

Abortion, Race, Gender, and Christ

by John Piper

The sermon highlights the connection between abortion, racism, and sexism, and how the evil of abortion is made clearer when it unites with the evil of sexism.

Duration: 42:57

Scripture: Exodus 1, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Social Justice", "Civil Disobedience"

Description

In this sermon, John Piper discusses the historical events of the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt as described in the Bible. He highlights the measures taken by Pharaoh to oppress the Israelites, including enslavement and intensification of harsh treatment. Piper also emphasizes the importance of civil disobedience in the face of evil, citing the example of the midwives who refused to participate in the infanticide of male children. He concludes by connecting these historical events to the present day, specifically addressing the issues of abortion, racism, and sexism.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.DesiringGod.org. Exodus chapter 1, verses 1 through 22. These are the names of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob, each with his household, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, and Benjamin, Dan, and Nephtali, Gad, and Asher.

All the descendants of Jacob were 70 persons. Joseph was already in Egypt, then Joseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. But the people of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly.

They multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them. Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply. And if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land. Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Ramses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied, and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel.

So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves, and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar, in brick, in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. Then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifra and the other Pua, When you serve as a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son you shall kill him, but if it is a daughter she shall live.

But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, Why have you done this and let the male children live? The midwives said to Pharaoh, Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them. So God dealt well with the midwives, and the people multiplied and grew very strong.

And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, Every son that is born to the Hebrews you shall cast into the Nile, but you shall let every daughter live. Suffer the little children to come to me.

Don't turn them away, because to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. Unless you turn and become like a little child, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so Father, I pray for a childlikeness now in this room.

Do not be babes in your thinking. In evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature. So alongside childlikeness, Lord, make us mature in our thinking about the culture and about the Bible and about our own souls.

Make us wise and intelligent and thoughtful. Lord, I pray now for a humility and grace and courage to deliver this word. I pray for the women in the room who have had abortions, for the men who endorsed it and encouraged it, parents who knew about it and didn't stop it.

That there would be, alongside appropriate guilt, great forgiveness and relief and a future. And I pray that the resolve of this church would rise to pray and work against abortion until it becomes in our land as unthinkable as the reinstatement of slavery. To that end, I pray for your help now, in Jesus' name, amen.

There's a connection between last week's message on racial harmony and interracial marriage and this week's message on abortion, race, gender and Christ. When interracial marriage is rejected, it's often because the reproductive effect of it is offensive to the dominant race. For example, the children of marriages between white and African-American or white and Asian or white and other ethnic groups are just not white enough.

And as soon as you say it like that, you begin to see the possible connection between racism implicit in that rejection of interracial marriage and abortion. Could it be that when non-whiteness is viewed as an undesirable outcome of interracial marriage, maybe that same view would express itself in using abortion to reduce the prevalence of non-whiteness in a dominantly white culture? That's one issue we need to deal with. A related issue is the issue of male and female gender, sexuality, and the racial and gender implications of abortion.

And I don't simply mean the fact that, as we are so often told, abortion has to do with a woman's rights over her own body. What I mean is the global use of abortion for sex selection. Millions of female babies systematically put to death because boy babies are preferable.

So those are the two issues in front of us today. I've preached in the last years 17 messages on abortion and its relationship to the cause of Christ and the pro-life movement, and I mention that for two reasons. One, because if you wonder why is he focusing this way? I mean, there's so many other issues.

Well, yes, there are. There are 17 plus, and they're all there for you to read or listen to at DesiringGod.org. But when you've preached on this year after year after year for 17 years, you start praying, Lord, what's the angle for this year? What's the focus for this year? And this is the focus for this year. The claim that I want to address is this.

Millions of abortions around the world are the outworking of racism and sexism. What I mean by outworking is that these abortions have their roots in racism. They have their roots in sexism, and they have their fruit in outcomes that would make racists and sexists happy, namely fewer blacks in the United States and fewer girls in India and China.

