

## Psalm 51:5

### Introduction

1. David penned these words in the long ago.
  - “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” NIV
  - PSA 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. NASB
  - “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” KJV
  - A literal translation of the Hebrew is “Behold, in iniquity I was born, and in sin she conceived me, mother mine.”
2. This statement is very controversial and has been greatly misunderstood by the majority of the students of the Bible.
  - a. Some believe this verse teaches original sin, and contend a baby is born a sinner.
  - b. They further contend if a baby is not baptized the baby is lost.
  - The literal interpretation of Psalm 51:5, magnified by John Calvin (1509-1564), has done untold harm. He wrote: The passage affords a striking testimony in proof of original sin entailed by Adam upon the whole human family (**Commentary On The Book of Psalms** 5, 290, cited by Don Jackson, Gospel Advocate, 10-15-1987)
  - John Wesley (1703-1791) accepted Calvin’s error, and taught that infants should be baptized: “Infants need to be washed from original sin ... the original stain cleaves to every child of man” (Wesley’s Works, II, 16, cited by C.R. Nichol, **A Study In The Methodist Discipline**, 53).
3. One needs to keep in mind that Psalm 51 is poetry - not prose.
4. David spoke poetically and figuratively in this psalm as he often did in his writings.
5. Everything is not to be taken literally in this psalm, but must be interpreted poetically.

### Devilish Doctrine

1. These men and many others like them have misled countless people into believing this devilish doctrine.
  - a. The Bible does not teach that a baby is born in sin and carries the guilt of Adam’s sin.
  - b. We do not have a single case of infant baptism in the New Testament.
  - c. Some have assumed there were infants in the household of Lydia and the jailer, but there is not an ounce of proof for this. (Acts 16:15, 33).

ACT 16:15 And when she **and her household** had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be

faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

ACT 16:33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

- 1) Many "households" do not have infants in them.
- 2) An argument from silence means nothing because one can prove anything from silence.
2. The Bible teaches that God is a God of love (1 Jn. 4:8), but this devilish doctrine has God punishing infants, knowing neither right nor wrong, because of what Adam did in the garden of Eden.

### **What The Bible Teaches**

1. The Bible does not teach little children are born sinners and are lost.
  - a. This was not a doctrine held by the Jews, but is deducted from David's poetic language.
  - b. There is no proof that this doctrine was held by the first Christians.
  - c. There is not a single example of infant baptism in the New Testament.
2. It teaches we must become like them to be saved. (Matt. 18:3,4; 19:14).

MAT 18:3 and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 18:4 "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

MAT 19:14 But Jesus said, "Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

3. It teaches the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father. (Ezek. 18:20; 28:15).

EZE 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

EZE 28:15 "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you.

4. It teaches a person remains sinless until they personally sin. Sin is not transferred from one person to another nor is righteousness transferable.
5. It teaches those who are baptized make this decision for themselves, and baptism is by immersion.
  - a. "baptism" is from the Greek "baptizo" [bahp **tid** zoh] meaning "to dip, submerge, immerse."
  - b. The New Testament reveals that baptism was a burial in water. (Jn. 3:23; Matt. 3:16; Rom. 6:3,4; Col. 2:12; Acts 8:36-39;10:47).
  - c. Those who practice infant sprinkle water on an infant who has no concept of God, salvation, sin, right from wrong, etc.
6. It teaches that those who are baptized [immersed] must believe, deny themselves, repent, and confess. (Jn. 3:16, 36;

Matt. 16:24; Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Matt. 10:32,33; Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10).

- a. Infants and small children are not capable of doing any of these things.
  - b. Once they are old enough to know right from wrong and respond to the gospel in the way designated by the scriptures they become accountable.
  - c. The age of accountability varies from child to child, but it certainly has not been obtained by infants and small children.
7. It teaches each one must give account for the things done in the body, but not for what others have done. (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12).
8. One is separated from God by his/her own sins. (Isa. 59:1, 2).

ISA 59:1 Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save; Neither is His ear so dull That it cannot hear.  
ISA 59:2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.

9. The Bible does teach that all, including infants, suffer the consequences of sin - physical death.
- a. Physical death is passed on to all because of Adam. (Rom. 5:12-14).

ROM 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

ROM 5:13 for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

ROM 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

- 1) Because of Adam's disobedience every human must die.
- 2) All must die physically because of what he did.
- 3) All must die even if they could hypothetically live without sin.
- 4) Adam sinned representatively for us in regard to physical death just as Abraham represented the priestly tribe of Levi when he paid the tithe Melchizedek. (Heb. 7:9, 10).

HEB 7:9 And, so to speak, through Abraham even Levi, who received tithes, paid tithes,

HEB 7:10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

- 4) Because Adam and Eve sinned they were driven from "the tree of life" and became subject to death.

- b. Paul also emphasized this fact. (1 Cor. 15:22, 23).

