

Opening Words

Some have said the God of the New Testament is a God of love and peace. I'll follow that God and I won't follow the God of the Old Testament who is mean and wicked. Many have tried that. But it won't work. Let's find out why today.

225 08 TQ “If the God of the Bible commands that innocent women and children be killed, how can I trust him? How can I trust the bible?” 2

Hello everyone and welcome. In our previous broadcast, we started looking at this question, “Can I really trust God if he commands that women and children be slaughtered?” We made a few preliminary observations about the Bible and what kind of book it is and isn't but today let's jump into this. Listen to these verses from Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

17 “Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, 18 how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. 19 Therefore it shall come about when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.

Moses, speaking in God's behalf, commanded that when the Israelites finished their work in the Promised Land they were to engage the Amalekites and destroy them which would include women and children. How could a prophet of God, or God himself call for such a thing, many ask?

First, we must realize that the Amalekites were not innocent. The passage tells us that when Israel came out of Egypt and was crossing the Sinai desert the Amalekites continually harassed and attacked them. They picked off the stragglers at the end of the line. This would have been the weak, the aged, and the disabled. What kind of people did things like that? Eventually they engaged in open war against Israel and it became necessary to exterminate them. Their culture became totally depraved. It was thoroughly evil and violent and this was passed on by tribal custom to the children as well as to the women. There was no hope for any of them.

The same was true of the Canaanite cultures that possessed the Holy Land. Here is what God said in Deuteronomy 7:1-6.

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, ²and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. ³Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. ⁴For they will turn your sons

away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. ⁵ But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their *sacred* pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. ⁶ For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Did you see what it said? These people were *wholly* given to evil. Archaeology has confirmed their complete indulgence in brutality, cruelty, incest, bestiality, cultic prostitution, and child sacrifice.

They had time to repent. They had hundreds of years to turn from sin to worship the true and living God but they continually refused. God therefore commanded their extinction because they had become like a cancer that would corrupt Israel. We must remember that Israel's purpose would be to bring the Messiah, the Savior of the world, into the world and it must not become corrupt like the nations that were in the land. It had to be protected from them. And we know the full story, when the Hebrew people did not exterminate these wicked nations, they did become corrupted by their practices and God had to judge his people to keep his saving plan for the world moving forward.

It was never God's plan to kill innocent women and children capriciously as if they were people who didn't deserve it. Their culture completely deserved it as did the culture of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Let's look at a few more biblical stories that have troubled people. 2 Kings 2:23-25 tells the story of the prophet Elisha bringing a curse upon young men who were mocking him. Here is the story.

“23 Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, “Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!”
24 When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two female bears came out of the woods and tore up forty-two lads of their number. 25 He went from there to Mount Carmel, and from there he returned to Samaria.

Some have read this story and thought, “That's severe! Why would the prophet Elisha curse these children for making fun of his baldness? What kind of prophet is that and what kind of God would send bears to kill children? I don't want anything to do with this kind of God.”

But we must understand the passage and the culture more clearly. First, the old King James Version called them children, but the Hebrew word doesn't point to children that are, say, six or seven years old. The word means young men who were between the ages of 12 and 30. In one passage this word refers to soldiers in an army. What would 42 children be doing out in a dangerous area without adult supervision anyway if they were young children? This was a group of young men who had banded together to defy the prophet of God.

Second, in the ancient world, baldness was often a sign that someone was a leper and therefore unclean. By taunting the prophet in this way, these young men were not making fun of Elisha but they were calling him an unclean man, a leper, who had no spiritual authority as a prophet of God.

Elisha had just been appointed as God's prophet to replace Elijah and it was imperative for the people to recognize his authority. If they did not, they would resort to the false gods that surrounded them in the Canaanite cultures, the cultures that the Israelites were not to compromise with.

When Elisha cursed them, they could have repented right at that moment for their insolence and rebellion. When the judgment came upon them, did the rest of the nation learn from this? Not at all. They continued worshipping false gods and defying the prophets of God. Because of their continued sin they fell into judgment years later which is why Hosea 13:16 speaks of God's judgment upon Samaria. It is not that he wanted it to happen. But because Israel would not obey God, because Israel would not embrace its destiny to be a light to the pagan nations of the world, because Israel embraced false gods and engaged in wicked practices like the nations around them, God removed his protection from them and allowed them to be swallowed up by the very nations they tried to befriend. These pagan nations had no example to follow and their violent cultures came upon Israel and slaughtered their women and children just as Hosea described. God was saying, "You want to be like these people? Here is what they are like and this is what they will do to you."

Let me mention one more objection. Some have said, "Well, the God of the New Testament is a God of love and mercy and peace. I'll follow that God and I won't follow the God of the Old Testament." Many have tried that. One of the founding fathers of our nation tried that – Thomas Jefferson. He rejected the Old Testament stories and preferred, instead, some type of kind, benevolent God that he thought the New Testament taught. And this was nothing new. In the second century, the heretic Marcion did the same. He said the God of the Old Testament was a mean, evil, wicked god and the God of the New Testament was a loving Father.

But is this really an accurate understanding of Scripture? Did you know that the word mercy is found 261 times in the Bible? If we follow the line of reasoning that the OT God is different from the NT God we might expect that mercy is rarely, if ever, found in the Old Testament and almost exclusively in the New Testament. But what do we find? 72% of all references to the mercy of God are found in the Old Testament!

What about references to the love of God? We find 322 references to the love of God in the Bible and 50% are in the Old Testament! Here's one to think about – the Old Testament rarely talks about Hell. We find this teaching mostly in the New Testament!

The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He is a loving God and he is a holy God. He does judge sin and he judges sin righteously. He does not judge sin capriciously or in fits of anger, but he judges sin after waiting hundreds of years for cultures and nations to turn from sin. If they do not, the cultures become so rotten that there is no choice but to allow extermination to come upon them.

Friends, don't let these superficial arguments keep you from putting your trust completely in God's word and in the God of the Bible.