

## The Bible and Childbearing

**Overview:** Even though the Bible has nothing directly to say about abortion, it has plenty to say about pregnancy and childbearing. One way to address the issue of abortion is to compare the place of childbearing in the Bible to the place of childbearing in a worldview that accepts abortion. Thus, an appropriate question to ask is: does the practice of abortion, the deliberate termination of a pregnancy, fit well with or sharply conflict with childbearing in the Biblical worldview?

### (1) Childbearing in Creation

The significance of childbearing in the Biblical story becomes apparent starting in the first chapter of Genesis.

#### **Genesis 1:26-28**

*[26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. [28] And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

#### **Observations**

- "Be fruitful and multiply," a command to bear children, is the very first command given to human beings.
- There is a connection between humans as "made in God's image" and childbearing – that is, each time a new human being comes into existence a new "image-bearer" comes into existence, further spreading God's image.
- There is also a connection between the commands to "be fruitful and multiply" and "fill the earth and subdue it" – the latter cannot be accomplished without the former.
- The command to "be fruitful and multiply" was given to the entire human race – this verse should not be used to say that individuals without children or smaller families are somehow disobedient, but it does at least indicate that childbearing has a significant role in God's creational design for humanity.
- The command is preceded with an act of blessing from God – it should come as no surprise that the Bible associates blessing with childbearing and fertility.
- This command is repeated in Genesis 9:1-7, with a special warning against harming fellow human beings created in God's image.

**Main point:** From the very beginning childbearing is a blessing that plays a significant part in humanity's responsibility to bear God's image in the world and subdue creation. The practice of abortion, on the other hand, is in conflict with these responsibilities, puts minimal importance on pregnancy.

### (2) Childbearing in Salvation

Significant texts about God's plan to deal with universal evil and bring about salvation are directly linked with childbearing:

**Genesis 3:14-15:** In the curse on the serpent, God reveals that the "seed/offspring of the woman" will crush his head. This hints that God will use childbirth somehow to deal with humanity's evil and rebellion.

*[14] The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock*

*and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. [15] I will put enmity between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

**Abrahamic Covenant** (Genesis 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14): God promises Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their "offspring" will bring blessing to all the families of the earth.

**Davidic Covenant** (2 Samuel 7:12-17): God promises David that his "offspring" will establish his throne forever.

**Isaiah 9:6-7**: In accord with the promise made to David, Isaiah predicts the "birth of a child" that will lead to everlasting peace and justice.

*[6] For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall rest upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. [7] Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

**Jesus the Messiah** (Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-14): Jesus is born in fulfillment of OT promises and messianic predictions.

**Overcoming Barrenness** (Genesis 11:29-30; 25:21; Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:7, 26-38): In connection with his plan to use childbirth to deal with evil, God overcomes the "would-be" obstacle of barrenness in significant Biblical characters. Beyond this, not even virginity is an obstacle for God to bring about the birth of a child.

**1 Timothy 2:15**: This verse connects childbearing and salvation in reference to Eve and women – "she will be saved through childbirth." Whatever the verse actually means, it at least puts childbearing in a very positive light.

**Main point**: If God has utilized the process of childbearing to bring about salvation for the entire world, childbearing itself must be good and valuable. Abortion, on the other hand, treats "not being pregnant" as more important than the life of a child in the womb.

### **(3) Childbearing in Biblical Poetry**

On a few occasions the Psalms speak about God, the womb, and children.

#### **Select texts:**

- Psalm 22:9-10; 71:7 – God cares for us from before birth.
- Psalm 113:1-9 – God is able to reverse the condition of barrenness.
- Psalm 127:3-5 – God gives children as a reward and blessing.
- Psalm 139:13-16 – God nurtures and sustains life in the womb.

**Main point**: A look at selected Psalms shows that God cares for and nurtures pre-born life, gives children as a blessing, and even sovereignly acts to reverse barrenness. On the other hand, abortion disrupts and destroys the person-forming work of God in the womb, often finds children to be a burden rather than a blessing, and prefers an empty womb.

### **(4) Childbearing in the Covenants**

In addition to being a blessing in general, childbearing is also given as a blessing for obedience in the covenants God made with Israel.

**Abrahamic Covenant** (Gen 13:16; 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14; 32:12; Exod 32:13; Deut 1:10; 10:22):

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are promised innumerable children as part of the covenant God established with Abraham.

**Mosaic Covenant** (Deut 28:4, 11, 18, 53-57; 30:9, 16): Moses promises fertility as a blessing of obedience and infertility as a curse of disobedience in the covenant established before they entered the Promised Land.

**New Covenant** (Isa 54:1-17; Jer 31:1-31; Ezek 36:1-37:28): As part of the new covenant, the prophets metaphorically describe Israel's return from exile and to God in language of reversal from barrenness and childlessness.

**Main point:** If fertility and increased children are promised as a blessing of covenant obedience, then childbearing itself must be a good thing.

**Summary:** If childbearing/fertility is (1) the part of first command given to humans, involving our responsibility to bear God's image in the world and subdue creation, (2) utilized by God to bring about salvation for the human race, (3) described as the handiwork of God himself and a blessing from him, and (4) given as a blessing of obedience, then abortion is a practice that conflicts with the Biblical worldview. Compared to the Biblical worldview abortion is a practice that is both immoral and unthinkable.