

6th Preserving Life Protecting Preborn Children 2-6-11

Introduction

Some people in our culture oppose killing in war and capital punishment, but the killing that takes place in abortion and euthanasia. Abortion is not treated explicitly in Scripture, but we can show that implicitly it is forbidden by the 6th commandment, which is to say, it is murder. Among many Qs, two stand out: what is the biblical evidence? What should we do about it as Christian citizens?

I. What is the biblical evidence for protecting preborn children from conception?

We will cover the ideas of personhood and punishment.

A. Texts on personhood

That “you shall not murder” implies “you shall not murder preborn children from conception by aborting a pregnancy” rests on the teaching of Scripture that personhood begins at conception.

“Children” wrestled in Rebekah’s womb (Gen 25.22).

The Psalmist speaks of himself as a distinct person before his birth: “you knitted me together in my mother’s womb” (Ps 139.13).

Samson was a Nazirite from birth, and from conception because his mother is told to preserve his status as a Nazirite for the entire time of her pregnancy from conception to birth by not drinking wine and eating of unclean food (Judg 13.3-5).

Ps 51.5: **Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.** This is an important text, but it demands some careful study. Qs: What does David not mean by these words? [*He does not condemn sex; he does not point us to some sin of his mother or father*] What does he mean that gives us a heavy biblical teaching? [*He speaks of his sin, sin that he carries with him from the womb; original sin or the imputation of Adam’s sin to the human family universally, Rom 5.12, all have sinned in that one act of disobedience; heavy truth: all people are born sinners and stand under God’s condemnation as such*] How does the meaning here apply to the discussion of the personhood of the unborn? [*David identifies himself as a sinner from conception, only person’s are considered sinners in Scripture (all sinners are persons), so personhood goes back to conception*]

B. A classic text on punishment

The most relevant text to the discussion of taking the life of the preborn is Ex 21.22-25: **When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman’s husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. 23 But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.** If a pregnant woman gets tangled between men in a brawl and one of the men strikes her and initiates birth, there are two outcomes that apply.

1) There is no harm to mother or child

In this case, the husband and judges shall determine an appropriate fine.

2) There is harm to mother or child

Levels of harm occur from the blow. If death occurs, whether to the mother or child (or both), the action (even if unintentional as the axe head case) is punishable by death. The law of the talion applies (the law of retaliation; *lex talionis*): **you shall pay life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe** (23-24). Per this law, the

punishment should correspond (in kind and degree) to the crime; it is to be reasonable and fair, not too harsh and not too lenient.

Some steps of good and necessary consequence are required to apply this text to abortion. What are they?

Killing an unborn child is equal to killing a pregnant women; just as serious

The child is equally a person; sins are against persons

Harm requires the same punishment

Here the harm is unintended. By a fortiori (much more argument), if intended, the killing of a mother or unborn child is even more serious; abortion is the *intentional* killing of an unborn child, so if there were cities of refuge here today, the killer would not have safety there.

This brings up what to do about it? Next week