

Capital Punishment

Throughout history, in various cultures specified crimes have been punishable by death. In our time a growing number of nations have ruled out capital punishment as uncivilized. That is, of course, except in military conflicts and the termination of unwanted life in the womb.

Sociologists who do not accept Biblical history and teachings, look upon Biblical teaching on the subject as inappropriate for our modern world. The Law of Moses prescribe execution for certain crimes. Some of those violations, such as a adultery or profaning the Sabbath, are considered frivolous in our society. In writing to disciples, Paul declared that the civil government “bears the sword” (the instrument for killing) as an agent of God for avenging infractions of civil law (Rom. 13).

To brand capital punishment as uncivilized is to arrogate human wisdom as superior to that of God. It implies that spiritually-guided men were less civilized than modern man. To the unbeliever, that may make sense. You who are believers may be willing to consider various Biblical factors involved in this issue.

Has it ever come to your attention that the Law of Moses prescribed no prison sentences? No conviction brought a five-year, forty-year, or life-time incarceration! There was no prison system for punishment. Justice was swift, and the administration of it brought prompt closure to the case. There were at least three kinds of justice rendered.

First, there were remedial requirements. A man who violated a virgin, for example, paid the father a fine and took the woman as a wife. In property crimes, the victim was repaid.

Second, there were fines that went beyond retribution.

Third, there was physical punishment as an avenging of the law.