

# Lest We Forget

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*Nehemiah 4:10-14*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. From Washington, DC, to Washington State, people will gather at public and private memorials tomorrow without giving much thought to who builds those monuments.
1. “That’s the way it should be,” says Sharon Jensen, public relations director for Cold Spring Granite Company. “Our greatest satisfaction is knowing that the monuments we help build are important to both individuals and communities, and will be there for generations to see.”
  2. Cold Spring Granite may be little known to the general public, but it has become a powerhouse within the dimensional stone industry.
    - a. Based in the small, central Minnesota town of Cold Spring, it is one of the largest quarries and manufacturers of granite in the world.
    - b. In fact, no single company has contributed more raw and finished granite building material to the development of national memorials in the last century.
      - 1) Over the years, Cold Spring Granite has worked on the Vietnam War, Korean War, D-Day, and USS Indianapolis memorials. In addition, it has helped design and build numerous monuments and war memorials for both state and local organizations throughout the United States.
      - 2) “Memorial Day is obviously important to us,” says Jensen. “We are in the business of building meaningful and lasting memorials. In this throw-away society, it’s great to be in a business that builds something permanent.”
- B. This is Memorial Day week-end.
1. On May 5, 1866, the town of Waterloo, New York, honored local veterans who had fought in the Civil War.
    - a. Businesses closed and residents flew flags at half-staff.
    - b. Since that time, Memorial Day has been a part of the American psyche.
  2. No doubt, many of you will gather at graves this week-end to remember loved ones, whether or not they died in war.
  3. It’s important to remember:
    - a. In our text this morning, the Jews reconstructing the walls of Jerusalem were becoming discouraged because of Sanballat and Tobiah’s plan to attack them, Nehemiah says, “Do not be afraid of them. REMEMBER THE LORD, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes” (Neh 4:14).
    - b. As Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, he says to the disciples, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24).
    - c. To the church at Sardis, Jesus says, “Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent” (Rv 3:2-3).
  4. Remembering the dead plays a vital role in who we are as a people.
    - a. As a nation, remembering the war dead brings to our consciousness the liberty we enjoy and helps us realize how frail that liberty really is.
    - b. As we remember family members who have died, we have an identity—We understand who we are, where we’ve been, and where we’re going.
  5. This morning, I want us to remember the dead.
    - a. Unfortunately, we cannot go and lay flowers at their graves, for they have no grave.

- b. In fact, they were never allowed to be born. This morning, as this nation remembers her dead, let us think about the evil abortion brings.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF ABORTION**

- A. The first recorded evidence of induced abortion, is from the Egyptian Ebers Papyrus in 1550 BC, and the practice has been performed countless times since.
- B. The Hippocratic Oath includes a prohibition against abortion. It says, “Nor will I give a woman a pessary to procure abortion.”
- C. Near the time of Christ, Josephus, the famous Jewish historian wrote, “The Law commanded to raise all children and prohibited women from aborting or destroying seed; a woman who does so shall be judged a murderess of children .... ”
- D. Athenagoras, a second century Christian, wrote to the emperor, Marcus Aurelius, saying, “We say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give an account of it to God .... The fetus in the womb is a living being and therefore the object of God’s care.”
- E. In the United States, laws against abortion were in effect until 1967, when a few states began to liberalize their laws.
  - 1. By the end of 1970, 18 states had passed laws that allowed abortion in certain cases.
  - 2. However, on January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States handed down its ruling in *Roe v Wade*, which permits abortion on demand.
- F. Since *Roe v Wade*, more than 40 million abortions have been performed in the United States.
  - 1. Let’s place that number in context of the largest mass killings in history:
    - a. 20 million died in Mao’s Cultural Revolution in China between 1966 and 1976.
    - b. 20 million died at the hands of Stalin in the USSR.
    - c. 11 million were killed during the Holocaust.
    - d. In 1971, the Pakistani government killed 3 million in reprisals against Bengalis.
    - e. 1.6 million died in the Cambodian Killing Fields.
    - f. 1 million were killed in Rwanda in 1994.
    - g. 200,000 were killed during the ethnic cleansing in Bosnia.
  - 2. There is not a one of us who will ever forget where we were when we heard that planes had flown into the World Trade Center.
    - a. The death toll was staggering—roughly 3,000 people had been killed in a horrendous act of violence.
      - 1) Our nation was up in arms—we were outraged, we were angry, and we wanted justice.
      - 2) Flags flew in front of houses as far as the eye could see.
      - 3) Our military has fought wars to prevent such an atrocity from occurring again.
    - b. But, do you realize that more than 6,000 Americans are killed each day by abortion?
      - 1) That is twice as many as were killed on September 11, 2001.
      - 2) While I do not wish for one second to minimize the lives lost that horrible day, where is the outrage over 6,000 people dying by legalized murder every single day?
      - 3) Are we more angry that terrorists flew planes into buildings or that our nation allows 6,000 innocent babies to be slaughtered daily?

