**Is The God Of The Old Testament A War Mongering God?**

We come to week 3 in our study “Questions And Answers.” Today this is going to be a tough one to answer, up to a point. I am going to ask you to please listen carefully to what I am about to say. For some in the Christian world, this may not seem like an important discussion, but trust me, it is. And the main reason is because the statement we are going to talk about is used by many as a reason to not accept Who God is or what the Bible has to say.

The question basically goes like this - “How can I accept a God Who, it seems, in the OT, is a war mongering God?” They point to places in Scripture where God commanded the destruction of a people or as in the case of the Promised Land, Israel was to drive the people out.

We could argue that folks are simply using the question as an excuse to not consider Christ, and that is true in some cases. They have not dealt with trying to find an answer, they have just made up their minds. But instead of us Christians burying our head in the sand, we are going to try to answer this so please hang with me as we work through this. This is not easy to explain, but there are explanations.

So, where do we begin? I must make a statement that we need to grab a hold of. There are things recorded in the Bible that happened that God did not condone. We see that in some places where someone kills someone, steals, etc. God does not condone murder, nor does He think stealing is okay. The Bible shows people’s faults, and that is tough for some to accept. Keep that thought moving forward.

When it comes to working through this topic, let me share with you what the book **“Hard Sayings Of The Bible”** notes,

**“In the period of the** [**church**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Church_(Theological_Terms)) **fathers** [**Marcion**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Marcion_(Biblical_Studies)) **pointed out this problem and suggested that the Creator God of the Old Testament was an inferior being to the God and Father of Jesus. He then set about to remove from the New Testament any influences from this “Jewish” Creator God (for example, in Gospels like Matthew), for the Creator was evil. He ended up with a shortened version of Luke as the only Gospel we should use. The** [**church**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Church_(Theological_Terms))**’s response was to reject** [**Marcion**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Marcion_(Biblical_Studies))**’s teaching as** [**heresy**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Heresy_(Theological_Terms))**, to list all of the books it accepted as part of the** [**canon**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Canon_(New_Testament_Greek)) **and to assert that all of these were inspired by the one and same God. Still,** [**Marcion**](https://ref.ly/logosref/IVPPocket.Marcion_(Biblical_Studies))**’s question remains with us.”**

Now, on to some thoughts that will guide us this morning. Here is the first,

**1) Keep in mind that God is Omniscient.** He knows everything that has will happen, and He knows everything that could happen but does not (potential things, we could say). When God gave us freedom to choose, which we are going to look at closely in our time today, He knew, yes, that men would make bad decisions, wicked, evil choices. That does not mean God made them do it. To be honest, we love freedom, freedom to choose who we marry, etc.

God knowing everything does not make God culpable, or responsible, for man’s choices. Sadly, man makes bad decisions in which people suffer. And some of the cultures, such as the Amalekites, found in the Bible, were exceedingly wicked. Their children were raised to be bad, to hate, and so actually, when God asks of Israel to drive out a people, or to deal with them, He is actually showing mercy because He knows what some of those children would grow up to be - very wicked. And God was not in their thinking.

And if they were to die, and, it could be argued that little ones may have escaped the destruction of some cities, they would be in heaven if they had not reached what is known as “the age of accountability”, where they would understand God’s grace and mercy.

That may not set well with us but also remember that God is, yes, just and righteous, and holy, but He is gracious and merciful **(see Ex. 34:6-7)**. As the book just quoted also notes regarding God’s character, **“He is loving, but he is not an indulgent parent. He will bring justice.”**

**2) God will allow anyone to escape judgment if they turn to Him.** Think of Nineveh, whom God was going to destroy for their absolute wickedness. He spared them because they listened to Jonah. So, remember that God also responds to people who repent. And as we will see, people like the Amalekites were on a mission to destroy Israel, a genocide that they planned. God intervened to protect His people. This was their mission, destroy Israel just as it is with some today.

Look with me at **Deut. 7:1-26** which tells us that God would give the land to Israel and they were to drive the people out. There was no covenant made with the seven nations listed in **vs. 1** and no mercy shown. Israel was not to intermarry because God knew that Israel would follow false gods. Israel was to destroy the pagan altars **(vs. 5)**.

