

**"Tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?"-1King 22:16****Did God Approve of the Extermination of Humans?**

Skeptics have been especially critical of the Bible's portrayal of God ordering the execution of entire populations—including women and children—during the Israelite conquest of Canaan. The Hebrew term "*herem*" found, for instance, in Joshua 5:7, refers to the total dedication or giving over of the enemy to God as a sacrifice, involving the extermination of the populace. It is alleged that the God of the Bible is as barbaric and cruel as any of the pagan gods. But this assessment simply is not true. Please consider the following observations.

In the first place, in the Decalogue that was given to the Israelites, the command, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13) undoubtedly referred to murder. It is so translated in most English versions (e.g., NKJV, NIV, NASB, etc.). In other words, the Old Covenant given to the Jews forbade taking the law into one's own hands and murdering one's fellow man. The Law of Moses certainly never intended for this commandment to be understood that the taking of human life always is wrong, regardless of the circumstance. In fact, the law itself made provision for implementing the death penalty in at least sixteen cases (see [Miller](#), 2002). But these provisions entailed judicial execution based upon due process—not murder (even as it exists in our

own society). The wording of Leviticus 24:17 ("Whoever kills any man shall surely be put to death") clarifies this point. The passage forbids taking life by individuals who are acting without legal authority—which, itself, brought the death penalty. Both murder and the death penalty are in the same verse, verifying the necessity of making a distinction between the two. God, Himself, implemented the death penalty directly on various people throughout human history (as evinced in the 1 Samuel 6:19 list), and required others to do it (as in 1 Samuel 15).

In the second place, if the critic would take the time to study the Bible and make an honest evaluation of the principles of God's justice, wrath, and love, he or she would see the perfect and harmonious relationship between them. God's vengeance is not like the impulsive, irrational, emotional outbursts of pagan deities or human beings. He is **perfect** in all His attributes. He possesses His attributes to a perfect degree, and each attribute exists in perfect balance and synchronization with every other attribute—a perfect blending. He therefore is perfect in justice, love, and anger. Just as God's ultimate and final condemnation of sinners to eternal punishment will be just and appropriate (Matthew 13:41-42; 25:41), so this temporal judgment of wicked people in the Old Testament is ethical and fair. Human beings do not have an accurate grasp on the gravity of sin and the deplorable nature of evil and wickedness.

**HAVE YOU STUDIED YOUR BIBLE TODAY?**

Human sentimentality is hardly a qualified measuring stick for divine truth and spiritual reality.

Ironically, the atheist, the agnostic, the skeptic, and the liberal attempt to stand in judgment on the ethical behavior of God when, if their position is correct, there is no such thing as an absolute, objective, authoritative standard by which to pronounce anything right or wrong! As the French existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, admitted: if there is no God, everything is permitted. The atheist and agnostic have absolutely no platform on which to stand from which to make moral or ethical distinctions—except as the result of **subjective**, purely personal preference. The very fact that they concede the existence of **objective** evil is an unwitting concession that there is a God Who has established an absolute framework of moral certainty.

The facts of the matter are that the Canaanites, whom God's people were commanded to destroy, were destroyed for **their own wickedness** (Deuteronomy 9:4; 18:9-12; Leviticus 18:24-25,27-28). Canaanite culture and religion in the second millennium B.C. were polluted, corrupt, and unbelievably perverted. No doubt the people were physically diseased from their illicit behavior. There simply was no viable solution to their condition except destruction. Their moral depravity was "full" (Genesis 15:16). They had slumped to such an immoral, depraved state,

with no hope of recovery, that their existence on this Earth had to be ended. A similar predicament existed in Noah's day when God waited while Noah preached for years but was unable to divert the world's population from its wickedness (Genesis 6:3,5-7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:5-9). Including the children in the destruction of such populations actually spared them from a worse condition—that of being reared to be as wicked as their parents, thereby facing eternal punishment. All persons who die in childhood, according to the Bible, are ushered to Paradise and, ultimately will reside in heaven. Children with evil parents must naturally suffer innocently while on Earth (e.g., Exodus 20:5; Numbers 14:33).

Those who disagree with God's annihilation of the wicked in the Old Testament have the same liberal attitude that has prevailed in society for the last forty years. That attitude typically has opposed capital punishment as well as the corporal punishment of children. Such a person simply cannot see the rightness of evildoers being punished by execution or physical pain. This aberrant view has resulted in the rest of society being forced to live with the outcome of such skewed thinking, i.e., undisciplined, out-of-control children who grow to adulthood and wreak havoc on society by perpetrating crime—crime that has risen to historically all-time high levels.

Miller

Dave:

<http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/1974>.

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