

## **Baby Dedication**

A Baby Dedication encompasses three parts: 1) It is a ceremony in which believing parents, and sometimes entire families, make a commitment before the Lord to submit a child to God's will and to raise that child according to God's Word and God's ways. 2) It is also a time where the Church is challenged to help in the parents' commitment. 3) Finally, it is a time for prayer and blessing the child.

### **Responsibilities Involved in Baby Dedication**

Christian parents who dedicate a child are making a promise to the Lord to do everything within their power to raise the child in a godly way, prayerfully until he or she can make a decision on his or her own to follow God. Parents who make this vow of commitment are instructed to raise the child in the ways of God, and not according to their own ways. Some of the responsibilities include teaching and training the child in God's Word, demonstrating an example of godliness, disciplining according to God's ways, and praying earnestly for the child. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is a challenge for all of God's people:

Listen, Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is One. Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

The Church also has responsibilities. The Bible reflects the idea of corporate identity, meaning that we are not simply a bunch of individuals with no sense of solidarity; we are knit together in the bond of love and are responsible for each other. When God asked Cain where his brother Abel was, Cain replied, "Am I my brother's guardian?" The implied answer of the rest of the Bible is a resounding, "Yes!" We are in this together; we sink or swim together; we need each other, and we are to help each other when we can according to the capacity God has brought about in our lives. The Church is a family that is responsible for each other's growth in Christ, which includes our kids.

Because of the dual responsibilities of the parents and church, at the dedication both the parents and the church will be asked if they promise to do their part in the care and nurture of the child being dedicated. The parents will be asked if they intend to raise the child in the ways of God according to the Scriptures. The parents are primarily responsible for discipling their child; the Church is a supplement to this discipleship, not a substitute. The parents will be asked if they plan on living as a good example of Christian parents. No one is perfect, but there must be a clear intention to live a godly life with the help of the Lord. The parents will also be asked if they promise to pray for their child regularly. The Church will then be asked if they promise to help in the care of the child to the best of their ability. They will be challenged to live out the

idea that the Church is a family that is responsible for each other, using each person's gifts and time in such a way that the parents will feel encouraged and supported by a caring family.

The baby dedication is not just a time of commitment; it is also a time for prayer and blessing. The pastor will hold the child and pray for his or her physical, emotional and spiritual health as well as for protection of the child. Mark 10:13-16 gives us the example of Jesus concerning blessing children. Parents wanted their children blessed and therefore brought them to Jesus, but the disciples rebuked them. Jesus corrected the disciples and welcomed the children. Verse 16 concludes, "After taking them in His arms, He laid His hands on them and blessed them." The concept of blessing is found throughout the Bible. It is not to be understood as something magical, but it is also not a meaningless ritual. It is powerful to bless others. An example of blessing is found in Numbers 6:22-27:

The LORD spoke to Moses: "Tell Aaron and his sons how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them: May Yahweh bless you and protect you; may Yahweh make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may Yahweh look with favor on you and give you peace. In this way they will pronounce My name over the Israelites, and I will bless them."

### **An Example of Baby Dedication in Scripture**

In 1 Samuel 1:11 Hannah made a promise to God:

Making a vow, she pleaded, "LORD of Hosts, if You will take notice of Your servant's affliction, remember and not forget me, and give Your servant a son, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and his hair will never be cut."

When God answered Hannah's prayer by giving her a son, she remembered her vow in 1:26-28:

"Please, my lord," she said, "as sure as you live, my lord, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the LORD. I prayed for this boy, and since the LORD gave me what I asked Him for, I now give the boy to the LORD. For as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD." Then he bowed in worship to the LORD there.

Luke 2:21-22 gives us another example:

When the eight days were completed for His circumcision, He was named Jesus – the name given by the angel before He was conceived. And when the days of their purification according to the law of Moses were finished, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.

This ceremony was in accordance to the Old Testament law, which we are no longer under, but the principle of dedicating your child to the Lord is still a good idea. There is nothing magical in

this ceremony and it is not commanded by the Lord, but with true hearts of dedication from the parents and congregation, this ceremony can be an important milestone in the child's life.

### **Why Dedication Instead of Baptism?**

I recommend you read my two papers "How to Get Saved" and "Do All Babies Go to Heaven?" In these two papers we see that the Bible is very clear concerning baptism and babies. Many believe that God sends children to hell or limbo if they are not baptized before they die. This belief is simply not true and reflects a cruel understanding of God. All babies go to heaven if they die and therefore do not need baptism for salvation or regeneration (read my paper "Do All Babies Go to Heaven?"). Also since there is no Scriptural support of infant baptism by example or decree and no examples of anyone baptizing a baby until late in the third century, we can be sure that believer's baptism is the only method we need to follow (read my paper "Why Should I Get Baptized?"). Baptism is not a glorified dedication and has a meaning all of its own and therefore should not be a substitute for baby dedication as outlined above.