

How Would Jesus Vote?

Matters of Life and Death

Exodus 20:13

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Matters of Life and Death¹

Scripture

“Stop! In the name of Christ, stop!”

Eighty thousand people watched as a man jumped over the railing, ran onto the field, held up his hands, and shouted, “Stop! In the name of Christ, stop!”

He ran in between two combatants, two gladiators who were fighting to the death, and he begged them to stop.

Who was this man? His name was Telemachus.

Telemachus was a monk who lived in a cloistered monastery somewhere in Eastern Europe in the late 4th century. He felt God say to him, “Go to Rome.”

And so he put his possessions in a bag and set off for Rome.

When he arrived in the city on January 1, 404, people were thronging in the streets. He asked what all the excitement was about, and was told that this was the day that the gladiators would be fighting to the death in the Roman Coliseum.

He thought to himself, “Four centuries after Christ and they are still killing each other, for enjoyment?”

He ran to the Coliseum, and as he arrived, he heard the gladiators say, “Hail to Caesar! We die for Caesar!”

He thought, “This isn’t right.”

That’s when he jumped over the railing and went out into the middle of the field, got between two gladiators, held up his hands, and shouted, “Stop! In the name of Christ, stop!”

How did the crowd respond?

The crowd protested and began to shout, “Run him through! Run him through!”

A gladiator came over and hit Telemachus in the stomach with the back of his sword. It sent him sprawling in the sand.

¹ The material for this sermon is drawn from *How Would Jesus Vote?: a Christian Perspective on the Issues* by D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2008).

Telemachus got up and stood between the gladiators again, and shouted, “Stop! In the name of Christ, stop!”

But the crowd chanted louder and louder, ‘Run him through! Run him through! Run him through!’”

One gladiator came over and thrust his sword through the little monk’s stomach and he fell into the sand, which began to turn crimson with his blood.

One last time he gasped out, “Stop! In the name of Christ, stop!”

A hush came over the 80,000 people in the Coliseum.

Then, a man stood up and left. Then another. And another. And within minutes all 80,000 people walked out of the Coliseum. It was the last known gladiatorial contest in the Roman Empire.²

Three days later, the Roman Emperor Honorius declared Telemachus a martyr, and officially ended all gladiatorial contests.³

Can one person make a difference?

Telemachus was appalled by what he saw in the Roman Coliseum. He could not believe that four centuries after Christ people were still killing each other for pleasure.

In the 21st century we find the gladiatorial contests crude and barbaric. And yet, we have our own modern crude and barbaric killing for pleasure—*abortion*. Although there are some medically necessary abortions—such as when the life of the mother is at stake—the fact is that the vast majority of abortions are for the pleasure of the individuals who do not want that child.

Last week I started a new series of messages titled, “How Would Jesus Vote?” It is my intention for about 8 weeks or so to examine some key issues that confront us today, and ask how Jesus would vote if he were here today.

Today, as we continue in our series on “How Would Jesus Vote?” I want to examine “Matters of Life and Death.” What does the Bible have to say about matters of life and death? Let us look at a foundational text, Exodus 20:13. This is the sixth of Ten Com-

² Galaxie Software. (2002; 2002). *10,000 Sermon Illustrations*. Biblical Studies Press.

³ William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1975), 203-205.

mandments:

¹³ “**You shall not murder.**” (Exodus 20:13)

Introduction

Ever since the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 abortion has been a hot political issue in this country.

It may not get as much attention in this upcoming election as it has in previous years due to the war and the economy, and yet, it is still an extremely important issue. The reason abortion is still an important issue is because the moral contrasts are so clear and the stakes so high.

However, abortion is not the only issue that deals with matters of life and death, but it is the best-known issue. Other issues include euthanasia, stem-cell research, and suicide. Because the theological issues regarding life and death are so similar with all these issues, we shall examine abortion first and at greater length before looking at the other issues.

Lesson

So, let us then examine how Jesus would vote on matters of life and death. Let me use the following outline to guide us:

1. What does the Bible say about life and death?
2. What does the Bible say about abortion?
3. What does the Bible say about euthanasia?
4. What does the Bible say about stem-cell research?
5. What does the Bible say about suicide?

I. What Does the Bible Say about Life and Death?

First, then, what does the Bible say about life and death?

The predominant view in our culture is that unborn children are simply masses of tissue. However, the biblical view is that God

has formed a person from the moment of conception. This is how King David put it in Psalm 139:13-14:

For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
my soul knows it very well.

Because of modern science we know that a male sperm and a female egg come together to form a new person. That single cell doubles, and then doubles again, and again, until the human body eventually has trillions and trillions of cells.

Michael Behe, author of *Darwin's Black Box*, once said that if we were to compile all the information found in the very *simplest cell* of the human body into books the size of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the information contained in that single cell would comprise approximately 30 volumes!⁴

We are truly fearfully and wonderfully made!

