

Destroying the Canaanites

Deuteronomy 7:1-5

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¹ When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, ² and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

³ You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. ⁵ But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire.



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Did God really say this?

You must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. (7:2)

But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God. (20:16-18)

New Testament agrees

- **Stephen:** “They dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers.” (Acts 7:45)
- **Paul:** “After destroying seven nations in the land of Canaan, God gave them their land as an inheritance.” (Acts 13:19)
- **Hebrews:** “By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient.” (Hebrews 11:31)

Jesus and Deuteronomy

“You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”
(Mark 10:19 = Deut. 5:16-20)

Jesus said “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’” (Mark 12:29-30 = Deut. 6:4-5)

Jesus and Deuteronomy

Jesus defeated Satan's three temptations by saying three times, "It is written..." and quoting from Deuteronomy.

- Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. (8:3)
- It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve. (6:13)
- You shall not put the LORD your God to the test. (6:16)

Key facts

- God's earlier judgments in the Flood, Sodom, and Egypt were very severe.
- God gives life and has the right to take it.
- God spoke directly and clearly to Moses.
- Killing would have been wrong if driven by Israel's greed or cruelty, but it was right for the Israelites to obey God's command.
- Horror at total destruction comes only because God taught a people the value of human life, forgiveness, and loving enemies.

Key facts

- This was unique, not a universal command.
- God waited 500 years to judge Canaanites, while Israelites suffered much of that time.
- Canaanites were unusually vile and cruel.
- Targeted only Canaanites, not other people.
- God did not allow Israelites to occupy any other land than what He gave them.
- If an Israelite city served other gods, it was to be totally destroyed. (Deut. 13:12-18)

So shall you perish

You shall purge the evil from your midst.

(Deut 13:5, 17:7, 17:12, 21:21, 22:21,22,24)

And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God. (Deut. 8:19-20)

Fragile foothold

- God's revelation and salvation for a lost, wicked world had its only foothold in Israel.
- Israel was fragile; paganism was strong.
- Main conflict was not racial but religious: God-lovers against God-haters.
- Israel had to separate from gods of other nations before leading other nations to God.
- Patriarchs were nomads without a land.
- Israelites had a weakness for other gods.

Not your righteousness

Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. (Deut. 9:5-6)







Foreign women and gods

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women... from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.”

Solomon clung to these in love... And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God. (1 Kings 11:1-4)

Ten tribes removed

They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them... And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings...

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only. (2 Kings 17:15-18)

- Acting like the Canaanites led to being punished like the Canaanites.

Judgment on Judah

Manasseh led them astray to do more evil than the nations had done whom the LORD destroyed before the people of Israel. (2 Kings 21:9)

For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence. (2 Kings 24:20)

They kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy. (2 Chronicles 36:16)



In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old... you have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity. (Lamentations 2:21)

Final judgment

The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:7-8)

Overcome evil, destroy strongholds

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God. (2 Cor 10:4-5)

The new holy nation

- The holy nation of the old covenant was Israel: one people with one land.
- The holy nation of the new covenant is the church: many peoples living in many lands.
- The church does not govern any particular nation or punish unchurched evildoers.
- The church teaches God's ways and rebukes sin. The church excommunicates (but doesn't execute) blatant sinners who claim to be Christians but refused to repent.

Remove, then restore

There is sexual immorality among you... Let him who has done this be removed from among you... Purge the evil person from among you. (1 Cor 5:1-13)

This punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. (2 Cor 2:6-8)

Don't be unequally yoked

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. (2 Corinthians 6:14-16)

No compromise with Canaan

- **Spiritual warfare** overcomes evil with good using spirituals weapons.
- **Church discipline** removes unrepentant sinners and restores those who repent.
- **Holy separation** avoids compromise with the world and yoking with unbelievers.
- **Reverent awe** worships the Holy One who will completely destroy all evil and will settle his people in a perfect land forever.