

**DOESN'T THE BIBLE TEACH SLAVERY, MISOGYNY AND GENOCIDE –**  
**(Can I Trust the Bible?)**

Tom Werner

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**The New Atheists.**

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction; jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust and unforgiving control-freak: a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filiacidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 31

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**Minorities/Women/Academics.**

“One woman, big with child, rushed into the church, clasping the altar and crying for mercy for herself and unborn babe. She was followed, and fell pierced with a dozen lances... the child was torn alive from the yet palpitating body of its mother, first plunged into the holy water to be baptized, and immediately its brains were dashed out against a wall.”

“The Christians attacked them with buffets and beatings... Then they behaved with such temerity and shamelessness that the most powerful ruler of the island had to see his own wife raped by a Christian officer.”

“The history of sexual violence and genocide among Native women illustrates how gender violence functions as a tool for racism and colonialism among women of color in general. For example, African American women were also viewed as inherently rapable. Yet where colonizers used sexual violence to eliminate Native populations, slave owners used rape to produce an exploitable labor force.”

Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide*.

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### **Thoughtful Christians.**

“We are particularly disturbed by the violence of the Old Testament when we contemplate the way it has been used to justify violence down during the ages since. The centuries of Christendom have witnessed professing Christians right up to modern times using the methods of conquest, torture, execution, horrifying punishments and racist genocide – and claiming theological justification from their reading of the Old Testament. Crusades against Muslims, genocide of North American Indians, or Aboriginal Australians, apartheid against black South Africans, discrimination and violence against African Americans... in all these cases the first step is to declare the “enemy” to be cursed by God, just like the Canaanites. After that it becomes OK to just wipe them out.”

Christopher J.H. Wright, *The God I Don't Understand*, page 74.

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### **The American Culture**

“Scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity. By their daily activity, most ‘Christians’ regularly commit treason. With their mouths they claim that Jesus is Lord, but with their actions they demonstrate allegiance to money, sex and self-fulfillment.... Gallup and Barna hand us survey after survey demonstrating that evangelical Christians are as likely to embrace lifestyles every bit as hedonistic, materialistic, self-centered and sexually immoral as the world in general.”

Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*, page 12.

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## **MISOGYNY.**

**Question:** Does the Bible teach misogyny?

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**The Bible teaches Women and Men are both created in the image of God.**

“<sup>26</sup> Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, <sup>1</sup>and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’”

<sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1

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**The Bible Teaches Women and Men are Equally Valuable to God.**

“<sup>26</sup> You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Galatians 3

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## **Jesus Valued Women**

Jesus:

- Called women to follow Him (Luke 8:1-3).
  - Received financial support from women (Luke 8:1-3)
  - Spoke to women publicly (John 4:1-45).
  - Taught women (Luke 10:38-42).
  - Honored a culturally scandalous woman who anointed His feet (Luke 7:36-50).
  - Recognized the faith of women (Luke 18:1-8).
  - Made sure women's deeds of faith were remembered (Matthew 26:13).
  - Rescued a woman from discrimination and judgment (John 8:1-11).
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## Paul Valued Women

Paul taught that:

- Women had the right to learn (I Timothy 2:11).
  - Women could have positions of ministry and influence in the church (Romans 16:1-2).
  - Women could privately instruct men in the faith (Acts 18:26).
  - Women had a right to love, affection, and service in marriage (Ephesians 5:25-29).
  - Women had conjugal rights in marriage (I Corinthians 7:1-5).
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## Four Attitudes that can Hurt Women

1. God intends that men dominate and that women submit.
  2. Woman is morally inferior to man and cannot trust her own judgment.
  3. Suffering is a Christian virtue, and women in particular have been designated to be “Suffering Servants.”
  4. Christians must quickly forgive and be reconciled with those who sin against them.
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## The Basis for these Attitudes Considered

- **Attitude 1:** God intends that men dominate and that women submit.
  - **Response:** The command for Christian marriage is mutual submission. The emphasis for men is on greater responsibilities, not greater privileges.
  - **Attitude 2:** Woman is morally inferior to man and cannot trust her own judgment.
  - **Response:** Nowhere in the Scripture is woman indicated to be inferior to man.
  - **Attitude 3:** Suffering is a Christian virtue, and women in particular have been designated to be “Suffering Servants.”
  - **Response:** We are not taught in Scripture that suffering is a virtue, we are only told that in this world that there will be suffering, and how we should respond to suffering. Men are certainly not commanded to be the cause of women’s suffering.
  - **Attitude 4:** Christians must quickly forgive and be reconciled with those who sin against them.
  - **Response:** Christians are to forgive, but all persons have worth and dignity, and need not subject themselves to danger or continuing indignity.
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## Doesn't the Bible Teach Different Standards for Women and Men?

