

# The Class That Never Was

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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It's graduation time around the country and we join everyone in congratulating this year's graduating class. But, at the same time, could we spare a moment to think about the kids who aren't with their class? No, I'm not talking about the dropouts. I'm asking for a moment of silence to remember the 1,608,600\* kids who were aborted 18 years ago and never given a chance at life, much less high school. Yeah... you read it right. There were over 1.6 million babies aborted in 1990—kids who would be graduating from high school right about now. How many potential high school football players do you suppose went up in smoke in hospital incinerators? How many potential cheerleaders had their little body parts sold off for cosmetics or for medical research? How many researchers, scientists, poets, novelists, playwrights, artists, musicians, and composers did we lose in 1990? How many mechanics, for that matter? How many pilots, soldiers, farmers, truck drivers, and bankers went up in smoke with those 1.6 million babies?

The cost of abortion in that one year alone is staggering, and I'm not talking about money. I'm talking about the cost to society of living, breathing, working human beings. If it weren't for lives lost to abortion we would have an additional 25,000,000\* people in the workforce today. Twenty-five million more people buying stuff and creating jobs. Twenty-five million more people at work, increasing the productivity and economic strength of the country. That's just the people who would be over 18 now. The total cost? Oh it's much higher than that. Since *Roe v. Wade* became the law of the land in 1973, over 48,000,000 babies have been killed. It beggars the imagination. Do you realize what that means? It is the equivalent of wiping out the whole population of the combined states of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, South Carolina, Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Missouri. Not just the children mind you—the entire population of ten states, cut right out of the heart of America. Gone.

They tell us we're headed for trouble in the Social Security system. The reason? The retirement of the baby boom generation. There are too many of them and not enough people who will be working to take care of them. But they're not the real reason. It's the baby bust that followed the baby boom. By the time we hit the crunch with Social Security, there will be some 45,000,000\* workers missing from the system due to abortion. That's 45,000,000\* people who would have been working, paying wages, and paying Social Security taxes in

order to support aging baby boomers in our population. And, by that time there would have been a total of some 65,000,000\* aborted children.

The cost is staggering—socially, economically, morally, and spiritually. I'm not an economist. I'm not a sociologist. And, I'm certainly not a politician, but when people start talking about the right or wrong of abortion, I can't help wondering what is informing their conscience. Since my field of interest is the Bible, I wonder what the Bible can say to our conscience on this much vexed issue. At what point does human life begin? The two clearly defined moments in the process are conception and birth. They're about the only two places where a bright line can be drawn. But at what point might the Bible start protecting life? Let me tell you a story from the Bible and we'll try to work our way from there.

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth” (Luke 1:5). If you've gone to church much, you many very well have heard those words in a Christmas play, because this is the beginning of the stories leading up to the birth of Christ. Zacharias and his wife were both blameless; they were righteous; they walked in all the commandments, the ordinances and statutes of the Lord—but, Elisabeth hadn't had any children. They were both old, well past that time of life, and probably were, by this time, settled into their routine. Zacharias was in the Temple executing the priest's office before God in the order of his course. His job was to burn incense in the Temple. A crowd of people was outside praying at the time of incense; it was the custom. While he was standing at the altar of incense, suddenly an angel appeared at the right side of the altar. Zacharias nearly fell over. He was very troubled; fear fell on him. Nobody was supposed to be there but him. The angel said, “Don't be afraid. I have heard your prayer. Your wife, Elisabeth, will bear you a son and you shall call his name John.” Obviously, Zacharias had been praying for his wife to have a child, but surely by this time in life he had given up. It must be that the prayer Zacharias had made, say, thirty years before had been heard. The time was now right for Elisabeth to have a son, and this boy would be the one we come to know as John the Baptist—one of the most important characters in the entire story of the Bible.

Jesus said of John the Baptist: “Of all the people born of women, there is none greater than John the Baptist.” The angel in the Temple said to Zacharias, “You're going to have joy and gladness. You're going to celebrate and many shall celebrate at his birth because he's going to be great in the sight of the Lord. He will neither drink wine nor strong drink because he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb.” Right from the start he was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but what did the angel mean by “from his mother's womb”? Did he mean that John was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit while he was *in the womb*? Or did he mean he would receive the Holy Spirit from the day he came

*out of the womb?* I don't know if you could tell from this verse alone, but you may be able to from the context of the story.

