
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Romans 13:1-7

INTRODUCTION

Some responsibilities are placed upon society, not because they are enjoyable, but because they are necessary. Capital punishment is such a duty. It is hard to imagine that reasonable people would view capital punishment as pleasant; however, that does not diminish its importance or necessity. The Christian's authority in all matters is not public opinion, personal feelings, or changing emotions, but God's Word!

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A. Capital punishment is _____ simply as "the death penalty for crime."
- B. The first established death penalty laws date back to the _____ century BC in the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon.
- C. The death penalty was also part of the 14th century Hittite _____; as well as the 7th century Code of _____.
- D. By the 1700s, 222 crimes were punishable by _____ in Britain!
- E. When the European settlers came to _____, they brought with them the _____ of capital punishment.
 - When the _____ of _____ was written in 1789, every state allowed the death penalty!
- F. In the late 1960s, the Supreme Court began "_____ _____" the way the death penalty was administered.
- G. The United States Supreme Court has issued several significant _____ concerning capital punishment, two of which are:
 1. The case of Furman v. Georgia in _____.
 - The Court ruled that capital punishment as currently administered in the state of Georgia _____ the 8th Amendment against cruel and unusual punishment.
 2. The case of Gregg v. Georgia in _____.

- The Court _____ a death sentence for murder but made sure that juries had careful _____ to follow in determining the appropriateness of the death sentence.
- H. Those who _____ the death penalty are known as abolitionists, since they favor _____ the death sentence.
- I. Those who _____ capital punishment are called retentionists, since they favor _____ the death penalty.

II. **BURNING ISSUES**

- While there are many questions concerning capital punishment, we will _____ four of the most important:
- A. Does capital punishment _____ the sanctity of life _____—that humans are made in the image of God?
1. No, a _____ view of the sanctity of life is not inconsistent with advocating the death penalty when _____ from the perspective of a deterrent.
 2. If society is serious about the sanctity of life, then it will _____ the strongest possible deterrent to keep people from taking _____ life!
 3. As we shall see, God the creator and giver of life, Himself _____ the death penalty!
- B. Does capital punishment violate Scripture's teaching regarding _____?
1. No, the responsibility to forgive is a _____ action. The responsibility of government is to _____ criminals, not to forgive them!
 2. It is wise to note that the act of capital punishment should _____ be used as a personal act of vengeance (often called "justice"), because vengeance belongs only to _____ – Romans 12:19
- C. Does capital punishment _____ the Constitution's 8th Amendment?
- "Excessive bail shall not be required, no excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."**
1. No, the Supreme Court has _____ that the death penalty does _____ violate the 8th Amendment, under certain sentencing procedures.

2. Capital punishment does not _____ to violate the 8th Amendment because capital punishment can be administered in a way that is essentially a _____ death.

D. What about people who are _____ and wrongly convicted?

1. Laws _____ be written solely with the extreme _____ in mind.

- “What ifs” can be leveled at virtually _____ law.

- Extreme exceptions do not invalidate the greater _____ aspects of _____ laws!

2. In our judicial systems, an appeal _____ is in place when perceived injustices occur.

3. The presence of and use of _____ evidence has greatly _____ erroneous judgments.

4. Adherence to the Biblical law of _____ witnesses would be an additional form of _____ – Numbers 35:30

III. BIBLICAL INSIGHT

A. God instituted the death penalty because “in the _____ of _____ made He man” – Genesis 9:6

- A murderer does not only take the life of an _____ victim, he also assaults God’s _____ majesty, because _____ man was created in God’s image – Genesis 1:26,27

- Nothing else in God’s _____ was brought to _____ by God’s own breath – Genesis 2:7

B. The Old Testament law in Exodus and Deuteronomy contains _____ of the references to capital punishment in the Bible. Beyond murder, several other _____ merited the death penalty:

1. Killings one’s _____ – Exodus 21:15

2. _____ one’s parents – Leviticus 20:9

3. _____ (child trafficking) – Deuteronomy 24:7

4. _____ – Leviticus 20:10

5. Homosexual _____ relations – Leviticus 20:13

6. _____ – Deuteronomy 22:25
- The _____ of Old Testament Civil Law may or may not be relevant to the present day, but the Law does _____ the death penalty!
 - The death penalty as ascribed in Genesis 9:6 was instituted _____ to the Old Testament _____, and there is no New Testament passage that indicates that it (capital punishment for taking an innocent life) is no longer _____!
- C. Jesus _____ the validity of the death penalty:
1. In the case of the _____ taken in adultery, Jesus ordered the Pharisees to _____ her. When they refused, He pardoned her – John 8:1-11
 2. Jesus did not _____ the death penalty even when it involved _____ life – Luke 23:13-25;33
- D. In the New Testament, _____ Himself invoked capital punishment – Acts 5:1-11
- E. The Apostle _____ clearly understood that there are some crimes _____ of death – Acts 25:11
- F. Government has the _____ and responsibility to punish a criminal even by capital punishment – Romans 13:1-7
1. God _____ human government – v.1
 2. Human government is to be _____ because it is of God and because it _____ evil – v.2-4
 3. The government has the _____ to use force – v.4
 - The _____ is the symbol of the power to _____ laws and capital punishment!
- G. Advocates of capital punishment must _____ that there are _____ on its application:
1. The first _____ murderers mentioned in Scripture (Cain and Lamech – Genesis 4:8,23) were _____ given the death penalty!
 2. Cities of _____ were established in various places throughout Israel to provide sanctuary for those who were _____ of manslaughter, or accidental killings – Numbers 35:6-29

Lesson 5: Capital Punishment

Though the death penalty may at first seem to be “cruel and unusual punishment,” the Christian should remember that the God of all mercy entrusted it to human government to prevent a far more destructive and corrupting violence.

--*Dr. Henry M. Morris*