## **WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES SAY ABOUT ABORTION?**

- A. Unfortunately, there have been many who have viewed this issue as a political one.
  - 1. It is an election year, and I have no doubt that the rhetoric about this issue will be as intense as it has been in years past.
  - 2. However, we can never allow the political rhetoric to form our views.

- a. We are not citizens of this earth:
    - 1) “Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil 3:20).
    - 2) “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Pt 2:11).
  - b. Because we are citizens of heaven and strangers and exiles on this earth, we seek our answers to life’s questions from on high:
    - 1) “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tm 3:16).
    - 2) “No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pt 1:20-21).
  - c. Therefore, let us is those who come to the Scriptures to discern the will of God!
- B. We learn from the Scriptures that God regards all human life as valuable.
- 1. Man is valuable for he bears the image of God.
    - a. Gn 1:26-31.
    - b. Man’s sin in the Garden did not remove that image of God, for we read of that image after the Flood: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image” (Gn 9:6).
  - 2. Because of man’s divine image, murder is forbidden.
    - a. “You shall not murder” (Ex 20:13).
    - b. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” (Mt 5:21-22).
    - c. “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood” (Prov 6:16-17).
- C. However, at what point does life begin? Does life begin at conception, or does life not begin until birth?
- 1. What we must absolutely understand is that conception is the work of God, not man.
    - a. Yes, I know that’s not the way we’ve been accustomed to viewing human reproduction.
    - b. We think a man and woman come together and conceive a child.
  - 2. Sure, humans conceive sexually, yet God is intimately involved in the entire process.
    - a. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nation” (Jer 1:5).
      - 1) It wasn’t Jeremiah’s parents who formed him through reproduction—it was God himself!
      - 2) “Formed” is the same Hebrew word we find in Gn 2:7: “The LORD god formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” Thus, the coming together of an egg and sperm is God’s doing in miniature what God did in the Garden.
    - b. “You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Ps 139:13-16).
- D. Yet, when does life enter the fetus?
- 1. Just as with conception, the giving of a spirit is the work of God.
    - a. “Thus declares the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him” (Zech 12:1).
    - b. “As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything” (Eccl 11:5). While the Hebrew is

ambiguous here, it's clear that God gives the spirit.

2. Unless the body has a spirit, it is not alive: "The body apart from the spirit is dead" (Is 2:26).
  - a. The opposite would also obviously be true: if the body is alive, it has a spirit.
  - b. Is the fetus in the womb alive? If so, he or she has a spirit.
    - 1) The Scriptures do not differentiate between a child in the womb and a child outside the womb.
      - a) "Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her" (Gn 25:21-22). The Heb word for "children" is used throughout the Old Testament to refer to children.
      - b) "When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb" (Lk 1:41).
        - i. The word "baby" refers to an infant, whether the infant is in or out of the womb.
        - ii. In fact, it is used of the newborn Jesus in Lk 2:16: The shepherds "went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger" (Lk 2:16).
    - 2) In fact, the Old Testament imposed stiff penalties on one who accidentally harmed a pregnant woman:
      - a) Ex 21:22-25.
      - b) I realize that's OT, but if God exacted a severe penalty on those who accidentally harmed an unborn child, what will God's penalty be for those who intentionally harm unborn children?
  - c. Yet, is a fertilized egg, a zygote, a human being? Does that zygote possess a spirit?
    - 1) "If the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, then she shall be free and shall conceive children" (Num 5:28).
      - a) The Hebrew here is literally "seed," but it is used of children throughout the Old Testament.
      - b) This is the same word used, for example, in Gn 15:5: God "brought [Abraham] outside and said, 'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be'" (Gn 15:5).
      - c) It is not an egg that is conceived, but a human being!
    - 2) "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 51:5).
      - a) Many have overlooked the hyperbole—exaggeration—here and attempted to teach original sin without looking at the poetic nature of this psalm.
      - b) That point aside, notice that David said his mother conceived him.
    - 3) When Mary wondered how she could conceive as a virgin, Gabriel says, "Behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son" (Lk 1:36), not tissue, not a glob of cells, but Elizabeth conceived a son. John was Elizabeth's son from the moment of conception.

