

# Solid Ground

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January / February 2013

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## THIS MONTH



### THE CANAANITES: GENOCIDE OR JUDGMENT?

One justification for atheists' claim to high moral ground is what seems to them to be the patently immoral conduct of God in the Old Testament. How do we answer this challenge?



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*Greg Kousser*





January 1, 2013

Dear Friend,

To date, I have not encountered a more awkward issue to deal with as a Christian thinker than the one I address in this month's *Solid Ground*.

The most pervasive complaint against theism in general is the problem of evil. The most offensive element of the Gospel is the exclusivity of Christ—that “intolerant” claim that Jesus is the only way of salvation. The most complex issue to navigate is same-sex marriage.

Those are challenges I can handle, though. I don't pray they won't come up in conversation, and I don't cringe when they do.

Not in this case, though. Until now I've quietly hoped I'd never have to publicly address the question of the destruction of the Canaanites during the conquest of Joshua. It was the skeleton in our closet I didn't want anyone to bring up.

Phrases like “utterly destroy” and “anything that breathes” directed at “men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep” were just too much for me to bear. Discretion being the better part of valor, avoiding the issue seemed the best policy.

But it comes up. It's a problem for unbelievers and it's a problem for Christians, too, so much so we're tempted to sanitize the account to make God more “reasonable.”

This month I tackle the issue head on. Having worked carefully through the texts and the arguments, I am no longer leery of the topic. I hope you'll feel the same way after carefully reading, “The Canaanites—Genocide or Judgment?”

A word of caution, though. I have little confidence the right answer to this challenge is going to placate many critics, and may not even satisfy some Christians. Sometimes I think we have to simply let God be God and leave it at that.

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Every January we look forward to another eventful year of ministry, serving you as a thoughtful Christian. Yet every January we also face a challenge financially, because the first month sets the pace for the rest of the year.

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Warmly in Christ,

Greg Koukl

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# THE CANAANITES: GENOCIDE OR JUDGMENT?



By Greg Koukl

The assault on theism by the so-called “[New Atheists](#)” has principally focused on three areas. People like Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and Daniel Dennett have argued, broadly, that reason is on their side, science is on their side, and morality is on their side.<sup>1</sup>

One justification for the atheists’ claim to high moral ground is what seems to them to be the patently immoral conduct of the God of the Old Testament. According to Richard Dawkins, for example, God is not only a delusion, but a “pernicious delusion”:

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.<sup>2</sup>

As an aside, it seems ironic that an atheist who denies the existence of objective morality can overflow so readily with [moral indignation](#). But that’s another matter. The deeper concern is that this [challenge needs an answer](#), not so much for hardened atheists like Dawkins (who are unlikely to be satisfied with any explanation), but because atheists are not the only ones troubled.

## Say It Ain’t So

Though many parts of Dawkins’s charge have been answered by thoughtful Christians, certain passages in the Old Testament even give believers pause. Like these:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you... *you shall utterly destroy them*. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them. Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them... For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you. But thus you shall do to them: You shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire. ([Deut. 7:1-5](#))<sup>3</sup>

Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, *you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them*, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God. ([Deut. 20:16-18](#))

Now go, attack the Amalekites and *totally destroy* everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; *put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.*” ([1 Sam 15:2-3](#))

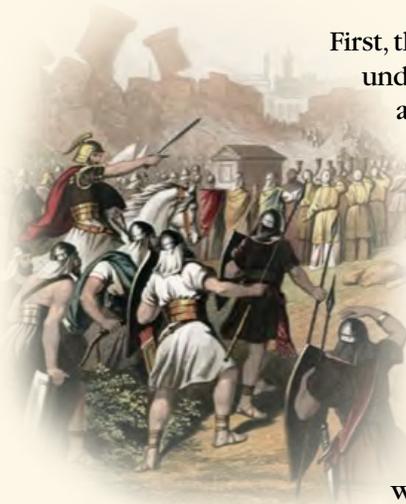
Strong words. Reading them brings to mind horrible terms like “genocide” or “ethnic cleansing.” Could this command really come from the God of all grace and mercy, the same God who, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, “became flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth” ([Jn. 1:14](#))?



Maybe not, according to some.

### But Did He Mean It?

Authors like philosopher Paul Copan (*Is God a Moral Monster?*) have argued, somewhat persuasively, that taking these commands entirely at face value would be to misread the genre. God gave the directives, to be sure (the Jews hadn't thought this up on their own), but one must accurately understand God's intention before he can accurately assess God's commands.



