

Bible Study:

The Meaning of the Term, “Human Life”

I. WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING?

James 2:26 “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.”

- A live human being has both body and spirit (soul).

Psalm 139:13,14 “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.”

- The unborn is regarded as a live human being while still inside their mother’s womb.

Matthew 10:28 “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

- Man can kill the body, but man cannot kill the human soul. The soul is immortal.

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

- When a human being dies, his body decomposes but his soul does not. His soul returns to God, the creator, for judgment.

ANSWER: A human being is made up of a mortal body and an immortal soul, which God joined together at conception. Death occurs whenever the body and the soul are separated, but the soul itself never dies or goes out of existence.

II. WHY IS HUMAN LIFE DIFFERENT THAN ANIMAL LIFE?

Genesis 2:7 “The LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

- Only humans were given souls at creation.

Job 32:8 “But it is the spirit in a person, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.”

- A person’s God-given soul gives him or her special reasoning abilities.

Genesis 1:26-27 “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the air, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

- Only mankind was created in the image of God.

Colossians 3:9,10 “Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.”

- Although God’s image was lost in the Fall, it is being renewed in the Christian.

ANSWER: Unlike any of the other creatures, God endowed human beings with souls, the ability to reason and make value judgments, and made mankind in his own image of holy perfection. Although mankind lost the image of God in the Fall into sin, God’s image is being continually restored in the Christian, and will be perfectly restored in heaven.

III. DOES A HUMAN FETUS HAVE A SOUL?

Psalms 139:15,16 “My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

- God knows the fetus as a person. (For example, he knew Jeremiah as a person before birth; cf. Jeremiah 1:5 – “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”)

Exodus 21:22-25 “If men are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman’s husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.”

- God gave the human fetus equality with adults under the civil law.

Romans 5:12,18,19 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned ... Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”

- Every descendant of Adam has inherited the guilt and consequences of Adam’s sin.

Psalms 51:5 “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

- Humans become morally responsible before God and guilty of original sin at the moment of conception. (For more on original sin, cf. Romans 7:18 and Ephesians 2:3.)

Luke 1:15 “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit before he is born.”

- A human fetus does have the capacity for Spirit-created faith.

Luke 1:41,44 “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. ... ‘As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.’”

- A human fetus is capable of expressing emotion.

ANSWER: Yes, the human fetus does have a soul, even in his mother’s womb. God knows the fetus as an individual, distinct person. God gives the fetus the same moral rights and responsibilities as he gives adults. Proof that the human fetus has a soul lies in his guilt inherited from Adam, as well as his capacity to have faith and emotion.

IV. HOW DOES GOD PROTECT HUMAN LIFE?

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.”

- God prohibits murder in the Fifth Commandment.

Genesis 9:5,6 “And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.”

- God will demand an accounting of every person for the life of every human being who is killed.

1 John 3:15 “Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him.”

- God threatens to damn murderers.

Romans 13:4 “For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

- God gives lawful government the right and responsibility to use deadly force in order to protect human life and punish evil-doers.

ANSWER: God protects human life with the Fifth Commandment, threatens murderers with damnation, and charges the government with the protection of human life and the temporal punishment of murderers.

V. WHY DOES GOD PROTECT HUMAN LIFE?

Psalms 100:3 “Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

- God created human beings; therefore, all human beings belong to him.

Matthew 6:25,26 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more

than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

- Human life is far more valuable and important than animal life.

Psalm 143:2 "Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you."

- Every human is sinful and needs God's mercy.

Romans 3:23,24 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

- Even though all human beings are guilty of sin, God's love is also universal. He has declared all people "not guilty!"

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

- God does not want anyone to go to hell, but for all people to repent (i.e., to turn away from sin and turn back to God).

1 Timothy 2:3,4 "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

- God wants all people to come to know this truth and to be saved.

Acts 17:24-27 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us.

- God gives every person a lifetime, a "time of grace," during which time a person has the opportunity to be brought to saving faith in Christ.

Hebrews 9:27 "Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment,"

- Each person has only one opportunity to live, die, and face God's judgment.

