

What The Bible Says About The Unborn

by Daniel J. Mount

We do not live in a neutral, moral-free world. The decisions we make reflect our worldview—either a Biblical worldview or an anti-Biblical worldview. Though the Bible does not always give specific answers for every question we face, its general principles can always be applied to the specific issues. It is important for the Bible to be our guide in all that we believe and do.

One issue facing Christians today is abortion. How pressing is it? In the United States alone, over one million babies are killed by surgical abortion methods every year. Over 4,000 are surgically killed every day. This is equivalent to the population of Lexington, Ohio being killed every day. (If you do not live in this area, check your atlas for a town of similar size in your area, for comparison.)

Some Christians support abortion; others oppose it. What does the Bible say?

No Bible verse uses the words “Abortion is wrong.” In Biblical days, abortion was unthinkable. But that does not mean the Bible has nothing to say on the subject. There are several important Biblical principles pertinent to this topic.

I. The Bible teaches that God created man in His image

The first and foundational principle is that God created man in His image. In Genesis 1:26, God said, “**Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.**” In Genesis 5:1, the Bible says, “**In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.**” In Genesis 9:6, God instituted capital punishment with these words: “**Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.**”

Because we are made in God’s image, human life is valuable. Human beings are not to be killed as we would kill cockroaches or spiders, or even as we would kill a horse with a broken leg. The sixth commandment is “Thou shalt not kill.” The Hebrew word translated “kill” means to wrongfully kill or to kill without cause; the New King James Version translates the word “murder” (“You shall not murder.”) This is consistent with the government having the power of the sword, to punish evildoers. But though all people are born with a sinful nature, unborn children do not commit crimes deserving of death. Thus, the power of the Government to execute evildoers does not apply. Because God created man in his image, *human beings are not to be killed without having committed a crime deserving of death.*

II. The Bible refers to unborn children as human beings

The second Biblical principle pertinent to this topic is that the Bible looks at unborn children as human beings, as real people and not just non-personal masses of flesh.

1. In Judges 13:8, Manoah (Samson’s father) prayed: “**O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born.**” Manoah did not say, “the fetus that will become a child.” He said, “the *child* that shall be born.” It was a child; it would be born.

2. In Psalm 22:9-10, David prays to God: “**But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly [womb].**” God is the God of the living (Mark 12:27), not of the dead. Only a human being—not a hunk of flesh—can acknowledge God as his

God from his mother's womb.

3. Psalm 78:5-6 states: "For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children." It does not say "the fetuses that would become children when they were born." It says, "the *children* which should be born." This verse unambiguously and unapologetically refers to the unborn as children.

4. Psalm 139:13-16 says: "For thou hast possessed my reins [for You formed my inward parts]: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." This passage refers to God's care for the unborn. Unborn children are not only human beings while God forms them; they are also human beings with a plan of God for their lives.

5. Jeremiah 1:4-5 says: "Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." All three phrases in verse 5 are important. Phrase 1 is a key phrase used to prove that life and personhood begin at conception, before the child begins to be formed. The second phrase is important, because only people can be sanctified. Dogs and horses can't; blobs of flesh can't. God only granted sanctification to human beings. The third phrase is likewise important because only human beings are ordained as prophets.

6. In Luke 1:41-44, an unborn child is twice referred to as a "babe" or "baby." The passage states: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed *art* thou among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of thy womb. And whence *is* this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."

It is clear Biblically that the Bible treats unborn children as human beings. It never uses the words "unborn children are human beings." Yet it is nonetheless clear. Let us move on to the third principle.

III. The Bible teaches that Christians are not to ignore the plight of the helpless

The Bible teaches that Christians are not to ignore the plight of the helpless, of the fatherless. In many if not most cases, women seeking abortions are unmarried and not intending to marry the child's father. Thus, most babies in danger of being killed are, in effect, fatherless.

1. Psalm 94:3-10 says: "LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph? How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves? They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" This clearly states that it is wicked to murder the widow, the stranger, and the fatherless. Abortionists murder the fatherless—and, through side effects, occasionally kill the widow and stranger as well. God sees and knows—and vengeance is His.

2. Exodus 22:22-23 says: "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou

afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry.”

3. Deuteronomy 24:17 says: “Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment [garment] to pledge.”

4. Psalm 10:13-14 states: “Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it. Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.” God is the helper of fatherless.

5. Psalm 82:1-3 states: “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.” We are to defend the fatherless.

6. Proverbs 24:11-12 says: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?” It is not optional to work to defend those about to be slain; it is our duty.

7. Isaiah 1:16-17 also says to defend the fatherless: “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.”

8. In Jeremiah 5:28-29, God says that he punishes nation for not pleading the cause of the fatherless. He says: “They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge. Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?” A decision to be pro-choice (or to be neutral) is not a decision without consequences.

What can Christians do? Christians can pray that abortion will end. They can support people and organizations providing alternatives to abortion. They can also vote for candidates committed to ending abortion. They can defend the Bible's position on life to their friends, saved and unsaved alike.

IV. The Bible clearly provides the basis for the humanity of the unborn

One more Bible passage is pertinent to this discussion. Exodus 21:22-25 provides the base for our legal system’s ideal of equitable punishments. What was the original context of the passage? Exodus 21:22-25 says: “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her [the New King James says “gives birth prematurely”], and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

The original context of this famous passage—the case for which this case law was instituted—was that of a man hurting a pregnant woman so that her child was born prematurely and died. “But if no harm follows,” a punishment is instituted. “Yet if harm follows”—this is how the verses are connected, and this is the Biblical punishment for killing an unborn child—the killer of the unborn child must give his life for the life of the child. If he even harms an eye of an unborn child through his actions, he loses his eye. This is part of God’s moral law. While the ceremonial law was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the moral law (the Ten Commandments, etc.) is still in effect and will be in effect as long as there is sin. It will always be wrong to murder, and it will

always be wrong to murder an unborn child. The murderer of an unborn child must give his life for the deed.

