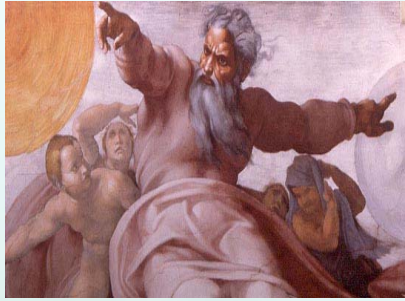


Troubling Images of God In the Old Testament

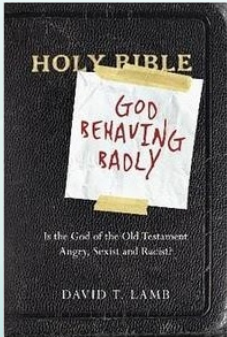




The God I Don't Understand...

- ✦ Introduction and Feedback from You
- ✦ The “Strange” Laws of the Old Testament and their Application to Christians Today
- ✦ The “Harsh” Laws of the Old Testament
- ✦ Patriarchy, Polygamy and Concubinage
- ✦ **Violence, War, Massacres and “Ethnic Cleansing”**

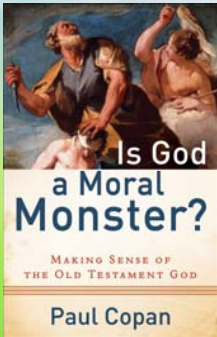
Credit Where Credit Is Due:



God Behaving Badly:

Is the God of the Old Testament Angry, Sexist and Racist?

by David T. Lamb



Is God a Moral Monster:

Making Sense of the Old Testament God

by Paul Copan



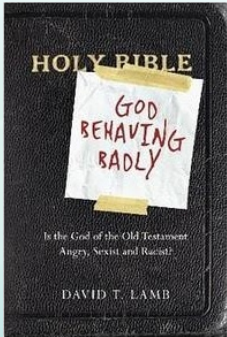
Disturbing Divine Behavior:

Troubling Old Testament Images of God

by Eric A. Seibert



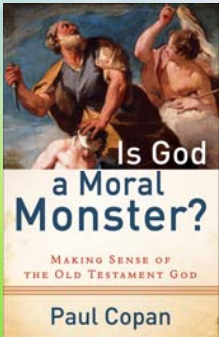
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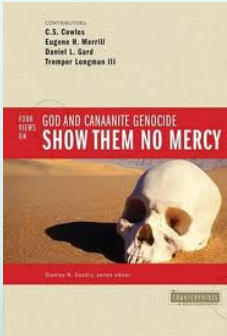
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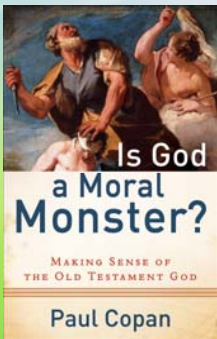
Credit Where Credit Is Due:



God and Canaanite Genocide:

Show Them No Mercy

by C. S. Cowles, E. H. Merrill, D. L. Gard and T. Longman III



Is God a Moral Monster:

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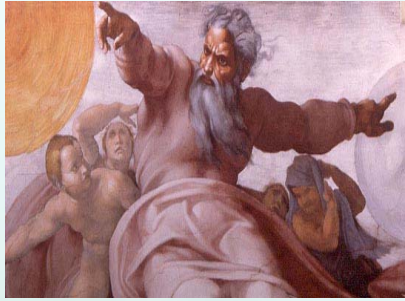


Disturbing Divine Behavior:

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Last Week...

“No Anakites were left in Israelite territory...” (Joshua 11:22a)

“He totally destroyed all who breathed ...” (Joshua 11:40b)

*“[A]ll his people [Saul] totally destroyed with the sword...”
(1 Samuel 8)*



Last Week . . .

- War narratives in the Near East frequently employed sweeping, exaggerated language that did not comport with the actual historical facts.
- The Scriptures themselves evidence that the wars conducted in the name of Yahweh did not rid the land of all Canaanites, nor destroy all who were named.



Last Week . . .

“[A]ll his people [Saul] totally destroyed with the sword...”
(1 Samuel 8)

David later attacked the Amalekites and “did not leave a man or woman alive.” (1 Samuel 27:8)

David fights the Amalekites again in 1 Samuel 30.

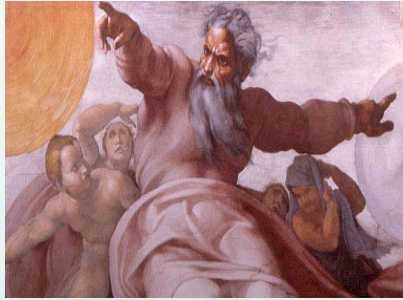
Amalekites are still around 250 years later. (1 Chron. 4:43)

Even Haman, the enemy of the Jewish people in the story of Esther, is an Amalekite descendant. (Esther 3)



Last Week . . .

