

A GOOD BOOK?

The Bible on Trial, Pt. 3

A GOOD BOOK?

- Genesis

- So the LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land...for I am sorry that I have made them” (6:7).
- God tested Abraham and said... “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love...and offer him...as a burnt offering” (22:2).

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- Exodus

- When a man strikes his slave, male or female...if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money (21:20-21).

- Numbers

- ...the LORD said...“Take all the chiefs...and hang them in the sun...that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.” ...Nevertheless, those who died by the plague were 24,000 (25:4, 9).

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- Deuteronomy

- When the LORD your God brings you in the land...and you defeat them...show no mercy to them (7:2).
- If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, then...she shall be his wife, because he has violated her (22:28-29).

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- Joshua

- So Joshua struck the whole land...he left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the LORD God of Israel commanded (10:40).
- For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts...in order that they...should receive no mercy but be destroyed (11:20).

A GOOD BOOK?

- Objecting to a “Good” Book

1. **God doesn't exist:** God of the Bible is not good.

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

-Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

“The Bible may, indeed does, contain a warrant for trafficking in humans, for ethnic cleansing, for slavery, for bride-price, and for indiscriminate massacre, but we are not bound by any of it because it was put together by crude, uncultured human mammals.”

-Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great*

“You can read *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins, you can read *God is Not Great* by Christopher Hitchens, but the Bible itself will turn you atheist faster than anything.”

-Penn Jillette

“It would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God.”

-Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*

A GOOD BOOK?

- **Objecting to a “Good” Book**

1. **God doesn't exist:** God of the Bible is not good.

2. **God isn't like the Bible:** The Bible is not good.

“To reject the Bible completely is to miss its proclamation of God’s love, but to accept it uncritically is to support some ugly notions about God. ...I no longer want anything to do with a god who punishes homosexuals by giving them a terrible disease...who murders children in order to maintain racial purity. I cannot believe in a god who will eternally punish a vast majority of his children. This isn’t the God of Jesus. This isn’t the God I have experienced. It is certainly not a god I can worship.”

-Philip Gulley and James Mulholland, *If Grace is True*

“Marcion expressly and openly used the knife...since he made such an excision of the scriptures as suited his own subject-matter.”

-Tertullian

“Rather than rejecting the Old Testament, I have proposed an interpretive approach that can help us evaluate the appropriateness of various portrayals of God in the Old Testament. Since some Old Testament portrayals of God do not accurately reflect God’s character, these particular portrayals should not be used to determine our beliefs about what God is really like....”

-Eric A. Seibert, *Disturbing Divine Behavior*

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- Objecting to a “Good” Book

1. **God doesn't exist:** God of the Bible is not good.

2. **God isn't like the Bible:** The Bible is not good.

Problem?

How did Jesus, the Savior, the “good” one, view God and the Scriptures?

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- Jesus on the Old Testament
- quoted it in the temptation - Luke 4:4, 8, 12
- used it at the start of his ministry - Luke 4:17-21
- fulfilled it, vowing to accomplish all - Matthew 5:17-18
- referred to it in parables - Matthew 21:33; Isaiah 5:1-2
- identified with it in his death - Mark 15:34; Psalm 22:1

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- Jesus on Us
- Now is the judgment of this world (John 12:31-33).
- Jesus on God
- Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone (Mark 10:18).
- None is righteous...all have turned aside...no one does good, not even one (Romans 3:10-18).

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- God on His Creation
- In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1).
- And God saw that the light was good (1:4).
- And God saw that it was good (10, 12, 18, 21, 25).
- And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good (31).

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- The concern for the “Right Evaluator”
also known as “The Judge of All the Earth”
- Far be it from you to do such a thing, to put the righteous to death with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just? (Genesis 18:25).

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The Objection: The Bible and the God in it are not good.

- **A Summary**

1. Sexism

2. Racism

3. Violence

- **Not Included**

4. Every Instance

5. Man's Misapplication

6. Extra-Biblical Events

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I. Sexism - Where It Began

- Genesis 1:25 → 31
good → very good

- *What happened?*

- Then God said, “Let us make man in our image...let them have dominion...So God created man...male and female he created them (1:26-27).

- Both crafted in God’s image. Both given dominion.

