

WHAT IS ORIGINAL SIN? (2)

The concept of original sin simply stated is that we inherit, (have on our souls) the sin of Adam and Eve when we are born. This makes us a sinner at birth and those who espouse this doctrine (original sin) then usually follow with infant baptism (sprinkling or pouring). To make the concept of original sin valid the Bible must teach it. If the Bible teaches such, then it is true that all babies have on their souls the original sin of Adam and are sinners from birth. If the Bible does not teach that babies have original sin, they are pure (sinless) at birth and infant "baptism" is not necessary.

One scripture that is used to support the idea of original sin is found in Exodus 20:5. Here the Bible says: " I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate me,". Some have said that the sins of the fathers are passed on to the children, the children's children and so on. They go further by showing the parallel passage in Deut. 5 :4. But to stop here in Exodus would be premature. To understand Ex. 20:5 one needs to look at Ex. 34:7. Exodus 34:7 states: "who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations ,"

Here we may understand what "visiting the iniquity" means. Exodus 34:7 says that God will "visit the iniquity" by not permitting the guilty to go unpunished. Simply stated, God will forgive the transgression of the fathers and punish the generations that come after them. The generations after them did not inherit their sin but suffered the consequences just the same. Jeremiah 32:18 says that God repays the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them. Again we see that the children "pay the price" for their fathers sin but do not inherit or obtain the sin itself.

Therefore in light of Ex. 34:7 and Jer. 32:18 we see that the passages under question (Ex. 20:5 and Deut. 5:4) does not teach that sin is passed on from generation to generation. Rather the punishment of God for sin can last from generation to generation after the sin is committed.

Next week we will take a look at David's statement in Psalm; 51 :5.