

The Death Penalty

What does the Bible teach about governments practicing the death penalty?

Introduction

- When discussing the death penalty, strong emotions are often expressed either for or against it
- Over 100 countries have either officially abolished the death penalty or are no longer practicing it
- 31 US states still have the death penalty
- Many denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church oppose the death penalty

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Introduction

- Latest Catholic leader, Francis, declared it is wrong in all situations differing from earlier Catholic teaching that in certain “extreme” situations it would be justified
- Does the Bible approve, condemn or remain indifferent about capital punishment, the death penalty?
- Whatever the Bible teaches about this and all things should guide Christians in what we believe

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Introduction

- Warning – do not allow the world to determine our thinking about capital punishment or anything else if the Bible has spoken on it

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The Death Penalty

1. The death penalty before the Law of Moses
2. The death penalty under the Law of Moses
3. The death penalty in the New Testament
4. Bible answers to objections against the death penalty
5. God’s attitude toward nations that do not practice the death penalty

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Objections Against The Death Penalty

1. The death penalty is murder
2. Innocent people may be executed
3. The death penalty does not deter crime
4. Those executed may not have the opportunity to obey the gospel
5. Only God has the right to kill a human being

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Objections Against The Death Penalty

6. Life imprisonment is a worse punishment than death
7. Society should rehabilitate all criminals who are created by social evils

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No Record of The Death Penalty Before The Flood

Gen 4:9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"
Gen 4:10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."
Gen 4:11 "Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand."

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No Record of The Death Penalty Before The Flood

Gen 4:12 "When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."
Gen 4:13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is too great to bear!"

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No Record of The Death Penalty Before The Flood

Gen 4:14 "Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."
Gen 4:15 So the LORD said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him."

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No Record of The Death Penalty Before The Flood

Gen 4:23 Lamech said to his wives, "Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech, For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me;
Gen 4:24 If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."

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God Brings His Death Penalty, The Flood, On A Violent Society

Gen 6:11 Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.
Gen 6:12 God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth."

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God Brings His Death Penalty, The Flood, On A Violent Society

Gen 6:13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

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After The Flood God Commands The Death Penalty To Noah For All Nations

Gen 9:5 "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

Gen 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

Gen 9:7 "As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

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After The Flood God Commands The Death Penalty To Noah For All Nations

Gen 9:11 "I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth."

Gen 9:12 God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations;

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After The Flood God Commands The Death Penalty To Noah For All Nations

Gen 9:13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth.

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After The Flood God Commands The Death Penalty To Noah For All Nations

- This is the first mention of the death penalty to be executed by men
- Whoever murders, takes a human life, must forfeit his own life
- Reason for this severe punishment is God highly values human beings, whom He created in His own image
- The covenant was a perpetual universal covenant applying to all nations confirmed by God's rainbow

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Capital Punishment Under The Law Of Moses

- God gave the Law of Moses to govern Israel in both civil and religious matters
- Notice God commanded the death penalty not only for murder but also for other crimes

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Examples of Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Exo 21:12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.

Exo 21:13 "But if he did not lie in wait *for him*, but God let *him* fall into his hand, then I will appoint you a place to which he may flee.

Exo 21:14 "If, however, a man acts presumptuously toward his neighbor, so as to kill him craftily, you are to take him *even* from My altar, that he may die. 19

Examples of Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Exo 21:15 "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

Exo 21:16 "He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.

Exo 21:17 "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. 20

Examples of Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Lev 20:10 'If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.

Lev 20:13 'If *there is* a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death. Their bloodguiltiness is upon them. 21

Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Premeditated murder Exo. 21:12-14	Cause death of unborn child by striking mother Exo. 21:22-25
Parental abuse Exo. 21:15	Failure to stop killer animal from killing Exo. 21:28-29
Kidnapping Exo. 21:16	Killing a thief in revenge Exo. 22:2-3
Cursing parents Exo. 21:17	Sorcery Exo. 22:18 22

Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Bestiality Exo. 22:19	Medium or spiritist Lev. 20:27
Adultery Lev. 20:10	Breaking the Sabbath Exo. 31:14-15
Incest Lev. 20:11-12	False prophets and promoters of idolatry Deu. 13:1-11
Homosexuality Lev. 20:13	Idolaters Deu. 17:2-7
Marry both mother and daughter Lev. 20:14	

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Death Penalty Crimes Under The Law of Moses

Blasphemy Lev. 24:16	Falsely accusing someone of a capital crime Deu. 19:15-21
Children rebellious to parents Deu. 21:20-21	
Rape in some cases Deu. 22:23-29	

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Difference Between The Murderer and The Manslayer

Num 35:16 'But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:17 'If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

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Difference Between The Murderer and The Manslayer

Num 35:18 'Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and *as a result* he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:19 'The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.