Speaking further of John, the angel said this: "He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah." This is a reference back to a prophecy in Malachi that there would be "one who would come before the Messiah in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children." This was what John was going to do. He wouldn't actually be Elijah, but he would be in the spirit and power of Elijah "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." John's job? To prepare the way for the Messiah.

Zacharias said to the angel, "How can I know this? I'm an old man. My wife is well stricken in years." He had prayed for a child and, now that he was going to get one, he couldn't figure out how it could possibly happen. I mean, apparently nothing has been going on between him and Elisabeth for some time. "And the angel said, 'I'm Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. I'm sent here to tell you and to show you this good news. You will be dumb and not able to speak until the day these things are performed because you didn't believe me.'" I guess when you're Gabriel, you can do that sort of thing. And Zacharias? Well, he couldn't talk. The people outside waited a long time and marveled that he was so long in the Temple, and that when he came out, he couldn't speak. They perceived he had seen a vision in the Temple for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless. "And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, 'Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men'" (Luke 1:23-25).

This is the story of the miraculous conception of a child promised by God way back in the Old Testament to be the forerunner of the Messiah. Here he is. He's in his mother's womb, and she's in seclusion for five months. What are we to think of the fetus, the baby, the child—John, if you will—that she's carrying in her womb? The story's not over because, in the sixth month of her pregnancy, the angel Gabriel was sent by God again. This time to a city in Galilee named Nazareth, "to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, you that art highly favoured, the Lord is with you: blessed art you among women" (Luke 1:27-28).

Commentaries tell us that Mary was probably a teenager at this time. Imagine Mary, by herself, all alone. Suddenly an angel is with her and he says, "You're highly favoured, the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women." Mary must have been truly astonished. She was troubled and wondered what kind of greeting this was. "And the angel said unto her, 'Fear not, Mary: for you hast found favour with God. And, behold, you shalt conceive in thy

womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:30-33). Mary said, “How could this be since I’ve never known a man? The angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you, therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1:35). That’s quite a load to lay on a teenage girl. She’s not just any teenage girl, obviously, but a remarkable woman. The selection of Mary to be the mother of Jesus, I’m sure, was made very carefully.

The angel went on to say, “And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible” (Luke 1:36-37). It didn’t make any difference if Elisabeth was barren. God could take care of that, and he can take care of you. God can do all this. Mary’s response to this was not quite like Zacharias’. She said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to your word. And the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:38). Zacharias had to be shown by being made dumb for a period of time. Mary said, “If it’s God’s will, I’ll take it.”

So now we have two women, carrying either an embryo in Mary’s case, or a six-month fetus in Elisabeth’s case, who were in the process of coming together. What are we to think of the two lives that these two women are carrying? Are they human? Are they human beings? Are they known to God? What are we to think about this in the light of the abortion controversy? “Mary... went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias and saluted Elisabeth. And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” Now the question arises, was John filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb? Did it happen at birth? Or was he filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born? Here was a fetus of six months, who could actually recognize the voice of the mother of the Messiah. I realize these things are mysteries. They are beyond our comprehension. But if we’re going to have the Bible inform our conscience about the life within a womb, the life inside of a mother, and about how God might look upon that life, we have to take these events into consideration. John, at six months, was probably a viable fetus. And, Mary’s voice in the house caused him to leap in the womb and his mother to be filled with the Holy Spirit. “And she [Elisabeth] spake out with a loud voice, and said, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of your salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy’” (Luke 1:38). I don’t know what you make of that, but that means to me that John, in the womb, leaped for joy at the presence of Mary.

That has to be taken as significant, that the identity of these two boys was established in the womb. The spirit of God was with them in the womb. They were human.

Jesus was to be a son of David, and David was the sweet psalmist of Israel who wrote so many of our Psalms. One of them is especially interesting in this regard. In Psalm 139:9, David writes: “If I take the wings of the morning, if I dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall your hand lead me and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about: Yea, the darkness doesn’t hide from you; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to you. For you have possessed my reins: you have 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 right well. My substance was not hid from you, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in your book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

“I was made in secret.” What could be more secret than inside a mother’s womb? “Your eyes saw my substance even when it was unperfect,” or unfinished. God actually wrote down in his book all David’s members—his hands, fingernails, the color of his eyes, the color of his hair— all that was going to become David was written down in God’s book when none of them had yet been formed. “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 you. Surely you will slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, you bloody men” (Psalm 139:17-19).

