

Apologetics 101

Interpreting the Old Testament Week 9

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1

Class Objectives

- Setting the Stage – Bringing the Challenge Into Focus
- The Old Testament (OT) Law
 - Preliminary Points
 - Mosaic Covenant
 - New Covenant
 - Purpose of OT Law
 - Kosher Laws
 - Agriculture and Dress Laws
 - Harsh Punishments
- God’s preferential treatment of Israel
- Tribal Warfare
 - Conquest of Canaan
 - The Amalekites
- Does the Bible Condone Slavery
- Resources for Further Learning

2

Setting the Stage

Bringing the Challenge Into Focus

Dear Laura letter: Paul Copan, 57 – bringing the challenge of interpreting the OT into clear focus!

Some of the challenges we face in understanding how others view the Old Testament:

- America is increasingly becoming a post-Christian nation. Widespread acceptance of Biblical authority is a thing of the past.
- Difficult passages of the Old Testament have become the target of modern-day atheists. (neo-atheists)
- In the same way that the topics of Evil & Suffering have been used by atheists in an attempt to discredit God's existence, some of the *uniqueness* of the Old Testament world has also been used to discredit the Christian God.
 - Specifically, God's love and justice, and his saneness, have been put on trial
- Consider the famous quote by popular atheist Richard Dawkins:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

3

Setting the Stage

Bringing the Challenge Into Focus

A Few Opening Examples:

- Today's Neo-Atheists describe the 'Conquest of Canaan' as our bible refers to it, as 'ethnic cleansing' in which bloodthirsty massacres were carried out with 'xenophobic relish.' ¹
- Joshua's destruction of Jericho, which Christians celebrate, is "morally indistinguishable from Hitler's invasion of Poland." ²
- Richard Dawkins accuses that God "*breaks into a monumental rage whenever his chosen people flirted with a rival god.*"
- Atheists like Bill Maher (author of *Religulous*) consider Yahweh to be impatient, jealous and easily provoked, a petty and insecure deity.
- The modern atheist's disdain for the bible, most specifically the Old Testament, is often rooted in ignorance. But that doesn't make it any less dangerous to the innocent bystander.
- Rodney Stark puts it this way: "*To expect to learn anything about important theological problems from Richard Dawkins or Daniel Dennett is like expecting to learn about medieval history from someone who had only read Robinhood.*"
- Their Goal: Discredit God so that they can Disprove God.

1. Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Baker Books, 2011), 20.

2. *Ibid.*

4

The OT Law Preliminary Points

“The Torah is given for a specific period of time, and is then set aside - not because it was a bad thing now happily abolished, but because it was a good thing whose purpose had now been accomplished.” - NT Wright

- Some scholars suggest that some OT laws were given by God as concessions in light of human hard-heartedness
- Paul Copan suggests that in the Mosaic Law, God was moving ancient tribal societal structure, which to us appears crude and uncultured, forward incrementally.
 - *“As stated repeatedly in the Old Testament and reinforced in the New Testament, the law of Moses was far from ideal. Being the practical God that he is, Yahweh met his people where they were, but he didn't want to leave them there. God didn't banish all fallen, flawed, ingrained social structures when Israel wasn't ready to handle the ideals. Taking into account the actual, God encoded more feasible laws as he directed his people toward moral improvement.”¹*
- We can observe ‘redemptive movement’ in the OT Laws. It was never meant to be permanent.
- Paul Copan suggests *“Israel's Old Testament covenant wasn't a universal ideal and was never intended to be so. The Mosaic Covenant anticipated a better covenant.”*

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 61.