First, the wording should be understood in the context of ancient Near Eastern military narrative, the argument goes. Ancient writings commonly traded in hyperbole—exaggeration for the sake of emphasis—especially when it came to military conquest. The practice is evident throughout battle reports of the time. “Joshua’s conventional warfare rhetoric,” Copan writes, “was common in many other ancient Near Eastern military accounts in the second and first millennia B.C.”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, phrases like “utterly destroy” (*baram*), or “put to death men and women, children, and infants”—as well as other “obliteration language”—were stock “stereotypical” idioms used even when women or children were not present.<sup>5</sup> It decreed total victory (much like your favorite sports team “wiping out” the opposition), not complete annihilation.<sup>6</sup>

Second, Copan argues, women and children probably weren't targets since the attacks were directed at smaller military outposts characteristically holding soldiers, not noncombatants (who generally lived in outlying rural areas). “All the archaeological evidence indicates that no civilian populations existed at Jericho, Ai, and other cities mentioned in Joshua.”<sup>7</sup>

Third, on Copan's view the main purpose of the conquest was not annihilation, but expulsion—driving the inhabitants out—and cleansing the land of idolatry by destroying every vestige of the evil



Canaanite religion<sup>8</sup> (e.g., “You shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.” Deut. 7:1-5). Further, this process would be gradual, taking place over time: “The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you” (Deut. 7:22).

Finally, the record shows that Joshua fully obeyed the Lord's command:

Thus Joshua struck all the land, the hill country and the Negev and the lowland and the slopes and all their kings. He left no survivor, but he utterly destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded.... He left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses. (Josh. 10:40, 11:15)

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### One must accurately understand God's intention before he can accurately assess God's commands.

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Still, at the end of Joshua's life it was clear that many Canaanites continued to live in the land, left to be driven out gradually by the next generation (Josh. 23:12-13, Judges 1:21, 27-28). According to Copan, if Joshua did all that was expected of him, yet multitudes of Canaanites remained alive, then clearly the command to destroy all who breathed was not to be taken literally, but hyperbolically.

If these arguments go through—if God did not command the utter and indiscriminate destruction of men, women, and children by Joshua's armies, but simply authorized an appropriate cleansing military action to drive out Israel's (and God's) enemies—



then the critic’s challenge is largely resolved, it seems.

It’s quite possible, then—at least according to some thoughtful observers—that the “genocide” charge is based on an inaccurate understanding of what the text actually means. But not everyone agrees.

**Yes, God Meant It**

Researchers like [Clay Jones](#) see it differently.<sup>9</sup> He understands these passages principally in terms of judgment, not displacement. Even if some hyperbolic and stereotypical language is in evidence, still there’s no escaping the implications that a major [incentive for the conquest was judgment](#). Note:

*“It is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you...” (Deut. 9:5)*

*“Do not defile yourselves by any of these things, for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled.” (Lev. 18:24-25)*

*“When you enter the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations... because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.” (Deut. 18:9, 12)*

God was angry. Indeed, He was furious. And with good reason. Even by ancient standards, the Canaanites were a hideously nasty bunch. Their culture was grossly immoral, decadent to its roots. Its debauchery was dictated primarily by its fertility religion that tied eroticism of all varieties to the successful agrarian cycles of planting and harvest.

In addition to divination, witchcraft, and female and male temple sex, Canaanite idolatry encompassed a host of morally disgusting practices that mimicked the sexually perverse conduct of their Canaanite fertility gods: adultery, homosexuality, transvestitism, pederasty (men sexually abusing boys), sex with all sorts of beasts,<sup>10</sup> and incest. Note that after the Canaanite city Sodom was destroyed, Lot’s daughters immediately seduced their drunken father, imitating one of the sexual practices of the city just annihilated ([Gen. 19:30-36](#)).

