



A BIBLICAL LOOK AT STEM CELLS, ABORTION, HOMOSEXUALITY, AND GAY MARRIAGE

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INTRODUCTION

"I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to the effect. Similarly, I will not give a woman an abortive remedy"
The Hippocratic Oath

These words which were written about 400 years before Christ by Hippocrates (often considered to be the father of medicine), has for centuries been the standard of ethics for doctors to follow. However, in some countries such as Australia, the anti-abortion clause has been removed from the oath. In the United States, the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973 as a result of *Roe v Wade*, and as a result, it is estimated that over 40 million abortions have taken place in this country. The increasing acceptance of euthanasia is part of a shift in mentality towards a reduced emphasis on life and a strong emphasis on "death." As an example, Terri Schiavo was recently allowed to die by starvation-dehydration, and the popular movie *Million Dollar Baby* depicted the main character being allowed to die by turning her ventilator off. The movie *Brokeback Mountain* depicted a gay relationship between two men. Television programs such as *Queer Eye For The Straight Guy* depict the gay lifestyle as normal, television personalities such as Rosie McDonald and Ellen DeGeneres openly exhibit their lesbian life style, and other Hollywood personalities are "coming out of the closet" on a regular basis in addition to an increase in other types of "alternative lifestyles" becoming

the norm. Recently, President Obama has appointed a “Bioethics Commission” that is comprised of secular appointees that will reevaluate the current viewpoint on sanctity-of-life stem-cell-research (particularly when stem cell research promises to cure a multitude of diseases). In today’s modern culture, it is not surprising that a recent Pew Research poll indicated that 56% of Americans said that it is more important to conduct stem cell research that may lead to new medical cures *than to avoid destroying human embryos* during the research.

The aforementioned changes in cultural viewpoints are in stark contrast to the biblical account of man being made in God’s image and marriage comprised of one man and woman as delineated in Genesis. Regrettably, the belief that humans have evolved from simpler creatures (macro-evolution) is often the basis that is used to justify the rejection of God as Creator and as a result, the rejection of His authority through His Law that is outlined in the Bible. With these thoughts in mind, let’s look at what the Bible has to say about the sanctity of life and modern relationships. This discussion is not meant to elevate the program hosts but to discern biblical truth as applied to modern cultural viewpoints. Additionally, Dr. Dan Tomlinson, a respected Obstetrics and Gynecology doctor in the Rogue Valley, author of the books “*Birth Pangs*” and “*A Woman’s Silent Testimony*,” and who also appears Monday’s at 5:15 p.m. on the local CBS news affiliate as their medical expert will add his medical expertise to this discussion.

Note: All biblical references are from the New King James Version of the Bible, and unless otherwise noted, secular quotes are from the book “The War On Choice, by Gloria Feldt,” President of Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

STEM CELLS

The preservation of life is a central theme of the Christian faith and the Bible, but as the use of stem cells to cure a multitude of physical ailments and diseases has recently been a news headline, the question of the use of stem cells and the sanctity of life has been a subject of debate, both biblically and politically. Determining the ethics of this issue can be challenging, particularly when the subject is not clearly defined and/or understood. Let’s take a brief look at stem cells and how their use applies to the Bible, particularly when modern scientific culture believes that life does not begin at conception, and stem cells are often viewed as property, not human beings as illustrated by this quote “*Those who oppose stem cell research believe that an egg fertilized in a Petri-dish is a human being. All other considerations aside, these embryos are not human beings, because humans need a woman to carry and gestate the embryo for nine months to birth. Embryos can’t develop by themselves. It’s a woman’s choice that makes an embryo a potential human being.*”

A stem cell is an unspecialized cell with the capacity to change into many different cell types, such as muscle, nerve, and blood. The two basic types of stem cells are found in embryos and adult human beings as follows:

- Embryonic stem cells (ESC) are derived from human embryos shortly after fertilization in a lab dish and are able to form any other type of cell in the human body (referred to as totipotent). Harvesting these types of stem cells *kills the embryo*
- Adult stem cells (ASC) are derived from varying locations in adults but can only form some types of cells, but not all cells in a human body (referred to as pluripotent). Harvesting these types of stem cells *does not kill or harm the donor adult*

