

Life does not begin at conception, and few things demonstrate whose we are as much as how we view children.

Life Does not Begin in the Womb.

Spermatozoa and ova are alive prior to conception, because life only comes from life, and everyone of these sex cells is in an unbroken line of life going back to the time when God first breathed the breath of life into humankind in the person of that lump of dirt, the lifeless Adam.

It is simply that a lone ovum or a lone spermatozoon is not a person anymore than my finger is a person; each is alive, but neither, in and of itself, is a human person. Furthermore, unlike the somatic cells that make up a finger, this lone egg or sperm each has half the chromosomes of a human being, and so each brings a part of the genetic code that forms the unique individual who is formed at the moment of conception, the zygote, with forty-six chromosomes.

During ovulation, a living egg is released from the ovaries and travels down one of the fallopian tubes, ready to enter the uterus, waiting for a possible encounter that must take place generally within twenty-four hours from the time that the egg's follicular wall of protective cells ruptures. Then, in one of the most pleasurable gifts that God has bestowed on his creatures, a human male releases two to three hundred million spermatozoa, each alive, each able to pass on its precious God-given life. Out of this seemingly chance encounter, a sovereign God has ordained that one of these germ cells is going to be the first to break through the outer wall of the ovum and proceed to the center of the female cell, where each of their threadlike, chromatin material organizes into chromosomes. Nothing becomes alive at that moment, because both the single spermatozoon and the single ovum are already alive, continuing the long path of life from primeval millennia begun in Eden. But at the moment of conception a unique human being is formed.

Each sperm and egg is alive, designed to pass on the life from Eden to a member of a new generation of humans. At the moment of conception a new human being is formed. If one of those sperm flags in his swimming through the cervix into the uterus and up into a fallopian tube, his genetic material is lost forever, and the sperm himself will quickly die. Out of the hundreds of millions of sperm that are released in ejaculation, in most cases, only one will win the triumphal crown of being able to fertilize that single ovum. Sometimes, as in the case of fraternal twins, more than one ovum waits in a fallopian tube.

Think about it. Not only the color of your hair and eyes, but the basic structure of your whole body, including your brain and its basic abilities, is determined at that moment. To be sure environmental factors are profound, but environment cannot make a person with a genetically limited mental capacity able to become a nuclear physicist, or a person with a genetically determined small set of muscles able to become a gold-medal, Olympic weight lifter, no matter how much training a person performs and how many steroids he

takes. In both cases, hard work and excellent teachers can produce significant results, but they cannot trump genetics. Furthermore, in spite of vigorous exercise, a low fat diet and never smoking, some people's genetic clock is simply going to stop ticking in early middle age—diet and exercise can help to extend life, but they cannot do so beyond certain genetic limiting factors. That's a major reason why my father's somewhat overweight sister, who ate lots of fried chicken and regularly enjoyed a glass of wine or a Gin and Tonic, lived to be one hundred, two and a half, and my tobacco using father-in-law lived to eighty-seven.

Life began in the Garden of Eden, but each generation is shaped in the womb when a particular sperm, ordained before the foundation of the world by an absolutely sovereign God, unites with a particular egg, thereby forming a unique human being: "For 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" (Psalm 139:13-16).

In what appears to us to be so random and chaotic—one sperm out of several hundred million reaches a particular egg within that roughly one day window of opportunity—out of this seemingly chance event come what we call birth defects, but even here the hand of a sovereign God is at work: "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Exodus 4:11)

God has ordained what the world calls good as well as what it calls evil: "I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make peace (shalom) and create evil (ra'), I am the LORD, who does all these things" (Isaiah 45:5-7).

But good and evil cannot ultimately be judged by humankind, because nothing that is ultimately evil ever happens to a child of God: "And we know that all things work together for good to them those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). And, "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11).

As we think about human conception, we bless this dreadful Sovereign who has exercised such absolute control over what appears to be such a chaotic, random event as one sperm out of hundreds of millions uniting with one egg, thereby genetically determining so very much of the course of our lives. We treasure life in the womb because it is part of a continuum going back to the green glades of Eden. We confess with Solomon: "Lo, children are a heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psalm 127:3). We happily welcome these little ones because: "As arrows are in the hand of a

mighty man; so are children of the youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!” (Psalm 127:4, 5) We rejoice in betrothals, marriages and births, especially births, because, “Thou shalt see thy children’s children” (Psalm 128:6). We look to the future with confidence because our benevolent Sovereign has covenanted: “His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed” (Psalm 112:2).

How Do the Wicked Experience the Good Gifts of God?

It is not so with the wicked. Even the good things that God sends to those who do not love him only serve to bring greater death and condemnation in the long run: “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed” (Romans 2:5). Even though God is loving and kind in and of himself, the ungodly “show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?” (Romans 2:4). Though God shows temporal kindness day by day, giving rain and sunshine to godly and wicked alike (Matthew 5:45), those who do not know God never experience God’s kindness as it is in itself; they only know a God of wrath from whom they hide: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18).