Let me define sexism for you. I defined racism last week. I'm going to use exactly the same definition for sexism, just substituting sex.

Here it is. Sexism is an explicit or implicit belief or practice that qualitatively distinguishes or values one sex over another. Now, you know that does not mean there aren't any differences.

In fact, it doesn't mean there aren't any massively, gloriously important and beautiful differences between male and female. It doesn't mean that. It means that these differences are really valuable, really valuable.

And when the differences in the female ledger are added up and the differences in the male ledger are added up, the value sum, the quality sum at the bottom is the same. It is equally precious to have a little baby girl as to have a little baby boy. In God's sight, female personhood and male personhood are equally sinful and corrupt.

And when they are equally redeemed, they reflect the worth of God equally. And you know, I hope, if you don't, you must be new, that I'm speaking that out of a full-blown complementarian context in which it is biblically right, beautiful, that godly, Christ-like, humble men are the heads of their homes. And godly, Christ-like, humble men are the elders of the church.

That's the context of opposing sexism in this abortion-related message. So my aim today is to expose one more evil of the mountain of evils surrounding the issue of abortion so that it will become increasingly plain, perhaps for some new people, that it is evil in a way they didn't know it was evil, and will bring them over the line to engagement and prayer and action so that the day will come when it's not just illegal, but is as unthinkable as is the reinstatement of slavery in our day. And that was one day, 150 years ago, as unthinkable as the unthinkable of abortion is today.

It can happen, it will happen, if God delays. Millions of abortions around the world are the outworking of racism and sexism. That's my statement, and we need to unpack it.

But first, let's go to the Bible. Let's go to Exodus. I invite you to open your Bibles.

We're going to look at this very carefully. I am very conscious this is not a text about abortion, and I'm also powerfully persuaded it is massively relevant for this issue of race, sex, abortion, and Christ. And I hope you'll see it before we're done.

The first thing to notice in this text is that there's a threat that the king of Egypt is feeling towards Egyptians. Let's read it in verses 8 and 9. Here's the threat. Now, there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph, and he said to his people, Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.

There's the threat. Israelites are not Egyptian. They're not like us.

They're different ethnically, they're different culturally, they're different racially, they're different religiously, and they're increasing, and there are too many of them. They're starting to be a threat to Egyptian-ness. There's the threat.

Now, you wonder why this Pharaoh, I don't know the answer to this except the providence of a merciful God, why he didn't just do Hitler. I mean, he's king. Just clean house.

Empty them, kill them, get rid of them. Why didn't he do that? I don't know. Why he took this strategy? Four steps of increasing severity against the Jewish people he took because each didn't work.

So he took another one and another one. So let's walk through the four extreme measures. Number one, verses 11 and 12, he enslaved them.

Therefore, he says, it says, they set testmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built, the Jews built for Pharaoh store cities, Python and Ramses. But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad.

The Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. So measure number one didn't work. Enslave them.

Therefore, he went to measure number two. The intensification of ruthlessness and harshness towards the slaves versus 13 and 14. So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves and made their lives bitter with hard service and mortar and brick.

And in all kinds of work in the field, in all their work, they ruthlessly made them work as slaves. That's extreme measure number two, and it didn't work either. And so he went to measure number three versus 15 and 16.

He instructed the Hebrew midwives to kill the boys while they were being born. Verse 15, then the king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shifra, the other Pua. When you serve as a midwife to the Hebrew women and see them on the birthstool, if it is a son.

You shall kill him. But if it is a daughter, she shall live. The aim is emasculate the people.

Minimize the male and master the nation. And that didn't work either. Because the midwives wouldn't do it.

We'll come back to that. So he went to measure number four. I don't know if you've ever felt the sweeping nature of measure number four, but let's read it.

It's verse 22. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people. That's overwhelming.

Anybody who sees a little baby boy, kill him. Anybody, not just midwives, anybody. That's incredible.

The Pharaoh commanded all his people, all his people, every son that is born to the Hebrews, you shall cast into the Nile. But you shall let every daughter live. And that didn't work either.

