

The Bible And Abortion Leader Guide

Memory Verse: “So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the LORD gave her conception, and she bore a son” (Ruth 4:13).

Text: Selected Scriptures (NKJV, unless otherwise noted)

Last Lord’s Day we started an emphasis on the sanctity of human life. We began by answering the question of when does life begin based solely on a secular scientific viewpoint and based on the testimony of pro-abortion activists themselves. We saw that according to these sources human life begins at conception. Then we shared several current abortion statistics so that you could get some idea of where we are in America today. We talked about what abortion was, what the act involved. We talked about the root of the problem in abortion and finally we saw the first and foundational principle that the Bible gives us related to this question.

The principle was this: **Conception is an act of God.** It is an act of God in which He creates personally and individually every human life. Therefore abortion is an attack against God Himself and His work as the Author and Giver of life. There were several texts of Scripture we looked at in support of this, the most important being Psalm 139:13-16. If you have any questions about that, I encourage you to get the sermon CD. Today we are going to review that principle briefly and look at four more Scriptural principles related to the question of abortion.

Before we dive in though, consider this. The Scripture says, “For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle.” It saddens me that the church or what passes for the church has been filled with uncertainty for so many years on the issue of abortion, and that the sound we should be making in our society has been plagued by this uncertainty. Recently I went to a web site for the Religious Coalition For Abortion Rights, a site endorsed by the American Baptist Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church, the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), the Church of the Brethren women’s caucus and the YWCA. On this web site there was a prayer for mothers contemplating abortion. Part of it read thus:

Creator God...We are made in your image.
You promised that we will grow up to be in you.
Seeds of divinity are planted in us.
You are the destination of our dream.
You wait for us!

In time your care will bring us to perfection.
We are on a voyage.
Our life opens before us like an uncharted sea.
We have no compass but the stars.

You wait for us!

We renew our strength.

We are one with you.

The world is not yet finished.

We are co-creators with you.

Now beloved, if you know your Scripture then you know that this prayer endorsed by these denominations is absolute blasphemy. Moreover, even if there was a fair argument as a matter of reason for abortion, which there isn't, we as the body of Christ should still be compelled to reject it, because there is an authority that is far greater, more sound, beautiful and excellent than our own thoughts and reasoning, and that is the word of God. It's not that we have "no compass but the stars", we have a wonderful compass, the Bible. And we are not divine "co-creators" with God able to strike out on our own authority, but we are His creatures, of whom He requires obedience. He has created all for Himself the Bible tells us. We are beholden to Him for all things and in all things.

The first principle mentioned in the service last week was this: 1. **Conception is an act of God.** God creates and He creates personally, and individually every human life. Scripture makes this fact absolutely clear. In Genesis chapter 20 verse 18 we read this statement, "for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech...." In other words, the women were not having any babies because the Lord had closed their wombs. God is in charge of who has babies. In Genesis 16, Sarah says to Abraham, "The Lord has restrained me from bearing children." They knew that life was a gift from God, and every one who was bearing children was bearing because God caused it and anyone who was not bearing wasn't because God kept it from happening. In first Samuel, chapters 1 and 2 you have that wonderful story of Hannah and the birth of Samuel. And in 1:5 Hannah is described in this way, "The Lord had closed her womb."

Now looking at it from the positive side, the Lord also opens the womb. In Genesis 17:16, God says to Abraham, "I will bless her (referring to Sarah) and also give you a son by her, and she shall be a mother of nations." Now God says, not only am I going to open Sarah's womb, but I'm going to bring forth a large number of people and nations from her. In Genesis 21 it says that Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which the Lord had spoken to Him. God is sovereign over conception. He is sovereign over who is conceived and when they are conceived. Conception is in His hands.

We read about this situation over and over again in Scripture. You remember 1 Samuel 1. Hannah pours out her heart and it says in verses 19b-20, "...and the Lord remembered her, So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked for him from the Lord.'" She knew that her ability to conceive and bring forth a child was because of God's personal creative act. In that beautiful story of Ruth and Boaz and their coming together in marriage, chapter 4 verse 13 says "So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife; and when he went in to her, the Lord gave her conception...."

“The Lord gave her conception. And she had a son.” It was a specific act and gift from God.

