

Doctrine of the Bastard

1. The term refers to an illegitimate child, a child born to unmarried parents.

Special Note.

Children would be better served if we spoke of irresponsible adults instead of illegitimate children. The children of an inappropriate union are still created, wanted, and loved by God.

2. The word bastard is from the Old French "*bastard*," which in turn was from Medieval Latin "*bastardus*." According to some sources, "*bastardus*" may have come from the word "*bastum*," which means packsaddle; the connection is that a bastard might be the child of a passing traveler (who would have a packsaddle).
3. The Hebrew term used for "bastard" in the Authorized Version is *mamzer* (mam-are') meaning to alienate; a mongrel, i.e., a person born of a Jewish father and a heathen mother.
4. A "bastard", or person born of a Jewish father and a heathen mother, was not allowed to enter into the congregation of the Lord. The prohibition also extended to Eunuchs, Ammonites, and Moabites.

Special Note.

Edomites and Egyptians were forbidden until the third generation.

5. Unfortunately, Bible interpreters are not agreed what is here meant by "*entering into the congregation of the Lord*." Matthew Henry offers three understandings of this divine prohibition.
 - Some think they are hereby excluded from communicating with the people of God in their religious services. Though eunuchs and bastards were owned as members of the church, and the Ammonites and Moabites might be circumcised and proselyted to the Jewish religion, yet they and their families must lie for some time under marks of disgrace, remembering the rock whence they were hewn, and must not come so near the sanctuary as others might, nor have so free a communion with Israelites.
 - Others think they are hereby excluded from bearing office in the congregation: none of these must be elders or judges, lest the honour of the magistracy should thereby be stained.
 - Still others think they are excluded only from marrying with Israelites. We find that when this law was put in execution after the captivity they separated from Israel, not only the strange wives, but all the mixed multitude (Neh. 13:1-2). With the daughters of these nations (though out of the nations of Canaan), it should seem, the men of Israel might marry, if they were completely proselyted to the Jewish religion; but with the men of these nations the daughters of Israel might not marry, nor could the men be naturalized otherwise than as here provided.

6. As a sign of divine judgment upon the Philistines, Zechariah predicted that “*a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod*” meaning that strangers without legitimacy would enter into the land.

Special Note.

Ashdod, along with Gaza, Gath, Ekron, and Ashkelon formed the Philistine Pentapolis. These cities reached the height of their power during the days of Saul (c. 1020 BC) and continued to be important under the Davidic dynasty (c. 1000 BC – 587 BC).

7. In the *New Testament* the apostle Paul declares that the true children of God are disciplined by the Lord. Absence of chastisement is an indication of an illegitimate relationship with God.
 - *Hebrews 12:8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.*
8. The Greek term for bastards is *nothos* (noth'-os) and refers to a spurious (doubtful) or illegitimate son. It is doubtful a person is born again if that individual sins grievously without being corrected by God.