**God was angry. Indeed, He was furious. And with good reason.**

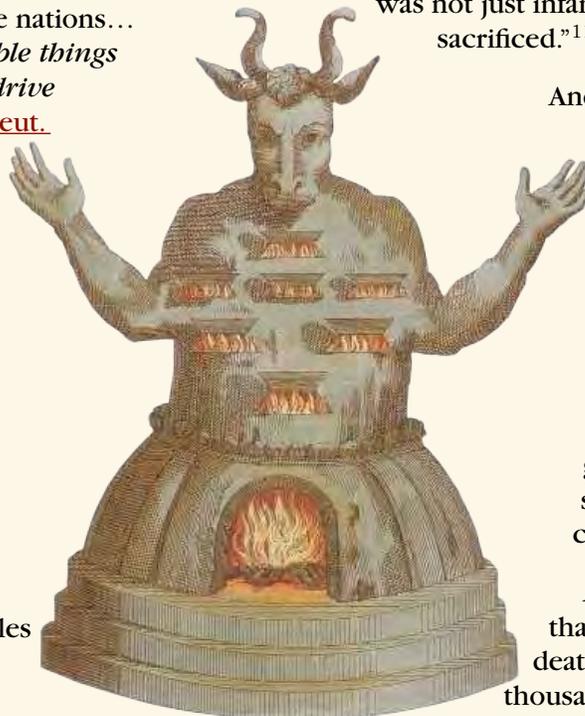
Worst of all, Canaanites practiced child sacrifice. There was a reason God had commanded, “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech” ([Lev. 18:21 NIV](#)):

Molech was a Canaanite underworld deity represented as an upright, bull-headed idol with human body in whose belly a fire was stoked and in whose outstretched arms a child was placed that would be burned to death... And it was not just infants; children as old as four were sacrificed.”<sup>11</sup>

And:

A bronze image of Kronos was set up among them, stretching out its cupped hands above a bronze cauldron, which would burn the child. As the flame burning the child surrounded the body, the limbs would shrivel up and the mouth would appear to grin as if laughing, until it was shrunk enough to slip into the cauldron.<sup>12</sup>

Archaeological evidence indicates that the children thus burned to death sometimes numbered in the thousands.<sup>13</sup>





# What would you say?

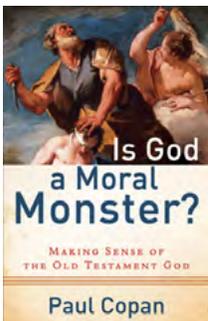
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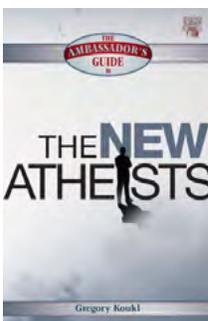
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Sometimes the best thing that can happen to your faith is for someone to launch a vigorous attack on it. Of course, this is what many Christians fear most. But when properly engaged, it fortifies your convictions like nothing else can.

In this respect the so-called "New Atheists"—Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, and Christopher Hitchens—have done Christians a favor. Ideas easily destroyed by those acquainted with the facts ought to be discarded. But if Christian ideas are sound, they will not be upended so easily.

In this booklet, Gregory Koukl will walk you through the issues, answering the critics' specific objections. As you become more familiar with the other side's arguments, you may even be surprised at how weak their resistance really is. In developing answers to the toughest arguments against your position, you'll strengthen both your witness and your confidence in your convictions.



The Canaanites had been reveling in debasements like these for centuries as God patiently postponed judgment (Gen 15:16). Here was no “petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser” (to use Dawkins’s words). Instead, here was a God willing to spare the Canaanite city of Sodom for the sake of just ten righteous people (Gen. 18:32), a God who was slow to anger and always fast to forgive (note Nineveh, for example).

The conquest was an exercise of capital punishment on a national scale, payback for hundreds of years of idolatry and unthinkable debauchery.

But is there not a limit? Indeed, what would we say of a God who perpetually sat silent in the face of such wickedness? Would we not ask, Where was God? Would we not question His goodness, His power, or even His existence if He did not eventually vanquish this evil? Yet when God finally does act, we are quick to find fault with the “vindictive, bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser.”

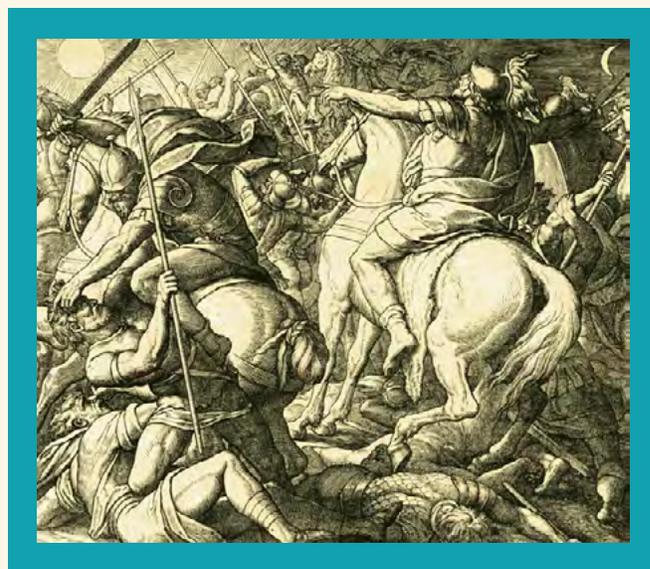
The conquest was neither ethnic cleansing nor genocide. God cared nothing about skin color or national origin. Aliens shared the same legal rights in the commonwealth as Jews (Lev. 19:34, Lev. 24:22, Deut. 10:18-19). Foreigners like Naomi and Rahab were welcome within their ranks.

