

THE SINS OF CANAAN HAVE BECOME THE SINS OF AMERICA

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One of the questions I've been asked, "How could a good loving God command the Israelites to slaughter every man, woman, child, and even animal in the cities of the Canaanite nations? Isn't this the same God that listed 'Thou shalt not kill?' in the Ten Commandments?"

In Deuteronomy 20:16-17, God gives these instructions to Israel:

"But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee *for* an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth: But thou shalt utterly destroy them; *namely*, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

I think it's important to be able to answer this question for those asking. As most of you know, the sixth commandment is actually, "Thou shalt not murder" rather than "Thou shalt not kill." There is a difference. God does not call all killing "murder".

But you ask what about infants and tiny babies? The command says to kill everything that breathes. This is a judgment on the people of Canaan, similar to the Flood on Sodom and Gomorrah. What was going on in Canaan that was so bad that God ordered even children killed? People who want reasons to reject the Bible often point to this as an immoral command. But we know God is perfectly righteous and justified in His judgment. How do you explain it?

First of all, we need to remember that God created us. He gave life and it is His right to take it back. He is not accountable to us for what He chooses to do. We are accountable to Him. "The wages of sin is death" is justification enough. For God to pronounce judgment for sin and not see that it is carried out is to make Him a liar and unjust Himself, and we know God cannot lie, He cannot sin.

Remember, the Canaanites had seen Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed completely. This was a warning that God would judge wickedness. So many horrible things were happening in Sodom that the angel of the Lord said in Genesis 18: 20-21,

"And the LORD said, because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know," it was so.

Ancient stories give hints about the evil in Sodom. Strangers and travelers who came into the city would be robbed, stripped, and held captive within the city. They would

wander the streets slowly starving to death, to the great amusement of the citizenry. One account relates that visitors to Sodom were offered a bed according to the Middle Eastern laws of hospitality, but it was a bed of torture. Short people were stretched. Tall people had their legs cut off. If a traveler had no money, he would be given bricks of gold and silver with his name on them! But nobody would sell him bread and water, even for all that gold and silver, so the traveler slowly died of starvation. The Sodomites gathered around the corpse and took back the gold and silver. The people in Sodom were not just evil, they were proud of being evil. Imagine being a child in a place like that!

These stories give us a hint of how bad things had gotten in Sodom. It was probably worse than our imaginations can conceive. The Canaanites knew about the destruction of Sodom. They knew that God would judge evil. They also knew about Melchizedek and Abraham. They had access to truth. They weren't ignorant or innocent. Egypt and other nations, despite their great sin, were not completely destroyed, so the sin of the Canaanites must have been more serious. God restricted Israel from attacking Edom, Moab and Amman so despite their sins, they must not have deserved such a severe judgment.

Leviticus 18 and 20 list some of the detestable religious practices of the Canaanites and says that these acts caused the land to become defiled, so that its inhabitants were "vomited out." This comes with the warning that if the Israelites copy those practices, the land will also vomit them out. That is exactly what happened after the Israelites adopted the practices of Canaan.

Archeology gives some hints about what the Canaanites did. On one High Place, archeologists found several stone pillars and great numbers of jars containing remains of newborn babies. When a new house was built, a child would be sacrificed and its body built into the wall to bring good luck to the rest of the family. Firstborn children were often sacrificed to Moloch, a giant hollow bronze image in which a fire was built. Parents placed their children in its red hot hands and the babies would roll down into the fire. The sacrifice was invalid if a parent displayed grief. Mothers were supposed to dance and sing. The Israelites later copied this practice in a valley near Jerusalem called Gahanna. Hundreds of jars containing infant bones have been found there.

This seems horrible. But is our culture superior? I was shocked to learn that in the United States, there are more than 3600 abortions every day, day after day. The number of legal abortions every year far exceeds the number of U.S. soldiers killed in every war since the nation began!

There was a great deal of sexual sin among the Canaanites. They believed that cultic prostitution was important to encourage their gods, Baal and Ashtoreth to mate so that the land would be fertile and rain would come. Many young people forced into prostitution were abused to the point of death. Even the surrounding pagan nations were appalled by Canaanite religious practices.

Yet God did not hurry to judge the Canaanites. In Genesis 15:16, God tells Abraham:

“But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

God gave the Canaanites four hundred years while Israel was in Egypt. After Israel passed through the Red Sea, He waited forty more years while Israel wandered in the wilderness. The people of Canaan knew Israel was coming, and that God had given the land to them, according to Rahab, a Canaanite, in Joshua 2:9:

“And she said unto the men, I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you.”