ANSWER: God protects human life because he loves all people. Humans are God's special creatures, far more valuable than animals. God protects human lives in order that living people may have opportunity to be brought to faith in Christ and be saved, rather than eternally lost.

VI. HOW CAN HUMAN BABIES BE FORGIVEN THEIR ORIGINAL SIN AND BECOME HEIRS OF ETERNAL LIFE?

Mark 10:14-16 “When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.’ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.”

- Jesus blesses human babies and invites them to come to him.

John 3:5,6 “Jesus answered, ‘Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”

- Unless a person is reborn through baptism, he is outside of God’s kingdom.

Titus 3:5-7 He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.”

- Through baptism, God saves people and adopts them into his family as his heirs. (On the saving power of baptism, cf. 1 Peter 3:20,21.)

Matthew 28:19 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

- Christ commands his Church to baptize “all nations.” That includes babies!

Acts 2:38,39 “Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’”

- Baptism and its promised blessings are intended for humans of all ages. (An example of who is ok to be baptized is found in Acts 16:30-34.)

ANSWER: God has graciously given his Church the Sacrament of Holy Baptism and commanded his Church to baptize humans of every age so that they may be saved by faith. Through baptism even tiny babies may receive forgiveness of sins and be adopted into God’s family.

VII. WHO ALONE HAS THE RIGHT TO TAKE HUMAN LIFE?

Psalm 100:3 “Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.”

- Since God creates people, all people belong to him.

Psalm 31:15 “My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.”

- The times when a person is conceived, born, and dies are entirely up to God alone.

Deuteronomy 32:39 “See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand.”

- God alone gives and ends human life.

Matthew 23:31 “So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets.”

- When one human usurps God’s authority and takes the life of another, it is murder.

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.”

- The Fifth Commandment prohibits murder.

Romans 13:1-4 “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.”

ANSWER: Because God alone creates every human being, the right to take human life is God’s alone. God does delegate authority to legitimate government to execute capital punishment as necessary, since the government serves as God’s servant to protect life and property. But anyone who usurps God’s authority to take human life violates the Fifth Commandment, thereby committing murder and incurring God’s judgment.

VIII. DOES GOD PERMIT ABORTION?

Matthew 18:14 “In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish.”

- God does not want any infant to perish.

John 3:5,6 “Jesus answered, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.’”

- Abortion precludes the possibility of baptism.

Mark 10:14b “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

- Abortion prevents a child from coming to Jesus.

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.”

- Abortion directly violates the Fifth Commandment.

ANSWER: No, God does not permit abortion. Because abortion is the murder of a human baby, it is against God’s will. Abortion violates God’s will that the child be baptized and be brought to a saving faith in Christ. Abortion is a willful, flagrant violation of God’s will as expressed in the Fifth Commandment. (Euthanasia, or “mercy killing,” and infanticide are likewise against God’s will for the same reasons.)

IX. THEREFORE, WHAT IS OUR DUTY AS CHRISTIANS?

Exodus 20:13 “You shall not murder.”

- Don’t perform or have an abortion.

Proverbs 31:8 “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.”

- Speak up in defense of those who cannot speak for themselves, for babies destined to be aborted.

Psalms 51:13,14 “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God my Savior, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.”

- Pray that abortion will be outlawed and stopped, and that those guilty of abortion repent and be saved.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

- God will forgive those who repent of their sins against the Fifth Commandment and believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Matthew 22:39 “And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

- Deal lovingly with your neighbors, with those who have had abortions, and with unborn babies as well.

ANSWER: As Christians, we should recognize God’s command that we love all people, regardless of whether they are born or unborn. Therefore, we must never be a party to an abortion, but we must defend the rights of the unborn as their advocates. We can lovingly counsel and console women who have had abortions and pronounce Christ’s forgiveness to all who repent. We can lovingly counsel and care for women who find themselves with problem pregnancies and do whatever we are able to do to help them bring their babies into this world

and to holy baptism. Let's also keep on praying that abortion will be stopped, and that abortionists repent and believe the Gospel!

- by Pastor David Peters

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