God cared only about sin. The conquest was an exercise of capital punishment on a national scale, payback for hundreds of years of idolatry and unthinkable debauchery.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, God brought the same sentence of destruction on His own people when they sinned in like manner.

### Cleaning House

In the process of executing His sentence against the Canaanites, God would be cleansing the land of every vestige of their debased religion (e.g., tearing down the high places) to establish a land of spiritual purity and religious truth so God’s strategy to save all the nations of the world could go forward (Gen. 12:3).

God’s rescue plan to save mankind depended on the theological purity of Abraham’s seed, Israel. The cancer of idolatry needed to be cut out for the



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patient—God’s plan of redemption—to survive. Syncretism with pagan religions would have corrupted Israel’s theological core. By purging the land of this evil, God ensured that redemption—forgiveness for the evils of any nation—would be available in the future for people of every nation.

Unfortunately, instead of completing the conquest of Canaan and driving its people out as commanded, the Jews capitulated ([Judg. 1:28-33](#)). Blending in with their enemy’s godless culture, they quickly were corrupted by it:

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Eventually, the same judgment that fell on the debauched Canaanites, fell upon the corrupted Jews for the very same reasons.

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The sons of Israel lived among the Canaanites... took their daughters for themselves as wives, and gave their own daughters to their sons, and served their gods. The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God and served the Baals and the Asheroth. ([Judg. 3:5-7](#))

Before long the Jews had adopted all the degrading and detestable habits God had condemned Canaan for in the first place.<sup>15</sup> The book of Judges—a record of the “Canaanization” of Israel—ends on this sinister note: “In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes” ([Judg. 21:25](#)). Eventually, the same judgment that fell on the debauched Canaanites, fell upon the corrupted Jews for the very same reasons.

Many balk, though, at the suggestion that non-combatants—women and children—were among the victims. This is partly because they assume the conquest was primarily a military action—combat. It was not. It was principally a sentence of judgment, with the punishment carried out by Israel’s army against the entire Canaanite people.

Characteristically, God deals not with individuals, but with nations as a whole when grand designs are in play. Since Canaanite sin was regular and systematic—the entire adult population participated in the idolatrous system—God judged the entire nation. Women were no less guilty than men, and in many cases they were the principal instigators.

When a community sins, there are consequences for every member of the population, even children. When Israel did evil and God brought famine and drought, adults and children suffered alike. Every act of corporate judgment sustains collateral damage.

Without question, the Canaanite adults got their just deserts. Regarding the children, I personally take comfort in the fact that, on my view, those who die before the age of accountability are ushered immediately into Heaven.<sup>16</sup>

But there is another reason [God seems justified](#) in taking any life—even “innocent” life—anytime He wants.

### Two Questions

It’s always a good idea when fielding any challenge to try to get specific about the specifics. What *exactly* is the skeptic’s complaint here? If the conquest took place as the narrative describes, what precisely is evil about the destruction of the Canaanites? Was it evil for God to command it, or was it evil for Israel to obey it?<sup>17</sup>

It certainly seems that if God *does* exist, and if He *were* to have morally sufficient reasons for decreeing the destruction of a group of people, then the *means* by which he carries it out would be somewhat inconsequential. Whether God chose famine, wild beasts, pestilence, or sword ([Ezek. 14:12-23](#)), if the authority to destroy is there, then the means of judgment is incidental. Thus, if it was right for God to *command* the conquest, it seems right for Israel to *obey* the command.

But was God right? I’ve already shown that if God needed morally sufficient reasons for killing the Canaanites, he had them in abundance. However, if God *is* God, does He even *need* to justify what He does with His creation? Does God *need* to give a reason to build up or to tear down, to plant or to uproot? ([Jer. 45:4](#)) Does God *need* to answer for taking the life of any person, even an innocent one?

When Job lost everything dear to him, he did not rail against God, but worshipped Him saying, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has



taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord” ([Job 1:21](#)). Reflecting on the sovereignty of God, the Apostle Paul asked, “Does not the potter have a right over the clay?” ([Rom. 9:21](#))

If this approach seems a bit severe, let me make an observation.