Because in Exodus 12, 37, it says there were 600,000 men in Israel that went out in the Exodus. Nothing worked. And God restrained the Hitler factor.

Let's make some observations about this. This is just so full of implications you can hardly stand it, right? Number one, notice how the king of Egypt tried first subtle infanticide, not open infanticide. That came later.

Subtle infanticide precedes open infanticide. Midwives, look, we want it to look like a stillbirth. OK, we don't want any big problem here.

We just lots of stillbirths like the water has gone bad or something. We want this to look like stillbirths. So when the baby is coming out, however you do it, just make sure it's dead.

And then when you hand it to the mommy, she'll think, those things happen. That's subtle infanticide. How might you do it? Maybe the way we do it.

It's called partial birth abortion. It's to bring the baby partway out, insert the vacuum in the brain, suck out the brains, collapse the head, bring it on out and call it abortion. That's subtle infanticide.

Maybe they would do it that way, deliver the baby somehow halfway and then choke it. And I don't know. Just make sure it looks not like what it is.

In fact, I think. A really clear. Right definition for the word abortion is.

Subtle infanticide, that is, infanticide that doesn't look like infanticide. That's the meaning of abortion. We create words to cover realities.

There's there's subtle infanticide and there's open infanticide and you can't get away yet with open infanticide. And so let's do it subtly and then create some language that cloaks it like we're cloaking it in a in a clinic. That's the meaning of the word abortion.

It is cloaked infanticide. Child killing by another name that can be made then with enough different kinds of people calling it right can be made legal and acceptable and even put a virtuous face on it. So that's the first observation here.

Pharaoh tried subtle infanticide, that is, infanticide that doesn't look like infanticide. Before he went public. Number two observation.

This partial birth abortion or subtle infanticide is selective. Only do it to the boys. Now, I know that's not identical with the sex selection abortion that's happening by the millions around the world today.

But it is at least an analogy and at least a banner waving and a trumpet blowing. This sort of thing happens when you want to kill babies. Sometimes you can think of sexual reasons to do it.

This time, males later females, whatever the culture demands in order to bring things under control. Let's just make sure that we do it. Observation number three.

This subtle infanticide, this partial birth abortion was ethnically specific. Don't do it to Egyptians. Just do it to Jews.

There is such a thing as ethnic cleansing and it's done in all kinds of ways. And if you think it's not done in America, if you think these attitudes are about 40 years old and now we just about got them licked, go to the internet and find the computer game called ethnic cleansing. \$14.95, you can order it online and read the blurb.

It goes like this. The most politically incorrect video game ever made. Run through the ghetto blasting at various blacks and spics in an attempt to gain entrance to the subway system where the Jews have hidden to avoid the carnage.

And then if you're lucky, you can blow away Jews as they scream Oy vey on your way to their command center. That's America. That's a game sold and played by young people in this country.

Observation number four. God rewarded the civil disobedience that refused to participate in the subtle infanticide. Verses 17 to 21.

We skipped it. Let's say it with the words of the Bible. But the midwives feared God and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.

So they disobeyed the imperial edict from the God appointed authority in Egypt. So the king of Egypt called the midwives and said to them, why have you done this? And let the male children live. And the midwives said to Pharaoh, because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women for their vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.

That's not true. So God dealt well with the midwives and and the people multiplied and grew very strong. And because the midwives feared God.

He gave them families. So the king said, kill the boys. And the midwives did not kill the boys because they feared God.

And then they lied to the king, afraid of their own skin. And God overlooked the lie and blessed him. He just loved what they did.

He didn't get on their case for the lie. And this isn't a sermon about whether it's right to lie in that circumstance. Let's leave that open.

But God at this point looks on that behavior and blesses these women. Because he was very happy that they did not participate in the subtle infanticide called midwifery. So my conclusion from all these observations is that this text and these events historically are given by God.