- War narratives in the Near East frequently employed sweeping, exaggerated language that did not comport with the actual historical facts.
- The Scriptures themselves evidence that the wars conducted in the name of Yahweh did not rid the land of all Canaanites, nor destroy all who were named.
- Care should be taken when we label this type of warfare as “ethnic cleansing” or “genocide.” These terms are modern constructs and have specific meanings. More importantly, this was God commanding war (judgment) through Israel, not Israel acting alone.



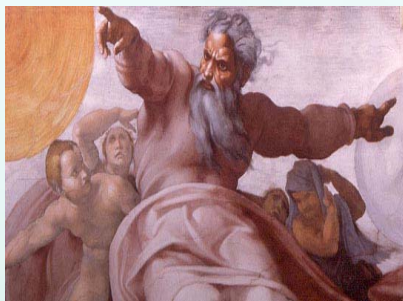
Last Week . . .

- There is archaeological evidence that the “cities” that were attacked were actually fortresses, and that the civilian population lived in the surrounding rural areas.



Last Week . . .

- There is archaeological evidence that the “cities” that were attacked were actually fortresses, and that the civilian population lived in the surrounding rural areas.
- The Canaanites were aware of God’s action and His miraculous works; they had an opportunity to repent, and (some believe) even to make peace with Israel.



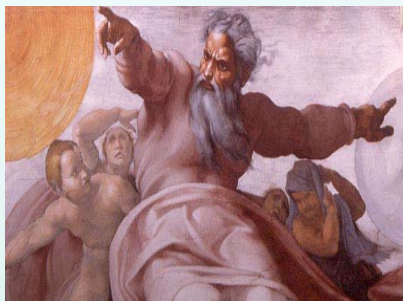
Last Week . . .

Chris asked:

- *If we accept the notion that the war narratives were exaggerated statements, doesn't that create problems for our view of scripture? What other passages are exaggerated in the scriptures?*

2 Kings 18:5 - about King Hezekiah: "Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him."

2 Kings 23:25 - about King Josiah: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did."



Last Week . . .

Chris asked:

- *If we accept the notion that the war narratives were exaggerated statements, doesn't that create problems for our view of scripture? What other passages are exaggerated in the scriptures?*

The scriptures had human authors, who used human literary forms and the language of their time.

Over this human authorship, God superintended the text so that it is “God-breathed.”

Fully of God / Fully Written by Humans



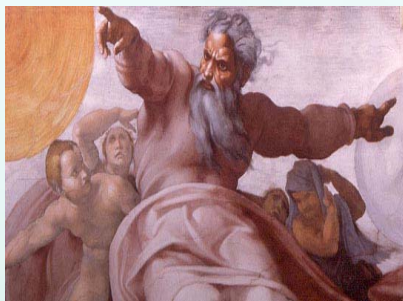
Last Week . . .

Andrew asked:

- *But even if the human authors writing the scriptures wrote using exaggerated war narratives, why is God recorded as using this same literary device? Doesn't He know better?*

Ezekiel 5:8a, 9: “Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says: . . . Because of all your detestable idols, I will do to you what I have never done before and will never do again.”

Matthew 24:21: “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again.”



Last Week . . .

Andrew asked:

- *But even if the human authors writing the scriptures wrote using exaggerated war narratives, why is God recorded as using this same literary device? Doesn't He know better?*

Matthew 5:29: “If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”



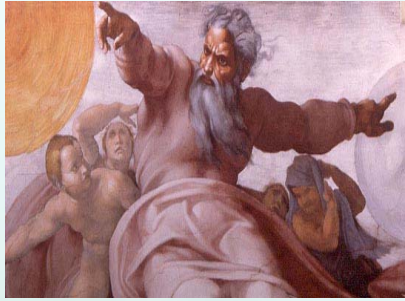
I'm starting to
The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand
How Can I Better Worship God?

According to C. S. Cowles, if you want to know what the God of the Old Testament is like, the amazing revelation of the New Covenant is that ***God is like Christ***. “Jesus is not defined by God; rather, God is defined by Jesus.”

Jesus is the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15).

In Christ, “the fullness of the Deity lives” (Col. 2:9)

Philip asked, “show us the Father,” and Jesus responded, “Don’t you know me, Philip? . . . Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9-10a)



I'm starting to
The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand
How Can I Better Worship God?

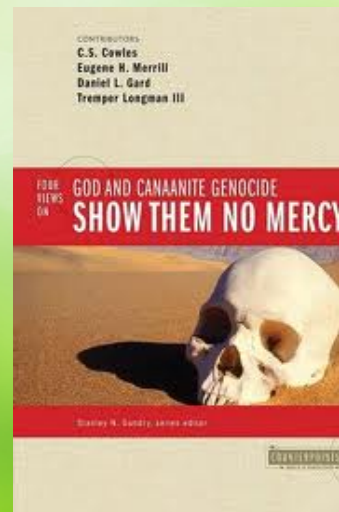
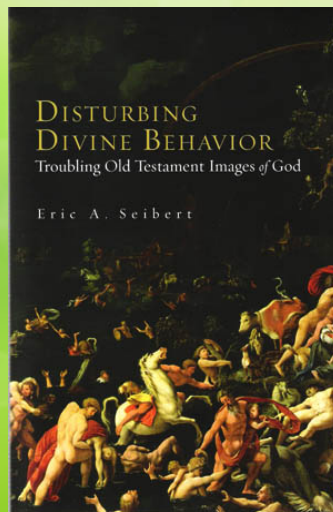
If "God is like Jesus," why
does God seem so different
in the Old Testament?