When people argue against capital punishment, they often form their appeal this way: “Capital punishment is wrong because man should not play God.” The same sensibility is reflected when people argue that cloning is suspect because the right to create life is God’s alone, not man’s.

I don’t think these arguments themselves ultimately succeed (that is, the morality of either capital punishment or cloning must be decided on other grounds). Still, I think the intuitions they trade on are sound.

Making life and taking life are the appropriate prerogatives of God. He has privileges that we do not. Though *we* shouldn’t play God, certainly *God* can play God, so to speak. Just as the owner has latitude the hired hand does not, the Creator has freedoms creatures do not share.

That’s part of what we mean when we say God is “sovereign.” The Maker has complete authority over what He has made—not simply in virtue of His power (omnipotence), but in virtue of His rightful ownership. Everything God created is His. He can do as He likes with anything that belongs to Him—which is everything.

Appealing to the sovereignty of God is not meant to silence opposition with a power move (How dare you question God!). Rather, it’s meant to put the issue in proper perspective. God has full and appropriate authority when it comes to issues of life and death. Being the Author of life, He has the absolute right to give life or to take life away whenever He wishes.

### The Heart of the Problem

Put another way, God is God and we are not. He is not to be measured by our standards. Rather, we are to be measured by His. And that brings us to the root of our difficulty with God’s judgment of the Canaanites. [The heart of the problem](#) is the heart, ours.

In a certain sense, the lesson of the conquest is a simple one: God punishes evil. For many in our culture, though, the Canaanite offenses simply are not offensive. “Divination, sexual adventure, adultery, homosexuality,

transvestitism, all evil? Please.”

Virtually every crime on the Canaanite rap sheet is common fare in our communities or can be found one click away on the internet. Children are not being torched on church altars, to be sure, but thousands die daily in abortion clinics sacrificed (literally) to the gods of choice and convenience.

There’s little doubt the wording in God’s commands regarding the conquest includes hyperbole. This is true of every narrative, ancient and modern. But literary devices are always meant to clarify meaning, not obscure it. God’s clear message was that punishment was coming, and it would be poured out with a fury upon all the inhabitants of a corrupt nation that had reveled in its debauchery for centuries.

### A Piece of My Mind

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This was not *carte blanche* for genocide or ethnic cleansing, but rather a directive limited in time to the conquest, limited in scope to the Canaanites, and limited in location to the Promised Land.

Yes, Joshua claimed he “finished” the job, though Canaanites remained. In light of all the details in the account, though, clearly the conquest wasn’t complete, only Joshua’s portion. He’d been completely faithful to do everything he could do *on his watch* (and here I think Joshua was using hyperbole, too). He then passed the baton to the next generation who was to follow his faithful example and finish the task.

In the process of judging, God would be cleansing, clearing out a safe place for truth to flourish so that Israel might rise up as a “kingdom of priests” to the nations, bringing the blessing of Abraham to all peoples—Jew and gentile alike.

It may turn out, though, that this explanation—or any explanation true to the text—is not going to satisfy the belligerent skeptic. People like Richard Dawkins and other critics “playing at omniscience”<sup>18</sup> are simply ignorant of the deeper designs in play.

Further, since we’ve all been “morally velocitized” by our own depravity, any response by God that takes sin seriously will seem inordinate to us. In fact, the temptation is strong even for Christians to sanitize the account so that God looks less extreme. “Most of our problems regarding God’s ordering the destruction of the Canaanites,” Clay Jones writes, “come from the fact that God hates sin, but we do not.”<sup>19</sup>



Atheists read the account of Canaan's conquest and sniff with moral indignation at the suggestion a holy God could be within His rights to destroy the Canaanite people along with their culture. I suspect, though, that Jones has a more accurate assessment:

We do not appreciate the depths of our own depravity, the horror of sin, and the righteousness of God. Consequently, it is no surprise that when we see God's judgment upon those who committed the sins we commit, that complaint and protest arises within our hearts.<sup>20</sup>

## Endnotes

1. I responded to each of these points in issues of *Solid Ground* for May, July, and September 2008, and in STR's *The Ambassador's Guide to the New Atheists* (str.org).
2. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 31.
3. All scripture citations taken from the NASB unless otherwise noted.
4. Paul Copan, *Is God a Moral Monster?—Making Sense of the Old Testament God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 171.
5. Copan, 175-6.
6. See also Deut. 2:34 and 3:6.
7. Copan, 176.
8. Ibid., 181, 178.
9. Clay Jones, "Why We Don't Hate Sin so We don't Understand What Happened to the Canaanites: An Addendum to 'Divine Genocide' Arguments," *Philosophia Christi* n.s. 11 (2009): 53-72.

