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When  
Does Life  
Begin?

by  
Douglas L. Crook

# *When Does Life Begin?*

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In our society today there is a pressing moral question that is being asked in many forums and arenas, political, social, legal and religious. The question is, “when does life begin?” Different individuals and groups ask the question for different reasons and with different agendas and offer different answers. My agenda in asking this question and attempting to answer it is not political, social, legal or religious. My purpose is to present what I believe is the clear Biblical answer to the question. For the true believer in Jesus Christ the Bible is understood to be the revelation of the will and purpose of God, our Creator. A Christian who understands the will of God and desires to please the Lord will then act in accordance with his or her faith in the Word of God in every arena of life in which he or she operates.

The debate over this question has been long and complicated. This tract will be short and simple. It will focus on one misconception that many theologians and Christians have embraced in order to compromise and accept the world’s view that abortion is an acceptable convenience of choice because it does not take a human life. Since, in their opinion, the embryo is not a human life, all the clear Biblical injunctions against taking a human life do not apply making abortion, in their minds, an acceptable, morally benign decision. The faulty foundation for their conclusion that the embryo is not a human life is based on their misapplication of ***Genesis 2:7***. “*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” NKJV In the reasoning

of liberal theologians, since Adam did not become a living being until God breathed into him the breath of life, life does not begin until we take our first breath, which, of course, takes place outside of the womb.

At first glance, that conclusion may appear very wise and Biblically sound. It certainly has been used by many Christians to ease their conscience for either personally choosing to end a pregnancy or for promoting and supporting the thought that others have a moral right to do so. The error of such an application of ***Genesis 2:7*** is quickly and easily exposed as one begins to understand the whole body of truth as revealed in the Bible.

God's creation of Adam and Eve was of necessity unique. They were the origin of a race that had never been. Adam was constructed from recently created dust and Eve from dust formed around Adam's rib. They became living beings only when God miraculously breathed into them the power of life. It wasn't that Adam and Eve just began to breathe. God breathed into them life. If we are going to use this passage as the standard for measuring when human life begins, we must believe that God miraculously breathes life into every child that is born into the human race.

Though the birth of every child is certainly a miracle of God's design, it is not a unique, creative miracle in the same sense of the creation of Adam and Eve. God's plan and purpose for the propagation of the human race was not that He would miraculously give the breath of life to every child that was born, but that Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God, would "*be fruitful,*" that is, that they would produce life from themselves. (***Genesis 1:27, 28***)

The answer to the question, "when does life begin?," can be found in understanding the Bible's declaration of where the source of natural life, both human and animal,

is found since the original creation. *“But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. “Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man. And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply in it.””* **Genesis 9:4—7 NKJV**

This Biblical truth is repeated over and over in the Word of God and is a cornerstone in the understanding of God's plan of redemption for the human race through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. God has declared that life is in the blood, (*Leviticus 17:14*) not in the first breath taken outside of the womb. If we believe the Bible to be true, as all Christians should, we should conclude that life begins with the beginning of the formation of the circulatory system. When does the circulatory system begin to be formed? In the womb. You should do your own research of the medical facts so I will not cite a lot of medical authorities in this tract. I will simply state some commonly known facts that you can verify with the sources of your choice.

At the moment of conception the fertilized egg possesses the power of life. Within the first 24 hours of the fertilization of an egg, the moment of conception, visible blood vessels, islands of blood will have formed. Some scientists have described the early stages of the embryo as a blood soaked sponge. Within the first 4 weeks of conception a primitive heart is already beating with a regular rhythm.

Since the Bible declares that the life of a person is in the blood and since that life-giving power to produce blood is present and doing its job from the moment of

conception, we must conclude that the Bible teaches that life begins at conception. Therefore, all the same injunctions of the Bible concerning the sanctity of human life that we apply to and accept for those who have been born, must be applied to and accepted for the unborn children in the womb as well.

This understanding of the sanctity of life leaves room to understand that there may be times when taking the life of an unborn child would be justified. For example, the Bible does not forbid ever taking another person's life, in fact, at times it demands it. (**Genesis 9:5, 6**) When the mother's life is in danger and a decision needs to be made about which life to save, it would be justifiable, though difficult and unpleasant, to choose one life over the other.

However, this understanding of the Biblical standard for life certainly exposes the sin of abortions of convenience and choice that treat the unborn as simply an unwanted body part rather than a living person.

The Biblical principle of the life of the flesh being in the blood is true of both animal and human flesh. However, what makes man uniquely human and different from the animals is the spirit of man. The spirit of the individual is what makes us a person formed to worship God. Another question that could be asked to determine when life begins would be, when does the individual receive a spirit?

*"...Thus says the LORD , who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him." NKJV **Zechariah 12:1** The Bible does not directly spell out when exactly the Lord forms the spirit within an individual. Nevertheless, the Hebrew word in **Zechariah 12:1** that is translated "forms" in reference to the spirit is the same word that is used in **Psalms 139:13**, and in many other places, to describe the formation of the body in the womb. In other words, I*

believe that the Bible teaches that life and spirit begin, are formed, in the womb. At the moment of conception the power of life and spirit begin.

We are given evidence of the power of the Spirit in the womb in the account of John the Baptist's experience in his mother's womb. "...*He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.*" **Luke 1:15** If John was able to receive the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb, isn't it logical to conclude that he already possessed a human spirit?

I know that these statements will be rejected by many as the oversimplified opinions of the uneducated, insensitive, unloving and arrogant born again Christian radical, but I believe that God's will can be understood by even the most simple among us. Our faith is simple. We simply believe what God has revealed to be true in His Word, the Bible. It is not arrogant or unloving to agree with God. He is the loving, all-wise Creator of all life. He has set the standard of what is right and wrong. We worship and honor Him by living by faith in His Word. May all of our actions and attitudes reflect our understanding of what God has declared to be right and wrong.

***Psalms 139:13-18***

*13 For You formed my inward parts;  
You covered me*

*(What makes me, me? Life and spirit.)  
in my mother's womb.*

*14 I will praise You, for I am fearfully and  
wonderfully made;*

*Marvelous are Your works,  
And that my soul knows very well.*

*15 My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,*

*(What makes me a person? Life and spirit.)  
And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the  
earth.*

*16 Your eyes saw my substance,*

*(Not just what I would become, but what I already  
was, a living soul)*

*being yet unformed. (Physically)*

*And in Your book they all were written,  
The days fashioned for me,*

*When as yet there were none of them.*

*17 How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O  
God!*

*How great is the sum of them!*

*18 If I should count them, they would be more in  
number than the sand;*

*When I awake, I am still with You.*

*NKJV*



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