There is a second principle. It is this:

2. The Bible teaches that human life begins at conception. We saw this last week as a matter of science from the testimony of recognized authorities, including pro-abortionists, but let’s see it this week from a greater authority, the word of God. There are several lines of evidence for this principle given in Scripture, but I will just mention three:

First, the greatest evidence that human life begins at conception, when it is rightly understood, is the incarnation of Christ. Jesus Christ came to earth and He took on humanity according to Philippians chapter 2. When did the incarnation take place? According to both Matthew and Luke, it began at the point of conception in Mary’s womb. Jesus fully identified with humanity from the moment of conception to His death. And when the angel came and announced to Joseph that his wife was pregnant because that which is conceived in her was of the Holy Spirit, He said, “And she shall bring forth a son and you shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.” He wasn’t describing some non-descript blob, some non-personal appendage, some potential life, but the very Son of God, the King of Glory, as yet unborn. A person.

Mary goes to Elizabeth, who is described as having conceived a son in Luke 1:36, once again not called a non-descript blob of tissue or a personal appendage by Scripture, but a past tense “**conceived son.**” In Luke 1:41 it says, “the babe leaped in her womb.” Now that word babe, (brephos) is the word for infant, but the text is speaking there of an unborn infant. Further, in Luke 2:12, 2:16, and 18:15-16, the same word is used to describe an infant outside the womb, and every other time it’s ever used it’s speaking of a born baby. So the Holy Spirit used that same word, brephos, for infants, born and unborn without distinction. Once conceived the child became a “baby” and it was a baby unborn until it was a baby born.

A second line of evidence comes from Psalm 51 verse 5. David says under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in his great confession of sin, “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” Now, put on your biblical history cap for me. Is David saying that he was conceived in sin because his mother had an illicit sexual encounter? No, that’s not what happened; he was a legitimate child. Is he saying this because there was something sinful about the union of his father and mother, a rape or a previous wife or something like that? No, none of those things happened. What is he saying? How has every Jewish and Christian and non-Christian biblical interpreter in the history of the church interpreted this verse? David is saying that the sin nature that he, you and I inherited from Adam inhered at the moment of his conception. The indwelling sin nature, the “flesh” as the New Testament calls it, came through the fall, from Adam to all humanity. Romans 5 talks all about this and verse 19 says, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners...” This was David and all humanity’s inheritance from Adam, and it is at conception that the sin-nature inheres. David wasn’t just a part of the mother’s body; he wasn’t a clump of tissue just attached and potentially human, but he

was a fully separate living being with a soul tainted by Adam's sin from the moment of conception.

A third line of evidence that human life begins at conception is once again demonstrated by Psalm 139 verses 13-15, "For You formed my inward parts; you covered [wove] me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." What was it that God wove together? What was formed by God in that womb? David says, "It was me." "I was formed." "**Me,**" a person, an individual being. That is where I began, he says. David didn't come later. He didn't come into being after he passed through the birth canal and took his first breath. He came into being personally when God skillfully wove him together inside his mother's womb.

All through the Scripture it is always a person that is in view in the womb from the point of conception and afterwards. In Job 3:3, he curses his own existence and life and in the second half of the verse says, "And the night in which it was said, a 'male child is conceived.'" What was conceived? A "child," a "male child."

So we see that not only is conception an act of special creation performed by God Himself, but that God, when He creates in the womb and gives conception as Ruth 4:13 says, creates a human life. There is a third principle from Exodus chapter 21, verses 22-24. The principle is this:

3. The Law of God protects a child in the womb, requiring life for life, if the child is killed. In this chapter God is expounding on and explaining the ten commandments by giving examples. God gives what attorneys call "case law" to serve as a guide to the nation of Israel. The text says, "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."

Now note first that the text says, "If men...hurt a woman with child." The Hebrew noun for child here is *yeled*, which is the common word for a child both inside and outside of the womb in Hebrew. So God has a "child" in view in the womb. The woman is hurt so that she "gives birth prematurely." This is the word *yatza*, the Hebrew word used to indicate a birth. That word is nowhere used in Hebrew for a miscarriage. Miscarriage is an entirely different term, *shacol*. So what we have here is a situation where men are fighting and they accidentally injure a pregnant woman, a likely event, especially if she tries to intervene and get them to stop. Because of their violent behavior, she goes into labor and gives birth prematurely. Note the text, "yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished..." So the text specifically says that if the woman is struck so that her child is delivered "and there is no harm," then the one who caused it will be fined. The fine is imposed because of the danger to which the mother and child were exposed and because of the distress caused by the event and the premature birth. But, if "harm follows" either

to the woman or the child, then the full weight of the law applies, including life for life, if the child is still born or subsequently dies.

Hebrew Scholar Jack Cottrell says this about this passage, “Clearly, then, the interpretation of this passage that is most faithful to the text is that which distinguishes between a premature birth that harms neither the mother nor the child and a premature birth in which one or the other is injured or even dies. In the latter case the life of the fetus is valued just as highly as the life of the mother, and the Lex Talionis principle applied to both...” “Lex Talionis” being the principle of judgment announced in verse 24. And this interpretation, Beloved, is fully in keeping with the understanding of all the ancients. One ancient Rabbi, Kusudo, for instance says this, “The harm means either the death of the woman or the death of the child. If in either case then what is required is life for life.” This is the proper interpretation.