In **vs. 2** Israel is told to **“devote them to complete destruction.”** **Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon** has this phrase meaning **“ban, exterminate, devote, dedicate.”** This word was used by some to speak of devoting something to a pagan god.

The Lexicon just noted says that this word is most often used of devoting to destruction the cities of the Canaanites, exterminating inhabitants and destroying or appropriating their possessions. See also **Num. 21:2-3; Deut. 20:17; Josh. 2:10; Josh 10:28, 35, 37, 39, 40; Josh. 11:11-12, 20-21**.

The Lord promises to bless Israel if they obey Him. **Vs. 16** says that Israel shall consume all the people that the Lord gives over to them. God is clear that these nations were wicked. The Canaanites may have been the most depraved culture on earth at the time and it filtered from the adults to the children.

As far as the children of these nations, they were growing up in a moral cesspool. God, knowing this, actually protects them by taking them to heaven instead of them growing up hateful, depraved, immoral. As we will note as we go, God gave the Amalekites and others centuries to repent, to change their ways, and they just got worse as time went on. Let’s dive a little deeper into this.

**Let us start with the flood in Gen. 6**. How could God do such a thing as wiping out the human race with the exception of eight people, that being Noah, his wife, sons and daughters-in-law.

When God made man, as already noted, He gave him freewill, freedom to choose. By **Gen. 3**, man had sinned. By **Gen. 4** Cain killed Abel and Cain’s descendants were less than righteous people. They chose to not do what was right or to follow God. They were wicked. The world got progressively worse and when we come to **Gen. 6** we see it at a moral bottoming out.

In **Gen. 6:5** it says that God saw that the wickedness **(misery, evil, distress)**, of man was great in the earth. So let me stop here for a moment. When we think of evil and wickedness, we think of sin at its worse. This wickedness was abundant, it was everywhere.

In the same verse we read that **“every intention” (imagination, meditation, form, framing, purpose)** of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Humanity was a mess. It was a moral cesspool even this far back in time. Choices, and man had made bad ones and things were spinning out of control.

The imagination, the mind is a powerful tool. And sin was continually being thought about and acted upon by the people. What man thought was wicked continually. They acted and talked based on the evil.

The word **“only”** has restrictive force. This is what they did, they acted out the evil intent of their hearts and rejected anything to do with God. But no one can say that God was not concerned for them because Noah preached righteousness for decades and no one listened **(2 Peter 2:5)**. To let you know how bad, Noah spent 120 years talking to the people and was ignored **(Gen. 6:3)**.

The heart of man, according to **Gen. 6:5** was **“evil continually.”** His thoughts, his actions, were horrible and wicked. On the whole, this was how they acted. God showed grace (note Noah’s preaching) so to point a finger at God and say that He was terrible to destroy man, His creation, after man chose to be wicked as could be, ignores the fact that God continually reached out through Noah to humanity.

**Gen. 6:11** says that the earth was corrupt and filled with violence. God saw this and this sin had affected even the animal kingdom. When it comes to the question of how could God kill children in a flood, you wonder how many children were even left at that time. When evil rules, children seem to bear the brunt, as some have noted, of sin and wickedness. Just think of abortion.

But even kids can be and act evil. We see 12-year-olds killing others. But imagine if the world was as wicked as the Bible says it was, and it was, children suffered no doubt in many ways. But again, those children, many would have grown up and had the opportunity to hear the message being proclaimed by Noah as well. Over 120 years, kids do not stay kids.

Mankind said “no” to God and continued on a path of total destruction. **Gen. 9** shows that God would never again do something as He did here in Gen. 6 and we need to be glad for that because the fact is we are all sinners and deserve judgment but God, in grace and mercy, gives us a chance. Our world is sick spiritually and the Lord is being patient to bring more people into His kingdom **(2 Peter 3:9)**. To accuse God of evil here in **Gen. 6** overlooks the fact of His patience, grace, etc.