When Jeremiah received his call from God to be a prophet, God told Jeremiah that he knew him before he was even born. Jeremiah said of God in Jeremiah 1:4-5, "Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'"

An unborn baby is a person, a human being made in the image of God. We read about a remarkable incident about an unborn baby in Luke 1:39-41, "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb." Masses of tissue do not leap for joy in the womb.

It is clear from these texts that God has a high view of the life

⁴ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *How Would Jesus Vote?: a Christian Perspective on the Issues* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2008), 49.

that he has created. From the moment of conception there is a person whom God knows, and who can even leap in the womb.

Regarding the destruction of human life God has clearly said in Exodus 20:13, the sixth of the Ten Commandments, “You shall not murder.” Some Bible translations, such as the *King James Version* and the *American Standard Version*, say, “Thou shalt not kill,” but that is not a good translation.

The Bible does not forbid killing. For example, God sanctions war (Deuteronomy 1:30; 2 Samuel 22:35) and commands capital punishment (Numbers 35:16-21, 30-33). God even provides a refuge for the accidental death of another person (Joshua 20:1-6).

What God is opposed to, however, is the deliberate or unwarranted destruction of life. God is opposed to murder. And that is why the *English Standard Version* (and other similar translations) have correctly translated Exodus 20:13 as, “You shall not *murder*.”

The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* asks in Question 67, “Which is the sixth commandment?” And the answer given is, “The sixth commandment is, You shall not kill.” As I have already noted, the sixth commandment really says, “You shall not *murder*,” and not, “You shall not *kill*.”

However, the Westminster Divines correctly summarize what is required and forbidden in the sixth commandment.

Thus Question 68 asks, “What is required in the sixth commandment?” The answer is, “The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.”

And Question 69 asks, “What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?” The answer is, “The sixth commandment forbids the taking of one’s own life or the life of others unjustly, or doing anything that leads to suicide or murder.”⁵

And so it is clear from the Bible that God forbids the unjust or unwarranted taking of human life. In fact, God wants life preserved from the moment of conception.

⁵ *The Westminster Shorter Catechism: With Scripture Proofs*. 1996 (3rd edition.) (Questions 67-69). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

II. What Does the Bible Say about Abortion?

So, with that as a general principal about life and death, what does the Bible say about abortion?

In the debate about abortion, there are some who cite Exodus 21:22-25 as proof that taking the life of an unborn baby is not the same as taking the life of a human being who has been born. Exodus 21:22-25 says,

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. But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

However, as Kennedy and Newcombe point out in their book titled *How Would Jesus Vote?*, “the Bible draws a huge distinction between the *deliberate* and *accidental* taking of life. In this particular case, justice demands a life (the adult who accidentally caused the injury) for a life (the unborn child). This passage says nothing about the *deliberate destruction* of the unborn.”⁶

There is simply no passage or text in the Bible that would support abortion at all. Abortion is the deliberate taking of life, for enjoyment. Oh, not the enjoyment of the abortion, but the enjoyment of life unhindered by a child.

There is, however, one instance in which abortion is permitted. And that is when the life of the mother is at stake. In those extremely rare instances when the lives of both the mother and the unborn baby are threatened and only one of them can be saved, then it is appropriate to save the life of the mother. But even in that instance, it is still essentially a choice for life—the life of the

⁶ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, 51.

mother. It is better to save one life than to lose two lives.

Some pro-choice people argue that this is a common occurrence. The fact is that “less than 1% of all abortions are performed to save the mother’s life.”⁷ In fact, while he was Surgeon General of the United States, Dr. C. Everett Koop stated publicly that in his thirty-eight years as a pediatric surgeon, “he was never aware of a single situation in which a preborn child’s life had to be taken in order to save the life of the mother.” He said that the use of this argument to justify abortion in general was a “smoke screen.”⁸

In 2006 the South Dakota legislature proposed a law banning abortion. It did not pass, but the research they conducted involved studying the side effects of abortion since 1973, the year that the U.S. Supreme Court passed *Roe v. Wade*. The bipartisan task force team consisted of 17 people, including some who were pro-choice. They collected 3,500 pages of scientific research, heard testimony from 58 experts on both sides of the abortion issue, collected thousands of affidavits from women who had had abortions, and then compressed all the data into a 71-page document.

Dr. Allen Unruh, one of the organizers of the information, summarized the findings of the task force to study abortion:

We found that there’s basically very little information given to women prior to an abortion, and what is given is false. The “informed consent” that they receive is a four-minute cassette, a message by an abortionist on tape. There’s no opportunity to ask questions. And they’re assigned a number, and as long as they have a number, they’ve been “informed of abortion.” And in this message it says, “Your chances of dying are seven times greater, 700% higher, if you have the baby than if we terminate your pregnancy.” And they tell women there are no side effects emotionally. The only emotion you will experience is relief. And the abortion counselor has no training in counseling, no [master’s] in counseling, no doctorate degrees, no psychiatry, or ministerial background.

⁷ Randy C. Alcorn, *Pro Life Answers to Pro Choice Arguments* (Sisters, OR: Eternal Perspective Ministries, 1992), 167.

