

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

Departures: Original Sin

As departures from God's Word are considered, we ask the question: From whence did the departures of "original sin" and "infant baptism" come? When did they arise? "A departure from the divine government in one thing opens the way for other departures ...Prominent among the early departures from the divine order was the substitution of infant baptism for that of believers. This practice originated in the third century, and grew out of the doctrine of original sin. It was contended that baptism was regeneration in the sense of washing away original sin; that infants were depraved by original sin...therefore they baptized infants..." (The Church, the Falling Away, and the Restoration, p. 59); "...the doctrine of corruption and guilt, cleaving to human nature in consequence of the first transgression...became more firmly established;...the theory was finally evolved of the unconditional necessity of infant baptism. About the middle of the third century this theory was already generally admitted in the North African Church" (Church History, Vol. I, pages 426,427). If you have been following these studies on departures, you have noticed that centuries had passed from the time of the founding of the Lord's church till the departures became firmly fixed. To briefly recap the time frame of some of these: Later than the second century came the departure from God's plan for each congregation's organization (Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I, pages 116,117). In 251 A.D., a departure in the mode of baptism, called "clinical baptism" occurred. The first "creed," or body of man-made rules, appears in 325 A.D. The Nicene Creed formulated and imposed the rules agreed to by the "chief elders," by now called "bishops." About the middle of the third century the theory of infant baptism required because of original sin was already generally admitted in the North African Church. If a person or group is truly interested in the teaching and practice of the early church, it is evident departures, which arose centuries after the completion of the New Testament, must be discarded.

What does God say about "original sin"? Nothing! What does He say about our personal responsibility for sin? *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him"* (Ezekiel 18:20). *"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). It is easy to see infants do not have the mental capability to read and understand God's law. They are not accountable, as are those who have reached the age at which they can read and understand God's law. In a future column, we'll look at quotes from man's creed books which teach the departures of "original sin" and "infant baptism."