I think it is worth noting that some of those who attack God for being evil believe in a naturalistic, evolutionary worldview where animals, and humans, kill and hurt others. They blame society and everyone else they can find for the reasons things are bad in our culture.

The problem is, by not wanting to believe in God and see His goodness, the fact that they attack God as bad and evil shows they know that He exists but they are suppressing the truth **(Rom. 1:18-20)**. And one way to do that is to say that God must be a moral monster to do what He did in situations such as **Gen. 6**.

**A second finger pointing at God has to do with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.** It must be noted that these wicked cities were also given a chance to repent. In fact, Lot, who **2 Peter 2:8-9** says was vexed in his soul by living there, could have been a mouthpiece for God but was not.

The story of these cities, found in **Gen. 18-19** cannot be overlooked. God was willing to spare the cities of judgment if even 10 righteous people could be found. God gave them a chance, and as Abraham bargained with God for the sparing these places, he started with if there were 50 righteous would God spare Sodom and God said “yes.” He also said the same when Abraham asked about 40, 30, 20, and all the way down to 10 righteous people. God says He would spare the city.

God gave the people a chance, a way out of judgment if they would just take it. They chose not to.

**A third example pointed out is the Egyptians.** In **Ex. 5-15**, we read of the plagues, the call by God to release His people, ending in the death of the firstborn in Egypt. Before we blame God, remember that Pharaoh was the one who refused to listen **(Ex. 7:22-23; 8:8-15; 8:19; Ex. 8:32)**. He needs to take responsibility for what happened. God gave a way out for him and everyone else. In fact, we know that it was not only Jews who left Egypt. There were others who went with them on their journey.

Pharaoh was brutal in his treatment of the Jews. Each plague gave Pharaoh the opportunity to let the people of Israel go but he fought against allowing that. Pharaoh could have repented at any time.

And people who get on God for this are often ones who are pro-choice when it comes to killing the unborn, as they complain about what God says would happen to the firstborn. Pharaoh is responsible for what happened because, again, God gave him and the people of Egypt chance after chance.

**Then, of course, there are the Canaanites, the people found in the land of Canaan**. The people who inhabited the Promised Land, numbered at least seven groups minimum. How could God tell Israel to drive the people out of the land. Well, the Canaanites were a wicked, evil people. They practiced child sacrifice; they were raising children to be evil and wicked. Their religion was immoral and disgusting when you read about it. They were not a model society by any means.

The children who would grow up in a hateful society toward Israel, which some of these people groups had already proven to be, would continue on to try to destroy Israel anyway possible. Again, to claim that God is a moral monster because He judged these nations using Israel, is to claim to have omniscience, to say that we know what is best and that we know how wrong God was. We then, become the decider.

If God is a moral monster, the hypocrisy in our land and around the world is great when we kill the unborn and, in some cases, babies that are born. The Amalekites, for example, when Israel was traveling on their journey, would pick off and kill those lagging behind **(Deut. 25:17-18)**. They were determined to wipe out as many of the Jews as possible.

In fact, God waited over four centuries to give these people in Canaan a chance to change and they did not. We must never forget that.

Turn with me please to **Lev. 18:2-30**. Here in this chapter is a listing of a number of the sins of those who lived in Canaan. Freewill, horrible choices, immoral lifestyles that were passed on to their children. **Vss. 24-30** tells us that the sins mentioned by God in this chapter, wicked stuff, was the reason why He was driving the Canaanites out of their land. All the people groups in the land of Canaan had performed horrible sins. God had given them time to stop, and they continued on in sins that were destroying lives.

**As one scholar has noted**, judgment from God comes after a period of time in which people refuse to change, and may I add, continue in wicked behavior, some so detestable that God would be less than Himself if He did not step in, in my thinking. But, He gives people time to change, to respond.

In all honesty, none of us can complain, nor should, about how God handles things because He is patient and kind with all of us as we have mentioned from **Ex. 34**. As we noted, God is holy and just and His perseverance with us should be enough to get us to think. God is merciful and gracious, and He is also just. And we are the creation, not the Creator. Who are we to speak as if we know what is best for God.