5

The OT Law Mosaic Covenant

The OT Law Understood in its Proper Context: *The Mosaic Covenant*

- The first 5 books of the Bible (Pentateuch) are comprised of over 600 laws containing God's commands to Israel. Many of these seem utterly bizarre and foreign to the modern Western reader. Some examples will be considered, but it is first important to understand the historical and theological context for such laws.
- The Mosaic Covenant takes place at a pivotal point in Israel's history. This was a time when God had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt and was establishing them as a nation set apart for his purposes: *to bring about Christ, the savior of the world!*
- God's promise was that he, the Lord over all the earth, *would embrace Israel as a treasured possession and establish them as a holy nation (Exo 19:3-6)*. The terms for this covenant required Israel's obedience to God's laws (Mosaic Law), which contained the famous 10 Commandments and many others. *The people agreed to this covenant (Exo 24:3), and Moses sealed it in blood (Exo 24:8)*
- Unfortunately, humans would break this covenant, just as they had done with prior covenants. (Adamic, Noahic and Abrahamic)

6

The OT Law Mosaic Covenant

The OT Law Understood in its Proper Context: The Mosaic Covenant

- *The purpose of the law under the Mosaic Covenant was to reveal the sinful nature of humans (Rom 7:7), and was never meant to be the final solution for it! It was not capable of making humans righteous before God (Gal 2:16,21), it only "imprisoned everything under sin" (Gal 3:21-22). It revealed our need for God's intervention and a Savior!*
- This would set the stage for the New Covenant in Christ (and final covenant).
- *"The Mosaic covenant was an administration of detailed written laws given for a time to restrain the sins of the people and to be a custodian to point people to Christ. Paul says, "Why then the law? It was added because of our transgressions till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made" (Gal 3:19), and, "The law was our custodian until Christ came" (Gal 3:24) . . . Moreover, although the sacrificial system of the Mosaic covenant did not really take away sins (Heb 10:1-4), it foreshadowed the bearing of sin by Christ, the perfect high priest who was also the perfect sacrifice (Heb 9:11-28). Nevertheless, the Mosaic covenant itself, with all its detailed laws, could not save people."¹*

1. Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 187.

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7

The OT Law New Covenant

The New Covenant – The Final, Long-Term, Permanent Solution

- Jeremiah prophesied that the Lord would establish a new covenant with Israel and Judah (Jer 31:31-34) (Remember: per the Abrahamic covenant, these were Abraham's descendants and God's chosen people through whom Christ would come. Christ would be the savior of the world and mediator of this new covenant, *which would accomplish God's purpose of reconciling all humanity into right standing relationship with himself!*)
- *The New Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Covenant and accomplished what it could not (2 Cor. 3:14, Heb 8)*
 - Humans broke the Mosaic Covenant: "For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for (*turned away from*) them, declares the Lord." (Heb 8:9)" Herein lies the issue: humans, plagued by their sinful nature, are **chronic covenant breakers**. They never live in such a pure manner as God intends for them: "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" -Rom 3:23 NIV (this is because of their inner sinful condition)
- This is exactly what the New Covenant and Christ address: With inability to do it on their own, humans need
 1. a solution that justifies them and provides them with legal right standing before God, and
 2. the restoration of the Holy Spirit to empower them to overcome their sinful nature and live a holy life.
 The New Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Covenant because it provides both!

8

The OT Law New Covenant

Do the OT laws of the Mosaic Covenant apply to Christians today?

- **No.** *Christians are under the New Covenant and are not bound to the Mosaic Covenant* (which only applied to the nation of Israel for a period of time in history, and for specific purposes). The OT law was never meant to be a long-term, final arrangement.
- *“None of the Old Testament law is binding on Christians today. When Jesus died on the cross, He put an end to the Old Testament law (Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:23–25; Ephesians 2:15). In place of the Old Testament law, Christians are under the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2), which is to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...and to love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). If we obey those two commands, we will be fulfilling all that Christ requires of us: “All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22:40). . . . “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).”¹ (ie. Refinancing a home – you have a new agreement with new terms)*
- This does not mean that all the OT law is irrelevant today. Many principles reflected in such laws are timeless and applicable today (love your neighbor as yourself, do not murder, do not commit adultery, etc.) The specific 600+ laws of the OT, however, are not binding for Christians today. *We must interpret the OT law through the lens of the NT teachings.* (OT – God’s Word *FOR* us. NT – God’s Word *TO* us.)