As a bright light shining upon our day, a very bright light can hurt the eyes if you look right into it as a sinner. A very bright light shining on the evil of subtle infanticide in our day called abortion. And especially on the millions of abortions that are done as the outworking of racism and sexism.

So let's talk about that for a few minutes. Let me illustrate the sexism issue. The most prominent places where this is happening is India and China.

There are cultural, social, financial reasons why the preference for boys over girls is so much stronger there than here. In the state of Maharashtra, one little tiny glimpse of what has been happening for a long time. Quote from a Harvard journal.

In one hospital from June 1976 to June 1977, 700 individuals sought prenatal sex determination. Of these fetuses, 250 were determined to be male and 450 were female. While all of the male fetuses were kept to term, 430 of the 450 female fetuses were aborted.

Close quote. India and China have come under huge global criticism for this. And they have passed laws, 1987 for India and 2003 for China, they have passed laws against this sort of selective abortion, sex-selective abortion.

But it hasn't stopped the issue because the sex determination today is happening so much earlier and so much easier that it's very hard to legislate. If you're going to allow abortion to happen, which they all do, then sex-selective abortion becomes difficult to prevent. So here's another quote.

China's strictly enforced quotas on the number of children a married couple may have make it even more apparent why sex selection, abortion, and female infanticide have become so prevalent. Indeed, there are an increasing number of villages in both India and China about whom the following claim uttered by a Chinese peasant can be made. Quote, last year, we had only one girl born in the village.

Everybody else had boys. When these villagers are questioned about the possibility that their sons may not find wives in 20 years' time, the villagers do not appear worried. Their immediate concern is to have sons who can help them in the fields and take care of them in their old age and who will continue the family line.

Now, my point here is not that those kinds of motives are any worse than the materialistic, consumeristic, convenience-oriented motives of abortion in the West. My point is simply to say that in the practice of abortion around the world as time goes by, different kinds of evil mount up and multiply. And as they do, the position of the pro-choice person is less and less defensible.

Pro-choice feminists, for example, oppose sex selection abortion since it almost always goes against girls. And they find themselves struggling, therefore, not to call this 14-week-old mass of tissue a little girl. Very hard not to call it a little girl if you're opposed to taking it because it's the killing of a girl.

When the evil of sexism unites with the evil of abortion, in other words, when the evil of sexism unites with the evil of abortion, both evils are made clearer. What about race? Is it true that racism is at the root of many, many abortions? Planned Parenthood is the largest abortion provider in America. It was founded by a racist, Margaret Sanger.

I commend Corrine Cordes, who's sitting down there, a member of this church, for her ministry, Self-Evident Truth. She has provided in her last several issues the documentary evidence of this foundation. And if you want to read Randy Alcorn, you can read *Eternal Perspectives* and see it.

If you want to read Marvin Olasky's book, *Abortion Rights*, you can see it. It's documented all over the place. Quote, this is from Olasky, Margaret Sanger's Negro Project in the 1930s was similarly hailed for its work in spreading contraception among those whom eugenicists most deeply feared.

Eugenics. She was instrumental in leading a eugenics. It is dealing with sterilization and abortion and contraception to purify the race, get rid of unsavory elements.

To my knowledge and to everybody's knowledge I've ever read, Planned Parenthood has never renounced one sentence that Margaret Sanger ever spoke or act she ever performed. Instead, Planned

Parenthood is part of an industry that has put to death 10 million black babies in the last 30 years or so. Only racism can rejoice in that.

The African-American population in America is 14% of the whole. And the number of babies that are put to death in abortion among the black American community, the African-American community is 33%. 74% in Washington, D.C., 62% in Mississippi, 52% in New York City, 50% in Georgia.

What shall we make of this? Some call it genocide. I prefer the very balanced and sober words of Randy Alcorn, and I'll read them to you. I think every person of every color should listen very carefully.