A close reading of **Num. 31**, where God dealt with the Midianites through Israel, shows that some of the children or young girls, were spared. The Midianites previously had led Israel into idolatry **(vs. 16)**. And again, as already noted, when God did deal with nations, often those very nations had at the heart of their thinking the utter destruction of Israel. And God, when the Israelites entered Canaan, was also dealing with such a corrupt group of people we could say He was cleaning house.

Note that when Israel went into the Promised Land, the people there were warned. Most likely women and children fled and the warriors, the soldiers, were left behind and they would have been some of the most corrupt individuals of the group.

**Next, we must deal with a passage that has troubled many, Deut. 20:16-18**. Here we read that Israel is to leave no one alive and the reason was their horrible religious practices, which as we have mentioned, at times included child sacrifice.

God knew how Israel was. The reason that they had to drive out the nations is because God did not want them getting caught up in the idolatry of these people in Canaan. As we just said, there religious practices were immoral and disgusting and Israel, well, they could be swayed. That is why passages such as **Ex. 23:32-33** say what they do.

**Deut. 20:18** tells us that a reason Israel had to deal with the people in Canaan was that their religious practices were **“abominable” (impure)**. Child sacrifices and other horrible things were done in the name of their religions. Remember, God had given them centuries to change their ways and they chose not to.

**Now turn to Josh. 6:21**. Here we read of what Israel did at Jericho. But we also know that God spared Rahab and her family. God, when people repent, saves. See **Josh. 10:28; Josh. 10:40; Josh. 11:14**.

**3) Is the God of the OT different from the God of the NT**. In other words, some say the NT God is One of love, not judgment. Well, as we have seen from **Ex. 34**, and we could show many other passages, God is a God of love as noted in the OT. He is also righteous and just.

In the NT, **John 3:16** talks about God’s love as does Jesus in **Jn. 13:34-35** regarding His followers. In **Jn. 5:25-29**, Jesus speaks of two resurrections and one of those is judgment, people who have done “evil” will be judged.

And in **2 Thess. 1:7-10** we read of the return of Christ in judgment. This is a picture of His Second Coming. And just read Revelation. The God of the OT is the same God of the NT for Christ is God as **Jn. 1:1-2** so clearly states along with many other passages. Jesus was there in OT times as well as in NT times as was the Father and the Holy Spirit. This argument does not hold up.

As we wrap this up, I want us to consider the following:

**1) God is a God of love, mercy, and grace, but He is also righteous.** His love and patience is seen throughout the Bible as He responds when people repent and do what is right. Just think of Nineveh. We cannot pick and choose God’s character traits that we like or dislike. He is perfect across the board. And the God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT.

God’s patience, as we have noted, was seen in Him giving the Canaanites centuries to change their horrible ways and they refused. God knew what would happen if Israel allowed them to influence them.

**2) Whether we like it or not, God is God.** He is the Creator and He can do with His creation as He sees fit. He is also omniscient and knows everything. The death of people, as God knows what they will be like or grow up to be like, is not trifle. We put ourselves in God’s place when we say He is wrong for what He did. But He is not a warmongering God, and He always gives people chances to repent.

**3) The Canaanites were incredibly wicked.** It says that the land wanted to vomit them out. That is how bad they were. God, in His All-knowingness, knew that the majority of the people would grow up to be absolutely wicked because that is what they were taught. But if at any time they wanted to change, God in His mercy would accept them and not necessarily judge them.

**4) It really is a question of whether we trust the Bible or not.** It comes down to an issue of inerrancy. Is the Bible full of errors and mistakes or not. Let me say briefly that the answer takes a full discussion to look at but the internal evidence as well as external (archaeology, history, etc.) show us that we can trust the Bible. We may not fully grasp every part of Scripture, but we can trust the Bible as given to us.

We at Oakridge believe the Bible is the Inerrant, infallible Word of God, and as we have stated before, when all the MSS of the NT are laid out, all 5,800+ of them, they are in agreement over 99%. The differences are seen in words that are similar in Greek and remember, these were copied by hand.