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-law.html>

9

The OT Law Purpose of OT Law

Purpose of the OT Law

- *The OT laws were intended to be a comprehensive set of instructions for Israel such that they properly reflected their status as God’s chosen people to the world.* God desired that Israel’s conduct was orderly so that their social and moral well-being was upheld and their hearts and minds were pointed back to him in all aspects of their lives. This would ensure they exemplified their holiness and uniqueness to the world, and remained healthy as the nation from which the Messiah would come.
- Israel’s laws are traditionally understood as falling under 3 general categories:¹
Moral Laws: dealt with timeless truths regarding God’s intention for human behavior
Civil Laws: dealt with courts, economics, land, crimes, and punishment
Ceremonial Laws: dealt with sacrifices, festivals, and priestly activities
- These laws (though often seemingly bizarre and rigid) weren’t arbitrary or meant to oppress Israel. Rather, they were intended to uphold certain themes: Israel’s reverence for, and devotion to God, purity and holiness in all of life, and uniqueness from surrounding corrupted nations.

1. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands on Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 356.

10

The OT Law

Kosher Laws

Example of an OT Dietary Law

“You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof and that chews the cud. There are some that only chew the cud or only have a divided hoof, but you must not eat them. . . . *the pig, though it has a divided hoof, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses;*” -Lev 11:2-3, 7 NIV

One Unsatisfactory Explanation: Health/Hygiene

Argument: Pigs can transmit diseases such as trichinosis, and crabs and lobsters are scavengers.

Response: a physical health concern isn't indicated in Lev 11 or elsewhere in the OT. Also, why wouldn't poisonous plants be included? And why would Jesus declare kosher foods as clean if sickness was really the concern in the OT?

One Alternative Explanation: Animals that are permissible to eat are those that have a divided hoof *and* chew the cud (vegetarian), which implies they are not predators and therefore do not eat blood. Lev 17:14 states the life of all flesh is in its blood and Gen 9:4 prohibits the eating of blood, which suggests life is to be respected. Unclean animals appear to be either predatory or vulnerable animals. *The pig should be avoided because of its contact with blood, which symbolizes a breaking of the law. “What’s most clear in all of this is that holiness and predatory behavior don’t mix. Holiness represents respect for human life, and the eating of blood (symbolizes violent death) represents predatory activity.”*¹

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 83.

11

The OT Law

Agriculture and Dress Laws

Examples of an OT Agriculture and Dress Law

“Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together. Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.”
–Deu 22:10-11 NIV

- Recall that God desired for the hearts and minds of the people of Israel to be pointed back to him in all aspects of their lives. He *“gave the Israelites certain actions to carry out as a way of symbolically telling them not to get mixed in with the false ways of the nations. Israel “wore” certain badges of holy distinction that separated them from morally and theologically corrupted nations surrounding them,”* –Copan 77
- Recall that bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor 15:33; Psa 1:1-2)
- *“Israel’s land, Israel’s sacrifices, and Israel’s food all had social and theological significance. . . . Just as God was set apart from human beings, Israel was to be set apart in its behavior and theology from the surrounding nations.”*¹

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 78.

12

The OT Law Harsh Punishments

The Sabbath Breaker Stoned to Death per the Lord's Command

"While the Israelites were in the wilderness, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the Lord commanded Moses." -Num 15:32-36 NIV

-This incident takes place right after legislation is established regarding *unintentional versus defiant* sins. This sin of breaking the sabbath was a *defiant act* in direct violation of God's explicit commands (Exo 31:14-15; 35:2)¹

-Recall that God is a *"compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished;"* -Exo 34:6-7 NIV That said, He *"does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone."* -Lam 3:33 NIV God is perfectly just in all his ways, does no wrong, and prescribes a perfect law (Deu 32:4; Psa:7).

-God takes sin seriously, and if he decided to inflict this type of judgement in this instance, enforcing the law during this period (Exo 31:14-15), we can trust his wisdom is beyond ours and that he had morally sufficient reasons to do so.

