

## Stem Cell Research: Good News, Bad News

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Perhaps every one of us owes a great deal of respect and appreciation to medical science for the healthy life we now enjoy. Caring, hard working, intelligent people populate the medical field. Enormous advancements in medicine have been made during our lifetimes. For example, before the St. Jude Children's Hospital was established in Memphis in 1962 through the efforts of the late Danny Thomas a recent article in the *Commercial Appeal* pointed out that the survival rate for children with cancer was four in a hundred and today it is ninety in a hundred. Phenomenal advancements have been made in virtually every area of modern medicine. Yet, widespread indifference to the word of God has generated horrible happenings such as the well known disrespect and disenfranchising of the pre-born through abortions and unconscionable exploitations of our offspring.

The periodicals among churches of Christ continually carry admonitions to remember the sanctity of life. Passages like Genesis 2:7 demand emphasizing in a society and world like ours. Moses wrote, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Psalm 139 says, "For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked,

O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men" (vv. 13-19). The prophet Jeremiah observed, "Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:4-5). These passages from the Old Testament show that life and personhood begin at conception, and this settles the key point in this great debate. Only without regard for God and his word can individuals, medical and otherwise, harm and destroy the pre-born.

As in the Old so in the New; in fact, the very first page of the New Testament cannot be consulted without realizing that the miraculous conception of Mary involved "God being with us" from the very moment of the conception of Christ (vv. 23, 20; cf. also Lk. 1:35-36). In the United States across the long years since the infamous Roe V. Wade decision of the high court in 1973, effective presentations have been made in consideration of what loss the world would have suffered had the mothers of key people taken the route traveled by more than 40 million mothers in aborting their children. But, no key person would ever nor could ever exceed the importance of the Son of God, who entered this world through the same biological process (excepting his miraculous conception) by which every person (excepting Adam and Eve) enters the world.

The good news concerning the hot topic of stem cell research was announced Sunday (01/07/07) by Dr. Anthony Atala, head of Wake Forest University's regenerative medicine institute that a plentiful source of stem cells exist in the fluid that cushions developing infants in their mother's womb. Incorporated into the announcement is the concept that a variety of types of tissue can be produced from these cells. AOL news reported, "Researchers at Wake

*To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,  
that the man of the earth may no more oppress  
Psalm 10:16-18.*

Forest University and Harvard University reported the stem cells they drew from amniotic fluid donated by pregnant women hold much the same promise as embryonic stem cells. They reported they were able to extract the stem cells without harm to mother or fetus and turn their discovery into several different tissue cell types, including brain, liver and bone.” What was the appeal of the embryonic stem cells over, for example, adult stem cells? The news related, “The hallmark of human embryonic stem cells, which are created in the first days after conception, is the ability to turn into any of the more than 220 cell types that make up the human body” (AOL News).

Well, doesn't it look like now medical science will turn away from destroying the pre-born in their embryonic state since stem cells may be extracted harmlessly from the mother? While we might think so and certainly hope so, the bad news is the former destructive experimentation with embryos will not soon go away. Dr. George Daley, a Harvard University stem cell researcher, said, “Nonetheless...the discovery shouldn't be used as a replacement for human embryonic stem cell research.” Then, this final quotation from Daley, “While they are fascinating subjects of study in their own right, they are not a substitute for human embryonic stem cells, which allow scientists to address a host of other interesting questions in early human development,” said Daley, who began work last year to clone human embryos to produce stem cells” (AOL News).

Friends, it nearly saddens one to despair to have to think of the loss of millions of pre-born infants to “research” or perceived quality of life for an immoral mother (and father, though most of the time the pair is unmarried). But, the church of our Lord will always remain “the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15). And, as such carry forward the divine commission to endeavor to defend and support the innocents (Ex. 22:22; Psa. 10:16-18; Jas. 1:27).

*The Lord is King for ever and ever:  
the heathen are perished out of his land.  
Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:  
thou wilt prepare their heart,  
thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:*