



June 7, 2019

In our day, the topic of abortion is receiving much attention, and we often hear discussions from two differing viewpoints. The pro-life viewpoint opposes abortion in varying degrees, and the pro-choice viewpoint favors a woman's right to choose whether or not to bear a child. A key premise to both points of view is the determination of when human life begins.

Certainly the One Who formed, made, and created men and women and gave them freedom of will has much to say about the origins of life and the choices we make. When we seek God's point of view from His written Word, we can be "pro-truth"—we can have answers of truth for ourselves and for others regarding when human life begins.

To see this important matter from God's point of view, let's start our search in the Book of Genesis, where God set the foundations of all life.

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 soul.

God's Word tells us that man was formed of the dust of the ground. Man's body is composed of the same elements that are in the dust of the earth. It also tells us that God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." This phrase is a figure of speech meaning God put life into Adam. At this point man became a "living soul."

The soul in man is that which gives the body its life, its vitality. Soul life is "breath life." Man became a living soul when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. So the beginning of a person's soul life, according to God and His Word, is not when a heartbeat is detected in the womb; it is with the first natural breath after a baby is born. When a human being breathes independently, then God says that human being is a "living soul."

The breath of life after birth ignites a series of vital changes in the cardiovascular and pulmonary systems of the newborn so as to sustain that child's life functions independent of the mother. The breath of life occurs as the child breathes in through his or her nostrils or mouth, not through the connection to the mother. The unborn does not breathe on its own in the womb and therefore cannot receive the breath of life, which is the determining factor in being labeled a living soul.

Let's continue our search for God's viewpoint on when human life begins.

Exodus 21:22,23:

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow [that is, if the woman does not die]: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine.

And if any mischief follow [if the woman does die], then thou shalt give life for life.

This record deals with a miscarriage. According to the Old Testament Mosaic law, if two men were fighting and hurt a pregnant woman so that she miscarried (i.e., the fetus died) "and yet no mischief follow" (i.e., the woman herself did not die as a result), the man who hurt the woman had to pay a fine. Yet God's Word states emphatically that if someone was a murderer, he was guilty of death and was to be put to death. Money could not be offered as payment to absolve him of the crime.

Numbers 35:30,31:

Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.

Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction [ransom, payment] for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

According to the record of Exodus 21, the man who caused the miscarriage was not put to death unless the woman herself died. If the death of the fetus were considered murder, the law would require a mandatory death sentence, not a fine. For causing the miscarriage, he was fined. In Old Testament law a fine was the standard penalty for damaging or stealing property. (See Exodus 21:33-36; 22:1-7.) In the case of the miscarriage, the man who caused it stole the blessing that the parents would have had

from the baby. On the other hand, as we saw from Numbers 35:30, “whoso killeth any person” would have been put to death. Thus the record in Exodus 21:22 shows that God does not consider a fetus to be a person, a living soul.

The truth is that breathing on one’s own is the determining factor for being labeled a “living soul.” This is true for every human being, including God’s only begotten Son. Let’s look at God’s viewpoint in the Book of Luke.

Luke 1:35:

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

God’s messenger, the angel Gabriel, called Jesus Christ “that holy thing” before he was born. The words “holy thing” represent one word in Greek, which is in the neuter gender, not in the masculine. While he was in the womb, Jesus Christ was not yet considered a male human being, but a “holy thing.”

We have seen God’s viewpoint from several records in the Bible. In Genesis, we saw that man became a living soul when he breathed in the breath of life. From Exodus and Numbers, we saw that a fetus was not considered a living person, a living soul. And in Luke, we saw that Jesus Christ was not considered a human being when he was in the womb.

With the accuracy of the Bible in the forefront of our thinking, we can heed wise counsel in life and help others as well. The clear answers from God’s Word allow us to be “pro-truth” in our day. With certainty, we can know God’s viewpoint on when human life begins.

For more information, visit www.theway.org

© 2019 by The Way International™. All rights reserved.