

SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLES GOVERNING LIFE

The Taking of Human Life

The 6th commandment is clear and plain. “Thou shalt not kill.” The best commentary on this command is by the Lord Himself in Matthew chapter 5. Here the Lord literally says “Thou shalt do no murder.” In the 6th commandment unlawful killing is forbidden. We must point out that there are circumstances where the Scripture teaches that killing is lawful.

Self-defence

Exodus 22:2-3 “If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, *there shall* no blood *be shed* for him. If the sun be risen upon him, *there shall be* blood *shed* for him; *for* he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.”

Capital punishment

Genesis 6 v 9 “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”

Just wars

This can be viewed as national self-defence. God forbids all other taking of life, and all who transgress this law are guilty before God. What is in view in the 6th commandment is the wilful, premeditated taking of a life, and this is happening daily in our land under many cloaks of justification and respectability.

The Legal Position of the Unborn Child in the Law of God

The legal position in the Law of God with regard to the unborn child is clearly set out in Exodus 21:22-25

“If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, 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.” Simply put, if a woman is injured so that she miscarry “-her fruit depart from her,” even if the child is born alive with no injury “-yet no mischief follow,” “he shall be surely punished.” But if harm does come to the child, “-if any mischief follow,” then the punishment will be in kind, “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.” Notice that the life of the unborn child has *equal* status with the adults in the situation.

We must not overlook the circumstance of suicide. Before we make any further comment it should be pointed out that a sizeable proportion of those who take their own life are so mentally unbalanced at the time that they are incapable of making rational decisions. That said, just because someone takes their own life does not mean they had the right to do so. The command forbids any murder, even our own.

Now that we have established the Biblical principles regarding life, we are in a position to examine some of the many moral and medical issues that raise ethical questions and examine them against the Word of God.