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 89.

13

The OT Law Harsh Punishments

Ancient Near Eastern Law Codes and the Mosaic Law

- It's important to note a few points pertaining to the harshness of some OT laws and punishments:¹
 1. certain OT laws and punishments were far inferior to the original creational ideals due to 'The Fall'
 2. the OT law was never intended to be the final, permanent arrangement for all people
 3. God may have been working through the morally inferior Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) context when he gave the OT law to Israel. There are various similarities between the Mosaic law and other ANE laws (Exo 20:21-23:33 - capital punishment, legislation regarding a goring ox, etc.) The Mosaic Law also stood out in its higher ethical standard compared to other ANE codes during its time.
- It is fair to say God was tough on Israel on many matters (though the people of Israel were also tough on him! They repetitively sinned and turned away from him: think of the golden calf right after he brought them out of Egypt) Remember, God initiated a covenant with Israel in which he lovingly embraced them and committed to establishing them as a nation through which he would bring the Messiah. God had BIG plans for Israel and cared for them deeply. *Any of God's dealings with Israel were in accordance with accomplishing his long-term, entirely good and perfect plan of reconciling as many people as possible to himself, to dwell eternally with him in peace and joy, in a place in which he will forever eradicate evil and suffering.*

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 88-89.

14

God's Preferential Treatment of Israel

The Critic may say: "The God of the Bible very clearly seems to show favoritism to the Jewish people. Shouldn't God love everyone the same?"

- We should not confuse God's love for all people, whom he has created, with God's purposeful design for both individuals and people groups. Just because He has selected certain individuals and people groups for specific purposes doesn't mean that *those not selected* for those purposes are loved less by God.
 - Abraham chosen as the father of the nations, the initial recipient of the covenant (Gen. 12)
 - Moses chosen to be used by God to bring deliverance to the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt
 - Saul chosen to be the first King of Israel – how he handled that honor would be his free will choice
 - David chosen to be Saul's successor as King of Israel – his leadership also his own choice
- "Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" Ez. 18:23
- We must also be mindful of God's justice and judgment. When we may think that God is showing negative favoritism towards a sinful nation, we may be observing God's judgment on sin, rather than his preferential treatment in reverse.
- Remember also that there is a difference between what the Bible records and what the Bible approves.

15

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Purpose of the Conquest of Canaan Video: Turek - Is God Immoral - Conquest of Canaan¹

- The Conquest of Canaan takes place in Joshua 1-12, and describes Israel's foray into the promised land where they conquered various sites and people groups.
- Some of the specific language of God's commands pertaining to this conquest can appear difficult:
- *"When the Lord your God delivers it [the city] into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. . . . in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them — the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites — as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God."*—Deu 20:13-14, 16-18 NIV
- How should such a passage and command from the Lord be interpreted?

1. Frank Turek "Is God Immoral Because of the Atrocities Committed in the Old Testament?", <https://youtu.be/zjBeR6f-NZ8?t=162>. (2:42 to End)

16

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Purpose of the Conquest of Canaan *(This was NOT genocide or an ethnic cleansing: it was judgment for atrocious sin)*

1. *God promised to establish Israel as a nation with its own flourishing land (part of Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants)*
 -God promised Abraham he would make his name great, establish a great nation through him, and bless all people on earth through him (Gen 12:1-3). The result of this would be the lineage of Abraham as the nation of Israel, and eventually the Savior of humanity, Jesus (Mat 1:1-16; Luk 3:23-38).
 -Following this, God brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt and promised he would embrace them as a treasured possession and establish them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exo 19:3-6; 6:6-7). "I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession." -Exo 6:8 NIV
2. *God was bringing judgment on the Canaanites, and purifying the land from false idols and destructive religious practices*
 -The Canaanites were a severely immoral people who worshiped perverse gods (Deu 9:4-5).¹ The nature of their deities was reflected in their culture: they engaged in violence, adultery (temple sex), incest, bestiality, and child sacrifice. They would place their infants on the arms of the molten hot idol Molech and watch them burn to death. Plutarch, a Greek writer, said the villagers would beat their drums louder during these sacrifices so the parents couldn't hear their babies²
 -God had already withheld his judgment on the Canaanites for 430 years until their sin reached its limit (Gen 15:16).
 -God did not want Israel to assimilate with and be corrupted by such a perverse culture

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 88-89.