(Some have attempted to use this verse against pro-lifers. This argument does not hold. If a child is born prematurely, and is healthy, no harm has followed, and the only punishment upon the offender is as the husband of the wife determines. Yet if harm follows, life must be given for life.)

Now (on a practical level) does this mean that it is our responsibility to execute an unborn child's murderer? No. We are not to take justice into our own hands. Since we live in a republic of elected officials, our responsibility is to select leaders who will institute and enforce this part of God's law. It used to be a criminal action to kill unborn children. That is as it should be, and if Christians wake up, that is as it one day can be again.

Should Christians act?

Many Christians will make excuses for not being pro-life. One of the most common is the excuse "Well, I'm not God." Yes, that's true. We are not God, and because we are not God, we are not given the power to decide who lives and who dies. That is God's power.

But in the same way that we do not have the power to decide who will live and who will die, we also do not have the power to decide *who decides!* God did not give us the authority to end an innocent life; we do not have the authority to pass that authority to another person. We are not God; we cannot decide to end a person's life. But the Bible does not authorize us to do nothing while thousands of fatherless are killed every day, simply because someone else made the decision to kill them.

Another common excuse is to make exceptions. Many people, including Christians, will say that abortions are okay in the cases of rape and incest. The problem with this view is that it is *never* permissible to kill the fatherless, even in the hard cases. In fact, it is in these hard cases, where a child has been abandoned by his father and is about to be abandoned by his mother that the child is most defenseless and is most in need of protection.

Whether they admit it or not, whoever would seek to make exceptions for difficult circumstances must first believe that the value of a human life depends on the circumstances under which that human life began. If that proposition is admitted, then teenagers or adults who were conceived or born under disadvantageous circumstances could also be killed. Either life has value regardless of circumstances, or else the circumstances under which a life began determine that life's value.

Conclusion

In the Bible, the case is clear. God wants Christians to stand for the fatherless—for the defenseless—for those who cannot stand for themselves.

In the years to come, will you stand? Will you take whatever opportunities you have—volunteering, voting, speaking, or praying—to stand for the unborn?

The consequences might be more serious than you could imagine. Let me illustrate this with an example from history.

Martin Niemöller commanded a German submarine in World War I. After the war, he became the pastor of a Protestant church in a Berlin suburb, Dahlem. When Hitler's National Socialist party came to power, he supported them. He saw Hitler's anti-Semitic policies. He saw Hitler attack political dissidents and trade unions. He still supported Hitler.

Then Hitler began arresting pastors. Martin Niemöller decided to act. He organized the Pastor's Emergency League. One-third of Protestant pastors in Germany joined the movement.

They held public prayers for arrested clergymen, some of whom were eventually released. They stood up for converted Jews who were members of their churches.

Hitler retaliated. He arrested hundreds of pastors and priests. (About 4,500 were killed.) One of them was Martin Niemöller. He was arrested in July 1937; he was sent to the concentration camp in Dachau, Germany.

While he was in the concentration camp, his words of regret serve as a stark warning to all who believe that the culture war does not affect them. While in the Dachau concentration camp in Nazi Germany, Martin Niemöller said:

In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came after the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time, no one was left to speak up. (Found in Bartlett's Familiar Quotations, 1980 edition, page 823.)

Lest you think that this could never happen here, I want to remind you of a few things. Just like our country, Germany had a heritage. Under Charlemagne, Germany was named the Holy Roman Empire. It was the stronghold of Christianity in the Middle Ages. After Martin Luther began teaching in Germany, Germany was the stronghold of the Reformation, and then, after the Reformation splintered into denominations, the stronghold of Lutheranism. Just like our country has a heritage, Germany had a heritage. Do you think persecution of Christians couldn't happen here? It happened there.

In our country, we can still stand. We still have freedom of speech. We still have freedom of religion. But we are not guaranteed these rights forever.

The war in our society wages on many fronts. But the day is not far off when our enemies will openly attack us. They will term the Bible "hate speech" and attempt to jail us for reading it. It has happened in Canada, and it *will* happen here—unless we stand now. If we wait to stand until that time comes, no one will be left to stand for us.

Christians today have two choices. We can stand—while there is time. Or we can wait until they come for us.

If we choose to stand, and seek God's face, and turn from our wicked ways, God can heal our land, and the tide in this nation can be turned. If we choose to wait, the day will come when they will attack Christians openly. If we wait until then, it will be too late to turn the tide.

Will we choose to stand—or will we wait until it is too late? Will we one day see a concentration camp from the inside, and regret, like Martin Niemöller did for Germany, that

In the United States they came first for unborn, and we didn't speak up because they weren't our babies. Then they came for the Ten Commandments, and we didn't speak up because it wasn't our copy they wanted. Then they came after marriage, and we didn't speak up because it wasn't our marriage at stake. Then they came for the public school children, and we didn't speak up for them because our kids were safe at home. Then they came for us, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

Will that be the legacy we leave to our children? Or will it be a legacy of a generation that prayed, of a generation that sought God's face, of a generation that turned from our wicked ways—and of a generation that saw God heal our land?

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