

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE WARRIOR

Prelude

- 1. The Revelation of God in Jesus culminates and supersedes all previous revelations.**
 - 2. The cross is the thematic center of everything Jesus was about, from the Incarnation to the Ascension.**
 - 3. Jesus' cross-centered ministry reveals that God's essence is non-violent, self-sacrificial, enemy-embracing love.**
 - 4. All Scripture is "God-breathed" for the ultimate purpose of bearing witness to Jesus' cross-centered ministry.**
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I. THE MERCILESS *HĒREM* COMMAND

“In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy (*hērem*) them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you....do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people, that you should besiege them?” (Deut 20: 16-7, 19)

*** The Israelites spare Midianite women, young boys and children (v. 9). Moses is enraged and commands the Israelites to slaughter the boys and women, but tells the troops to “save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man” (Numb 31:17-18).**

*** After conquering a city, the Lord is depicted as saying; “If you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife.” But if he later “is not pleased with her,” he may turn her out (Deut 21: 10-1. 14).**

II. TWO ALL-IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. How do we come to see the cross to be the definitive revelation of God?

*** Since the cross is the culminating and paradigmatic revelation of God, should we not read Scripture expecting there will be times when we will need to look by faith *through* the sin-mirroring surface of a portrait of God to discern how it bears witness to the same God who is revealed on Calvary?**

2. How does God “breathe” his definitive revelation on the cross?

* Since the God who “breathed” his definitive revelation on the cross is the same God who “breathed” all Scripture for the purpose of bearing witness to the cross, should we not read Scripture knowing that it reflects both God acting *toward us*, as much as possible, and God humbly allowing others *to act on him*, as much as necessary?

*** 1 Cor 1: 14-16** I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

III. CONFIRMATIONS OF ACCOMMODATION IN SCRIPTURE

1. The Rorschach-Quality of Our Conceptions of God in Scripture

- * We “see” and “hear” what our hearts allow us to “see” and “hear” (e.g., **Mk 4:12; 8:17-8**)
- * The Pharisees couldn’t see that Scripture is about Jesus because they did “not have the love of God in [their] hearts” (**Jn 5:42**)
- * “Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear (*akouein*) what I say” (**Jn 8:43**).
- * The disciples couldn’t “hear” Jesus’ many teachings about how he came to suffer and die.

- * Unbelievers can't see the “glory” of Christ in Scripture because a “veil” lies over their mind (2 Cor 3:13-5).
- * To the faithful you appear faithful, to the blameless you appear blameless, to the pure you appear pure, but to the devious (*iqqesh* – “crooked,” “perverted,” “twisted”) you appear shrewd (*pathal* – “torturous,” “deceptive,” “twisted”) (2 Sam 22:26-7, cf. Ps 8:25-6).
- * When you did these things and I kept silent, *you thought I was exactly like you*” (Ps 50:21) .

2. The Dreadful Spiritual Condition of Israelites

- * The Israelites are repeatedly depicted as a “stiff-necked” people who resist the Spirit (E.g., **Ex 32:9; 33:3, 5**).
- * Hosea and Isaiah declare that there was “no faithfulness or kindness or *knowledge of God* in the land” (**Hos 4:1**, cf., **4:6; Isa 5:12-3**)
- * Even the spiritual leaders led people astray (**Isa 3:12**)
- * Even God’s appointed priest do not know God (**Jer 2:8**)

How could such a people NOT have “twisted” views of God?

* “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, *or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword*” (Ex 5:3).

3. Examples of Divine Accommodations

a) Marriage

b) A King

c) Animal (and child?) Sacrifices

* In ANE it was believed gods consumed sacrifices (e.g. **Deut 32:38**).

“The gods smelled the savor ,the gods smelled the sweet savor, The gods crowded like flies about the sacrifice.” (Epic of Gilgamesh)

* Sacrifices are “a pleasing aroma to the Lord” (e.g., **Ex 29:25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17**).

* Later writers make it clear Yahweh does not delight in animal sacrifices (**Ps 51:16-7; Isa 1:11-4; Mic 6:6-8; Amos 5:21-2, 25; Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13; Heb 10:8**).

d) The Law

* When Yahweh promised Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him (**Gen 12:2**), “Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith” (not by the law) (**Gal 3:8**)

* Why law given? Humanity needed to be “kept in custody” and “locked up” under the law before we could be ready to receive “the faith that was later to be revealed” (**Gal 3:23**). The law functioned as a “guardian” (*paidagōgos*) to “lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (**v.24**).

