

Are Infants Born with Original Sin?

Some religious groups teach that everyone inherits the guilt of Adam's sin. They often refer to this as the doctrine of *original sin*, which holds that people come into this world totally depraved. Does the Bible teach the doctrine?

First, the Bible teaches that children do not inherit the guilt of their parents' sins. Ezekiel settled this question when he wrote, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son (Ezek 18:20)." Apparently, at the time Ezekiel wrote, some held a position close to that of *original sin*. Some of them said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge (Ezek 18:2)?" God told Ezekiel to condemn this proverb: "As I live, say the Lord Jehovah, you shall not have *occasion* anymore to use this proverb in Israel (Ezek 18:3)."

Second, the descendants of Adam inherit the consequences of his sin but not the guilt of that sin. Because of Adam's sin, physical death passed upon the entire human race: "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned (Rom 5:12)." There is a great difference between guilt of sin and consequence of sin. Little children sometimes suffer from the consequences of a parent's sin, but they do not suffer the guilt of that parent's sin.

Third, Jesus did not view little children as sinners. He did not teach the doctrine of *original sin*. He held little children up as models for those who would enter the kingdom. Jesus taught, "Verily I say unto you, except you turn, and become as little children, you shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3)." Again, he taught, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:14)." Jesus did *not* say, "Unless you become as totally depraved children." The doctrine of original sin is not a teaching of Jesus.

Fourth, we are each responsible for our own acts (Ezekiel 18:3, 20). The Bible teaches that children are without sin (Matt: 18:3; 19:14). Obedience to the gospel is for sinful adults—our sins and not Adam's. To be freed from our sins which we have committed, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Acts 17:30), confess the name of Jesus before men (Rom. 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of our sins (Acts 2; 38; 22:16). Infants are not capable of believing, repenting, and confessing. Nor do they need to, for they are without the original or current sins.