

## **Biblical Ethics Concerning In Vitro Fertilization**

*By James Moriello, March 6, 2024*

God bless the great state of Alabama! On February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Tom Parker opined on an 8-1 ruling that an embryo is a person. This caused a panic among clinics that were in possession of frozen embryos, and unrighteous indignation by those who adhere to the religion of women’s “reproductive rights” to murder babies. It also caused me as a Christian to take a look at the ethics of in vitro fertilization, something I had never looked at in detail before. The best qualified people to speak on the ethics of any subject are those Christian Pastors and leaders that are able to look at the Scriptures, and reason from them. Here are my reasonings and conclusions. They will not be popular at all in the world, nor will they be popular in “end justifies the means” Christian circles. If you agree with me, good. If you disagree with me, reason through the Word of God yourself on these things. If you will not use the Bible as the basis for your position, then you are not practicing biblical ethics, but the ethics based on some other standard, be it a philosophical one apart from Scripture, or your own code based on your own human wisdom. So, please consider this analysis with a heart and mind seeking biblical truth and guidance.

### **Is an embryo a person?**

Embryo is the successor stage to the zygote stage (the initial stage of the fertilization of the egg). After the embryo stage, the unborn baby enters into the fetus stage, then the baby stage, then the child stage, then the adult stage. From the time of conception, you have the continuum of the life of a unique human person. So from zygote stage to the death, you have a human person.

The Scriptures clearly teach that life begins at conception. “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And

in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16).

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you” (Jeremiah 1:4-5).

“And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41).

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

To knowingly commit pre-meditated murder against a human person at any stage of life from conception to death is strictly forbidden, even if one plays semantic games. “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13).

### **What is Bible parenthood of a conceived person?**

Biblical parenthood of a conceived person is based upon biblical marriage, which is defined as the union of one man and one woman. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

Jesus reaffirmed God’s original design. Polygamy and divorce may be practiced by men, but they are a violation of God’s perfect design, which all Christians ought to strive for. “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6).

“You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). All relations outside of one man and one woman marriage are sinful. “Marriage is

honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4).

A child conception, therefore, in the context of biblical marriage, is conceived of the union of the sperm of the husband which fertilizes the egg of the wife.

### **How does personhood and parenthood of a conceived person bear on in vitro fertilization?**

From a Bible perspective, the Supreme Court of Alabama got it right on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Every embryo is a person. So they ought to be protected, and not destroyed, because to do so would be the destruction of a human life. The only legitimate Bible option for child conception is the union of the sperm of the husband and the egg of the wife which results in fertilization of the egg. Any child conception outside of this scenario is out of bounds for the Christian. So, let’s say that the courts hold up the Alabama ruling. What is to be done with the “extra embryos” that exist out there in labs? How do you “un-ring that bell?” I would respond, “Yet God does not take away a life, but He devises means” (2 Samuel 14:14). I would suppose that unbelievers would be pleased to receive them, as they operate outside the constructs and constraints of biblical ethics. We cannot destroy these persons. When all is finished, then let us stop the practice. A nation founded on Judeo-Christian principles never should have gone down the road of this ethical quagmire.

### **Does the end justify the means?**

One may argue that since the Bible does not specifically mention in vitro fertilization, we cannot opine from it on the practice. That is ludicrous. One may use that line of thinking to say that the Bible does not specifically condemn child pornography on the internet. The Scriptures have all the answers, and the principles in God’s Word are timeless. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

One may argue that if one partner or the other in biblical marriage is unable to produce a natural child, you do what you have to do. In other words, the ends justify the means. Abram and Sarai tried that, and it did not work out for them because they were acting outside of God's will and plan. They basically did a similar thing to what people do in utilizing in vitro fertilization by using the sperm or egg of one spouse and introducing the sperm or egg of a third party. "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived" (Genesis 16:1-4).

Solomon, and many other kings in the Bible, are recorded as having married multiple wives. Many times this was done for expediency in making political or economic alliances. They always got in trouble for their sin, because the end never justifies the sinful means.

### **What ethical position(s) does the Bible allow for?**

One may reasonably argue based on all that is written here that in vitro fertilization could be biblically acceptable only in the case of the sperm coming from the husband fertilizing the egg coming from his wife. However, this raises other concerns. In practice, because the conceived persons (zygotes/embryos) are less likely to survive than those conceived under the usual circumstances. That means that too many persons die unnecessarily. This, in fact, is why sometimes multiple embryos are frozen for the goal of one intended birth. Jeremiah 1:4-5 speaks of formation in the womb, not the lab, which should give us pause as to whether in vitro is outside of the realm of God's plan, and whether or not men are "playing god" by using this technology. Just because we can does not mean we should. The same goes for human cloning and some of the more sinister elements of AI today.

The other conclusion, that which I have come to, is that the entire practice produces an unnecessary ethical dilemma for the Christian and a

nation that is based upon its principles. For all of the reasons outlined in this manuscript, my position is that the Christian should not go down the road of in vitro fertilization. Foster parenting is a good alternative. Adoption is the option that does not introduce all this murkiness and the questionable ethics associated with in vitro fertilization.