- **In Marriage?**

“<sup>21</sup>Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.”

Ephesians 5

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## Doesn't the Bible Teach Different Standards for Women and Men?

- **In Church Leadership?**

“<sup>12</sup>I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.

<sup>13</sup>For Adam was formed first, then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.” I Timothy 2

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## Two Positions on Women and Equality.

**Egalitarianism** = The position that equality before God requires equality in functional roles, including within marriage and the structure of the church.

**Complementarianism** = The position that man and woman were created equal in value and personhood, and equal in bearing his image, but that both creation and redemption indicate some distinct roles for men and women in the church.

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## Is Biblical Complementarianism Misogyny?

Biblical Complementarianism affirms:

- Women and Men equally created in the image of God.
- Women and Men equally valuable to God.
- Distinct roles for women and men are grounded in the creation, not the Fall.
- Distinct roles for women and men requires greater responsibility be taken by men.

These affirmations do not constitute hatred.

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## **SLAVERY**

**Question:** Does the Bible condone slavery?

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### **Slavery in the Bible.**

Slavery in the Bible was qualitatively different than our common picture.

- “Bond-servant” and “slave.”
  - It is not race-based.
  - It was not necessarily permanent.
  - It was not commonly cruel.
  - It was a means of getting out of debt.
  - In the New Testament period, it could be voluntary.
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### **Israel’s Origin was in Slavery.**

“<sup>21</sup> Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.” Exodus 22

“<sup>9</sup> Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.” Exodus 23

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### **The Old Testament Provided Unparalleled Protections to Slaves in Israel.**

- If a master administered a fatal beating, the slave was to be “avenged.” (Exodus 21:20-21)
- A slave who suffered serious bodily harm from a master was to be set free. (Exodus 21:26-27)
- Debts were canceled and Hebrew slaves set free every seven years (Deuteronomy 15)
- Asylum – hospitality! - was required for runaway slaves.

“<sup>15</sup> If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand him over to his master. <sup>16</sup> Let him live among you wherever he likes and in whatever town he chooses. Do not oppress him.” (Deuteronomy 23)

- **Why is this “unparalleled?”**
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### **Why did God not prohibit Slavery? The Idea of “Accommodation.”**

- “Accommodation” means that God adapts to our human condition.
  - God sometimes “accommodates” our fallen condition in his standards of morality.
  - Divorce is an example of God’s accommodation. (Matthew 19:3-12)
  - The Commandments are not our standard of morality – God’s character is our standard of morality! (Matthew 5:48)
  - God never commends slavery, but accommodates it.
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### **A Plan to End Slavery.**

<sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

<sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,  
<sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing,  
taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!

<sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2

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## **GENOCIDE.**

**Question:** Unlike the problems of slavery and misogyny, there is a direct command of God at issue here, the command of “Jahweh War” and of “*Herem*.” Does the Bible teach genocide?

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### **The Pattern of “Jahweh War.”**

In the Old Testament there are accounts of “Jahweh War.” The heart of Jahweh War is that God is present with the army of Israel and assures victory. The pattern of “Jahweh War:”

1. Mustering of Israel by a trumpet call.
  2. Consecration of the men of Israel.
  3. Offering of sacrifices.
  4. An assurance “Jahweh has given...”
  5. Yahweh leads the way.
  6. The enemy’s loss of courage.
  7. Victory for Israel.
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### **The Command of “*Herem*”**

“<sup>10</sup> When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. <sup>11</sup> If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. <sup>12</sup> If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. <sup>13</sup> When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. <sup>14</sup> As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. <sup>15</sup> This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

<sup>16</sup> However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. <sup>17</sup> Completely destroy\* them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. <sup>18</sup> Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.”

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### Examples of the Practice of *Herem*.

#### **Jericho**

“<sup>21</sup> They devoted\* the city to the LORD and destroyed\* with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.” Joshua 6

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### Examples of the Practice of *Herem*.

#### **Achan and his family**

“<sup>1</sup> But the Israelites acted unfaithfully in regard to the devoted things\*; Achan... took some of them. So the LORD's anger burned against Israel...<sup>25</sup> Joshua said, ‘Why have you brought this trouble on us? The LORD will bring trouble on you today.’

Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. <sup>26</sup> Over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger.” Joshua 7

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### Examples of the Practice of *Herem*.

#### **Ai**

“<sup>1</sup> Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. <sup>2</sup> You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves...."

