

THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the years we have received many questions as to when does a child reach the so-called “Age Of Accountability”. This short presentation is an attempt to answer that question. The fact that all men, women, children, and babies are sinners is a well documented scriptural principle: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (*Romans 3:23*). A blasphemous viewpoint of the justice of God leads Roman Catholics to baptize all babies, including dead babies, because they have been taught the heresy that all babies must be baptized to keep them from being cast into hell. The baptism of babies is rooted in the heresy of baptismal regeneration that falsely makes baptism mandatory for salvation. Baptismal Regeneration teaches that baptism regenerates the spirit rather than God the Holy Ghost regenerating those dead in their trespasses and sins. Then we have the wicked Calvinists that teach that certain babies were born predestined to hell which denies any doctrine of accountability. The wicked Calvinists, who took their doctrine from the Roman Catholic heretic, Saint Augustine, hold the baby accountable from the time they are delivered from the womb. However, the Bible clearly teaches that a just God does not hold infants personally accountable for their sins. Of the wicked Calvinists, we ask the following question: “Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right”? Obviously, there comes a time when a person does become accountable — hence the term, the “*Age of Accountability*.” The doctrine of accountability is based upon the following Biblical facts:

A. All Children Have A Sin Nature: *Psalm 51:5*.

⁵ Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; And in sin did my mother conceive me.
Psalm 51:5

B. All Children Manifest Their Sin Nature Immediately: *Psalm 58:3; Proverbs 20:11*.

³ The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. *Psalm 58:3*

¹¹ Even a child is known by his doings, Whether his work *be* pure, and whether *it be* right. *Proverbs 20:11*

C. Little Children Cannot Discern Between Good And Evil: *Deuteronomy 1:39*.

³⁹ Moreover your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it.
Deuteronomy 1:39

Therefore, they are not accountable. This does not necessarily mean that they cannot respond in obedience to parental authority. Discernment is a learning process.

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D. Little Children Do Not Sin Wilfully: *Romans 5:14.*

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. *Romans 5:14*

The phrase, "...even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression..." indicates that little children do not wilfully disobey God's law (as did Adam) — they only *naturally* disobey.

E. Little Children Who Die Are 'Safe' In Jesus: *2 Samuel 12:23.*

²³ But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. *2 Samuel 12:23*

David's child died shortly after birth. David, who was a saved man, had the assurance that he would one day see his son alive in Heaven — demonstrating the fact that infants who die go to be with the Lord.

F. Children Become Accountable From Their 'Youth On Up'.

Genesis 8:21; Matthew 19:20

²¹ And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart *is* evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. *Genesis 8:21*

²⁰ The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? *Matthew 19:20*

As to exactly when this point occurs, the Bible is silent. The "age of accountability" no doubt varies with each child, and depends to some degree upon external influences. In godly homes, where the Bible is taught this can be at a very early age.

See also: *2 Chronicles 34:1-3; 36:9; 2 Timothy 3:15.*

¹ Josiah *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. ² And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand, nor to the left. ³ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and

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the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images. *2 Chronicles 34:1-3*

⁹ Jehoiachin *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD. *2 Chronicles 36:9*

¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. *2 Timothy 3:15*

G. Accountability Involves Understanding God's Law.
Nehemiah 8:2, 3.

² And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. ³ And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law. *Nehemiah 8:2-3*

In *Nehemiah 8:2-3*, it is stated twice that only those who could hear and understand were brought under the reading of the book of law. The conclusion of the matter is this: There is no specific age identified in the Bible when a child comes to the so-called "*Age Of Accountability*". The age when a child comes to accountability varies based upon the environment they are raised in. Those children in Bible believing homes where the Bible is read and taught will generally come to salvation sooner than those children raised in the homes of unsaved parents. The doctrine of accountability also applies to the mentally handicapped who are mentally incapable of understanding and acting upon the gospel. You have to be able to hear and understand the book of the law (the Bible) in order to be held accountable to it.