**You Shall Utterly Destroy Them**

*Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18*

*Ready to Answer an Indictment Against God*

**Introduction**

1. The Bible clearly indicates that the conquest of the Canaan land by the Israelites, sparing none, was God’s will – **Deuteronomy 7:1-5; 20:16-18**
2. It is a favorite argument of the skeptic to turn to this obvious fact as an indictment against God for being the opposite of what He claims for Himself.
3. “The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction; jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.” (Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion)
4. Is this a fair treatment of God’s actions against the Canaanites? NO!
5. We should be ready to give a defense against these unjust claims. (**cf. 1 Peter 3:15**)
6. The Character of God
7. If God is…why would He slaughter the Canaanites like He did?
   1. Love – **1 John 4:8**
   2. Good – **Matthew 19:17**
   3. Full of Compassion and Tender Mercies – **Psalm 145:8-9**
   4. Just (what about the children?) – **Psalm 89:14**
8. The Name of God is Magnified in the Judgment of the Canaanites
   1. **Exodus 34:5-7** – merciful, gracious, longsuffering, goodness, truth, not clearing the guilty (unrepentant – all the good things do not overlook justice).
   2. **It is not our job to explain away God’s deeds in a spirit of confused defeat, but to maintain our faith in His immaculate, perfect and eternal nature, and honestly search for the answer of harmony between this supposed evil, and God’s magnificent character.**
      1. All that God does points to these attributes which make up God’s character.
      2. This would include His actions against Canaan.
   3. The answer is not:
      1. The God of the Old Testament is full of wrath and vengeance, but the God of the New Testament is full of grace and forgiveness.
      2. Grace, mercy, longsuffering, forgiveness, and love are abundantly demonstrated in the Old Testament – God is the same God.
9. The Character of the Canaanites
10. The Canaanites Were Evil
    1. They were disobedient to God – ***“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient” (Hebrews 11:31***, NASB); **Romans 1:18-20**
    2. **Leviticus 18:24-25** – warning against Israel not to follow the ways of the Canaanites – they are so defiled by immorality and sin that the land is said to vomit them out.
       1. Adultery **(v. 20).**
       2. Child sacrifice **(v. 21)**. (**cf. Deuteronomy 12:31; cf. Jeremiah 19:4-6** – judgment against Judah)
          1. “Funerary jars have been found with the bodies of young children distorted by suffocation as they struggled for life after having been buried alive as a sacrifice to Canaanite gods. Such young children have been found in the foundation pillars of Canaanite houses, and sometimes religious ceremonies were associated with their sacrifice (Wilson, 1973, p. 85).” (Jackson, Wayne, *Old Testament Events and the Goodness of God*, Apologetics Press)
       3. Homosexuality **(v. 22).**
       4. Bestiality **(v. 23).**
       5. On sexual deviancy – “in the Canaanite religion El was the chief god and Baal was his son. These were “gods” who had absolutely no concept of morality. In a poem known as “The Birth of the Gods,” El is said to have seduced two women, and horrible sexual perversions are associated with his name. He married three of his own sisters—who also were married to Baal. He is represented as practicing vile sex acts and influencing others to do likewise.” (Jackson, Wayne, *Old Testament Events and the Goodness of God*, Apologetics Press)
       6. NOTE: This is not xenophobic, and God’s annihilation of the Canaanites was not “ethnic cleansing” – **(vv. 26-30)** – WHOEVER, even Israel, commits these abominations will be vomited out and cut off.
11. When God’s actions against the Canaanites are viewed within context of their disgustingly depraved immoral character, they are understandable, and appreciated – **Habakkuk 1:13**
12. God’s Righteous Judgment on the Unrighteous Canaanitess
13. His Longsuffering
    1. God is slow to anger – **Psalm 145:8**
       1. Skeptics like to describe God as capricious and petulant.
       2. They act as though God is always immediate with His final punishments, not showing any sort of mercy.
    2. Track record of longsuffering:
       1. **Pre-flood world** – **Genesis 6:3; 2 Peter 2:5** – 120 years of preaching to bring them to repentance.
       2. **Sodom** – **Genesis 18:16-33** – entertaining Abraham’s intercessory pleas – 50 **(vv. 23-24, 26)**, 45 **(v. 28)**, 40 **(v. 29)**, 30 **(v. 30)**, 20 **(v. 31)**, 10 **(v. 32)** – **Genesis 19:13** – outcry has ***“GROWN”*** great.
       3. **Nineveh** – **Jonah 1:1-2; 3:5, 10; 4:11** – sent a prophet to produce repentance, relented from harm, rebuked prophet for anger.
    3. Standard of national judgment – **Jeremiah 18:7-10** (figure of potter and clay) – if the nation repents, they are spared.
       1. **Ezekiel 18:23** – God takes no pleasure in the death of wicked men but wants them to repent.
    4. It was no different for the inhabitants of Canaan – **Genesis 12:6-7; 15:13, 16** – it took over 400 years before God led the conquest of Canaan.
14. His Judgment
    1. **Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 20:16-18** – their evil had been made full (**cf. Genesis 15:16**), and the holy people of God were to be protected from their evil influence in the land.
    2. What about the innocent children? – **Joshua 6:21** (Jericho); **1 Samuel 15:3** (Amalek)
       1. They are innocent indeed – **Ezekiel 18:20; Deuteronomy 1:39**
       2. Children often bear the brunt of their parents’ infidelity – **Numbers 14:33** (Israel) – THEY WOULD BE SPARED FROM THIS.
       3. Children often are made to stumble by the wicked upbringing by their parents – **Matthew 18:6-7** – THEY WOULD BE SPARED FROM UNGODLY INFLUENCE.
       4. **“[God] is simply transitioning souls from the physical sphere to the spiritual…The Canaanite children would be ushered into paradise, while those who were ungodly would enter torment.” (Reeves, Bruce, Is It Reasonable to Believe in God?, “Why Does God Allow Suffering?”, pg. 61)**
    3. ***NOTE: The same people who argue that God is evil for destroying the Canaanites are those who complain about God allowing evil to persist. This lacks logical, and moral consistency.***
       1. **If justice is upheld, evil men are punished.**
       2. **If the oppressed are to be rescued, the oppressors are to be punished.**
       3. The punishment of evil is not evil, it is loving – **cf. Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2** – the government’s punishment of evil doers by the appointment of God is in loving protection of others.
15. His Prerogative
    1. “He does not have the right to play God.” (in context of deciding on another’s life) – implies that God has that right to decide.
    2. **Job 1:21** – He gives, and He takes away.
    3. **Daniel 5:21** – He rules and appoints whomever He chooses.
    4. **Deuteronomy 32:4** – all His ways are just.
16. The Heart of the Matter
17. God’s Judgment Against the Canaanites Foreshadows the Eternal Judgment of All
    1. Many lash out against God when they read of His just judgment because they know it is what they themselves deserve.
    2. Felix made the same mistake – **Acts 24:24-25**
18. God’s Judgment Against the Canaanites Provided for the Escape of Eternal Condemnation for All
    1. The Bible clearly demonstrates through prophecy, fulfillment, and reflection that the judgment against the Canaanites served the greater plan to offer salvation to the world – **Acts 13:19-23**

**Conclusion**

1. A fair examination of the entire text of scripture with the question of Canaan’s conquest in mind does not reflect poorly on God, but manifests His wonderful, gracious, loving nature.
2. These historical accounts call us to self-reflection, and devotion to God in true righteousness and holiness.