2. Turek, "Did God Really Command That All The Canaanites Be Killed?", <https://youtu.be/GxSZXBxOEY>.

17

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Conquest of Canaan: Important Considerations

1. The Israelites' conquest could only take place in the land of Canaan. They were prohibited from conquering other neighboring nations (Moab and Ammon (*Lot's people*) (Deut. 2:9, 19), Edom (*Esau's people*) (Deu 2:4-5; 23:7)) Further, if the Canaanites fled the land upon Israel's military entry, there was no command for Israel to hunt them down.
2. This conquest was not a timeless, normative practice for Israel. *It was permitted for this occasion, and specifically for purpose of Israel purifying and entering the promised land.*
3. Israel's warfare procedures instructed them to first make offers of peace before conquering a city (Deu 20:10). Though most scholars believe the Conquest of Canaan was an exception to this, we do see indications that some cities in Canaan had opportunities to make peace but did not (Jericho had an implicit sevenfold opportunity to make peace with Israel, but refused. "*There was not a city which made peace with the sons of Israel except the Hivites living in Gibeon; they took them all in battle.*" -Jos 11:19)
4. We do see indications that any who were repentant and sought to know Yahweh were spared (Rahab).

18

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Did God Really Command the Killing of all that Breathed? Men, Women and Children?

- The first two locations Israel conquered were Jericho and Ai, which were military strongholds, not civilian cities. It is very possible that women, children, and other general civilians did not dwell in these locations:
“The text doesn’t require that women and young and old must have been in these cities. . . . Jericho, Ai, and many other Canaanite cities were mainly used for government buildings and operations, while the rest of the people (including women and children) lived in the surrounding countryside. . . . all the archaeological evidence indicates that no civilian populations existed at Jericho, Ai, and other cities mentioned in Joshua. Other biblical evidence of various cities used as fortresses, citadels, or military outposts also exists (e.g., Rabbah in 2 Sam. 12:26; Zion in 2 Sam. 5:7 & 1 Chron. 11:5, 7).”¹
- God’s command to Israel was primarily oriented to drive the Canaanites out of their land rather than kill them:
“the Bible does not unequivocally state that God commanded Israel to exterminate every single Canaanite man, woman, and child in the Promised Land. The dominant language used in Scripture is not of extermination but of “driving out” and “thrusting out” the Canaanites (cp. Exod 23:28; Lev 18:24; Num 33:52; Deut 6:19; 7:1; 9:4; 18:12; Josh 10:28, 30, 32, 35, 37, 39; 11:11, 14). The Israelites were to “dispossess” the Canaanites (Num 21:32; Deut 9:1; 11:23; 18:14; 19:1). “Driving out” or “dispossessing” is different from “wiping out” or “destroying.”²

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 176.

2. Matthew Flanagan and Paul Copan in Cowan and Wilder, *In Defense of the Bible*, 303.

19

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Did God Really Command the Killing of all that Breathed? Men, Women and Children?

A Closer Look at the Language Used in the Conquest Accounts - OT ‘Stock Phrases’

*“When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city. They **devoted** the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.” -Jos 6:20-21 (Jericho)*

A Possible Explanation:

- The stock phrase “men and women” occurs many times in the Old Testament and is almost always accompanied by the word “all”. For example, “we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor” (Deu 2:34), and “utterly destroying the men, women and children of every city” (Deu 3:6). “The expression “men and women” or similar phrases appear to be stereotypical for describing all the inhabitants of a town or region,”¹
- Given the stock nature of such phrases, and the evidence that the cities Israel overtook were military sites not occupied by women, children, or general civilians, the specific mentioning of women and children may not be meant to be understood as a literal, explicit command.

1. Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster*, 175.

20

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Did God Really Command the Killing of all that Breathed? Men, Women and Children?

A Closer Look at the Language Used in the Conquest Accounts - ANE War Rhetoric

*“At that time Joshua went and destroyed the Anakites from the hill country: . . . Joshua **totally destroyed** them and their towns. No Anakites were left in Israelite territory; -Jos 11:21-22 NIV*

Caleb: “Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said. . . . From Hebron Caleb drove out the three Anakites—Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmi, the sons of Ana” -Jos 14:21; 15:14 NIV

Possible Explanation:

- Joshua does not intend to be deceptive here, but rather speaks in the manner of his day. It was typical for ANE war rhetoric in the second and first millennia B.C. to use exaggerated language full of bravado:
*“Joshua subdued the whole region, . . . with all their kings. He left no survivors. He **totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.** . . . So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel. . . . Then the land had rest from war.” -Jos 10:40; 11:23 NIV*
- This is not literally true: Scripture later indicates there was still land to be taken (Jos 13; 18:3), and that many Canaanites were still around (Judg 1:21, 27-28; Jos 14:21; 15:14)

21

Tribal Warfare: The Conquest of Canaan

Did God Really Command the Killing of all that Breathed? Men, Women and Children?

- The considerations, thus far, might ease some of the difficulty in accepting the conquest narratives. They would imply God did not literally command the killing of all women and children, and that such language may have just been in the **genre** of ANE war rhetoric. Israel's military raids targeted military locations where primarily combatants would be killed, and presumably civilians in the remaining land or countryside would flee and be driven out. The main emphasis of the conquest was to “drive out” the Canaanites rather than kill them.

- William Lane Craig, however, notes that though God primarily intended for the “driving out” of those who were in the land, he still may have literally commanded and permitted the killing of some women and children. Assuming this more difficult case is true, is God's morality impugned?

- Even in such a case, we've established throughout this course that God is just in all his ways. We can trust that there is a **morally sufficient reason** for such a command, even if we don't have access to it. Such a command may be a necessary component of this fallen world that reaps divine eternal benefits in the afterlife and accomplishes God's ultimate overall good purposes. Further, God alone gives life and has the right to take it away.

-Regarding the children, it may be that this was an act of mercy to spare them from growing up in a corrupt culture that would have led them into perverse practices and away from God. God no doubt would have brought such children into his presence in Heaven.

22

Tribal Warfare: The Amalekites

Consider God's Command, thru Samuel, to King Saul:

"³ Now go, attack the Amalekites and **totally destroy** all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys."

- Why would a loving God command this kind of slaughter? War is one thing, but killing women, children and infants?? And what did the animals do wrong??

A Few Considerations:

- What was the source of warfare between the Israelites and the Amalekites?
 - The animosity began during Israel's 40 trek through the dessert to Canaan. In Ex. 17, the Amalekites conducted an unprovoked attack on Israel. Joshua won the battle for Israel that day, but it was an insult to their vulnerability.
 - According to Midrash tradition (Jewish commentary on the Book of the Law), the Amalekites were also sorcerers who practiced very strange dark arts.
 - God said this attack would be to 'punish' the Amalekites for their unprovoked attack while Israel was leaving slavery. (Punish: I remember, reckon)

23

Tribal Warfare: The Amalekites

Further Considerations:

- Ancient Warfare writing often used strong, absolute language. It was common in non-biblical texts as well. Use of exaggerated language and hyperbole. (*to further reiterate*)
 - Paul Copan suggests that this was its own 'genre' of literature. A Moabite King, after defeating Israel in a war, stated that 'Israel is no more.' Clearly, since Israel still exists, this was **hyperbole**.
- Perhaps the command to 'utterly destroy everything' refers to those things which stand in the way of, or nearby, the line of battle, but does not include distant villages where uninvolved bystanders are going about their business unawares.
- Also note: years after this attack by Saul, there were still many Amalekites living in other areas. (1 Sam. 27, 30) This clearly suggests that they did not carry out wholesale slaughter (*ethnic cleansing*), even though Saul suggested that he carried out the command faithfully, except for King Agag and a few animals.
- A Final Thought: God, if He is indeed God, has the right to bring judgment on wicked people. His judgment on wickedness is actually an act of love for those against whom the wickedness was carried out.

