

## ***Universal Laws: Murder***

In a discussion of God's universal laws given to the family of man, murder and the consequence for it stands as one of the most profound and controversial in light of current attitudes. Most of us know the story of the first murder recorded in the Bible. Abel obeyed God and offered a proper sacrifice (**Gen 4.4, Heb 11.4**) while his brother Cain offered that which was unacceptable to the Lord. God told Cain he too could be accepted if he did well (**Gen 4.7**). Instead of changing his way of thinking, Cain killed his brother. The consequence for this was that he was separated from men becoming a fugitive and vagabond in the earth and the ground that produced the crops he was so proud of would no longer yield for him (**Gen 4.11-12**) Cain, fearing this was too harsh a punishment, expressed concern that someone might find and kill him for what he'd done (**Gen 4.13-14**). God declared, "***Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.***" (**Gen 4.15**).

This says a lot about the mentality of Cain, and is familiar to those who deal with criminal mentalities. He feared facing the same fate he imposed on his brother, had an aversion to the harsh consequences for his actions and was only concerned about himself. This is a typical criminal profile.

Over time, as the population of the world grew, evil increased and was marked by violence to the extent that God regretted creating man and decided to bring destruction by means of the flood (**Gen 6.5-7, 11**). After the world was cleansed, God spoke with Noah and his family, restating former commands, or laws, and providing new detail on others. One of these was a prohibition against murder. Note the nature of the command. "***And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.***" (**Gen 9.5-6**). According to God's pronouncement both animals and humans were to face the same consequence.

Today discussions of capital punishment don't take the sacred nature of human life into consideration. Humanity's place and role in creation are brought out in the Psalms as David writes, "***What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.***" (**Psm 8.4-8**).

The possibility that this penalty would serve as a deterrent against future murders isn't expressed here. God plainly reinforces the sanctity of human life and the fact that no one has the right to end a life, by any means without consequence. That involves all human life, including the unborn who are referred to as humans in the scriptures (**Job 3.16**) and other places. God's judgment is that one who murders forfeits their own life and must face the consequences for their actions. God has set limits on human behavior and violating these are to be dealt with as He has commanded.

Consequences of course are of no significance without the means to enforce them. God provided for that as well through the agency of civil authority. Paul, speaking of secular powers, and the need to respect them states, “*For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” (**Rom 13.4**). Government enforcement of law and order, is the instrument in the physical world through which God expects the stability of society to be maintained. In the history of the world, when societies abandon strong moral principles, murder and other crimes rise to a point that the culture fragments and eventually ceases to exist. History bears this out as one civilization after another is compared to the life cycle of culture we reviewed at the beginning of this study. God’s design for humanity contains provisions intended to preserve stability. The consequence for murder is clearly stated, is a law that originated with God and remains in effect today.

### **Next**

An element that lies at the heart of life and the biblical narrative is also the subject of a universal law pronounced by God. In the next lesson we’ll discuss the universal law from the Lord concerning blood.