

SUICIDE AND THE BIBLE

Over 25,000 Americans commit suicide each year. Over one million will try but only one out of fifteen will succeed. Suicide is the tenth highest killer in the U.S. More will die by suicide than by murder. In the average population, eleven out of 100,000 will commit suicide. In Los Angeles it is 41 per 100,000. The model age for attempting suicide is 32 for men and 27 for women. The model age of succeeding is 50-54 for men and women. Men kill themselves twice as often as women, but women attempt suicide twice as often as men. There are over 5,000 suicides among teen-agers each year. Some 10,000 college students will attempt suicide in a year. Suicide is the second highest cause of death among young people aged 15-24 surpassed only by accidents. Thirteen young adults each day consider life not worth the living.

That is twice as many as ten years ago and three times as many as twenty years ago. It has increased eleven fold over the past 20 years in the college students.

For many years Japan has had a very high suicide rate. Japan has a very high culture and education but it shows the effects of education without God and the Bible. Sweden has the leading suicide rate in the world. This is not surprising because it was Sweden that led the world in "free love", sex education, permissiveness and situation ethics. Now we see our own society going the same way as Japan and Sweden.

We want to consider the matter of suicide from the Bible standpoint. We are neither a psychologist nor a psychiatrist. The church is flooded today with amateur pseudo-psychologists and pseudo-psychiatrists who use a little Bible to make their worldly, humanistic analysis to sound spiritual.

Suicides will continue to rise. The Bible declares that society is headed away from God. Godless society is bent on it's own destruction. As these last days flow steadily toward those awful tribulation days, suicides will become more and more common. As the pressures of life mount, as society has rejected the only Anchor for their troubled souls suicides will become as common as accidents. The climax will be reached in the tribulation period where it is recorded (Rev. 9:6) that society will seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. Evidently the only thing that keeps the mass of society from committing suicide in the tribulation is the sovereign, preventative power of God.

The Bible covers a period of 4,000 years from Adam to John on the Isle of Patmos writing the Revelation. Yet there are only seven suicides recorded of all the multitudes that lived (that is about the same results as in twelve hours in America today). There were probably many more, but these are all that are recorded. One needs to remember that the Bible is primarily a Jewish book, and that the Jews have the lowest suicide rate. They believed that life is God-given and is held as a sacred trust. They believed the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (not even yourself). After the Jewish religion comes the Catholic religion as next to the lowest and highest of all is the Protestant religion. The fact is, if you are a skilled, white, male protestant between 50-54 you are the best prospect for suicide. Ninety five percent of all suicides are committed by the white race, who are in the white collar bracket. They are the most successful group of all at committing suicide. The largest single category for women is the housewife. It is interesting that there is not a single woman listed in the Bible as having committed suicide. There are seven recorded suicides in the Bible. If one could properly analyze the cause of these seven, I believe he could analyze all suicides. Let us briefly consider the suicides of the Bible.

I. ABIMELECH—JUDGES 9:54

Abimelech was the wicked son of Gideon who had himself proclaimed king of Israel. To insure his position, he killed his seventy brothers. The country was in continual turmoil and living in fear. When he besieged Thebez he had all but conquered it, he got careless and moved too close to the base of the defense tower. A woman noticed him and dropped a millstone upon him. Recognizing that he was mortally wounded, he commanded his armour-bearer to slay him (it was a disgrace to be killed by a woman). His armour-bearer did so. You might debate whether he died a true suicide or not. Even though

he did not die at his own hands, he did die at his own word. It was an order. The armour-bearer was under obligation to obey.

Notice he had been defeated in battle. He was facing certain death. He was shocked, frustrated, and depressed. He wanted to choose his own method of death.

II. SAMSON—JUDGES 16:28-31

Samson was dedicated to God from his birth. He became a judge and lived in the power of God for a short while. He was known for his daring feats of strength. After he had broken his vows he lost his power, his sight, and his liberty. He was made a slave. While on display one day in a temple to an idol, he prayed and God gave him strength to pull down the support columns of the temple. This caused the death of many of the leading Philistines but it also caused his own death.

Notice that in the act of taking his own life he was trying to rectify the past. He considered it an act of atonement. He was doing penance. It was all he knew to do about the guilt he lived under. He had disappointed his parents (who had dedicated him to God). He had betrayed his God and broken all his vows. He was totally defeated, thoroughly frustrated and depressed. It just seemed the best thing to do for all concerned under the circumstances.

III. SAUL -- 1 SAMUEL 31:1-6

Saul was the first king of Israel. He was head and shoulders above all the others. He was a man of prominence. He made a good beginning as king. The people were all delighted. Yet, he soon forgot God. He only half-heartedly obeyed God. He intruded into the office of the priest. Finally he was rejected by God. Frustrated by his declining power and the rise of David, he visited the forbidden witch of Endor. Then comes the fatal battle with the Philistines. He is mortally wounded by an arrow from the enemy. Seeing that death will be slow in coming and that the Philistines might capture him while he still had some life and torture him, he commands his armour-bearer to finish him off with a sword. The armour-bearer refuses. Whereupon Saul falls upon his own sword. Now it is true that the Amalekite told David that he found Saul barely alive and upon Saul's request finished him off. But, personally I believe that he was lying and that what Samuel said in I Samuel 31:6 is the complete and final story of Saul's death.

