



YOU SHALL NOT MURDER!

Jim Dearman

“You shall not murder!” (Exodus 20:13) That was God's command as part of the Ten Commandments, and it is reinforced in the New Testament. In Romans 13:9, the apostle Paul refers to this commandment. There he writes, ***“For the commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ ‘You shall not covet,’ and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*** We must determine from the Bible what kind of killing is prohibited by the command, ***“You shall not murder.”***

First of all, let us notice what is **not** included in the command. It does not mean that killing animals for food is wrong. ***“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs”*** (Gen. 9:3). These words were spoken to Noah, but they were meant for all mankind for all time. In 1 Timothy 4:4,5 the apostle Paul wrote, ***“For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”***

Also, ***“You shall not murder”*** does not mean that it is wrong for a soldier or a policeman to perform his duty in a justifiable cause. Paul wrote in Romans 13:4, ***“For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.”*** In the Old Testament, the same God who said, ***“You shall not murder,”*** told Israel to destroy her enemies. ***“Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey”*** (1 Samuel 15:3). That was God's divine judgment upon those people who had opportunity to know God; yet they rebelled against Him, and God destroyed them. Thus, the execution of the duties of a soldier or a policeman in a justifiable cause are not condemned by the command, ***“You shall not murder.”***

Also, this command, ***“You shall not murder”*** does not mean that capital punishment is wrong. An Israelite who suggested serving other gods, for instance, was to be killed (Deuteronomy 13:6-9). A person who practiced homosexuality was to be put to death (Leviticus 20:13). Adulterers and adulteresses were to be killed (Leviticus 20:10). Murderers were to be put to death (Numbers 35:30,31). It is still God's will that those who commit murder shall be put to death. This is capital punishment. There is an eternal principle

established in Genesis 9:6. "***Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man.***"

The apostle Paul understood that the government had the right to put offenders to death. In Acts 25:11, he says: "***For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying....***" Paul, by implication, endorsed capital punishment. The world needs to appreciate, accept, and apply this Biblical teaching today.

Now that we have seen what the command "***You shall not murder***" does not mean, let us see what is included in this prohibition.

Murder is forbidden in this command. Jesus understood the sixth commandment to forbid murder, as recorded in Matthew 19:18. However, Jesus went beyond the physical act of murder to condemn those who hated their fellow man (Matthew 5:21,22; 1 John 3:15). The Lord dealt with the attitude as well as the action itself. But, what is murder? Murder is defined as "the unlawful, malicious, and intentional killing of one human being by another." Murder is forbidden. This prohibition against murder carries through from Old Testament to New. "***Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God***" (Galatians 5:19-21).

In addition to the common definition of murder, there are three other acts which amount to murder. One of these is abortion. The two other forms are euthanasia (the so-called mercy killing, killing of the elderly, or those who are hopelessly ill) and suicide, or self-murder. But the remainder of this study will deal with abortion.

Funk & Wagnall's Dictionary defines abortion as "a miscarriage produced artificially." Why is abortion wrong? Abortion is wrong because life is a gift from God. Genesis 1:27 points out that God made man in His image and He placed the spirit of man in him at conception, not at birth. Therefore, to take that life deliberately is murder. How do we know life begins at conception? The Bible tells us so. There is a Greek word, "brephos," which is found eight times in the New Testament. Thayer's Greek Lexicon says it refers to "an unborn child, embryo, fetus, a newborn child, an infant, a baby." It refers to the child in the womb, as well as to the child outside the womb. There is no distinction.

In Luke 1:15, John was said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. "***And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit***" (Luke 1:41). Here was the meeting of Mary and Elisabeth. The angel had appeared to Mary and told her that she would conceive, "***And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus***" (Luke 1:31). Then in verses 36 and 37 we read: "***Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.***" Then verses 39 and 40: "***Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah,***

and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth." These are the verses leading up to the verse 41 previously quoted which says that the babe "*leaped in her womb.*" The babe (the "brephos") leaped in her womb! That is a significant statement. Yes, life begins at conception and not at birth.

Is the unborn child alive or dead? There is no question about the fact that he is alive. Is he animal or human? He is human. Is he endowed with a spirit from God? Yes, the unborn child possesses an eternal, immortal spirit. "*Let us make man in our image,*" the Bible says. Man is made in the spiritual image of God, with an immortal spirit. That spirit certainly is within that child before he is born.

An Old Testament passage which reinforces the fact that abortion is a form of murder is Exodus 21:22-25. This is legislation pertaining to a situation in which an unborn child might be harmed. "*If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give 'life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.'*"

"*If she gives birth prematurely,*" when this struggle occurs, "*and no harm follows,*" means the woman had a miscarriage, but there was no loss of life. In that case, the one causing the miscarriage paid a fine according to what the husband determined. But the text says, "*if any harm follows,*" meaning the mother or child died, then, it was "*life for life.*" The one who caused the death of the mother or the unborn child paid with his life. How could there be a clearer passage revealing how God views the unborn child? He is a child created in the image of God, while yet in the womb. To take that life by abortion in order to end an unwanted pregnancy is murder! **Murder is sin!**