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HAL LINDSEY

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## Thou shalt kill?

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By Hal Lindsey

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Timothy McVeigh was finally put to death on Monday. The Oklahoma City monster is no more. It's over. Unless you pick up a newspaper, turn on the news or tune in to talk radio. Then, you wonder if the execution of Timothy McVeigh was really only the beginning.

The Oklahoma City attack took place six years ago. The Alfred P. Murrah building was razed after it was destroyed, and a memorial to the victims erected in its place. One of the victims of the bombing complained that "it isn't about Timothy McVeigh, it's about his victims."

One could argue that Monday, June 11, wasn't about the victims, or even about Timothy McVeigh. The attention given to the execution itself was more about 300 million Americans coming to grips with the fact a man was deliberately killed in their name.

McVeigh's crimes, his trial, the aftermath and the irregularities surrounding who else was involved, what the government knew and when it knew it and even the victims all took a back seat to the question of capital punishment. Most Americans agree that if ever there was a crime that merited the ultimate sanction, this one was it.

Still, the execution of Timothy McVeigh was controversial, especially as viewed from outside our borders. Critics of capital punishment delight in pointing out that America has the third highest body count of any nation when it comes to the number of criminals executed.

Because humanity prefers not to admit its common depravity, putting to death a murderer includes a tacit admission we can be so bad someone can actually deserve to die. Secular society doesn't believe that man is basically evil and that each person is capable of crime. Instead, it attempts to "rise above" such barbarism, claiming capital punishment is no deterrent to crime. The absurdity of this statement is self-evident. McVeigh was deterred from future criminal activity on June 11, 2001, and will never commit another crime against human society.

There is even great confusion about capital punishment among born again Christians. Some say that it is

an Old Testament law that was done away in the New Testament.

The original commandment to execute a murderer was given by God to Noah. It is a commandment that preceded the Law of Moses and has never been abrogated. God commanded, "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6).

This was God's original authorization of human government, for it gave man the ultimate authority to execute a murderer. But the reason why God commands a murderer's life be taken is often missed. God says that if a man willfully takes another man's life, he has taken something that is created in the image of God. Only God has the right to terminate life that is in His image. Therefore the murderer owes his life to God and He commands human government to carry out the sentence.

The Law of Moses included this command, "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The Hebrew verb "to kill" is *qatal*. It is in the hiphel stem, which is an intensive, active verb form meaning deliberate, violent action. So it means "to murder." This is recognized by the fact that God commanded a duly organized court to "kill the killer." The Law of Moses commanded, "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:12).

Jesus Christ gave new insight into this commandment in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder' and 'Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell" (Matthew 5:22).

Far from canceling the Sixth Commandment, Jesus said that being angry with someone is grounds for being judged for murder before God, because God looks at the motives of the heart and not just our actions.

The Bible authorized officers of the government to use deadly force to maintain order, "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 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; 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 upon the one who practices evil" (Romans 13:1-4).

Government authorities are authorized by God here to use the "sword" for the keeping of law and order. The "sword" is a symbol of deadly force in the Bible. You don't spank people with swords; you kill them. And leave the rest up to God.

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