# Is abortion murder?

by Rev. Jerry Propst

This magazine is read most frequently by the convinced — convinced that abortion is wrong. But do we agree that abortion is murder?

It all depends upon what standard we choose to use. If we define murder as the unlawful taking of a life, we have to understand whose law we are talking about. We must also ask the question as to what "human" means. If "human" means someone who has been born and is still alive at the time of the act of killing, then abortion is not murder according to, for example, Oregon state law. Oregon law specifically defines a human as someone who has already been born and is still alive.

If we assume that "unlawful" refers to the laws of our land, then abortion is not murder because it is not in violation of current law in the United States, and the restrictions on abortion are minimal, if existent at all.

But if we believe that God is the ultimate judge we have to determine what God calls murder.

In Exodus 20:13 the King James translation says, *"Thou shalt not kill."* But that does not necessarily mean that all killing is outlawed by God. For instance, it was God who in later chapters provided examples of activities for which government was required to put the perpetrator to death.

For example: Exodus 22:18—*"You shall not permit a sorceress to live."* Exodus 22:19—*"Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death."* Ex. 22:20 *"He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed."*

In other words, there are at least some instances in which putting someone to death was permissible in God's eyes. Again, in the same book, God gives permission to the private citizen to protect himself and his family against intruders by killing them under certain circumstances. Exodus 22:2—*"If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, there shall be no guilt for his bloodshed."*

Later, in Israel's invasion of Canaan, God gave a specific command for the Israeli army to annihilate all inhabitants of the cities of Canaan. Deuteronomy 20:16-17—*"But of the cities of these peoples which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive,But you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perrizite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the Lord your God has commanded."*

So, we have at least three catagories of circumstances in which God approved or commanded the killing of someone.

This list is not exhaustive, merely representative for the purpose of making the point that "thou shalt not kill" is not a universal statement. The passage in Exodus 20:13 should in fact be translated, *"you shall not murder."*

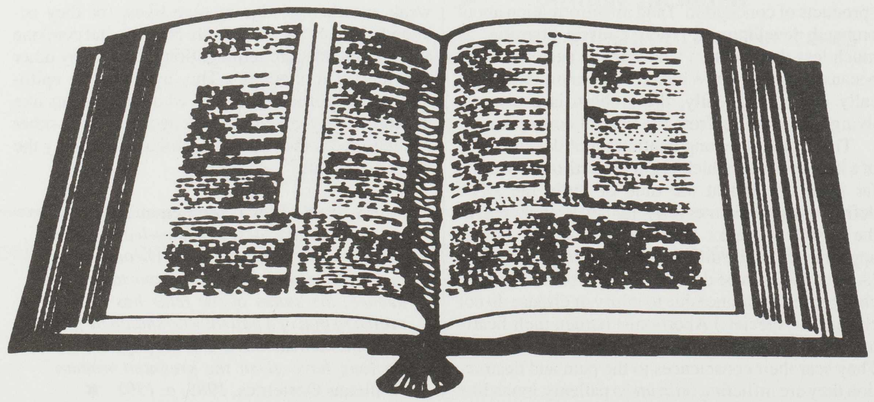
Throughout the rest of Exodus and successive books, God defines by decree and action what constitutes murder and what does not.

There are times when even governments are guilty of murder — when they take the lives of their citizens or of foreigners without cause.

For example, David as king of Israel was guilty of the blood of Uriah the Hittite when he ordered the captain of the army to withdraw from Uriah during a conflict with one of Israel's enemies. 2 Samuel 12:9—*"Why have you despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in His sight? You have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon."*

King Ahab was guilty of the blood of Naboth whom he falsely accused of blasphemy so that he could appropriate Naboth's vineyard. God sent Elijah to Ahab with these words in 1Kings 21:19, *"Thus says the Lord: 'Have you murdered and also taken possession?'"*

In other words, not even governments are exempt from the scrutiny and condemnation of God for abuse of divine law. Governments can be and are guilty of murder.







Now in order to further understand the nature of abortion, we must first define "human." If the "thing" we kill is not human, then it cannot be murder as the Lord defines it in Scripture. If it is human, then it may be murder to take the baby's life.

It appears from the statements that follow that God treats the unborn as human. Jeremiah 1:5—*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."* Luke 1:15—*"For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink neither strong wine nor drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb..."* Psalm 139 :15-16—*"My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest part of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them,"* and Exodus 21:22—*"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."* Exodus 21:23 *"But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life."*

They are *called* before they are born. They are designed and destined before they are born. They are filled with the Holy Spirit before they are born. And if their life is taken from them through violence to the pregnant mother the Lord responds to their death as the death of a human being.

In fact, God says, in Amos 1:13—*"Thus says the Lord: 'for three transgressions of the people of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory.'"*

This crime is despicable because it preys on the defenselessness of the woman who is "with child." There are others who are defenseless in society; the infirm, the aged, children, women who are not pregnant. But it is especially reprehensible to destroy the life of a woman and her child who has not yet been born.

There is more than one way to kill a pregnant woman. But the one which does the greatest insult to her and to her child is to slice open her abdomen and let her and the child die. It is an assault not only on the woman but on her child as well. If the woman is defenseless, how much more so the unborn child! God has a special judgment in store for those who engage in such behavior.

Contrary to President Clinton's recent assertion that the Scriptures are vague on abortion, I think that they are very clear. Not once does God mitigate or moderate His stance with regard to the unborn. There are no Scriptures which treat the unborn with anything but the same respect given to other human beings.

Everything points to the fact that God has a special place in His heart for the unborn.

This is so because God sees the unborn as human. And the laws providing safety for the born are meant to be applicable to the unborn. There is no place in Scripture (except as it occurs in specific acts of war where the Israelites were commanded to "utterly destroy" all people and livestock) where God approves or encourages the willful taking of the life of a child before birth.

I believe that the Scriptures teach abortion is murder in the sight of God even when it is not so in the sight of man. I believe that our government will be held accountable before God for sacrificing children on the altar of political expediency.

Is abortion forgivable? Yes. There is no sin which cannot be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. Our purpose in declaring this truth is not to wreak havoc on the souls of women and men who have committed the act of abortion. Our purpose is to let them know that if they acknowledge the truth about it, they can find forgiveness and restoration in the sight of God.■

*Jerry Propst is senior pastor at the Hillsboro First Baptist Church, Hillsboro, Oregon.*

God speaks on . . .

ABORTION

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