

CARVED IN STONE, PART 6
REGARD HUMAN LIFE AS SACRED
Exodus 20:13

God's people are to regard human life as sacred.

CONTOURS of the Sixth Commandment

- “kill” (KJV); “murder” (NIV, ESV)
- *rāṣāḥ* = to take the life of another so as to cause a state of death.
- accidental murder; manslaughter; premeditated murder

COGNATES of the Sixth Commandment

- Exodus 21:12-14
- Numbers 35:16-24, 30-34
- Deuteronomy 19:4-7, 11-13

COMMENTARY on the Sixth Commandment (and Cognates)

- These laws call for the death penalty for first-degree murder.
- Unintentional homicide is murder in which the killer did it “accidentally,” or “without malice aforethought.”
- The judges had to determine whether the murder was intentional or unintentional.
- Those guilty of accidental homicide could remain in one of the cities of refuge until the death of the high priest.
- No ransom ever was to be accepted as a substitute for the death penalty.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT and the Sixth Commandment

- Numbers 35:33-34
- Deuteronomy 19:13
- Genesis 9:6

COMPARISONS to the Sixth Commandment

- Murder was universally condemned, but no other law code insisted on the death penalty for murder.
- Monetary compensations for first-degree murder were often allowed.
- It was absolutely forbidden in Israel to plan someone’s death and carry it out. To do so was to forfeit one’s own life.
- The reason for the ultimate penalty in this case is that human beings are made in the image of God.

CONCLUSIONS about God and His Ways from the Sixth Commandment

- God views every human being as having supreme value.
- God may give qualified human beings the responsibility, in the cause of justice, to take the lives other human beings.
- From God’s perspective, the continuation of a person’s life on earth is not an absolute good.
- God takes motives into account.

CONNECTIONS of the Sixth Commandment to Our Day

- Know that your value to God is inexpressibly high.
- Think of yourself as a person of great worth to God.
- View every other human being that you encounter as having inestimable value.

CORRECTION to a Misunderstanding of the Sixth Commandment

- Matthew 5:21-22 (unjustified anger, says Jesus, is murder begun)
- The death penalty today? (Moses? David? Saul/Paul?)
- There is only one payment in this world large enough to compensate for a lost human life—the blood of Jesus Christ.
- Jesus is our city of refuge.