

Is God Genocidal?

Recently, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, gave a speech defending Israel's invasion of Gaza to punish Hamas. And in that speech, he mentioned the word, Amalek. That's a reference to 1 Samuel 15:2-3, where God instructed King Saul to punish the Amalekites by attacking and destroying them, even their women and children. When pundits in the West heard that word, they went bonkers. "How dare the God of Israel demand genocide?" they screeched. Liberals everywhere were aghast that what Israel is doing now in its war with Hamas is repeating what the God of the Bible demands, genocide. It's of a piece with the long-standing argument of atheists that God is cruel in commanding Israel to wipe out the Canaanites. To them, the Bible is hate speech.

God doesn't need us to defend Him. Nevertheless, we should understand what's happening in Scripture for two reasons: (1) to avoid any temptation to share in that fraudulent assertion; and (2) to be able to respond to the Bible's critics. So, is God genocidal?

First, let's understand that God is good. He is trustworthy, truthful, wise and just, to mention a few attributes of His ineffable Person. As Creator, He owns all that exists. He owns all life forms, including every human person. He has the inalienable right to dispose of His creatures according to His good and holy will. He also is sovereign over His creation, which He rules in perfect justice. That means He holds humanity, created with a measure of moral freedom, to live according to His revealed righteous standards. Humanity must either obey Him or suffer consequences, which includes losing the right even to exist in His creation. So He has declared death to all who live in disobedience to Him. God doesn't care if those in rebellion against Him accuse Him of injustice ("genocide"). Their very rebellion against God demonstrates they are incapable of moral analysis. No human has the ability or the right to question God, especially as all humanity is already under condemnation for sin and rebellion against God. The only appropriate stance before God is to humbly appeal for mercy.

Yes, it is true that genocide is morally wrong. That is an ethic necessary for humanity to flourish in society, to live in peace with each other. The Nazi's attempt to annihilate all the Jews was evil as was the attempt by the Turks to annihilate the Slavs, or the attempt by the Aztecs to annihilate the Mayans, or the attempt by . . . hey, genocide is all over the pages of human history. And it's wrong, always.

But God is transcendent. He has great purposes and goals to achieve in His creation. What He has ordained for humanity as a rule by which we are to live can be superseded for God's justice to prevail. This is true not only in the realm of ethics, but in every aspect of life. God, for example, forbids us from committing murder, yet He takes life – everyone's. We, for another example, are to treat everyone as equal, yet God gives some people more talent or intelligence or skills than others. Is God arbitrary? No. He is holy. And He has perfectly just and right reasons for everything He does. And He's under no obligation to share those reasons with us, although some reasons can be adduced from what is in Scripture. And so books, tracts, scholarly articles, treatises, dissertations, and more have been written in the attempt to explain why God is good yet can command His chosen people to annihilate the Amalekites and the Canaanites. We don't need to repeat those arguments here. Another approach seems better.

God judges. If we acknowledge this, we can understand how He can ordain death for sin, how He can uphold justice in spite of sin, how He can condemn those who reject His offer of salvation. Only by acknowledging that God judges does Deuteronomy 30 make sense: He sets before us a choice, being on the side of God and doing good, or rejecting God and expressing evil. If we acknowledge that God judges, the problem of theodicy becomes moot and we can live as God wills, to His glory. God judges His human creatures. It therefore is the epitome of folly to hold God in contempt. That's what the Amalekites did, and so did the Canaanites. They knew what Rahab knew, but whereas Rahab acted to honor God and so was saved, all the others chose to hold God in contempt. They suffered for their bad choice. And so will all who hold God in contempt. It's a cosmic truth: God is not only Creator, He's our Judge. It therefore is perilous in the extreme to challenge His goodness.