⁸ Randy C. Alcorn, 167.

They're only trained on how to sell abortion.⁹

The task force also found that many women had abortions because of the pressure put on them by boyfriends, husbands, and parents. This is what Dr. Unrah said:

Nobody skips into an abortion clinic. They do not look forward to it like a chocolate sundae. And then they're forced into an abortion. In fact, one of the women that testified before us said her mother told her she had to have an abortion. When she was in the waiting room, she started crying. She said, "I can't do it. I change my mind. I can't do it." And they called the mother, and she told them, "You have to do this abortion." So they said, "Come in this other room; we're gonna calm you down," and they injected something in her, and when she woke up, they said, "The abortion's over. Is there anything else you'd like?" She said, "Yes, do you have a gun?" And you can imagine the trauma involved.¹⁰

Indeed I can. And I am sure that you can too.

The task force paid special attention to two thousand women who had had abortions, concluding: "Of those post-abortive women, over 99% of them testified that abortion is destructive of the rights, interests, and health of women and that abortion should not be legal."¹¹

It is clear that the Bible does not sanction abortion. The only possible time that abortion may be permitted is when the life of the mother is at stake.

III. What Does the Bible Say about Euthanasia?

Third, what does the Bible say about euthanasia?

Euthanasia is defined as "the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals (as

⁹ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, 53.

¹⁰ D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, 54.

¹¹ "Report of the South Dakota Task Force to Study Abortion," www.voteyesforlife.com/docs/Task_Force_Report.pdf.

persons or domestic animals) in a relatively painless way for reasons of mercy.”¹²

We live in a “throw away” society. Things break, and we throw it away. Things don’t work as they used to, and we throw it away. Unfortunately, that attitude is creeping in regarding older people and disabled people. They are no longer “productive” citizens, and so there are those who want to “throw them away.”

Some of you may remember Dr. Jack Kevorkian (a.k.a. “Dr. Death”). He claims to have assisted 130 patients die via euthanasia in the 1990s. He eventually served 8 years in prison, from 1999 to 2007, for second-degree murder.

The Bible is clear that we have no warrant for taking life. We must do all in our power to preserve it.

However, there are times when a person cannot be helped (such as when there is no brain activity) and it is appropriate in such circumstances to remove a person from life-support.

IV. What Does the Bible Say about Stem-cell Research?

Fourth, what does the Bible say about stem-cell research?

Usually stem-cell research refers to *embryonic*-stem-cell research conducted on the cells of human embryos. This means that babies that are aborted are used in this research.

Because of the practice of abortion, the Bible does not support embryonic-stem-cell research.

Supporters of embryonic research say that such research is needed in order to find cures for diseases. It is my understanding that to date not one single cure has been produced as a result of embryonic-stem-cell research.

On the other hand, *adult*-stem-cell research, which raises no ethical issues, *has* yielded profitable results. Noted scientist Michael Fumento observed, “Adult stem cells cure and treat more than 70 diseases and are involved in almost 1,300 human clinical

¹² Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. Includes index. (Eleventh ed.). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

trials.”¹³

So, let research be done with adult-stem-cells but not with embryonic-stem-cells because they are obtained from abortions.

V. What Does the Bible Say about Suicide?

And fifth, what does the Bible say about suicide?

The Bible records five suicides: Samson (Judges 16:29-30), Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Samuel 31:4-5), Ahithophel (2 Samuel 17:23), Zimri (1 Kings 16:18), and Judas (Matthew 27:5).

Since suicide is the murder of oneself, it is not justified. It is therefore clearly prohibited by the sixth commandment (“You shall not murder,” Exodus 20:13).

Conclusion

So, how would he vote?

Jesus would vote for a candidate who supported and preserved life personally and politically. I don’t believe that he would support a candidate who would support life personally, but politically voted pro-choice.

Let’s say that a candidate is in line with what the Bible says on all the other issues (such as the war, the economy, and so on), but was pro-choice. I don’t believe that Jesus would vote for such a person. This issue trumps all others because the Bible is so clear about the preservation and protection of all life.

So, that is how Jesus would vote regarding matters of life and death. Is there a Telemachus who would stand up for life today?

Come back next week as we learn how Jesus would vote on crime and punishment, including the death penalty. Amen.

¹³ Michael Fumento, “Code of Silence,” *Daily Standard*, February 8, 2007, www.fumento.com/biotech/stemcell2007.html.

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in order to **magnify** God's name.*

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PRAAYER:

O God, thank you for your Word. Thank you for what we learn about Jesus and politics.

As we think about the upcoming general election and our responsibility (and privilege) as citizens to vote, help us to understand how Jesus would vote on each issue.

O God, your Word is so clear about matters regarding life and death. You call on us to do all in our power to preserve and protect life, particularly the life of the unborn and the weak.

Would you raise up political candidates who support and preserve and protect life, not merely in their personal lives but also in the way in which they vote.

And all of this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.