

213 Unjustifiable genocide!

OK, Paul, you say that the preacher^[212] was wrong in his interpretation of Deuteronomy chapters 7 and 22. You even imply that Jesus would agree with you! But it *does* say that “when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.”^[Deut 7:2]

Also, Paul, you say you believe that the Bible is true, right? And if that’s what the Bible says, then that’s true; that really is what God told them to do!

No, sorry, my Christian friend, that’s way too simplistic an interpretation. You’ve seen what Jesus was like, defeating evil by sheer goodness and non-violence. Would Jesus have tried to justify that kind of genocide?! When Jesus “taught in the synagogues”, did he say, “What the Scripture says is true: my loving heavenly Father told them to kill every man, woman and child! He didn’t want His people to be corrupted by their moral impurity.” No, I don’t buy that, sorry!

I can’t explain in 500 words why that interpretation is mistaken – way too simplistic. But I can try to give you a few pointers. Remember that when God said to Abraham, 4000 years ago, “I want to bring blessing to the whole world through you”, the world was a very different place. For example, child sacrifice was not unusual – remember that Abraham actually thought that God was asking **him** to kill his own son and burn his body!

Genocide and slavery were pretty common in those days; it was kill or be killed, subjugate or be subjugated. So God had a **massive** job on his hands to civilise humankind, and the process would take years – thousands of years. (Indeed, God’s job isn’t finished yet, sadly.)

While I believe totally that God **inspired** the writers of the Bible, they nevertheless held the worldview of their own times and places, and so **their view of God was distorted**. Only when God came in person, could we really see what God is like.

You can’t change the world overnight, so in order to civilise the world, to bring blessing to the whole world, God was willing to be misunderstood by the people of the time. That’s the thesis of Greg Boyd’s book, *Cross Vision*.

And as a final pointer, remember just how easy it is to be too simplistic, saying “God ought to...” What do **you** think God ought to do? How about this?

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” ^[Exodus 34:5-7]

Jesus would agree: his loving heavenly Father forgives us all. But would God forgive someone who had tortured and killed children? No, you say? Well, exactly where do you draw the line?!

We are just too simplistic (dualistic) in our view of life and the Bible.

Paul Bev. 9.8.22