I'm starting to ***The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand*** ***How Can I Better Worship God?***

One View: Clearly, the Old Testament writers got it wrong, and were only writing from their own theological perspective. Since God is like Christ, and Christ is nothing like the God of the Canaanite war narratives, it is easier to yield our view of scripture than to pervert our view of God.





The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand

How Can I Better Worship God?

- One View: Clearly, the Old Testament writers got it wrong, and were only writing from their own theological perspective. Since God is like Christ, and Christ is nothing like the God of the Canaanite war narratives, it is easier to yield our view of scripture than to pervert our view of God.
- Other View: We cannot artificially limit our view of Jesus Christ to those passages we prefer to cite from the Gospels, and ignore the whole of the New (and Old) Testament.



I'm starting to
The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand
How Can I Better Worship God?

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

- Revelation 19:11-16



I'm starting to
The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand
How Can I Better Worship God?

Could certain warfare be a manifestation of God's holiness?

"Herem warfare" or "Yahweh warfare"

1. God's will had to be known.
2. The army had to be spiritually prepared (Josh. 5:2-12 and 2 Samuel 11).
3. Sacrifices had to be offered.
4. The presence of the ark was often a factor.
5. The victory is the Lord's and results from His action.
6. The victory was to be celebrated (feasts, music and marches)
7. The *herem* was to be complete, with no exceptions except those commanded by God.



I'm starting to ***The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand*** ***How Can I Better Worship God?***

Could certain warfare be a manifestation of God's holiness?

God causes nations to war against Israel and Judah as well, after repeated warnings, to bring judgment to His people:

1. Northern Kingdom of Israel – 10 tribes – removed entirely from the land, with only a remnant to remain
2. Southern Kingdom of Judah – 2 tribes – removed from the land during the exilic period, with rare exception, never to enjoy self rule again until the 20th Century.
3. Daniel 7 – 12 and Revelation reveal God's work behind the rise and fall of nations to bring about His rule and extend His kingdom.



I'm starting to
The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand
How Can I Better Worship God?

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.”

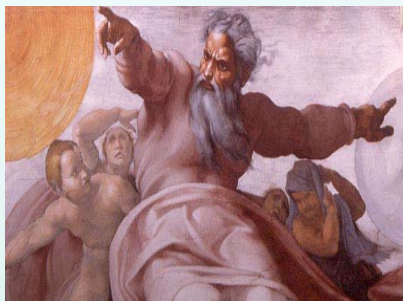
- Revelation 20:11-15



I'm starting to ***The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand*** ***How Can I Better Worship God?***

“It is only because of God’s extraordinary grace that Adam and Eve were not killed on the spot when they ate the fruit of the tree. Indeed, it is because of that grace that any of us breathe. The period of God’s extraordinary grace, often called common grace, is a special circumstance. In this light, we should not be amazed that God ordered the death of the Canaanites, but rather we should stand in amazement that he lets anyone live. . . . In a sense, the destruction of the Canaanites is a preview of the final judgment. Of course, we are left with disturbing questions. Why the Canaanites? Why not some other people? Are the Canaanites really extraordinarily evil.? . . . Here, like Job, we are left unanswered with why suffering comes to one and not another.”

- Tremper Longman, paraphrasing Meredith Kline



I'm starting to ***The God ~~I Don't~~ Understand*** ***How Can I Better Worship God?***

A Final Disclaimer

There is no way that in the course of a few weeks we could in any real depth cover all or even a good number of the troubling passages in the Old Testament. Our series was intended to help show that many of these passages are more trouble on face value because we take little time to look at their context, to understand what was going on in the story, and to look at the entire story arch of scripture. While we can often better understand these passages, they do remain troubling. But what we were hoping to do in this series was to model how scholars and other believers come to these passages, how we can better study them, and how some of the difficulties should not be so readily accepted on face value with our further investigation. But for certain, difficulties remain, and that is why I commend to you to read some or all of the books that I have read to better appreciate the arguments made on all sides.



WELCOME TO EXODUS INTERACTIVE FORUM



INTERACTIVE



Participate, ask questions, talk back...

What if we listened to what everyone had to say — and discovered that God can speak through us all? After all, we all learn better when we talk things out, hear different points of view, and give room for the Spirit to speak through our deliberation.

[Read more](#)

THOUGHTFUL



Test everything, hold on to what is good...

Many hours of research are dedicated to prepare each one of our series. We explore the scriptures, the breadth of Christian scholarship, contemporary authors, and consider a wide range of sources outside of our faith.

[Read more](#)

FAITHFUL



Set apart Christ as Lord...

We all have questions. But we learn together in a way that tackles the deepest part of our doubts while making sure that our purpose is clear: to always know the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and to be prepared to share that answer with everyone who asks us about that hope.

[Read more](#)

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