E. Furthermore, we need to understand the biblical view of children.

1. Children today are viewed more as a curse by many rather than a blessing.
  - a. If you don't believe me, take your children to a restaurant, allow them to misbehave just a little bit, and see the stares you get.
  - b. If children aren't viewed as a burden by so many, why are child abuse, neglect, and abandonment serious problems? If children aren't viewed as a burden by so many, why are there so many abuses?
2. The biblical view is that God graciously gives children.
  - a. When Jacob and Esau met after their estrangement, Esau saw Jacob's children and asked who they were. Jacob replied, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant" (Gn 33:5).
  - b. "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one's youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with

them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate” (Ps 127:3-5).

3. God expects married couples to have children.
  - a. The first recorded command God gave man was reproduction: “God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it’” (Gn 1:28).
  - b. Women “will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (2 Tm 2:15).
    - 1) In that context, Paul is speaking about the roles of men and women.
    - 2) “Childbearing” here stands for the entire submission of women to man.
      - a) What Paul does here is quite like what Jesus does in the Lord’s Prayer: “Give us this day our daily bread” (Mt 6:11). Was Jesus praying just to have bread? No, he’s praying for food, but he uses bread to stand for food in general.
      - b) While Paul speaks of a woman’s entire role in the home and the church, notice that he uses “childbearing” to speak of that role.
  - c. “I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander” (1 Tm 5:14).
  - d. Is it a requirement that couples have children?
    - 1) Scripture recognizes that not everyone is physically able to have children: “There are eunuchs who have been so from birth” (Mt 19:12).
    - 2) Also, while children are a heritage of the Lord, having children isn’t for everyone.
      - a) Scripture does not expect everyone to get married: “To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am” (1 Cor 7:8).
      - b) Jesus never fathered children. If having children were a command of God in this present world, how could he have been perfect without doing so?
    - 3) Yet, that does not diminish the view that having a child is both the gift and plan of God.

## **SOME OBJECTIONS**

- A. We hear all the time, “You cannot legislate morality.”
  1. The legislation of morality is one of the few God-given roles of government: The one in authority “is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer” (Rm 13:4).
  2. Also, morality is legislated all the time:
    - a. If morality is not legislated, tell that to the IRS when they come to audit you and find that you’ve lied on your income tax returns.
    - b. If morality is not legislated, tell that to the individuals who have been prosecuted for perjury.
    - c. If morality is not legislated, tell that to the folks who have been put to death for murder.
- B. We also hear that women should have the right to control their own body.
  1. If that is the case, what about the females who are aborted without their consent?
  2. We recognize in this society that we do not have absolute rights over our bodies.
    - a. This society doesn’t permit folks to be nude or drunk in public.
    - b. What about taking illegal drugs? If I have a right over my own body, shouldn’t I be permitted to do that?
  3. Women have a right to control their bodies—they do not have to become pregnant.
  4. Abortion involves much more than just the woman’s body, for the body of an unborn child is involved.
- C. What about cases of rape and incest?
  1. Rape and incest account for less than one percent of all abortions.
  2. I cannot speak to the trauma such brutality brings, for neither I nor anyone in my family has ever experienced such.

3. However, the innocent do not pay for crimes.
  - a. That is a recognized judicial truth—if we were willing to punish the innocent along with the guilty there would be no need for trials.
  - b. Furthermore, we know the words of Scripture: “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son” (Ezek 18:20).

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. The lives of innocent children are at stake.
  1. How much longer shall we, as the people of God, sit idly by and allow millions of children to be slaughtered?
  2. The kingdom of heaven belongs to little children: “Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:14).
- B. “As Jesus walked upon the earth, on the shores of Galilee, He’d say to his disciples, ‘Let the little children come to me.’ I wonder if up in heaven, do you suppose you’ll see, Little children asking, ‘What was I supposed to be?’ Was I to be a prophet used in the ministry? A doctor who would find a cure, for some terrible disease?’ ‘Even if I had been born imperfect why couldn’t my parents see I’d have been made perfect, when you came back for me?’ ‘What was I supposed to be? What were my eyes supposed to see? Why did I taste of death, Before I even drew a breath, Or lay my head on my mother’s breast to sleep? Oh, Jesus, what was I supposed to be?’”