From the preceding two definitions, it is easy to see that ESC stem cells can be more desirable than ASC stem cells, however, harvesting ESC stem cells are fatal to new embryos. In this case, the topic of stem cell research and the use of stem cells forces individuals to consider the question of “*when does life begin?*” To answer this question, let’s look at what the Bible has to say:

- Psalm 51:5 – “*Look, I was prone to do wrong from birth; I was a sinner the moment my mother conceived me*”
- Psalm 139:13 & 15 – “*Certainly you made my mind and heart, you wove me together in my mother’s womb. My bones were not hidden from you, when I was made in secret*”
- Jeremiah 1:5 – “*Before I formed you in your mother’s womb, I chose you. Before you were born, I set you apart*”

Of particular interest is Psalm 51:5. The psalmist focus is that he has been a sinner from the very moment his personal existence began. By going back beyond the time of birth to the moment of conception, the psalmist makes his point more emphatically in the second line that he was a *sinful person* at the moment of conception. Clearly, the Bible makes the point that life does begin at conception. As a result, harvesting ESC’s violates multiple biblical commandments that are found in:

- Exodus 20:13 - “*You shall not murder*”
- Matthew 19:18 – “*You shall not murder*”
- Romans 13:9 – “*You shall not murder*”

As a side note, it is interesting that with all of the claimed advances and benefits of embryonic stem cell research is the unreported negative aspects of ESC’s. These include the genetic instability (mutations and chromosomal changes) that are associated with tumor formation, and anyone receiving ESC’s must take anti-rejection medicine their entire life. However, there are therapeutic uses of stem cells that do not violate the biblical view of the origin of life and murder and which can be categorized as “Ethical Alternatives to Embryonic Stem Cell Research.” These include harvesting ASC’s from an individual who needs therapy (without the fear of cell rejection), using umbilical cord blood, stem cells from baby teeth, turning ordinary human skin cells into stem cells that behave similar to embryonic stem cells, and other measures that modern science will certainly discover that can be a viable alternative to using ESC’s and killing a newly formed embryo.

SUMMARY

In summary, *harvesting ESC’s violates God’s commandment not to murder.*

ABORTION

Most people are well aware of the contentious abortion debate that has been an integral part of politics and religion in this country for years. This debate has been highlighted by a noteworthy Supreme Court case, a criminal ban on abortion procedures, and a Presidential Declaration as follows:

- In 1973, Roe v Wade legalized abortion by expanding the concept of a woman's right to privacy
- In 2003, President George W. Bush signed the Partial Birth Abortion Act (restricts some abortions)
- In 2003, President George W. Bush declared National Sanctity of Human Life Day (emphasized the sanctity of life for human tissue)

Although there have been numerous other legal challenges from both sides of the abortion debate, this is a dilemma that will not be easily resolved as there is a significant difference in the philosophy of "*when life begins.*" Let's take a quick look at the question of when life begins from a secular and biblical viewpoint.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines abortion as "*any expulsion of a fetus before it is able to survive, especially if induced on purpose.*" To expand on this definition, the definition of a fetus is defined as "*the unborn young, especially in its later stages, and specifically in humans from about the eighth week after conception until birth,*" the definition of an embryo is "*an animal in the earliest stages of its development in the uterus or egg,*" and the definition of conception is "*a conceiving or being conceived in the womb, the beginning, as of a process.*" From these definitions, it is apparent there is a lack of specifically defining when life actually begins other than "*about the eighth week after conception.*" This is not surprising as the secular scientific definition of when life actually begins has varied over the years and is often dependent on the source of the definition. As an example, compare the previous definitions with the following definitions:

(1) "*The notion that "life," meaning "personhood," begins at conception is extremely radical. Though much of this legislative and regulatory activity is being undertaken in the name of religion, in many religions, the fetus is not considered a person until it has either "quickened – developed to the stage where the woman could feel it moving – or grown to viability – the stage at which it could survive outside the woman's body,*" (2) "*The fundamentalists opposition to abortion certainly has no basis in the Bible. As for the question of when life begins, again, there is nothing in the Bible that speaks to that issue,*" (3) "*Specifically, the use of the term unborn child is part of the campaign to assert the primacy of the fetus over the rights of the woman carrying it,*" Another noteworthy definition was handed down by Judge Lord Prosser, in Scotland in 1991, when he ruled that a child in the womb was "*Not a person in life, and therefore had no rights.*" From a religious viewpoint and according to the Rabbi Balfour Brickner, Senior Rabbi Emeritus at the Stephen F. Wise Synagogue in New York City "*Each of the actions to make the fetus equivalent to a living, breathing human being is clearly*

unbiblical, un Jewish, and if Christianity claims to be based on biblical traditions, un Christian.”

The fundamental issue that the pro-abortion lobby has been advocating is “when does a person become a person?” Their answer is rather straightforward; *“life does not begin at conception, but begins when a fetus can sustain life on its own outside the womb an/or at the actual time of birth.”* In all cases, the mother should have a primary right of choice.” Unfortunately, the real issue is much deeper than whether or not a mother has the right over her body to abort her unwanted baby. The real issue involves morality and responsibility, which are reflections of how we, as a society, view God’s word. When God’s word is rejected as the standard for living, there can be no basis for morality. Modern society has rejected the Bible, starting with the biblical account of man’s origin. Man is no longer viewed as a special creation by God in His image, but simply an advanced type of animal. Therefore, what’s wrong with terminating a pregnancy as long as the mother feels it is necessary?

When applied to the secular viewpoint of abortion, the Bible is clear that abortion is murder. Consider the following verses that address the abortion issue:

- 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”*
- Psalm 139:13-15 – *“For you formed my inward parts; you covered 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”*
- Ecclesiastes 11:5 – *“As you do not know the ways of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything”*
- Exodus 21:22&25 – *“If men fight and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely and any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, etc*

These verses indicate that even before birth, the person exists and is known by God. It is deplorable that modern society has come to the point where unborn babies are considered to have no rights because they are not persons, particularly when the Bible clearly indicates they are persons. An interesting quote is from Professor Peter Singer, the Ira De Camp Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University – *“The obvious fact is that abortion kills human beings.”*

Note: Even the Didache (2.2), a second century catechism for young converts, states, “Do not murder a child by abortion or kill a new-born infant,” Augustine warned against the terrible crime of “the murder of an unborn child,” Jerome called abortion “the murder of an unborn child,” the epistle of Barnabas (19.5) states “you shall not slay a child by abortion.”

SUMMARY

Therefore, *if unborn life is a person, abortion will kill the person and can be considered murder from a biblical perspective.* In all cases, remember that the Bible condemns the shedding of innocent blood (Deuteronomy 19:10, Proverbs 6:17, Isaiah 1:15, Jeremiah 22:17).

For an additional perspective on abortion, let's briefly discuss abortion as applied to voting for candidates. Assume candidate A supports abortion and also does not support the issues that you feel are important. Additionally, assume candidate B supports the issues you feel are important but supports abortion. How would you vote? It is doubtful you would vote for candidate A, but candidate B presents a dilemma in that the candidate supports abortion but not voting for candidate B potentially gives a vote to candidate A. An option is to vote for neither candidate and use the "write in" option. This option can fulfill your civic duty to vote, but more importantly, allow you to *trust* God to place the person He wants in office as outlined in Romans 13:1 – "*For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.*" Exercising this option would be a matter of placing your trust in the creator of the universe.