24

Does the Bible Condone Slavery?

First, a few distinctions:

Video: Does the Bible Endorse Slavery?²

- The slavery of the Old Testament world was not the slavery of **pre-civil war America**:
 - There was an anti-harm law in Israel – if a servant was beaten or harmed, he was to go free. Think more in terms of indentured servitude. (remember Jacob to Laban?) In times of severe poverty, it was common for a person to sell themselves into servitude in order to eat, etc. (Lev 25:47)
 - Unlike Antebellum slavery, kidnapping in Israel was prohibited and punishable by death.
 - Foreign slaves in Israel were permitted to settle in any town they preferred, without harsh punishment. This is in contrast to other ancient cultures of slavery, like the Code of Hammurabi in Babylon, where even those who harbored a runaway slave could face capital punishment.
 - In many cases in OT Law, becoming a servant was voluntary. It was also vastly more fair for the servant than that of other ancient cultures' slave laws.

Concerning Servants in Israel: Lev. 25:53-54

⁵³ They are to be treated as workers hired from year to year; you must see to it that those to whom they owe service do not rule over them ruthlessly. ⁵⁴ "Even if someone is not redeemed in any of these ways, they and their children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, ⁵⁵ for the Israelites belong to me as servants.

1. Evidence & Answers Article, Is God a Moral Monster. Interview with Paul Copan, Episodes 277-278
2. "Does the Bible Endorse Slavery?", Southern Seminary, <https://youtu.be/0uBqkZ-m3XI>.

25

Does the Bible Condone Slavery?

From Old to New Testament:

- The Old and New Testaments were different as well in how slaves were used.
 - OT culture actually helped slaves, like with the law of gleaning...
 - NT culture saw a shift, when slavery had become institutionalized. Slaves were the property of the owner. One could suggest that Jesus was opposed to this, when he quoted Isaiah in Luke 4, "*bringing freedom to the captives.*"
- Paul's comments in Gal. 3 could suggest that slaves and masters who were both Christ followers may have lived with greater cooperation and shared interest than expected.
- The letter from Paul to Philemon also suggests that the Christian ethic invited slave owners to reconsider their relationship with their slaves, *even if they had run away!*
- "*Critics wonder why Paul (or Peter in 1 Peter 2:18–20) didn't condemn slavery outright and tell masters to release their slaves. . . . Paul's position on the status of slavery was clear on various points: (1) he repudiated slave trading; (2) he affirmed the full human dignity and equal spiritual status of slaves; and (3) he encouraged slaves to acquire their freedom whenever possible (1 Cor. 7:20–22). Paul's revolutionary Christian affirmations helped to tear apart the fabric of the institution of slavery in Europe. Paul reminded Christian masters that they, with their slaves, were fellow slaves of the same impartial Master; so they weren't to mistreat them but rather deal with them as brothers and sisters in Christ.*"²

1. Evidence & Answers Article, Is God a Moral Monster. Interview with Paul Copan, Episodes 277-278
2. Copan, Is God a Moral Monster, 152.

26

Resources for Further Learning

Is God a Moral Monster, Paul Copan

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/slaughter-of-the-canaanites>

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/the-slaughter-of-the-canaanites-re-visited/>

<https://bibleproject.com/blog/why-did-god-command-the-invasion-of-canaan-in-the-book-of-joshua/>

<https://bible.org/seriespage/23-joshua-1-%E2%80%93-24-taking-promised-land>

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27

**Thanks for joining me on
this Journey!!**

28