So God considers the child in the womb to be a life as valuable as anyone else’s life, and the one who takes that life through an act of violent negligence, what we would consider voluntary manslaughter, that person is to forfeit his life in exchange for the life of the child. This punishment, Beloved, is required even for an act that is less severe than a deliberate taking of the child’s life. The intent of a man in this situation is far less culpable than the intent of a man or a woman that engages in a deliberate willful abortion of a child’s life.

The principle of Lex Talionis was first given by God 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 babe in the womb is a little person made in the image of God, and worthy of the same and even greater protection than is given to the lives of others. To take that life is a serious crime. A fourth biblical principle related to abortion is this:

4. God is particularly compassionate towards the helpless. If you study the Scripture for very long, you will note that it is characteristic of God to reach out to and care for those who are weak. They are a special concern of His. In Psalm 82, for example, it says in verses 3-4, “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy. Deliver the poor and needy; free them from the hand of the wicked.” It has always been the particular business of God to defend the poor, the downtrodden, the weak, the defenseless and the helpless. In fact, that beautiful statement of Proverbs 17:5 says, “He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker.” In other words, when you look down on those who are helpless and in need, then you reproach the One who made them.

God has special concern for the weak, defenseless and helpless. And dear friends, there is no person more weak, defenseless and helpless than an unborn child. God has taken that unborn child and for its own protection placed it in the womb of its mother. God has built in a natural love and protection of that child that only vile and wretched sinfulness could do away with as it is happening in our society. That mother is to be a sanctuary and haven of rest, a place of protection and nourishment for that child.

Proverbs 31 verse 8 and verse 9 say this, “Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die. Open your mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and the needy.” Beloved who is more speechless than the unborn child who has been appointed to die. Who is more mute? Who is in more desperate need that somebody open up his or her mouth and speak on that unborn child’s behalf? Who is there who is more needy? There is no one. All others have had more and better opportunity for speech and life and someone to plead their cause. God wants those who are faithful to Him to Open their mouths on behalf of those who have no opportunity to plead for themselves, to open our mouths and plead their cause, because He has a special concern, compassion and love for the helpless.

I was doing some research on the internet in preparation for this lesson, and I went to a pro-abortion site which was offering a pre-written sermon for pro-abortion pastors to give to the congregation in celebration of and in honor of the Roe v. Wade decision. I was curious, so I read it, and as I expected there was not even a single Scriptural reference in the entire sermon. No verses were read or quoted. There was only a passing reference to the woman who was cured by Jesus of the issue of blood, an affliction that she suffered from for 12 years. The theme of the sermon strangely enough was compassion, and the argument of the person that wrote it was that as Jesus was compassionate, we should have compassion on women by allowing them to terminate their pregnancies. Because, as the author said in essence, “the woman is particularly oppressed and helpless and a victim in the whole thing if we don’t give her this choice.” I read that and was quite frankly appalled at the argument and the blasphemous use of the Lord’s name.

The woman had no choice in the matter? She had no choice before she had sex? The woman was helpless in the matter? The woman, who put herself in this situation, was somehow the oppressed victim? No mention was made of the baby. What about Christ’s compassion for the helpless little infant, His own special creation that He had woven in the mother’s womb? What about Christ’s compassion on the one that was truly needy and helpless, the one who has no voice of his own? No authority was stated by the author other than his own whim, and he certainly had no authority from the Bible.

So we have seen that conception is an act of God, that human life begins at conception, that the law of God protects the child in the womb, requiring life for life, and that God is particularly compassionate toward the helpless. I want to give you one final biblical principle that relates to abortion.

5. The child in the womb is a neighbor and love demands his or her protection. Unborn infants in the womb of a mother, said the Jews of old, must be considered as neighbors. And it was this particular theological truth that dominated the early first through third century church’s argument against abortion. They said a child is a neighbor and a neighbor is to be loved as one’s own self. They knew what we all know. Even the pro-abortionists know it and the doctors know it, that life within the mother is not the woman’s body. It is a body all its own, and a spirit all its own, and a person all its own. The child is a neighbor to be protected.

