

April 15 – Tough Questions

Do Babies go to Heaven?

Hey there, this is Tim Perry coming at you with Week 15 of Tough Questions.

Our question this week comes from that famous story of David and Bathsheba. It comes out of 2nd Samuel 12, and it's the aftermath of David's adulterous affair with Bathsheba. Nine months later a child is born and God steps into the circumstance and actually takes the life of the child.

Now here's the question that I think the passage raises for us: Do babies who die go to heaven? Let's look at the case of David and David and Bathsheba's son, but let's also talk more broadly about what happens before what evangelicals call the "age of accountability" with little tiny children.

A guy that I know who is an atheist has a really big beef about this, and he wrote me an email the other day and it goes like this: "Nine million children under the age of five die every year," says Bill. "That boils down to nine children dying every minute. Imagine the suffering these children experience as well as their parents and their family. Any God that allows suffering like that on a huge scale like that is either impotent or evil," says Bill. "How do you explain God's behavior in this instance? And please don't say that God is mysterious. That's a repulsive answer."

Well, good question, Bill. I'm glad that he's asking it. Let's go back to David's circumstance. This child of David and Bathsheba is born, but the child is not thriving. The child is sick and tottering on life and death. David knows that this is an act of God's judgment in this circumstance, and so here's his response: *"And the LORD afflicted the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and he became sick. David therefore sought God on behalf of the child. And David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground."* So for seven days David is heartbroken over these circumstances. He knows that this is an act of God and he appeals to God and says, "Please can you spare the life of this child?" Don't let this child pay for my sin, in a sense.

Well, the child does die and here's David's reaction: *"While the child was still alive I fasted and I wept for who knows whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now that 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."* See, David knows that the door has been closed on this child's life, but David has hope that he will actually see his son someday. *"I will go to him."* It was David's ambition and David's heart and passion – that David after his days on earth were over – that he would go and be with the LORD.

David also held a very aggressive theology of the depravity of man. In David's famous Psalm about wrestling with the failure with Bathsheba – he said, *"I was conceived in sin from the day I was born I was sinful."* So David holds to a view that

humanity is fallen. Humanity is totally depraved. There is nothing in the life of a small child that necessarily obligates God to take that child to be with him in heaven. But David here is holding out hope because perhaps if God is gracious to him, he'll take the life of this child and he'll actually be able to see this child someday. God will welcome this little child into his presence and then when David dies later, he'll actually get to join God and meet up again with this little child in eternity future with God.

Well, that does have some bearing on our question. We know that God's normal way of working to save people is that people would hear the gospel good news – that they would have the opportunity to respond, to reply to God, to give themselves to God, to trust Jesus. But in the case of a very young child who has no opportunity to do that, scripture gives us at least this example of a child who perhaps is going to be reunited with its parents someday in heaven.

Well, I don't know what you think about that. It's a fascinating test case. Hit reply and tell me what your thoughts are about it. Let me know what you think.

This has been Pastor Tim Perry, Christ Community Church with Tough Questions. We'll see you next week.