



The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites

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Is God a moral monster?

The topic of holy warfare is always a controversial subject within ethical discussions. Renowned scholar John H. Walton teams up with J. Harvey Walton to take readers on an archaeological dig of sorts in *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest*. They look into the shocking texts of the Old Testament to answer this question: Do the so-called holy war texts of the Old Testament portray a divinely inspired genocide?

“There is a lot of misunderstanding about the Conquest and it is giving skeptics a reason to attack God and the Bible and giving Christians doubts about God and the Bible,” write the authors. “We contend that the Canaanites were not being judged for sin and that the Israelites were not under orders to destroy them. The nature of the conquest has been misunderstood because we have lost touch with the ancient world and the theology of the Old Testament.”

Their digging asks questions such as:

- What happens when we take new approaches to and frame new questions about the Conquest?
- Were the Canaanites punished for sinning against the covenanting God?
- How are the Canaanites portrayed and why?
- What happens when these texts are examined under their ancient context?
- What does the word *herem* mean if it doesn't mean “utterly destroy,” as it traditionally is interpreted?
- Is God a moral monster, committing or condoning genocide as some have interpreted from this text?

“The conquest of Canaan is arguably the most intractable ethical problem in the Bible, and to date no solution has garnered a consensus,” says John W. Hilber, professor of Old Testament at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. “These authors offer a genuinely fresh approach to mitigate the difficulties. Deeply rooted in ancient Near Eastern mores and reconsideration of key biblical words and texts, the arguments challenge many commonly held ideas. While provocative at times, this book deserves careful consideration.”

The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest, much like the other “Lost World” books that have been previously published, keenly recalibrates our perception and reframes our questions. While not attempting to provide all the answers, it offers surprising new insights and clears the ground for further understanding.



TALKING POINTS

John H. Walton (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School. Previously he was professor of Old Testament at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for twenty years. Some of Walton's books include *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, *The Lost World of Scripture*, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, *The Essential Bible Companion*, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, and *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (with Victor Matthews and Mark Chavalas).

J. Harvey Walton (MA, Wheaton College Graduate School) is a researcher in biblical studies and has contributed to a variety of publications.

"I never intended for *Lost World* to become a series," writes John Walton in the preface. "In fact, after each one, I state emphatically to friends, family, and students that this will be the last *Lost World* book! But in our Bible reading, all of us continually encounter portions that we find difficult to penetrate and understand. We need whatever help we can get to position ourselves in the ancient Israelite audience and hear the text as they heard it."