

167 Bible bashing – Beware cherry-picking!

Our supposed enquirer^[166] was just about to challenge me about Old Testament violence, such as the sort of ‘Kill every man, woman and child in that land’ passage, and I was going to point her/him to Greg Boyd’s excellent book, *Cross vision*,^[124–129] but I’d run out of time (words).

However, another (actual!) friend, ‘Arthur’, in response to my ‘Game of three halves’,^[165] then raised the issue of ‘cherry-picking’ – prioritising some scriptures over others, and even totally ignoring any scriptures that contradicted our interpretation of the overall message of the Bible.

Anyway, to help me think about the ‘answer’ to OT violence, I started reading *Cross vision* again. Coincidentally, in the first chapter, Boyd refers to the danger of cherry-picking, and of producing “an acceptable Bible Lite”, saying it was “not a helpful strategy” – so he agrees with you, Arthur!

Boyd then quotes the passage saying that if my son “does not obey his father and mother”, then “all the men of the town shall stone him to death”.^{Deut 21:18-21} Call me old-fashioned, but I’m not happy with that. In fact, I’m going to refuse to obey “the clear teaching of Scripture”!

But I have an idea: before I put that on my personal ‘Ignore’ list of Bible passages, I’m going ask Jesus what he thinks. I’m going to take the role of a disciples name of Fred – “Me and my wife live in a village just outside Jerusalem.”

Excuse me, Jesus, but I’m very unhappy with this passage in Deuteronomy. Is that really what God wants us to do?!

Come on, Fred, how long have you known me? Do you seriously think I’d want anyone to do that?!

But it’s what it says in our Scriptures, so we have to do what God says, right?

Well, yes, but that was written hundreds of years ago, when people saw God very differently. Remember that Abraham even thought that God might want him to offer Isaac as a child sacrifice – like the tribes around us did. At least God managed to move us on from child sacrifices to only offering animal sacrifices. (And soon, thankfully, we can stop doing that too – trust me!)

OK, I know that you’ve said that if we’ve seen you, we’ve seen our Father God. And you’re just amazing, but...

Listen, just trust me for now – God’s really not like that! In a few months, I’ll be able to explain more clearly, once I’ve died and risen again.

“Died and risen”?! You’ve said that before, but I just don’t get it!

Be patient; trust me.

True to his word, Jesus met me and the wife on the road home to Emmaus, and *didn’t our hearts burn within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?* ^{Luke 24:32}

It was like the Scriptures contained all of Jesus' life and teachings, and yet it was written by people who thought we should kill our disobedient sons! Talk about **inspired!** ^{2 Tim 3:16}

Paul Bev. 9.9.21