. Determined to do something about it, he ordered all the roads in his kingdom covered with leather, so his feet would not have to walk all the rocky roads. This would cost a fortune and, most likely - because of having to butcher so many cows for the leather - cause the people of his kingdom to starve. However, the king was determined to do something about his hurting feet.

Finally, one of the king’s servants got over his fear of upsetting the king and offered a suggestion. “Instead of covering every road in the country with leather, why don’t you just get a small amount of leather and strap it to your feet?” The King was surprised at his servant’s boldness, but later decided to fashion a “shoe” for himself.

The deeper moral of this story is this: in order to make this world a happier, better place to live, change yourself - your heart and understanding - not the world.

In Philippians 4:12-13, we read that Paul learned to be content in any situation he found himself in. He wrote, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”

As Christians, we should learn not to get too upset and down about the circumstances life has thrown our way. Instead, we should learn about the strength, understanding, and peace we are offered in Christ Jesus.

You can’t always change the things that happen to you, but you can change what you do with those things.

— Abilene, TX

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.” (Matthew 6:31-34.) “For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” (1 Timothy 6:7,8.)

WORLDLY WISDOM VERSUS GOD’S WISDOM

By Danny Tunnell

The Bible is clear: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask God, that gives liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him.” (James 1:5.)

We live at a time when many are seeking their own wisdom rather than the wisdom of God. We may have the highest literacy in history, and the best universities and colleges, and still not know anything about God’s wisdom.

Jeremiah wrote, “Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glory glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, for I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 9:23,24.)

All of our worldly knowledge and wisdom is not enough to solve the problems we face. The first step toward the wisdom of God is to respect God and His word. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Psalm 111:10.) “Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.” (Proverbs 3:7.)

Even though worldly wisdom may seem to be the way to go, “There is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12.) All of the troubles and problems of the human race stem from the fact that we have followed the wisdom of the world rather than the wisdom of God. We need mind renewal brought about by heeding God’s word. (Romans 12:2.) Conformity to the world’s wisdom is the source of our calamities.

The Bible teaches there are two kinds of wisdom. There is a wisdom that is God-given; it is after the mind of Christ, and it views life in terms of eternity. “The wisdom from above is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17.) Godly wisdom is not brash, cynical or high-minded. It is characterized by reverence and faith.

Worldly wisdom is different. It is cunning, clever, subtle and designing. It schemes and connives. It is largely influenced by Satan, who himself is cunning, clever, subtle and designing. (Genesis 3:1; Ephesians 6:11.)

Isaiah the prophet wrote, “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes.” (Isaiah 5:21.) He said, “The wisdom of wise men shall perish.” (Isaiah 29:14.)

We live in the midst of a society in which many are intellectually wise and where worldly wisdom is highly valued. Some even laugh and sneer at God’s wisdom. They call believers fanatics and refuse to listen. But how many are paying a penalty for their folly? How many are bound with chains of their own forging? How many are impressed with a false sense of their own importance and wisdom?

Godly wisdom seems good and right to the faithful child of God. But to the world it may seem foolish and ridiculous. Paul addressed that concern: “The foolishness of God is wiser than men.” (see 1 Corinthians 1:23-29.)

— Miami, OK

THE FEAR OF GOD

By Danny Boggs

Scream! Panic! Collapse! Run away! Those are the kinds of things we do when we are afraid. We shake, and our hair stands up straight. Fear grips us, causing reactions and sometimes lasting effects.

When we come to the Bible, we cannot abandon those thought associations when we read about “the fear of God.” And we should not. When God met Moses on Mount Sinai, “Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, ‘I tremble with fear.’” (Hebrews 12:21.) David confessed, “My flesh trembles for fear of you, and I am afraid of your judgments.” (Psalm 119:120.) “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 10:31.) But that’s not the whole picture.

Jeremiah saw the judgment of God in the destruction of Jerusalem, and then God showed him coming joy over the restoration of the city. Both scenes brought fear and trembling. “The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah a second time, while he was still shut up in the court of the guard: Thus says the Lord who made the earth, the Lord who formed it to establish it - the Lord is his name: Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. For thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city and the houses of the kings of Judah that were torn down to make a defense against the siege mounds and against the sword: They are coming in to fight against the Chaldeans and to fill them with the dead bodies of men who I shall strike down in my anger and my wrath, for I have hidden my face from this city because of all their evil. Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance and prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.” (Jeremiah 33:1-9.)

When we recognize our rebellion against God, we are seized by the thought of God’s anger and wrath. We shudder to think that he hides his face because of our evil. But when we truly learn and believe that he is a God who also heals, cleanses, forgives, restores, rebuilds, prospers, protects, and rejoices over penitent people, we fear and tremble because of all the good and the prosperity he provides.