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I. Sexism - Where It Began

- Genesis 2:18 - A “helper”? Meaning “inferior”?
 - “ezer” - Genesis 49:25; Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29 - all refer to God
 - exception: Deuteronomy 32:38 - other gods
 - Your God helps you (1 Chronicles 12:18).
 - God is my helper; the LORD is the upholder of my life (Psalm 54:4).

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

-Genesis 3:1-6

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1 Timothy 2:14

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I. Sexism - Where It Began

- Genesis 3:14-19 - cursed?

1. the serpent, the ground man works, and...?

2. “he shall rule over you”

“as Christ loved the church” (Ephesians 5:25).

3. the good stuff for the woman

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I. Sexism - Rewarding Rape

- Protects Lot's daughters - Genesis 19:10-13
- Protects a wife's standing in her home and community - Numbers 5:11-31
- And gives her to the rapist? - Deuteronomy 22:28-29

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I. Sexism - Rewarding Rape

- Deuteronomy 22:28-29 - in ancient culture
 - traumatized (as today)
 - unlikely to be desired for marriage
 - more likely to become poor
- “He may not divorce her all his days.” = Security
- Won’t marry her? = Worse (2 Samuel 13:16, 20)

I. Sexism - Final View

They are heirs with you of the grace of life.

-I Peter 3:7

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2. Racism - The Family Tree

- Made from one man - Genesis 3:20; Acts 17:26
 - dismissive of God's order
 - insulting of one's own family

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2. Racism - Conquest

- But the conquest of Canaan?
 - So Joshua struck the whole land...he left none remaining, but devoted to destruction all that breathed, just as the LORD God of Israel commanded (Joshua 10:40).

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2. Racism - Conquest

- Who was delivered from Egypt?
 - A mixed multitude also went up with them (Exodus 12:38).
- Who renewed the covenant with God in Canaan?
 - All Israel, sojourner as well as native born...There was not a word of all...Moses commanded...not read before all the assembly of Israel...and the sojourners...among them (Joshua 8:33-35).

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2. Racism - Conquest

- Who was protected by God's people?
 - Gibeonites - Joshua 10:12-13; 2 Samuel 21:1-3, 14
 - sojourners - Deuteronomy 10:18-19; 24:17-19

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2. Racism - Conquest

- Why destroy the people in Canaan?

1. No glorification of the brutality

2. Israel's legal right to the land - Genesis 23:17-18;
26:12; 33:19

3. God's promise to bless Israel and all nations - 12:7, 3

4. Punishment of evil - 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:5

And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right...as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them...they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God...they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings...Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight.

-2 Kings 17:9-18

None was left but the tribe of Judah only. Judah also did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced.

-2 Kings 17:9-18

I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply...Behold the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

-Jeremiah 23:3, 5

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3. Violence - What God Did

- Behold the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land a desolation and to destroy its sinners from it (Isaiah 13:9).
- Behold, I am against you, declares the LORD of hosts (meaning armies), and will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will make nations look at your nakedness and kingdoms at your shame. I will throw filth at you and treat you with contempt and make you a spectacle (Nahum 3:5-6).

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3. Violence - What God Did

- The LORD is a jealous and avenging God; the LORD is avenging and wrathful; the LORD takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies. The LORD is slow to anger... The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him (Nahum 1:2-3, 7).
 - God's anger does not blind him to the innocent.
 - God's anger is slow burning.

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3. Violence - What God Did

- When God saw...how they turned from their way, God relented of the disaster...(Jonah 3:10).
- For I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster (4:2).

While he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, 'Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!' And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

-2 Kings 2:23-24

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3. Violence - What God Did

- Elisha and the She-Bears
 1. boys = young men
 2. Elisha's track record
 3. she-bears did what?
 4. Elisha's well-known Boss

The LORD...sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people...but they kept mocking the messengers of God...scoffing at his prophets...

-2 Chronicles 36:15-16

And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day.

-Deuteronomy 6:24

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.

-1 John 5:3

You are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake...

-Nehemiah 9:17

Righteousness and justice are the
foundation of your throne;
steadfast love and faithfulness
go before you.

-Psalm 89:14

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Closing Suggestions

1. Know God has a reason for what he does.
2. Read the whole context.
3. Be reasonable.