Jericho had six additional days to repent while Israel did laps around it. The day judgment finally came to Jericho Israel marched around the city seven times. God judged swiftly when He finally acted but He patiently warned and allowed time for its inhabitants to repent.

Families who wished could have migrated out of the land and settle in nearby areas. God said repeatedly that he would drive out the inhabitants of the land before Israel. Those who wished to leave had time and opportunity. The point was to destroy the evil Canaanite “culture” rather than the individual Canaanite people. Only individuals who stubbornly refused to leave were destroyed with military force, along with their children, who could not have survived without parents. God gave no instructions to hunt down and kill Canaanites who left the land peacefully. Later in the Bible, Canaanite individuals like Uriah the Hittite show up as righteous characters. Rahab, herself was a Canaanite harlot who repented before Jericho was destroyed. She is an ancestor of Jesus Himself. God’s judgment was not based on racism or favoritism.

God is never arbitrary or unjust, despite how some events appear at first glance. The same people who are angry because God doesn’t do anything about all the evil in the world are the first to cry foul when He exacts judgment. But those of us who know Him trust in His perfect justice. He knows all the aggravating and mitigating circumstances, we do not. His patience and forgiveness are immense. He waits for repentance. He gives people an opportunity to choose between salvation and judgment. He won't wait forever. Judgment, at some point, is certain.

America has joined God’s black list committing the same sins of the Canaanites. She awaits judgment unless she turns from the manifestation of these sins. What was the sin of the Canaanites? Why did God order them to be destroyed?

The sin of the people of Jericho was the same as all the inhabitants of Canaan they worshipped idols, were immoral and did evil in the sight of God. Canaan was defiled by its inhabitants.

Exodus 23: 20-33, “For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites,

and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off. Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works: but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images. Thou shalt make no covenant with them or with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Some of the evils that they did are listed in Leviticus 18

“And the LORD Spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I *am* the LORD. None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover *their* nakedness: I *am* the LORD. The nakedness of thy father, or the nakedness of thy mother, shalt thou not uncover: she *is* thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it *is* thy father's nakedness. The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, *whether she be* born at home, or born abroad, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover. The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs *is* thine own nakedness. The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she *is* thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's sister: she *is* thy father's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister: for she *is* thy mother's near kinswoman. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she *is* thine aunt. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter in law: she *is* thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife: it *is* thy brother's nakedness. Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness; *for they are* her near kinswomen: it *is* wickedness. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex *her*, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life *time*. Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman to uncover her nakedness, as long as she is put apart for her uncleanness. Moreover thou shalt not lie carnally with thy neighbour's wife, to defile thyself with her. And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through *the fire* to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I *am* the LORD.

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion. Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants. Ye shall therefore keep my statutes and my judgments, and shall not commit *any* of these abominations; *neither* any of your own nation, nor any stranger that sojourneth among you: (For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which *were* before you, and the land is defiled;) That the land spue not you out also,

when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that *were* before you. For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit *them* shall be cut off from among their people. Therefore shall ye keep mine ordinance, that *ye* commit not *any one* of these abominable customs, which were committed before you, and that ye defile not yourselves therein: I *am* the LORD your God.

Leviticus 18:3 "... after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances."

See verses 6 to 26:

Leviticus 18:27 "For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled; That the land spue not you out also, when ye defile it, as it spued out the nations that were before you."

Moses repeats the warning to the generation about to go over Jordan into the promised.

Deuteronomy 12:30, "Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? Even so will I do likewise? Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods."

God brings punishment upon nations for the evil that they do.

Because Israel did not obey God but turned to idolatry and did the same abominations in the sight of God as the Canaanites, the nation was dispersed from the land. This is described in Psalm 106

Psalms 106:34 "They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood. Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance? And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them; but they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: And He remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried

them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.”

The final restoration of Israel to the land will happen when Christ returns to deliver the nation.

Zechariah 12:10

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

Christ is their promised king and he will reign over the earth from Jerusalem.
Luke 1:32

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

At that time there will be no more abominations committed in the land, figuratively described as ‘no more the Canaanite’.

Zechariah 14:21

"Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts."

That the punishment was national and not individual is shown in the saving of Rahab and her house.

"By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace" Hebrews 11:31.

James 2:25 "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?"

A Canaanite was one of the twelve apostles. Matthew 10:4 “Simon the Canaanite...”