God has clearly revealed what our responsibility is, and that's to know Him (to the extent that He's revealed Himself in Scripture), and to love and trust Him. And obey Him. Whatever our personal circumstances, degree of

understanding, sacrifice needed, or the consequences, our responsibility as His creature is plain. Jesus was silent before Pilate because He knew that God was trustworthy, so He could endure the shame and the agonies of flogging and crucifixion in the full and confident expectation of being vindicated. We're to live like that as well. But there's a problem: We need to be of a certain humble disposition to submit to God's rule and will. Sin makes us proud, self-willed, god-like. Those who suppose that their minds and moral sensibilities enable them to determine justice apart from God are expressing foolish rebellion against God. He has already ordained death because of sin and death will overtake them too. Whatever do those who challenge God's justice and goodness expect to be their ultimate destiny?

In surpassing love, in love so transcendent we can only marvel at it, God Himself endured agonizingly painful self-sacrifice in order to free us from the guilt of sin and our enslavement to sin. Whoever rejects what God in grace and justice has done for us holds God in contempt and so deserves to forfeit life. Those who accuse God of "genocide" and allege that His Word is "hate speech" are . . . what other word suffices? Fools. Repudiating the revelation that God has lovingly given us, they cannot know the spiritual truths necessary to understand life. They therefore suppose that death brings existence to an end. So they hate death and, to their tragic surprise and regret, ultimately will be forced to experience eternal death as well. This is folly in the extreme.

God is glorious, majestic, excellent in all His Being and His ways. He is brilliant Creator, sovereign Ruler, and loving Redeemer. He seeks to bless us in ways too wonderful to review here. At *minimum*, we have a creaturely obligation to honor Him. What He asks of us is to know Him, love Him, humbly yield to His authority and obey His revealed will. And further, to be united to the Son. And so we take His side, the side of good in His cosmic conflict with evil. In all these ways we not only honor God, we fellowship with Him eternally.

Enough discussion! Now let's answer the question, Is God genocidal? Genocide, defined by those with an anti-theistic, totalitarian agenda and invoked to advance the supposed moral virtue of the accusers and to generate intolerance of their targeted opponents [Jews and Christians], is an expression of hatred and the deliberate annihilation of certain people because of their politics, ethnicity, race or culture. So emphatically, No. God is good. He loves all His creatures. But God is just. He exercises perfect, retributive justice, condemning without regard to politics, race, ethnicity, or culture all humans who practice evil and reject the extensive warnings in Scripture and the offer of grace and mercy that is freely available in the Gospel. That justice, which will be realized fully at the end of time, was expressed proleptically in the commands to annihilate the Amalekites and Canaanites. I will also suggest that the command to take the lives of those who themselves take human life (Genesis 9:5c,6) serves as the moral justification for dealing with the Amalekites and Canaanites. The Bible is not hate speech, it is transcendent love speech.

But let's ask, Why do the Palestinians seek to annihilate Israel? Why do those on the political left in the West support the Palestinian cause? The answer is not "settler colonialism" or oppression. That is pretense, propaganda. The reason is, Islam is a Satanic counterfeit of Judaism. So to remove the true so that only the false exists, Judaism (that is, the Jewish people) has to be annihilated. That is real genocide! Another reason that Islam AND the secular West hate Jews is that Judaism, by its existence, bears testimony to the reality of the God of the Bible. And that they hate because they base their very lives on the hope that God doesn't exist. And for that reason they hate Christianity too. And a third reason is, Satan, who rules Islam and the secular West, needs Jews and Christians wiped off planet Earth for his own security. If there's no Israel and if there's no Church, Christ cannot return. Satan's kingdom would then endure forever.

God made man in His image, and proud, envious Satan hates that. Satan hates humanity. So he seeks the destruction of all humans. He doesn't have the authority to do that himself, so he tempts us to sin and to do evil so that God must justly condemn the very creatures that He loves. It's Satan who is genocidal. This is why the Church was commissioned to take an aggressive stance toward the forces of Satan by proclaiming the Gospel in all the world. Ah! If only we'd done that. If only we'd do that!