Biblically, real fear of God does not drive us forever away from him; it draws us near to him. It’s humbling in a special way to think of how good God wants to be to us. Art Lindsley writes that fear of God “involves a reverence for and respect toward God . . . It is not a fear of rejection by God but a fear of distancing ourselves from God by our behavior or by proving ungrateful for the love God has shown us.” (True Truth, p. 79.)

“Therefore, my beloved . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13.)

— Neosho, MO

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

OVERCOMING THE PRIDE PROBLEM

By Dalton Key

Cicero, once billed as “the greatest Roman orator,” was a man of tremendous talent and enormous ego. It was reported that often, after one of his speeches, Cicero’s hearers would cry out, “Behold, how well did Cicero speak!” It didn’t take long for the applause and plaudits to swell the speaker’s head.

The orator’s massive ego was put on full display when he once remarked: “When I write on philosophical subjects and lay my writings aside and later have occasion to return to them, I can scarcely believe that Cicero wrote them, they sound so philosophical!”

Cicero’s mistake was one of pride. He came to believe too much in himself and in all the lavish praise which was heaped upon him.

Herod Agrippa had much the same problem. Luke records the king’s sad story: “So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man.’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.” (Acts 12:21-23.)

Cicero and Herod, falling for the flattery which swept over them, both succumbed to that “proud look” which heads the list of those things hated by the Lord. (Proverbs 6:16-19.)

When Scripture admonishes that we “be clothed with humility,” it further reminds us that “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5.)

Those of us who teach and preach are especially - and continually - in need of such reminders. While many young preachers have been discouraged and decimated by unwarranted criticism, many others have been spoiled and ruined by well-meaning, but overblown, praise.

While we should not believe all the bad that may be said about us, neither should we foolishly accept as fact all the good! Every sermon is not a home run; we are not involved in preaching competitions; none of us are “superstars” within the brotherhood.

The story is told of one preacher who, after what he considered one of his more stellar sermons, asked his wife, “How many truly great preachers do you think there are in the brotherhood?” Her reply? “One less than you think!”

Paul’s attitude deserves imitation: “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others . . . But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” (1 Thessalonians 2:6; Galatians 6:14.) In keeping with our prayers of yesteryear, may we “hide behind the cross” as we preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.



GOD’S AMAZING CREATION

By Milton Smith

When we behold the physical universe we should immediately stand in awe of God’s astonishing power to create. From distant, massive galaxies to the DNA molecule, we see amazing arrangement and design all around us. How foolish the man surely is who suggests that the physical universe is nothing more than the product of blind chance. Like a poem demands the existence of a poet, like a musical composition demands the existence of a composer, the human body - with all of its amazing complexity - demands an intelligent designer.

The complexity involved in the human eye demands not only a cause, but a master designer as well. Particular elements had to be arranged in a very specific order to form its optic nerve, retina, lens, pupil, iris, and cornea. Are we seriously to believe that all the complexity of the

human eye was somehow brought together accidentally? Is it the least bit illogical to assume that somebody had to purposely arrange all the parts of the eye in order to give us the gift of sight? Does this not strongly suggest a Designer? For nine months, the parts of the eye are being made and arranged. Then suddenly, the design emerges! Consider the fact that the very design of the eye is for the single purpose of producing sight. And the design of this amazing mechanism must precede the final arrangement that brings about the blessed gift of human sight.

Yet we are asked by some to believe that all of this came about by pure accident? With no real purpose, arranger, or designer?

When we consider the human eye and nothing else, the logical person should arrive at the conclusion that its intricate, complex, and elaborate

design clearly demands intelligence. I have often pondered how any honest, logical person can seriously suggest that the eye came about as a result of (no pun intended) “blind chance.” Surely we must all agree with the inspired pen of David when he declared in the 19th Psalm, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows forth his handiwork.”

— Tulsa, OK

SIN IN THE CAMP

By Bobby Key

There was rebellion in the camp. The way had been hard, and the people were discouraged. Complaining about food, water, and hardships of the journey now turned into speaking against their leader, Moses. In fact, it went further and turned into speaking against Almighty God.

Punishment was equally swift. Fiery serpents appeared among the people, and by their bites the Israelites began to die. “We have sinned,” the nation cried. “Save us. Take away these snakes!” Their plea was presented to God by an interceding Moses, and a gracious God hearkened unto them. “Make a fiery serpent. And it shall come to pass that every one that is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.”

Those who did as they were told, lived. (Numbers 21.)

More is embraced here than just an historical event. Christ says this is an analogy of the redemption of fallen man. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but

have eternal life.” (John 3:14,15.)

Sin is the deadly malady that has spread through the world. Wherever man is found, there sin is found also.

Like the venom from the snake, sin is deadly. Victims died from the venom. In a more awful way the victim of sin pays the penalty of death.

Remedy for both snake bite and sin are prescribed by the Lord. The Israelites could not heal themselves; neither can we! They escaped punishment just as we will, by heeding heaven’s instructions!

— Deceased

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16.) “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38.) “And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16.) “There is also an antitype which now

saves us - baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21.)

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