Notice: He felt rejected. He was frustrated over David's steady rise and his own steady decline. He was depressed. He was defeated. He had to choose his own manner of death. What remained of life would not be worth living. He was just speeding up a certain and painful matter.

IV. SAUL'S ARMOURBEARER -- 1 SAMUEL 31:1-6

He refused Saul's order to kill him. He was the enemy (death) approaching. He saw Saul kill himself. He knew that he would not be spared neither torturing or death. He fell upon his own sword.

Notice: he was frustrated. The king said "Kill me." The Lord said "thou shalt not kill". He could not obey the king and the Lord both. He was shocked over losing his king and the battle both. He was depressed. Since death was certain and imminent, he simply chose his own form of death.

V. AHITHOPHEL -- 2 SAMUEL 17:23

Ahithophel was David's trusted counselor. He acted as David's Secretary of State. He gave good advice. He was always right. He was one of David's closest friends and his greatest advisor. When Absalom rebelled and temporarily won the kingdom from David, Ahithophel went along with Absalom. He had

been a secret enemy of David all those years. Even though he had given good advice, it was only to insure his position. He had never forgiven David for his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. Because, you see, he was the grandfather of Bathsheba. He became one of Absalom's advisors. Absalom refuses the plan that would have brought certain victory for the one that brought sure defeat. When he saw that his plan had been rejected, he knew that David would win and upon David's return he would be exposed and punished. He went home and hanged himself.

Notice: he was rejected. He was frustrated. He was depressed. He was filled with fear as he contemplated the future. He chose death to living. It took less courage to die than it did to live. He thought life not worth the living.

VI. ZIMRI -- 1 KINGS 16:18

Zimri was a captain under Elah the King of Israel. He conspired against King Elah. While Elah was drunk he killed him and all his sons. He declared himself king and reigned seven days. When the army learned what had happened, they marched against him. Seeing the battle was lost, Zimri barricaded himself in the palace and burned it down with himself inside.

Notice: He had a desire to destroy as much as possible even in death. He was rejected. He was frustrated. He was depressed. What guilt must have been his. He had killed the king and all his sons for naught. He was facing certain death. He was only choosing the method of death.

VIII. JUDAS—MATTHEW 27:5

Judas, after betraying the Lord for thirty pieces of silver, was rejected by the high priest and elders. He went out and hanged himself.

Notice: Judas differs from all the others. He was under complete control of the Devil (John 13:27).

In these seven Bible suicides we have the basic reasons for all suicides. They all believed that life was not worth living or that they were not worthy to live.

1. At least four (Abimelech, Saul, Saul's Armour-bearer, and Zimri) were choosing the manner of their death. They knew that life was over and they just wanted to choose the manner of death. Ahithophel could possibly be added to this list, because he knew that if David ever got his hands on him what was the most likely to happen.

2. At least one (Samson) was trying to rectify the past. He was trying to do something good in death. He was trying to atone for his past mistakes.

3. At least three (Saul, Ahithophel, Zimri) felt rejected. Ahithophel felt total rejection. He undoubtedly felt rejected by both man and God.

4. Only one was known to be fully under the control of the Devil (Judas). Others might have been demon possessed. Others surely were demon influenced. We will never know today the percent of suicides that are caused by demon possession or by demon influence. I do not believe that a child of God can be demon possessed because he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit (greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world). A child of God can be influenced by Satan and his demons. Drugs are a great tool of Satan and his demons. He has used this to influence and control many. Most were unaware. Many did not care.

5. Not one had a recorded history of mental disorder.

6. One (Samson) was a true believer. Since Samson is found recorded in Heb. 11:32 with the faithful, we consider him a true believer.

Many folk consider suicide as an unpardonable sin. This is due to the fact that the person who commits does not live to confess their sin. Therefore they die with a sin unconfessed.

Let me give you a very simple Bible argument. The believing sinner is justified (just as if he had never sinned, in the sight of God.) the moment that he believes. His sins (past, present, future) are washed away by the shed blood of Christ. The believer's hope of heaven is not in his own ability to "hold out faithful until the end" (that is a tribulation admonition), but in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

My going to heaven when I die does not depend upon me confessing my daily sins but by the fact that there was a time and place that I appropriated by faith the finished work of Jesus Christ for all my sins. Admittedly, my confession of daily sins has a great deal to do with my power, peace, influence, testimony, and rewards, but not my salvation.

The purpose of this booklet is not to discuss justification but suicide. However if you are interested in it, consider a few verses on justification look at Romans 1:17, 3:20-28, 4:25, 5:9. 5:18, Galatians 2, 3.

7. All were spiritually sick at the time of suicide.

8. All were depressed. This was the common fact of all the cases.

It is one thing to properly analyze these Bible accounts of suicide and quite another to properly apply the truth to our own heart. All will admit that these are troubled days. Most folk will have no trouble given present day illustration for the seven Bible suicides. We all know folk who were basically described by one of the Bible characters that took their own life. But the question is, does the Bible have an answer for present day society. Does the Bible have an answer for me?