* The law was given to expose and even increase sin (**Rom 3:20; 5:20; 7:8-11, Gal 3:19-25**)

* The law was a “shadow of the things that were to come,” for “the reality ... is found in Christ” (**Col 2:16; cf., Heb 10:1**).

* There was something “wrong with the first covenant” (**Heb 8:7**). The new covenant renders “the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear” (**Heb 8:13, cf., vv. 8-13**)

4. The OT depictions of Yahweh as a violent warrior closely parallel other ANE warrior deities.

*** “Crediting” a deity with violence was how you praised a deity in the ANE.**

e.g., Parallels with a Cannibalistic Ugaritic Warrior Deity (*Anat*)

*** Deut 32:41-2 “I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me.**

**I will make my arrows drunk with blood,
and my sword shall devour flesh—
with the blood of the slain and the captives,
from the long-haired heads of the enemy.”**

Isa 34:2-3, 5-6 The LORD is angry with all nations;
his wrath is on all their armies.
He will totally destroy them,
he will give them over to slaughter.
Their slain will be thrown out,
their dead bodies will stink;
the mountains will be soaked with their blood.
My sword has drunk its fill in the heavens;
see, it descends in judgment on Edom,
the people I have totally destroyed.
The sword of the LORD is bathed in blood,
it is covered with fat—
the blood of lambs and goats,
fat from the kidneys of rams.
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.

- * **Isa 49:26** I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh; they will be drunk on their own blood, as with wine.
 - * **Ps 58:10** The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.
 - * **Ps 68:22-3** The Lord says, “I will bring them from Bashan; I will bring them from the depths of the sea, that your feet may wade in the blood of your foes, while the tongues of your dogs have their share.”
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IV. CONFIRMATIONS THAT *HEREM* COMMAND IS AN ACCOMMODATION

1. The portrait of Yahweh giving this command reflects ANE assumptions about warrior deities
2. Moses is the only one reported to have heard this command. Joshua gives the command on Moses' authority. Paul says if anyone, even an "angel of light" teaches anything contrary to the Gospel he preached, we are place them "under God's curse" (**Gal 1:8-9**). His "Gospel" is "the message of the cross" (**I Cor 1:18**)

3. Yahweh always told the Israelites that if they trusted him, they wouldn't have to use the sword, just as they used no sword when being freed from Egypt.

4. Reflections of a non-violent plan to enter the promised land.

”I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet (*sirâ*) ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land” (Exod 23:27-30 cf. Deut 7:20).

*** Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.... if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you (**Lev 18: 24-5, 28**)**

*** Other passages that say Yahweh planned on “driving out” the population (**Ex 33:2; 34:11, 24; Lev 20:23; Num 32:21; Deut 4:38; 7:1, 22**).**

*** Remember the Rorschach-quality of all spiritual “hearing” and “seeing.”**

5. The “neutral” captain of the Lord’s heavenly army (**Josh 5:13-5**)
 6. The inconsistency way the command is given and applied reflects its human origin.
- * “...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. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods...” (**Deut 7:2-4**)
 - * Sometimes virgins are slaughtered with everyone else, other times soldiers are allowed to keep them as war booty (despite other prohibitions on bonding with Canaanites) (e.g. **Deut 21:10-4; Num 31:18**).

IV. A CRUCIFORM INTERPRETATION OF THE CONQUEST NARRATIVE

a) God wanted Israel in the land, but hoped to get them in by means of a slow, non-violent process.

b) Yahweh *said*, “Enter the land,” but Moses *heard*, “Slaughter the indigenous population.”

c) The Canaanites had pushed God away, so “their protection [was] gone” (**Num 14:9**).

d) With a grieving heart, Yahweh allowed his people, who were “intent on violence” (Hab 1:9), “do as they pleased” (**Num 9:24**).

e) This became another negative object lesson, demonstrating that all who “live by the sword die by the sword.” Their violence “recoiled back on them” (**Ps 7:16**).

f) The depiction of God uttering genocidal commands to Moses is the sin-mirroring surface of this revelation. It tells us nothing about God's true character, but everything about the fallen and culturally conditioned hearts and minds of the people God was dealing with.

Since we know what God is truly like on the basis of the cross, we must exercise the same surface-penetrating faith we use to see the cross as the definitive revelation of God to behold God humbly stooping to bear the sin of his people, just as he does on Calvary.