

THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

"To Kill or Not To Kill"

Leviticus 24:17-22

Introduction

1. Many liberal theologians advocate euthanasia (Washington Post, May 17). Newsweek favored abolishment of capital punishment (March 8, '65). What do we believe?
2. Abortion is still an issue. When is a baby a baby? When is there true life? Where does man order and where does God's command stand? See the truth from three vantage points:

1. BIBLICAL

a. Recorded v.17.

Hebrew for "kill" means "smite." Noun "soul" is included. Certain death is promised. Hebrew has special device to affirm this. Same position taken in the Decalogue (Ex. 20:13). Verb there means "to dash in pieces," hence to "murder." General idea of "kill" is absent.

b. Explained. vv. 18-22.

Here specifics are given. It applied to both Jew and Gentile (v. 22). Suggestion is, therefore, of a general human pattern (cf. Rom. 2:14). Animals killed demanded payments (vv. 18,21). Humans on a different level; hence judgment of reciprocal death (vv. 19-21b). This division shows evolution wrong, for God sees them differently in creation! All this is in keeping with pre-Mosaic law (Gen. 9:6). God's governmental arrangements stand. Variant kinds of murder involved—predetermined (Ex. 21:14) or accidental (Num. 35:11). God provided places of asylum for the latter, but the former were tried and judged! Various circumstances are covered by God's Word (Ex. 21:15-36) showing His equity and justice.

2. PRACTICAL

a. Animal killing.

No prohibition in Bible. Rather, it is practised with God's approval: Levitical offerings (1-5), with patriarchs (Gen. 27) and in the N.T. (1 Tim. 4:4). God Himself killed an animal (Gen. 3). Vegetarianism is not taught by the Bible!

b. Capital Punishment.

To appeal that the O.T. is unworthy of present "grace dispensation" activity is a cop out! Murder is rejected by the N.T. (1 John 3:15). Governments are provided by God for this purpose (Rom. 13:4). It is clear that human government persists in grace!

c. War.

God instructed David to war (Psa. 18:34). O.T. is filled with international wars from the history of Israel and God employed this instrument to judge sin in the nation and Gentiles (Judges; 2 Kings 17). Ultimately, war is traced to sin (James 4:1).

d. Moral Judgments.

Mad dogs are killed. Cows must be killed to feed the hungry (cf. India). People go beserk and must be shot. The whole intent is the role of human government in a world of sinful men (Rom. 13). No wonder God urged prayer for leaders in politics (1 Tim. 2:1,2).

3. INFERENTIAL

a. Suicide

This is self-destruction. Some may be done intentionally (recent shoot out in L.A.). Most linked with despair and mental imbalance. God holds eternal matters and best to leave it to Him. Little said in Bible (cf. 1 Sam. 31:4; Matt. 27:5). God is omniscient (Psa. 139).

b. Habit

This is the slow killer. Abuse of the body brings death. Believers will attend to Scripture which shows the sanctity of the body (1 Cor. 6:19; Rom. 12: 1,2).

c. Carelessness.

Responsibility for one's actions and possessions is taught (Ex. 21:29). No wonder one reads about Jacob's "grave" (Gen. 37:35) and Isaac's grief (Gen. 26:35). Many, by their behaviour, have done the same and ultimately brought death! Such indifference is culpable!

Conclusion The value of a man before God is the crux of the question. Viewed in that light, the violation of one's life from God is sinful! It was such sin that took the son's life (1 Cor. 15:3). Have you claimed the value of His death for yourself?