IS ABORTION THE SHEDDING OF INNOCENT BLOOD?

Exodus 21:22-25 “If people 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.”

Miscarriage or Premature Birth

Most translations, including the NIV, NASB and NKJV translate the phrase “gives birth prematurely.” The ESV very literally translates it “her children come out.” But since there are a significant minority of translations that render the phrase as “has a miscarriage,” let’s look at what the passage would say if that translation is correct.

Numbers 35 makes a very clear distinction between deliberate murder and accidentally killing someone else. Murder was to be punished by putting the murderer to death. The person who accidentally killed someone had to flee to one of the cities of refuge and remain in that city until the death of the high priest in office at the time of the accidental killing. His only punishment was that he had to remain in the city of refuge.

If Exodus 21:22-25 is saying if people are fighting and “hit a pregnant woman and she has a miscarriage,” and the pregnant woman dies, then the person who caused the miscarriage shall be killed, it creates a special class of people, pregnant women, for whom all the rules about the difference between accidental killing and murder are changed, because the passage is saying that the person who accidentally causes the death of a pregnant woman is to be put to death.

What Does the Passage Say?

The most common translation of the passage is the one in the NIV, “she gives birth prematurely,” although the ESV is not the only translation to translate it very literally “her children come out.” Hebrew has a word for “miscarry” and one for “miscarriage,” but neither one is used here. This passage uses exactly the same Hebrew words as those used in the following passages.

Genesis 25:22a(NASB) But the children struggled together within her;

Genesis 31:43 Laban answered Jacob, “The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see today is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne?”

Genesis 25:24-26 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau. After this, his brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau’s heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them.

Genesis 38:27-30 When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, “So this is how you have broken out!” And he was named Perez. Then his brother, who the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out. And he was named Zerah.

The phrase “come out” in both these passages translates exactly the same verb that is translated “come out” in the ESV of Genesis 21:22.

So the passage says that if people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and “her children come out” (she gives birth prematurely) “the offender must be fined whatever the husband demands and the court allows as long as there is no injury to either the mother or her child(ren).

But the standard for calling a death accidental includes these words in Numbers 35:23b “Then since that other person was not an enemy and no harm was intended,” the death is to be considered accidental. The most consistent reading of these passages produces the conclusion that **ACCIDENTALLY** causing the death of a pregnant woman or her child was to be punished by death and any serious injury was to be punished by inflicting the same injury on the guilty individual.

The Hebrew word translated “serious injury” is used only here and of what Jacob was afraid would happen to Benjamin if he let him go with his brothers to Egypt to buy grain. Genesis 42:4, 38; 44:29

What Is Happening in American Culture

The attempts to justify abortion because the unborn child was only “fetal tissue” largely ended with sonagrams of unborn babies showing they were distinctly human. Another justification had to be found. They are now saying the unborn child may be biologically human, but is not really a “person” in a legal sense until they are self-aware, understanding who they are and what they need and want. But that is truly a slippery slope, for how truly self-aware is a three-month old or an old person with dementia.

Furthermore, if self-awareness and not biology is what makes you human, then how you view yourself is what makes you who you are, whether you are heterosexual (what biology tells you that you are: male or female) or gay or transgender or queer or etc. (what you subjectively think you are). It is the philosophical justification for abortion that largely leads to legitimizing homosexuality and transgenderism.

To return to what seems obvious to most of us, that everyone who is biologically human is a human being deserving the full protection of the law, would essentially delegitimize many of the arguments for homosexuality and transgenderism. In essence, you are what your body and your DNA say you are.

Genesis 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

The Primary Reason God Judged Judah

2 Kings 24:3&4 Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD’s command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.

Summing Things Up

There are often two victims to an abortion. The baby who is killed and the mother who is told that an abortion will “solve her problem.” I struggle when I teach what the Bible says about abortion, because of the second victims, women who have had abortions and struggle with guilt and loss. The Bible is very clear, however, that when we confess sin, God forgives and cleanses us.

No matter how you translate Exodus 21:22-25, whether as a miscarriage or a premature birth, it puts pregnant women in a special category; to kill a pregnant woman accidentally under the law was treated as murder.

If you translate the Hebrew words as they are translated elsewhere in the Old Testament, to accidentally cause a pregnant woman to give birth early and have the child die was also to be treated as murder.

The only way to justify abortion is to make something other than biology the basis of who is truly human, truly a person in the eyes of the law.

When you start declaring that unborn babies are not human, other bad things follow.

It’s hard to come up with something more innocent than an unborn baby.

Shedding innocent blood is an incredibly grievous sin.