There’s a lot of irony at the end of the passage when David says, get away from me “you bloody men,” when you think in terms of the bloody men and women who have destroyed life after life, who have dismembered babies in the womb in the process of abortion. You can take that any way you want to, but it is a fact that they often dismember the child in the womb, the child of whom God says all his members were written down in his book before they were even formed. I can’t help thinking of them being dismembered in the womb and how they have been disposed of, sold for cosmetics or medical research or just burnt in a hospital incinerator. All their little body parts which were already written in God’s book when they didn’t yet exist. I take this to mean that all these members exist in the embryo before they ever take shape. And science now tells us that’s true.

John the Baptist, from the womb, recognized the identity of the Messiah when Mary walked into the house and called out. This was not just a blob of tissue to God. It was a real, identified human being in the process of being formed. I realize that we cannot take God’s Book into the Senate and ask them to take that into consideration. I’m not addressing this as

a political issue. I'm talking about a moral issue, a spiritual and religious issue, a biblically-based issue. The question is, whose children are these anyway? When you think about Andrea Yates on trial in Houston for murdering her own children, the question arises naturally, "Well, they're her kids, why can't she kill 'em?" The answer is obvious. The state has a vested interest. These children are wards of the state as well and the state has an interest in saving the lives of people who can't protect themselves. The question then arises: How far back do we go? Whose children are these and where does their protection lie? The Psalms have another interesting little passage—one to think about. It's in Psalm 127:3, where the psalmist says, "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord and the fruit of the womb is his reward." One might argue that this is the heritage God gave. God gives us the children, but after he gives them to us, they're ours to do with what we will. No, it doesn't quite work that way. Children are a heritage of the Lord. "The fruit of the womb is his reward as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man so are the children of the youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed. They shall speak with the enemies in the gate." This means that a family with a lot of big strapping boys is stronger than a family without them. And so is a nation. Children are the strength and the future of a nation. You kill off a generation of children and you have torn the heart out of a nation and a people.

There's a prophecy in Ezekiel 16 that I would be derelict not to mention. Israel was being called on the carpet. Perhaps, in particular, Judah was being called on the carpet because of what they did with all the things God did for them. God draws out this great analogy in finding Judah polluted in her own blood, cast aside, and how he rescued her, covered her, washed her and cleaned her, dressed her, put all kinds of beautiful jewels on her, and made her a beautiful people. In verse 15 he says, "But you trust in your own beauty and you've played the harlot because of your renown and you poured out your fornications on anybody that passed by, his it was [you'd sleep with anyone]. Your garments you took and you decked the high places with colors and you've played the harlot there; the like things shall not come; neither will it be so. And you took your fair jewels that were made out of my gold and my silver which I had given you, and you made to yourself images of men, and committed whoredom with them. And you took your brodered garments and you covered them and you set my oil and my incense before these other gods. My food that I gave you, fine flour, oil and honey that I fed you with, you set it before these others for a sweet savor. Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters whom you have borne unto me and you have sacrificed them to be devoured. Is this of your whoredom a small matter, That you have slain my children and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for these other gods."

Whose kids are they? God said, you have killed my children. So I guess we've answered the question about whose kids they are. Sure, God gives them to us, but he gave them to us and formed them in the womb, and wrote their little members down in his book before they

ever began to take shape. Before this little baby ever sucked its thumb in the womb, God had written that thumb down in his book, because it was his kid. You would think that anyone who is a Christian or who takes the Bible seriously, who wants the Bible to be a guide for life, would think very, very seriously about the responsibility he or she had been given to take care of God's children.

Chances are, some of you will get graduation announcements soon, with a picture of the proud senior inside—they're such good looking kids. Some of you will even attend a graduation and listen to the valedictorian give a speech about the future. But, you should know there are ghosts there. The ghosts of hundreds, thousands, millions of kids who never had a chance. Maybe during graduation this year we should wear a little black ribbon of mourning for the graduation class that never was.

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