He says, I do not believe that most people who support abortion rights are racists any more than I believe that there are no racists among pro-lifers. I am simply suggesting that regardless of motives, a closer look at both the history and the present strategies of the pro-choice movement suggests, now listen carefully, suggests that abortion for the minorities may not serve the cause of equality as much as the cause of supremacy for the healthy, the wealthy, and the white. My prayer, my cry, is that the African-American Christian across this land will wake up to what is happening and lead this country in its war on abortion.

If blacks turn away from involvement in the pro-life movement because there are so many whites in the movement who are indifferent to racial prejudice and racial injustice, which is true, if blacks turn away from involvement in the crusade against child killing because so many in the movement are indifferent to racial injustice, they are doing exactly the same thing that white conservative Christians did in the civil rights movement for justice because there were so many liberals in the movement who didn't believe in the deity of Jesus. The deity of Jesus really matters in the universe. Racial justice really matters in the universe.

Not to be involved in the cause of racial justice because there are liberals there is the same as not being involved in the pro-life cause because there are racists there. That's a foolish decision to make on both sides. Let us rather, oh God, rather let us join hands, black, Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, every shade and ethnicity in America, let us join hands and say with one loud, clear, compelling voice, there is a better way toward freedom than killing the babies.

Can't we hold hands and say there's a better way towards freedom than killing the babies? Let me close by going back to Egypt with you and watch something else that happened. In the darkest moment when the whole nation of Egypt has been told, have at them, kill the boys, throw them in the Nile wherever you see them, God moves and causes to be born a little boy named Moses. Moses, go down Moses, go down Moses, set my people free.

And he was deliverer, he was rescuer, he was savior. And then the Bible writes, Deuteronomy 18, there will come a prophet like Moses. In Acts chapter 3 and Acts chapter 7, there was born a prophet like Moses.

His name was Jesus and he was deliverer and he was savior. He was protector, he was rescuer, but oh how vastly he outstripped the salvation wrought by Moses. Let me mention one difference, one glorious difference between our son of God, incarnate Jesus Christ who lived and died for sinners and rose again and reigns today as the vastly superior Moses to Moses.

Let me mention one difference. Moses delivered the oppressed. Jesus delivers oppressed and oppressor.

Jesus saves oppressed and oppressors. Moses delivered a hated people, a despised people. Jesus delivers hated and hater.

It's the whole point of the cross. The point of the cross is I didn't come to deliver the righteous. I came to deliver sinners.

Baby killers are my business. I save sinners. Moses couldn't deliver the babies thrown into the Nile at all.

Jesus can. Jesus can raise the dead. Jesus can raise dead abortionists and dead babies.

Jesus can raise from the dead and give new life in this room right now to boyfriends who made it happen. Where are you? Jesus is right there with his bloody hands outstretched saying, the son of man did not come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. So can we not, abortionist, woman who had an abortion, boyfriend who pushed it, parents who condoned it, those who hate that.

Can we not of every color and of every past experience join our hands and say with our mouths, our lives, our prayers, our investment, our giving. And in every way God enables, there's a better way towards freedom than killing the babies. And the way is called Jesus Christ.

I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life.

So Lord, I pray earnestly now for those in this room who have been touched by abortion. A grandmother who didn't want it to happen and couldn't stop it. A girl who didn't want it to happen and felt she couldn't stop it.

My boyfriend who was irresponsible and careless and foolish and sinful and then compounded it by trying to clean it up with making the appointment. Right in this room, Lord, we are sinners all. What would we do if Jesus only came as judge? We would perish.

So I pray now that there would be salvation in this room. Would you bring people to faith in Jesus and then wipe away all the sin by bearing it as you did on the cross. And instead put hope in the heart that there's a future for the baby and there's a future for the one who took the baby's life.

There's a future. I want you to stand with me and I'll ask the Lord to bless you or I'll say his blessing over you and you receive it as from him. The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace and a strong, courageous, humble way forward in both justice for the unborn and racial justice in our land. And all the people said, Amen.

You're dismissed. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Feel free to make copies of this message to give to others but please do not charge for those copies or alter the content in any way without permission.

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