**Evangelising the New Atheists with the Old Testament:**

**Preaching the Canaanite ‘Genocide’**

The “New Atheists” speak as though portions of the Bible were smoking guns, as obviously evil as revelations of abuse from priests. They assume that Christians will blush and either apologise for these passages, or explain them away. In fact, the gospel calls the New Atheists not only to repent of sins in general, but to repent specifically of their claim to be moral judges standing over the Bible. We will look at the command to destroy the Canaanites within its biblical context and show that it is integral to God’s nature as life-giving and life-protecting. In fact, we will further show that it is only when we listen to what the OT teaches (including these commands) that we can call genocide evil. By contrast, atheists (new or otherwise) have no solid grounds for critiquing the violence which filled the 20th century.

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1. Introduction: A Choice of Courtrooms
	1. What happens when a society sits in judgment on someone?
		1. Who judges the judges?
		2. We reveal our standards of right and of wrong
	2. An ancient example
		1. How do we judge this courtroom?
	3. Our agenda
		1. What we’re *not* doing in this session
			1. “If only you knew God better, you’d see that he’s likeable.”
		2. What we are doing in this session
			1. *“Do get to know God better.”*
			2. *“Let’s look at the Bible carefully and accurately.”*
			3. *“And then let’s change our values to agree with what we find.”*
		3. We need to begin with ourselves: persuade ourselves that God is good before we seek to persuade others.
2. Part I: The Case for the Prosecution
	1. Deut 20:16–18
		1. New Atheists think they have a “smoking gun”
		2. It’s the other way around: this passage shows
			1. The goodness of the gospel
			2. The moral failure of atheism
	2. Some initial clarifications
		1. Why is this text a problem, after flood and before Jesus’ return to judge?
		2. Careful: what does it teach? how is it wrongly understood?
		3. Concrete command
			1. Specific in history
			2. Specific in geography
			3. Specific in people
			4. Not an example
		4. Even if it were an example, it would forbid genocide and terrorism
			1. Audible command
			2. Miraculous context
			3. Miraculous requirements
			4. Compare modern terror and war
		5. However, it was gory and must not be “softened”
	3. This passage forbids genocide
		1. It shows why murder is evil
		2. Without it, we lose the ability to *condemn* moderngenocide
		3. Western world has lost that ability
	4. In God’s story: love of life and people
		1. Eden: lover of people
		2. Noah: life defended
		3. Abraham: life for all the world
		4. The promised pro-life bubble
	5. This command within the Law
		1. In Deut, the 10 commandments are focussed on Canaan
		2. Each is given an exposition, in order, from ch 12-25
		3. 1st & 2nd (no other gods) => ch 12 no Canaanite shrines
		4. 3rd (name in vein) => ch 13-14, no Canaanite syncretism
		5. 6th (murder) => chs 19-22, including our passage (ch 20)
			1. How not to murder if war against nations generally
			2. But specifically, death penalty on Canaan
			3. Create a no-murder zone in the world (mini flood; mini 2nd coming)
	6. Not racial, not ethnic
		1. Israel’s standard
		2. Rahab etc.
3. Part II: Examining the Prosecution
	1. Method
		1. Not cheap points: “you too are bad!”
		2. Rather: please explain *on your own terms* why genocide is wrong
		3. By what yardstick are you able to sit in judgment on genocide?
	2. Social Darwinism
	3. Atheist paradises on earth
	4. Relativism
4. Part III: Now Choose Life!
	1. What happened to the life-defense zone?
		1. Isaiah 49:6
		2. Matthew 1:1–17
		3. Matthew 28:18–20
	2. John 10:10