

WHERE'S RICKY?

By Jim Robinette

Little 3-year-old Ricky was playing in the yard with his big sister. His blond hair reflected the light of that warm August morning's sun and was ruffled by the sea breeze which flowed softly off Santa Barbara's beaches. This was another usual day of play and discovery for Ricky who was a vivacious and outgoing little guy.

Suddenly, out of nowhere it seemed, a drunk driver's car came crashing into the yard. And all so quickly and finally the car struck and killed little Ricky.

An unspeakable pain and grief came explosively over Kappy, Ricky's mom, when she was told shortly after this incredible event that her son had been killed in such a horrendous way. Kappy found it difficult to understand or really believe that Ricky had died in the following soul-numbing days as she coped with Ricky's burial, the shock her daughter experienced and would experience for many years into the future and the thousand details that now intolerably had to be dealt with because Ricky's life had been violently seized from him and her.

Kappy and I were not Christians when Ricky died but years later learned about Jesus and His love for us and we trusted Him to save us because of His favor towards us which we did not deserve. As Christians we had come to believe in the reality of eternal life and death, heaven and hell. We began to ask ourselves then: **Where is Ricky?**

We longed to know if the Christian Church had a definite and clear understanding of the destiny of children like Ricky who departed this world while very young. This led us to learn that many, many unborn, infants, and young children die in our modern times. Research enabled us to see that well over 40 million abortions have been committed in America since 1973 when abortion on demand was legalized and that yearly almost half as many babies are killed by abortion as are live-born. We learned that in the developing world more than 11 million kids die each year and that many die before the age of 5. Because of war, famine, natural disaster, disease (AIDS claims many millions of kids yearly) a countless number depart this world in infancy and childhood.

God's Spirit led us to inquire, **"Does God save uncomprehending infants and children from damnation, eternal death?"**

We want to share with you things we've learned about God's treatment of "babes", those who die in infancy and early childhood. We'll use this word "babes" to refer to the unborn, infants, and very young children in the remainder of this piece. Our hope is that in reading this tract you may acquire a saving knowledge and therefore true comfort about God's nature and about His gracious treatment of babes.

In the study of the Bible, God's word, and in our examination of the thoughts of gifted Christian leaders we've learned some fascinating things.

We learned that the Bible tells us that all men, including babes, are born with a sinful nature. **Psalm 51:5 says: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."** This verse means that children are sinners. Sin is a violation of God's law and God's law is summarized in God's requirement that man love God and his fellow man with all his being, **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** Mark 12:30,31.

Though babes may or may not have committed actual sins (for instance, a babe in the womb cannot lie for he can't yet speak) they are conceived with a sinful nature which has been passed on to all men from the first man Adam who sinned. **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—" Romans 5:12.**

The babe, like all men, must be forgiven of his guilt as a sinner (a result of his sinful nature) by a new spiritual birth which brings cleansing from guilt's stain and forgiveness of the guilt itself. **Jesus says in John 3:5, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."** Jesus says we must be born again, that is, we must experience a spiritual birth or the bestowing of spiritual life from God to inherit (receive) the kingdom of God. The babe's need, as is everyone's, is to receive this spiritual life from God. This receiving of spiritual life results in forgiveness of all sins—actual sins, thought sins, spoken sins, heart sins and the sin of a fallen nature. Blessedly for us, God gives this spiritual life to all men who receive it by believing that Jesus Christ is God's salvation, that He is God in bodily form (**God became a Man! A perfect man without Adam's sinful nature!**) **"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."**

Colossians 2:9. Jesus, who is God and man lived a sinless life on behalf of sinners, died on the cross as a substitute for sinners who believe in Him to bear their sinful guilt—**He died in the place of sinners!** And because He is God in human flesh and was absolutely sinless in His own life He raised Himself to life from the dead after three days—**"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."** John 2:19. Death could not hold Jesus because God is just. Jesus was sinless and therefore could not receive a permanent death sentence—**"For the wages of sin is death..." Romans 6:23.** A sinless man cannot justly die.

God's word tells us that over 500 people at once saw Jesus Christ raised up (resurrected) from the dead—**"After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once."** 1 Corinthians 15:6, and that His disciples saw Him ascend into heaven, **"Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."** Acts 1:9, where He now lives with His God and Father and our God and Father. And because Jesus has done all this to save men from death's judgements we have great hope that Jesus saves helpless babes from their sin's guilt and takes them to be with Him in God's paradise at the moment of their deaths.

God used the tragic occurrences of Ricky's death to teach Kappy about His love that saves the soul, of His love for her—**"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

John 3:16. Kappy learned that in Jesus she would find all of her needs met, even the need to accept Ricky's violent and senseless death and truly forgive the driver who killed Ricky. Ultimately she found the meaning of life, little Ricky's and hers, in Christ Jesus the Son of God and Son of Man. Kappy saw her sins for the evil they are, confessed them to God as the evil they are and turned from them to live in a way that pleases God. She trusted Jesus and repented of her sins and came to love God, as He always wanted her to!

Some of you who are reading this piece have lost babes and some of you have aborted your children. May God lead you, dear ones, to find forgiveness in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. There, where Jesus was crucified taking the place of sinners, my wife and you too will find love, peace, righteousness, grace and the knowledge of God that makes a broken sinner whole. Look by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ to save you from the tragedy of your babe's death and from the reality of your own sin and death. Trust Christ and repent of your sins, believing that He died on the cross as your holy sacrifice, that He was buried, and that three days later He arose from the dead, and you will find Christ's life and victory over death and you will live and never die—**"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die."** John 11:26.

Because Jesus is the loving, kind and compassionate Savior we have great hope that Jesus gave Ricky spiritual life through the spiritual birth prior to Ricky's death. We believe and hope that Ricky was born again and that he was cleansed of all his sin's guilt because Jesus gave Him the gift of eternal life!