Think of it, you and I who have tasted the goodness of God in the land of the living: the man or woman who never truly comes to Christ never truly knows the goodness of God. Though I have known many ups and downs in my life, from the day that I was converted to Christ almost fifty years ago, I have never known that utter sense of loneliness and despair that I knew so many times before. But that deep-seated and often latent sense of guilt and loneliness corresponds to reality in those who do not savingly know God: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

Hell is not something new because God’s wrath is continually experienced in this life. But in the world to come God’s wrath is stripped of all his temporal kindness and experienced without mixture: “If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

God’s Children Are Contrasted with the World in How They Respond to God’s Good Gifts.

God’s children treasure his good gifts, “which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is

consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:3-5). But what a child of God cherishes with weaned affections, the world idolizes. Where a believer is temperate, the heathen is an extremist: either a teetotaler or a drunkard. Where a child of God treasures children as God’s good gift, a temporary trust from him, the heathen either treats with contempt or worships, unable ever to let go of and grant freedom, because they seek to find in their children that which one can only find in God. The heathen are “Without natural affection.” More and more they are “trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:3, 4).

Unlike God’s children who treasure their precious seed, the world holds children with contempt and increasingly so as we move toward the consummation of the ages and the events that surround our Lord’s return. As the antithesis intensifies we may expect that those around us who do not know God will more and more join in actions of an ancient accursed nation, who turned her back on him who gives life:

“And you shall eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. The man who is the most tender and refined among you will begrudge food to his brother, to the wife he embraces, and to the last of the children whom he has left, so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because he has nothing else left, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. The most tender and refined woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will begrudge to the husband she embraces, to her son and to her daughter, her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears, because lacking everything she will eat them secretly, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns” (Deuteronomy 28:53-57).

This Antithesis Must Intensify.

I do not know all about the future, but I do know that Christ’s kingdom has significantly triumphed over the kingdom of Satan already: countless millions of Gentiles have been won to the God of Abraham, and Christian principles produced Christendom where once there was only benighted death. A major hallmark of Christian civilization is the cherishing of the life of the individual, especially of children. That is one reason why *Roe v. Wade* is such a watershed in American history; it represents a drastic overthrow of Christ’s easy yoke, and warmly embraces the death little children instead.

Yet such overthrows are not unexpected because the Bible tells us that the blessed leavening influence of the gospel will someday cease for a season, and that season may be nearer than we suppose. The nominally Christian world will one day remove its mask and reject every semblance of Christian thinking. Satan once again will run wild with the world for a little season (Revelation 20:7-9).

Every calamity is a signpost of the coming judgment, an omen that “the Judge is standing at the door!” (James 5:9) From time immemorial there have been “wars and rumors of wars,” “famines and earthquakes in various places” and nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. But as we draw near the return of our Lord, he hints that these birthpangs of the New World Order will intensify (Matthew 24:8). Earthquakes and tsunamis are portents of the final judgment of God on our planet, even though these signposts may be separated from that ultimate judgment by millennia yet to come (2 Peter 3:8, 9).

A profound evidence of the throwing off of the yoke of Christ is the world’s increasing use of science to play God. However, instead of bringing us back to Eden, godless science is the harbinger of death and destruction, following as it does in the footsteps of Tubal-Cain and Nimrod and all those who would lead us into the ancient City. Yet for the believer, here on earth we have “no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). In its quest for the perfect society, within the City of Man, with its absolutist concept of freedom and bastardization of the Democratic Ideal, the West also seeks perfect children. But pagans will always slaughter millions for their distorted vision of paradise, always believing that their evil is necessary for the greater good of the world—they have no place for these special gifts of God, the mentally and physically challenged, sent by the hand of a loving Father as special trusts to his own.

As I say, I do not know all about the future, but I do know from Scripture that the Antithesis must intensify in order that the Light may shine more brightly against the gathering, glowering gloom. As I look at the hubris of my own nation, I cannot expect that American believers will be exempt from what so many other Christians have undergone in other places throughout history because the Bible teaches “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (2 Timothy 3:12). But then, in the middle of persecution, one sweet Day, the trumpet will sound, and all believers from all times will be caught up to join the returning Lord. But “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed” (Romans 13:11). “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

In spite of so many terrible things, it is a grand time to be alive. Now is the opportunity to labor to spread our Lord’s kingdom like no other time in history because God has promised that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea?” (Isaiah 11:9) In one sense, that has already happened, because the gospel has already “been proclaimed to every creature under heaven” (Colossians 1:23. cf. Colossians 1:6 and Romans 16:26), but in the goodness of God there may be much more to come. As in the ancient, pre-Christian world, where pagans sacrificed their precious seed to the gods of this world, such barbarism was a golden opportunity to rescue the lost and love the unlovely for Jesus’ sake. May our culture of death be the backdrop for our affirmation of life and the Lord and Giver of life.

I'd rather live at no other time in history.

Bob Vincent