

*"And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain." (Deuteronomy 2:34)*

It is difficult to read passages of scripture like these without a shudder of horror running through your soul. While some find a way to justify the slaughter of warring males, it is inconceivable to picture an Israelite soldier with a small child impaled on the end of his sword. I don't know about you, but for me it brings a feeling of utter revulsion. What makes this much worse is that the Bible appears to not only condone these actions, but to command them.

*"And all the cities of those kings, and all the kings of them, did Joshua take, and smote them with the edge of the sword, and he utterly destroyed them, as Moses the servant of the LORD commanded." (Joshua 11:12)*

*"So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the LORD God of Israel commanded." (Joshua 10:40)*

If a group of people were wiped off the map completely, then why would you give a command not to intermarry with them?

*"And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly." (Deuteronomy 7:2-4)*

Take note that the Hebrew word "destroy" here can mean "to seclude, to ban." So, were they to kill or simply seclude or ban them? This apparent contradiction might be resolved in the understanding that Israel was commanded to proclaim peace unto a city, and if they made peace then the city was to be made tributary to Israel and their idols and worship system were to be destroyed.

*"When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee." (Deuteronomy 20:10-11)*

*"But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire." (Deuteronomy 7:5)*

Yet even if we are to allow these points, it still falls far short of the teaching of Christ.

*"Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matthew 26:52)*

They had misunderstood the true meaning of His words when He said: *"But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."* (Luke 22:36). They thought He was speaking of a literal sword. Notice how the *International Standard Version (ISV)* translates verse 38: *"So they said, 'Lord, look! Here are two swords.' He answered them, 'Enough of that!'"* The *King James Version* quotes Jesus as saying, *"That is enough."* A superficial reading of this may lead the reader to believe Jesus accepted their use of the sword by simply saying two swords were enough. What comes next, however, reveals Jesus' true attitude toward the sword:

*"When those who were around Jesus saw what was about to take place, they asked, 'Lord, should we attack with our swords?' Then one of them struck the high priest's servant, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' So he touched the wounded man's ear and healed him." (Luke 22:49-51 (ISV))*

John sees Jesus in vision riding a white horse and says, *"in righteousness he doth judge and make war ... And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations ..."* (Revelation 19:11,15). How does Jesus judge and make war in righteousness? Not by violence, but by His word which brings conviction of sin in order for us to acknowledge it and accept His everlasting mercy.

*"And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." (John 12:47-48)*

The warfare that God is involved with is a war of words – Satan's word against God's. God does nothing outside of righteousness. Judging in righteousness does not inflict harm or death upon another:

*"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death. The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness. The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them: but transgressors shall be taken in their own naughtiness." (Proverbs 11:4-6)*

*"In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." (Proverbs 12:28)*

How does God conquer His enemies in war? Not by inflicting punishment, torture, or killing them, but by converting His enemies into friends. Righteousness doesn't destroy the person, it kills *"the old man"* of sin (Deuteronomy 32:39; Romans 6:6-11) and *"delivereth from death."* God conquers and gets His "revenge" upon evil by always doing good.

*"Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-21)*

God judging in righteousness will result in peace, not war.

*"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isaiah 2:4)*

In regard to the possession of Canaan by Israel, the Lord told them how this would be accomplished:

*"I will send my fear before thee, and will destroy [confuse, discomfort, disturb] all the people to whom thou shalt come, and I will make all thine enemies turn their backs [stiffen their necks] unto thee. And I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee ... By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land." (Exodus 23:27-30)*

There is no mention here of the use of the sword. Israel had escaped Egypt and seen the Egyptians defeated without one use of the sword. The Hebrew word for "destroy" here is *דָּרַךְ (hamam)* which literally means "to make a noise, move noisily,

confuse, discomfort." God told them He would discomfort them by saying, *"I will send hornets before thee,"* He never told them to go up and fight or to instigate any type of warfare. Later God told them: *"I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, also the two kings of the Amorites, but not with your sword or with your bow."* (Joshua 24:1).

The Israelites themselves misunderstood the character of God, so could it be that taking up the sword simply was a manifestation of the God that Israel had imagined? The instruction to utterly destroy their enemies without mercy, while being in harmony with a god that Israel had imagined, was not reflective of the true God of heaven. The Bible says that judgment is given without mercy to those who have showed no mercy.

*"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."* (James 2:13)

This verse can read two ways. Those who show no mercy will judge others without mercy, and also those who show no mercy will receive none when they are judged. This idea of merciless justice reflects the mind of Satan. Psalm 89:14. Therefore, God commanding the execution of others is to magnify sin, not only for the offender to seek His grace and mercy, but also to expose the Israelite's self-righteous hearts and in turn put away their swords and pray for mercy and healing in behalf of the offender. Romans 5:20.

In these last days we are granted the opportunity to see the character of God as it truly is. In the face of Jesus we can begin to uncover the true intentions of our heavenly Father.

*"He that hath seen me (Jesus) hath seen the Father ... the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works."* (John 14:8-10)

Jesus is *"the image of the invisible God."* (Colossians 1:15); the very *"brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person."* (Hebrews 1:5). How many people did Jesus kill with the sword? How many did He burn with fire? How many children did He impale with a spear? Absolutely none!

Jesus said, *"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."* (Matthew 10:34). What sword did Jesus bring?

*"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* (Ephesians 6:17)

How do we reconcile the wholesale slaughter of nations by Israel with the sword against the words of Christ?

*"... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."* (Matthew 26:52)

Not only men and women  
but children also:

*"And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain."* (Deuteronomy 2:34)

Were the Israelites truly in tune with the character of God? If not, then why does it appear that God Himself commanded such violent acts?

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