## Stand to Reason Speakers Near You

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- [1-3](#) First Baptist Church Connections Weekend, Tallahassee, FL Topics: Various Contact: (850) 681-0488 or <http://www.fbctlh.org/templates/System/details.asp?id=46231&PG=Events&CID=1293962&rDate=2013-02-01>

### Alan Shlemon

#### January

- [18](#) North Coast Calvary Chapel, Carlsbad, CA Time: 7:00pm-9:00pm Topic: "Making Abortion Unthinkable" Contact: [www.northcoastcalvary.org](http://www.northcoastcalvary.org)
- [20](#) First Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL Time: 6:00pm Topic: "The Qur'an: A Word from God?" Contact: [www.tacticalfaith.org](http://www.tacticalfaith.org)

#### February

- [27](#) Crossline Community Church, Laguna Hills, CA Time: 7:00pm-8:30pm Topic: "A Closer Look at Islam" Contact: [www.crosslinechurch.com](http://www.crosslinechurch.com)

To get information about inviting an STR speaker to your church, email [Dawnielle@str.org](mailto:Dawnielle@str.org) for Alan, Brett or Jim, or [Melinda@str.org](mailto:Melinda@str.org) for Greg.

### Brett Kunkle

#### January

- [6](#) Harvest Christian Fellowship Time: 2:00pm Topic: TBD Contact: [www.harvest.org](http://www.harvest.org)

- [12-13](#) The Fountain, Phoenix, AZ Time: Saturday 9am-4pm, Sunday 10am-12pm Topic: "Why I Am a Christian", "Does God Really Exist?", "Dead or Alive? The Cold Hard Facts of Jesus' Resurrection", "Why Should I Trust the Bible?", "A Practical Game Plan for Bringing Apologetics into Your Church", "Tactics in Defending the Faith" Contact: [www.inthefountain.org](http://www.inthefountain.org)

- [18-20](#) First Baptist Church, Montgomery, AL Time: TBD Topic: TBD Contact: [www.tacticalfaith.com](http://www.tacticalfaith.com)

#### February

- [6 & 13](#) Crossline Community Church, Laguna Hills, CA Time: 7:00pm-8:30pm Topic: "Truth Never Gets Old" & "Mormonism 101" Contact: [www.crosslinechurch.com](http://www.crosslinechurch.com)

### J. Warner Wallace

#### January

- [11-13](#) College Park Church, Indianapolis, Indiana Topic: TBD Contact: [www.yourchurch.com/students](http://www.yourchurch.com/students)
- [18-23](#) Coquitlam Alliance Church, Vancouver, Canada Topic: Evidential Reliability of the Bible, Contact: <http://www.cachurch.ca>

#### February

- [20](#) Crossline Community Church, Laguna Hills, CA Time: 7:00pm-8:30pm Topic: "Atheism" Contact: [www.crosslinechurch.com](http://www.crosslinechurch.com)

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## Putting This Solid Ground into Action

- Keep in mind that God has complete authority over what He has made. Appealing to God's sovereignty puts the issue of His commands to Israel in the Old Testament in proper perspective.
- When fielding any challenge, it's always a good idea to try to get specific about the objections. Ask questions to clarify.
- Remember that God characteristically deals not with individuals, but with nations as a whole when grand designs are in play.
- The sin of the Canaanites was hideous and it was God's legitimate prerogative to punish them.

10. This may explain God's command to destroy even domestic animals. "No one would want to have animals around that were used to having sex with humans." Jones, 66.

11. Jones, 61.

12. Ibid., see footnote.

13. Ibid., 62 see footnote.

14. In the case of the Amalekites, God's judgment was for their unprovoked ambush of His people when en route to the land (1 Sam. 15, Deut. 25:17-19).

15. See also 2 Kings 17:16-17.

16. For more on this issue, see Ronald Nash, *When a Baby Dies* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999).

17. I owe this insight to Peter J. Williams when I heard him speak on, "Does the Old Testament Support Genocide?" A video of that talk can be found [here](#):

18. Peter J. Williams.

19. Jones, 53.

20. Ibid., 71.

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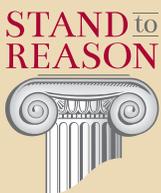
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