HOMOSEXUALITY

"I think religion has always tried to turn hatred toward gay people. Religion promotes the hatred and spite against gays...But there are so many people I know who are gay and love their religion. From my point of view, I would ban religion completely. Organized religion doesn't seem to work. It turns people into really hateful lemmings and it's not really compassionate"

Elton John

Homosexuality is simply defined by Webster's New World Dictionary as "*having a sexual desire for those of the same sex.*" This condition (often referred to as "gay") has become prevalent in modern society and has gained tremendous inroads towards acceptance as normal behavior, even in some church environments. As an example, several examples of the acceptance of gay clergy are as follows:

- In November 2003, a part of the Episcopal Church voted to ordain a gay bishop
- On March 18, 2004, the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Methodist Church in America supported a lesbian pastor

On the secular side, politicians have forced the United States military to abandon its "*Don't ask, don't tell policy*" against unanimous opposition from military leaders. Additionally, it is common for supporters of the "gay movement" to state "*they were born that way*" and therefore not responsible for their sexuality. Interestingly, homosexuality is a learned behavior. In the comprehensive book on Christian Counseling, Dr. Gary Collins states that "*there is no present evidence to support the idea that homosexuality has a physical or biological cause.*" It is also a fact that homosexuality is devastating to any culture that encourages its lifestyle. As an example,

in 1990, the Australian Federation for the Family noted the following comments in a document on homosexuality:

- Homosexuals commit between 33% and 50% of all recorded instances of child molestation
- Homosexual teachers have been involved in 80% of recorded teacher-pupil sexual interactions
- Homosexuals have accounted for about half of all molestations among those who work with children
- You are 15 times more likely to be murdered by a homosexual than a heterosexual during a sexual murder spree

Let's look at what the Bible say's about homosexuality:

- Romans 1:26-27 – *“For this reason, God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due”*
- Leviticus 18:22 – *“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination”*
- 1 Timothy 1:9-10 – *“The law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine”*
- 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 – *“Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist will inherit the kingdom of God”*

Homosexuality is not an alternative to heterosexuality as no union between men alone or women alone can fulfill the role God created for the man-woman relationship. Additionally, someone who subscribes to a certain lifestyle or behavior and then claims to be a Christian does not negate the fact that it is sin. Homosexuality is also a form of adultery as it is an unmarried sexual relationship. As God instituted marriage as between a man and a woman, then any other form of union, whether it be a man and a man or a woman and a woman, is not marriage as defined by God. Therefore, a homosexual relationship is a form of adultery.

SUMMARY

The preceding four verses makes it clear that **the Bible considers homosexuality a sin, shameful, an abomination**, and also places it in the same category as numerous other noteworthy sins.

GAY MARRIAGE

The gay marriage issue (or civil unions) has been headline news across this country as graphically illustrated by the recent extension of family benefits to “*same sex*

partners” and some states endorsing and/or legalizing gay marriages in those respective states. The more gay marriage is the accepted norm, the more it should become apparent that this is a symptom of a much deeper problem that begins with man’s fallible ideas being used as a basis for determining “truth” and overriding the Bible’s authority. In many cases, the Bible has lost respect in people’s eyes, both in and out of the church environment, to the extent that modern culture does not take the Bible’s morality seriously. As a result, the increasing acceptance of gay marriage is a symptom of the loss of biblical authority, and is primarily due to the compromise the church has made with the secular teaching of the world on origins. Once the biblical basis for marriage is removed or diluted by secular humanism, it should not be a surprise to see additional variants such as polygamous or pedophilic relationships/marriages being allowed and/or accepted. This dilemma is clearly outlined in Judges 17:6 that states – “*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*” In other words, when there is no absolute authority to decide right or wrong, everyone has their own opinion about what is right.

Let’s look at what the Bible has to say about gay marriage:

- Matthew 19:4-6 – “*He who made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate*”
- Mark 10:6-9 – “*But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate*”
- Malachi 2:15 – “*But did not He make them one, having a remnant of the spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore, take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth*”

SUMMARY

In the preceding three verses, Jesus delineates the first marriage as literal history, and to explain the doctrine of marriage as being **one man for one woman**. Therefore, marriage cannot be a man and a man, or a woman and a woman. Additionally, one of the primary reasons for marriage is for reproduction of godly offspring. Adam and Eve were commanded to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). **A gay marriage cannot fulfill this command.**

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