1CO 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

1CO 15:23 But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming,

- 1) The subject matter of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of Christ and believers.
- 2) Paul is emphasizing that because of Adam all must die physically, but because of Christ all will be raised from the dead. See Jn. 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

9. The Bible does not teach anyone bears the spiritual guilt of Adam's transgression, and will be lost because of what Adam did.
  - a. No one in hell will be able to successfully blame Adam for his condition.
  - b. Those who are lost will be lost because of their own sins.
  - c. Each person is responsible to God. (Gal. 6:5).

### **What Is The Meaning Of Psalm 51:5?**

1. There are several possible meanings that do not support babies being born in sin.
2. One possible meaning is that David was stressing he was born into a world of sin.
  - a. He is not saying his conception was sinful or as a baby he was born with the guilt of Adam's sin.
  - b. He is setting forth he was born into a sinful world and these sinful influences had led him to sin with Bathsheba and commit many other sins.

PSA 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in [a world of] iniquity, And in [a world of] sin my mother conceived me.

- c. This is a view held by many conservative scholars, but it is an interpretation based on treating this verse as prose and not poetry.
  - d. He never blamed Adam or others for his sinful condition.
  - e. Many seek to interpret the words of David literally.
3. A far more likely meaning is David is using a hyperbole, an exaggeration, for the sake of emphasis. A hyperbole is not always regarded as a lie, but it is an exaggeration to make a point.
  - a. He is not speaking literally as most have assumed, but poetically.
  - b. For emphasis sake he describes his own entire existence as sinful.
  - c. He is in deep mourning because of his transgression with Bathsheba.
    - 1) This man had been a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22), but he had let lust get the best of him.
    - 2) Lust led him to commit adultery with Bathsheba and even have her husband, Uriah, killed.
    - 3) He felt that his sin was so great that it was as if he had been sinful from his mother's womb.
    - 4) David had hit an all time low in his life.
    - 5) He was ashamed and full of godly sorrow for what he had done, and is begging God to forgive him. (Psa. 51: 1-4).

PSA 51:1 Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions.

PSA 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

PSA 51:3 For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.

PSA 51:4 Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge.

d. He used other hyperboles in this chapter that are not literally true.

1) He said “Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight...” (Psa. 51:4).

- This was not true. He had sinned against Bathsheba, and he had sinned against Uriah by having him killed. (2 Sam. 12:9).
- He may have caused some to turn away from God because of his sins.
- His baby died because of his sin (2 Sam. 12:14), but the baby did not go to hell because of his sin.
- David believed that one day he would be with his son. (2 Sam. 12:23).

2SA 12:23 "But now he has died; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me."

2) David also prayed that God would purify him “with hyssop.” (Psa. 51:7).

- He did not think God would literally obtain “hyssop” and literally dip it in “water” and animal “blood” and sprinkle it on him. See Heb. 7:19.

3) Literally David did not mean his “bones” could “rejoice” or God had literally “broken” his bones.” (Psa. 51:8).

PSA 51:8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice.

4) He spoke figuratively when he spoke of God hiding his “face.”

PSA 51:9 Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

5) He also spoke figuratively when he spoke of a sinner having “a broken and contrite heart.” (Psa. 51:17).

PSA 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

e. David used hyperboles in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Psalm.

1) David said “But I am a worm, and not a man.” (Psa. 22:6).

- He did not believe he was a literal “worm,” but explained his comment by saying, “A reproach of men, and despised by the people.”
- In the 8<sup>th</sup> psalm he presented a very lofty view of man. (Psa. 8:3-5).

2) He exaggerated when he said he was one who trusted in God on his mother’s breasts. (Psa. 22:9).

PSA 22:9 Yet Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb; Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breasts.

3) He was surrounded by “strong bulls” that is poetic and not literal. (Psa. 22:12).

4) He was one whose “bones” were “out of joint.” (Psa. 22:14).

PSA 22:14 I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.

5) His “heart” had “melted in the midst of” his “bowels.” (Psa. 22:14). KJV

f. The wicked spies used an hyperbole that manifested their lack of faith in God. (Num. 13:33).

g. Job used an hyperbole when he said he had provided for widows “from my mother’s womb.” (Job 31:16-18).  
KJV

JOB 31:16 "If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail,

JOB 31:17 Or have eaten my morsel alone, And the orphan has not shared it

JOB 31:18 (But from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, **And from infancy I guided her**), NASB

h. John the apostle used an hyperbole in John 21:25.

JOH 21:25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.

#### **Additional Note:**

1. Pope Pius IX in 1854 created the doctrine of immaculate conception in regard to Mary, the mother of Jesus.
2. This doctrine was created to make the baby Mary sinless so that she could give birth to a sinless baby.
  - a. Those who hold to original sin have a problem in regard to the birth of Jesus.
  - b. How could Christ be sinless if He was born a sinner?
  - c. Jesus was not baptized until He was “about thirty years old (Lk. 3:23), and His baptism was not because of sin. (Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22).
3. The doctrine of immaculate conception is foreign to the Bible and is not needed since all babies are born pure and holy.
  - a. There is nothing more innocent than a new born baby.
  - b. Many die at birth, and the loving God will not condemn the innocent babies to eternal hell.

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