God said it in Leviticus 19:18, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus reiterated the commandment on four occasions. He told the parable of the good Samaritan to illustrate who your neighbor was. He said it is the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

To listen to these proponents of abortion who cry out that the baby as an enemy trying to destroy the woman’s freedom, or an enemy trying to destroy her economic stability, or an enemy trying to destroy her feminine figure, or an enemy trying to betray her promiscuity, to somehow see the baby as an enemy, somebody to be destroyed is a hellish and frighteningly evil twist and denial of the truth. It doesn’t matter how the child got there, that child is a neighbor to be loved and cared for, not some inconvenient mass of tissue to be thrown out. This was the key fact in ancient Judaism and the first church’s response to abortion.

We sometimes think that abortion is a new idea, a modern phenomenon, but there is nothing new about it. If you read the Jewish Talmud, you will read statements made by Rabbis throughout ancient history prior to the time of Christ about how abortion is murder and has no place in the society of the people of God. Abortion is not new. Aristotle and Plato both advocated abortion as a way to control large families. In the early church the issue of abortion had to be dealt with because it was very common in the Greco-Roman world even at the time of Christ and during the first century. The reasons that the Romans gave for abortion were recorded in their history. One Roman historian abortion was used for the following: 1) to conceal illicit sex; (nothing new about that); 2) to protect rich women who were impregnated in their love affairs with low class men and did not want to give birth to these children and have to spend money on them; and 3) to allow a woman to preserve her sex appeal, to preserve her figure. Those were the reasons. Nothing new about those. Convenience killing.

And they had some effective techniques. There was a medical journal written by Cirranus, a Greek, at the time of the early church. In his gynecological book, that is a Greek word by the way, he gives all the procedures for how to go through the birth canal and how to mix the poisons. They used drugs to cause an abortion, and they new what worked by trial and error, using drugs. Another simple method they used was to bind a woman’s stomach tight with ropes so that the child could not develop, would eventually die and be miscarried. Now the pagan world accepted these things. They also accepted the use of blades and hooks through the birth canal, though this was much more dangerous to the woman, obviously.

The Jews spoke out against these practices. They considered abortion to be a horrendous crime of violent murder, and there is no evidence of any ancient Jewish community that ever tolerated abortion. Though there are many that do so today contrary to their heritage. The church along with the Jews always stood against abortion, basically for the same reasons I’ve given, for the reason that the life in the womb is a creation of God, for the reason that the life is not the woman, but is a neighbor that is being killed, which should be cared for and preserved in the most protected place, a woman’s womb. The early church fathers, get this, called abortion “the most violent act of lovelessness and an act of murder.” They advocated the fact that Jesus reached out

to the poor and the needy and the helpless and defenseless, and that was the style of His loving ministry, and there was no one more defenseless than an infant still in the womb of his mother. So the love of Jesus could not allow a murder of that child.

You can read in the Didache. The Didache called “the teaching of the twelve” was written in the first century while the apostles were alive as a manual of church order. It was not considered Scripture by the New Testament church, but it was a manual to tell them essentially how to do church. Church was all new to them, of course, and this work is very instructive to us. In the Didache it sets forth the way of life and the way of death, and one of the key elements of the way of death is abortion. It says things like this, “You shall not murder a child by abortion. For that little one is a neighbor to be cared for.” The Didache defined the way of death very clearly; and in defining the way of death it said that it is full of cursing, murders, adulteries and the murders of children. And it calls such people corruptors of God’s creatures and the translation of that term is abortuantis, abortionists. Is that clear enough?

So they had this problem even then, it isn’t anything new for the church to deal with. Abortion is a form of murder, a form of violence and the antithesis of loving care the early church said. They based their view principally on that great teaching of Jesus, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

A young woman wrote a letter to John MacArthur of Grace To You, and in the letter she said this: “About ten years ago at age 17 I had an abortion. I can’t even begin to explain the despair and anger which I felt then. My relationship with my parents was not good. At that time I moved out of our home to keep my parents from knowing and I worked full time. It was hell. There was no one to help me, no one to confide in. I was so frightened. I went to planned parenthood and told them I wanted my baby. They thought I was crazy. In no way did they offer me other alternatives such as adoption or help from the state. The only advice they offered was that of an abortion and how to go to medical and tell them I didn’t know who the father was. That way medical would pay for it. The ordeal was a horrendous nightmare I will never forget. I remember especially the doctor singing opera while the procedure was being done. I cried for months. The only thing that pulled me through was the fact that Jesus forgave me. And with His blessings I now have three beautiful little children, and I keep reassuring myself that in heaven I will have a child I haven’t yet met.”

I believe that God is a God of grace and He will forgive, and all who call on the name of the Lord as this woman did shall be saved. But Beloved, this great reality does not exonerate us or end our responsibility as the people of God. Let us love our neighbors, both the women and the children, taking a stand against this terrible scourge in our society.