

Exodus 20:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not kill.

Analysis

Thou shalt not kill.

The Hebrew 'lo tirtzach' (לא תרצח) specifically prohibits 'murder' (unlawful killing), not all killing—war, capital punishment, and self-defense aren't banned. The verb 'rartzach' denotes criminal homicide, taking innocent life. Since humans bear God's image (Genesis 9:6), murder assaults divine likeness. Jesus expands this to include hatred and contempt—'whoever is angry with his brother' violates this command (Matthew 5:21-22). The heart's murderous rage is moral equivalent of the hand's deadly blow. John says 'whoever hates his brother is a murderer' (1 John 3:15). The command protects life's sanctity from conception to natural death—abortion, euthanasia, and assisted suicide violate God's image-bearing creatures.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite) prohibited murder but with qualifications. Israel's absolute prohibition, grounded in God's image, elevates human life above property or pragmatism.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus' expansion of 'do not murder' to include anger and contempt apply to your relationships?
2. What does the image of God in all humans teach about issues like abortion, capital punishment, and euthanasia?

Interlinear Text

א ל : תְּכַרְצֵה

H3808

Thou shalt not kill

H7523

Additional Cross-References

Romans 13:9 (Parallel theme): For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Deuteronomy 5:17 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not kill.

Exodus 21:14 (Parallel theme): But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Matthew 19:18 (Parallel theme): He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,

James 2:11 (Parallel theme): For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.

Exodus 21:20 (Parallel theme): And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished.

Leviticus 24:21 (Parallel theme): And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.

Isaiah 26:21 (Parallel theme): For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

1 Timothy 1:9 (Parallel theme): Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,

James 2:13 (Parallel theme): For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

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