

Unfolding God's Plan of Redemption

Themes from the Old Testament: Joshua (Part III)

God of Genocide, God of Love?

One of the greatest questions in Christian apologetics is explaining the presence of evil in the world. If God is God of love, why do bad things happen to people. Equally perplexing is when God appears to be behind the evil. It always comes up in the discussion of the annihilation of the tribes of Canaan when Joshua leads the Israelites in to conquer the land. Is the God of the Old Testament the same God as in the New Testament; are the teachings of Jesus regarding love incongruous with the commands of God in Joshua to "show no mercy, leave nothing alive that breathes"?

I. A Background for Understanding the Canaanites

- A. Not so ignorant or far removed from the revelation of the true God
Noah > (2500-2100) > Babel > (2100-2000) > Abraham & Canaan (1900) + life longevity
- B. God is slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness
(Ex 34:6, Num 14:18, Joel 2:13, Nahum 1:3, Psalm 86:15, 103:8, 145:8)
- C. For the iniquity of the Amorites (a tribe of Canaan) is not yet complete
God to Abraham, Genesis 15:11-16

II. Why the Total Annihilation of the Canaanites?

- A. The Canaanite tribes were farming tribes, depending on the fertility of the soil (earth)
 - 1. Their religion was therefore centered around sacrifice and fertility for abundant harvest
 - 2. Their practices included sacrifice of the community first born; sacrifice of children for special requests, public ritual sex for blessings of fertility, communication with demons through mediums,
 - 3. A total rejection of the ways of God passed down through Noah, the entire community was steeped in pagan ritual, public immorality, human sacrifice, and demon worship
- B. God gave them more than 400 years to repent from the time of Abraham until the conquest of Joshua, but they continued to decline further and further into depravity and degrading immorality
- C. But why destroy the women and children, even the infants?
 - 1. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers to the 3rd and 4th generations" Exodus 34:6-9
 - 2. Women participated equally in the evil of the pagan worship
 - 3. Children were influenced and inhabited by evil spirits to which their parents were given over
 - 4. The evil was so hideous and sinister, not one bit of leaven could be allowed to exist without polluting the whole lump of Israelite dough, it had to be purged completely
- D. God was building a nation through whom He would bless and save the entire human race according to His promise to Abraham. It was essential to preserve the purity of the Israelites, or at least slow their own decline into depravity, in order to prepare a people for the birth of Messiah

III. God Loves People, But He is a Holy God and Cannot Tolerate Evil Forever

- A. Consider Nineveh and God's call upon Jonah as His missionary
- B. Consider God's compassion upon Nebuchadnezzar through Daniel
- C. God is slow to anger...but:
 - 1. it is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:31)
 - 2. do not fear the one who can kill the body, but the One Who can cast both body and soul into hell (Lk 12:4-5)
 - 3. in the final analysis, God made us and He owns us. He is fair and just in all that He does.

IV. Does the Sixth Commandment Prohibit Killing Other Human Beings?

- A. The 6th commandment prohibits murder, not homicide; there are circumstances of justifiable homicide
- B. Officers of the Law do not bear the sword in vain, but are God's servants of justice (Rom 13:4)
- C. Homicide is justifiable in the imminent threat to "innocent" life
- D. Capital punishment is a God given instrument to the state, how much more when justly ordered by God