<sup>26</sup> Joshua did not draw back the hand that held out his javelin until he had destroyed\* all who lived in Ai. <sup>27</sup> But Israel did carry off for themselves the livestock and plunder of this city, as the LORD had instructed Joshua.” Joshua 8

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**What in the World does God have in mind?  
Three Poor Choices.**

**Poor Choice 1: “Radical Discontinuity.”**

Jahweh War is an Old Testament problem, put right by Jesus and the New Testament.

**Poor Choice 2: Israel’s Self-Justification.**

The Israelites thought Jahweh War was commanded by God, but they were wrong.

**Poor Choice 3: *Herem* as Spiritual Lesson.**

Jahweh War is entirely an allegory of spiritual warfare.

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**Three Better Considerations to *Herem*.**

**Consideration 1: The Conquest of Canaan was a Unique and Limited Event, Not to be Repeated.**

- There were many wars in the Old Testament, and
- Jesus indicates that war is a fact of life. (Matthew 24:6)
- BUT - it is caricature to portray God as constantly on the warpath or to portray the conquest as typical of the Bible.
- The conquest of Canaan was never intended to be a model for how future generations should behave toward enemies.

“<sup>51</sup>As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. <sup>52</sup>And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; <sup>53</sup>but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup>When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” <sup>55</sup>But Jesus turned and rebuked them, <sup>56</sup>and they went to another village.” Luke 9

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### Three Better Considerations to *Herem*.

#### Consideration 2: *Herem* fits in God's Sovereign Justice.

- *Herem* is set within a framework of God's justice – God judges the wicked.
- God exercised restraint in his judgment of Canaan.

“<sup>12</sup> As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. <sup>13</sup> Then the LORD said to him, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. <sup>14</sup> But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. <sup>16</sup> In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.’” Genesis 15

- The Canaanite society was truly degraded. See, for instance, sexual perversions of Leviticus 18, sacrifice of children in Deuteronomy 12.

“<sup>24</sup> ‘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.’ <sup>25</sup> Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.... <sup>28</sup> And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.” Leviticus 18

“<sup>29</sup> The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, <sup>30</sup> and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.” <sup>31</sup> You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.” Deuteronomy 12

- The conquest did not mean that Israel was righteous – smug moral superiority was unfounded.

“<sup>1</sup> Hear, O Israel. You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you... <sup>4</sup> After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, “The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. <sup>5</sup> It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>6</sup> Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

- God threatened to judge Israel, too – and did. See Leviticus 18:28 above; Achan, above; Deuteronomy 25:25-68;
  - *Herem* was not human genocide – it was God’s righteous judgment on sin.
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### Three Better Considerations to *Herem*.

#### Consideration 3: God’s Plan: Salvation of the Nations.

- God cares for foreigners as well as for Israelites.  
Illustrated by:
  - The inclusion of foreigners among those who bear the mark of the covenant people; Rahab; Ruth; Naaman; the widow of Zarephath
  - The benefits of the Law apply to foreigners in Israel.
  - The command to love the widow, orphan and alien as God does. (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)
- God’s ultimate plan is for peace through a messianic king.

“<sup>2</sup> In the last days  
the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established  
as chief among the mountains;  
it will be raised above the hills,  
and all nations will stream to it...

<sup>4</sup> He will judge between the nations  
and will settle disputes for many peoples.  
They will beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks.  
Nation will not take up sword against nation,  
nor will they train for war anymore.”      Isaiah 2

“<sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counselor, <sup>1</sup>Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it

with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty  
will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9

- God will call people from every tribe and tongue and nation. (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8; Revelation 5:9)
- It is difficult to call God’s character into question when we consider the justice rendered the Canaanites if we also consider the justice of the cross.
- Ultimately this is personal. I am part of the people of God because God preserved Israel, through whom my Messiah Jesus came.

<sup>1</sup> Clap your hands, all you nations;  
shout to God with cries of joy.

<sup>2</sup> How awesome is the LORD Most High,  
the great King over all the earth!

<sup>3</sup> He subdued nations under us,  
peoples under our feet.

<sup>4</sup> He chose our inheritance for us,  
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.  
Selah Psalm 47

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**EIGHT LESSONS FROM THE LESSON:**

God does not love me more (or others less) for our status – Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free.

Complementarianism is not misogyny.

God will often accommodate our weaknesses (but we can never demand he do so.)

The Law is not the standard for morality – God's own character is our standard!

God's plans to use Christ's radical servanthood to break radical servanthood.

God can use all things - even sin - for good.

*Herem* is a mystery to me – BUT three considerations help:

1. The conquest of Canaan was a unique and limited event, not to be repeated.
2. *Herem* fits in God's sovereign justice.
3. God's plan is for salvation of the nations – AND ME!

The Bible's standard of morality, properly understood, is trustworthy.