

Week 3 The Joshua Paradox: The God who is terribly compassionate.

The story of the Israelites marching round the walls of Jericho is very well known. What happened after the walls fell down?

Read Joshua 6: 20-21 Joshua 8 (all) Deuteronomy 7:16

What is the paradox? Krish Kandiah calls this paradox 'the God who is terribly compassionate'.

Read Matthew 5: 43-45

How can the God of love order the annihilation of a whole people-group, the mass slaughter of men and women, young and old, and even animals too? How can we take seriously the command of God to love our enemies, when he appears to ignore those injunctions himself?

Thinking over more recent history, has genocide been excused as acting in the same way as the conquest of Canaan? Can genocide ever be justifiable?

Is there any difference in God's instructions for the conquest of Canaan and other battles in the Old Testament?

Read Deuteronomy 20: 10-20

God's instructions in Deuteronomy 20 would have been very different to the prevailing culture of the Bronze Age when wholesale destruction was the norm in war. Once established in the Promised Land the Israelites were to defend their borders when they were attacked (as they were frequently) but they were not instructed to go to war with a view to increasing their territory. However this does not alter the fact that the conquest of Canaan makes for very uncomfortable reading.

Krish Kandiah suggests that the destruction of the Canaanites was:

- 1 to ensure the Israelites weren't contaminated by their god
- 2 God's punishment on Canaan that was actually 400 years in coming.

Read Leviticus 18: 24-25

'God did not lose his temper with the Canaanites suddenly and on a whim because he needed somewhere to give his people. Nor was it a divinely mandated smash-and-(land)-grab mission for Israel.'

Read Genesis 15: 7, 13-16 Abraham and his family had a glimpse of the Promised Land but were not truly established there. The 400 years Israel spent in Egypt gave the Canaanites time, 'time to show their true character; either to get worse, or to change their sinful practices. If God was being merciful to the Canaanites he did so at the expense of his chosen people, letting them be slaves and strangers in the land of Egypt.'

Did the Canaanites have any knowledge of God? There are a few hints in the Old Testament that God did not confine his relationship with man solely with the Israelites. Read Genesis 14:18 and Hebrews 7:11 also Exodus 3:1 and Exodus 18: 5-12 and Joshua 2: 8-11

What did the Canaanites do that was so bad? Read Deuteronomy 12:29-31

How do we react to the taking of innocent life?

Does man have a sense of needing and wanting a moral framework?

Do we want a God who demands justice?

Do we expect God to bring judgement?

We all want a God of love; but what relationship would we have with him if there were no corresponding judgement?

Do we let ourselves become contaminated by other gods and in what ways do we find ourselves worshipping them?

Thinking about the Joshua paradox encourages us to see God as he really is and not as someone we manipulate to fit our personal desires and beliefs.

How and when will our God of love bring about judgement? Read 2 Peter 3: 8-15