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Difference Between The Murderer and The Manslayer

Num 35:20 'If he pushed him of hatred, or threw something at him lying in wait and *as a result* he died,

Num 35:21 or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and *as a result* he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death, he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

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Difference Between The Murderer and The Manslayer

Num 35:22 'But if he pushed him suddenly without enmity, or threw something at him without lying in wait,

Num 35:23 or with any deadly object of stone, and without seeing it dropped on him so that he died, while he was not his enemy nor seeking his injury,

Num 35:24 then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the blood avenger according to these ordinances.

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Difference Between The Murderer and The Manslayer

Murder

- He intended to kill with a deadly object or his hands
- He acted out of hatred for the victim
- He planned to kill ahead of time

Manslayer

- He never intended to kill with a deadly object or his hands
- He had no previous hatred for the victim
- He did not plan to kill ahead of time

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The Death Penalty

1. The death penalty before the Law of Moses
2. The death penalty under the Law of Moses

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Jesus Confirms Divine Authority For Death Penalty Given To Governments

Joh 19:10 So Pilate *said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

Joh 19:11 Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has *the* greater sin."

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The Death Penalty In The New Testament

Rom 13:1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

Rom 13:2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

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The Death Penalty In The New Testament

Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. ³³

The Death Penalty In The New Testament

Rom 13:5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

Rom 13:6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for *rulers* are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

Rom 13:7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax *is due*; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. ³⁴

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Key Points of Romans 13:1-7

- God establishes but does not approve of all governments
- Christians must submit to government
- Governments are to protect the good and punish the evil
- Not bearing the sword in vain refers to the use of the death penalty as God's ministers of wrath toward the evil
- Christians must pay taxes

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Paul Agrees That Some Crimes Are Worthy of Death

Act 25:11 "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

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Objection 1 The Death Penalty Is Murder

KJV Exo 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

NASB Exo 20:13 "You shall not murder.

NASB Exo 21:12 "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death.

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Objection 1 The Death Penalty Is Murder

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Exo 21:17 "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Pro 6:16 There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him:

Pro 6:17 Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, And hands that shed innocent blood,

Pro 6:18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil,

Pro 6:19 A false witness *who* utters lies, And one who spreads strife among brothers.

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Deu 17:6 "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

Deu 17:7 "The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Deu 19:15 "A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

Deu 19:16 "If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing,

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Deu 19:17 then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days.

Deu 19:18 "The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely,

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Deu 19:19 then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

Deu 19:20 "The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you.

Deu 19:21 "Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

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Objection 2 Innocent People May Be Executed

Num 35:12 'The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.

Num 35:13 'The cities which you are to give shall be your six cities of refuge.

Num 35:14 'You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

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Objection 3 The Death Penalty Does Not Deter Crime

Ecc 8:11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil.

Gen 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

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Objection 4 Those Executed May Not Have The Opportunity To Obey The Gospel

Act 25:11 "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

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Objection 5 Only God Has The Right To Kill A Human Being

Gen 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

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Objection 5 Only God Has The Right To Kill A Human Being

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Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. 48

Objection 6 Life Imprisonment Is A Worse Punishment Than Death

Gen 9:6 "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man.

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Objection 6 Life Imprisonment Is A Worse Punishment Than Death

Num 35:31 'Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:33 'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Eze 18:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

Eze 18:2 "What do you mean by using this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, 'The fathers eat the sour grapes, But the children's teeth are set on edge'?

Eze 18:3 "As I live," declares the Lord GOD, "you are surely not going to use this proverb in Israel anymore.

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Eze 18:4 "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die.

Eze 18:20 "The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Eze 18:21 "But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

Eze 18:22 "All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live.

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Eze 18:23 "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked," declares the Lord GOD, "rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Eze 18:24 "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die.

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Objection 7 Society Should Rehabilitate All Criminals Who Are Created By Social Evils

Act 25:11 "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is *true* of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

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God's Attitude Toward Nations That Do Not Practice Capital Punishment

- Before the Law of Moses, during the Law of Moses and under the New Covenant, God approves of the death penalty to be used in certain crimes such as confirmed murders
- Therefore, today, as in the past, God condemns and will judge those nations that either fail to use or misuse the death penalty

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God's Attitude Toward Nations That Do Not Practice Capital Punishment

Num 35:31 'Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

Num 35:32 'You shall not take ransom for him who has fled to his city of refuge, that he may return to live in the land before the death of the priest.

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God's Attitude Toward Nations That Do Not Practice Capital Punishment

Num 35:33 'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it.

Num 35:34 'You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the LORD am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.'"

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