

1. How do we connect this extermination with love for our neighbor (one could turn this into love the neighbor and hate the enemy, Matt. 5:43)? How do we square the command to exterminate with the sixth commandment? Can we call for a holy war today?

How does extermination comport with justice, especially when there is total destruction? This question already came up in Exodus and numbers (the Lord went to war with Amalek, Ex. 17:16; some enemies were put under a vow of destruction, Num 21:2-3, the kingdom of Og had no survivors, Num 21:35, "utter destruction" included leaving no survivors, Num 24:19-20, and all the inhabitants of the land are to be driven out, Num 33:51, 55). However, there are cases where captives are taken when the Lord's vengeance is executed, Num 31:1-3. Thus, *we can define holy war as the calling of Israel by God to be the Lord's army to execute His vengeance in driving out all the inhabitants of the land He promised to their forefathers. It included putting people "under the ban" or devoting them all to destruction* (men and women, young and old, Josh. 6:21; 11:16-23; even Israelite cities, Deut 13:14-15). By direct command, the Lord was executing justice against a sinful people, but are they more sinful than Israel? No, they are not (Deut. 9:4-5), but it is a matter of sin and *justice sovereignly executed* as indicated by Gen. 15:16 with the language of "executing the Lord's vengeance in the context of election (Deut. 9:4-5) and reprobation (Josh. 11:20, "it was the Lord's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy").

If we look at the narrative in purely human terms, we may see only murderous aggression on the part of Israel against the Canaanites. If we view it in terms of distorted OT religion, we have the origin in principle of Islam, which began about 750 AD. After the coming of Christ, the following things apply: a) There is now no direct revelation from the Lord telling His people what to do and where to go (not since the foundation for the church was laid down by the apostles and prophets, Eph. 2:20. b) If the Lord actually tells His people to exterminate a people, then His people must obey, but that no longer applies because not only do we have His word only in the 66 books and no word there to do such today (on the authority and promise of Christ), but judgment is delayed until the harvest at the end of the age. c) Instead of the sword of steel, the coming of Christ brings gospel to the nations (with the power of the sword put into the hands of the state and taken from the hands of the church). This is a new wineskin form of OT laws and sanctions. The sanction of death was predominate in the OT in anticipation of the death of Christ.

2. How do we learn that God accomplishes His purposes in stages from the book of Joshua?

Joshua only gave Israel, God's people, a temporary rest. Rest in the land was provisional. The land was a type of the city of God toward which Abraham moved in his pilgrimage. Thus, the writer of Hebrews reasons that "if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day" (Heb. 4:8). That other day was the promise of rest expressed through David in Psalm 95:7-8. Rest is still out in front of the people of God in the NT since God is pleased to work out his purposes for men and women, his image bearers, in history. He works out his purposes in stages, day by day, moving ever so deliberately forward toward consummate fulfillment.

Thus, we still have a Sabbath rest to keep (Heb. 4:9) in continuity with the promise and sign of the seventh day (Heb. 4:4) that still looks ahead to the day when we will rest from all our work on earth.

For the time being, therefore, we are to "make every effort to enter that rest" (Heb. 4:11). Likewise Hebrews 4 tells us to "be careful" (1), "to hold firmly to the faith we profess" (14) and to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (16).