

Since God is a God of love, why does He kill people?

1. Kill and Murder are not synonymous.

The Old Testament records God killing multitudes of people, and some people want to believe this makes Him a murderer. The misconception that “killing” and “murder” are synonymous is partially based on the King James mistranslation of the sixth commandment, which reads, “Thou shalt not kill” ([Exodus 20:13](#)). However, the word kill is a translation of the Hebrew word ratsach, which nearly always refers to intentional killing without cause. The correct rendering of this word is “murder,” and all modern translations render the command as “You shall not murder.” The Bible in Basic English best conveys its meaning: “Do not put anyone to death without cause.”

...

As already stated, to kill and to murder are different things. Murder is “the premeditated, unlawful taking of a life,” whereas killing is, more generally, “the taking of a life.” The same Law that forbids murder permits killing in self-defense ([Exodus 22:2](#)).

Source: Got Questions: Does God killing people make Him a murderer?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-killing.html>

2. God is God and we are not. God is a holy God and we are not innocent.

In order for God to commit murder, He would have to act “unlawfully.” We must recognize that God is God. “His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He” ([Deuteronomy 32:4](#); see also [Psalm 11:7](#); [90:9](#)).

Some would argue that executing the innocent is murder; thus, when God wipes out whole cities, He is committing murder. However, nowhere in Scripture can we find where God killed “innocent” people. In fact, compared to God’s holiness, there is no such thing as an “innocent” person. All have sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)), and the penalty for sin is death ([Romans 6:23a](#)). God has “just cause” to wipe us all out; the fact that He doesn’t is proof of His mercy.

When God chose to destroy all mankind in the Flood, He was totally justified in doing so: “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” ([Genesis 6:5](#)).

Source: Got Questions: Does God killing people make Him a murderer?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-killing.html>

If God places such high worth on the life of every human, then why did He intentionally order the killing of many people in the Old Testament? In the Great Flood ([Genesis 6:1—8:22](#)), God destroyed all land-dwelling life on earth except for a remnant. Other significant examples of God killing people include the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah ([Genesis 19:1–29](#)) and the drowning of the Egyptian army at sea ([Exodus 14:26–31](#)). God instructed Israel to execute everyone in Jericho except for Rahab and her family ([Joshua 6:17, 21](#)). In a lesser-known account, God sent lions to kill some Assyrian ex-patriots ([2 Kings 17:25–26](#)).

Bible skeptics often ask, why is it acceptable for God to kill or command the slaughter of people? The answer is not complicated: God as Creator of the Universe is the Author of life ([Acts 3:15](#)). He

alone possesses the right and authority to give life and to take it away ([Genesis 2:7](#); [Job 1:21](#); [12:10](#); [Acts 3:15](#); [17:25](#)). God is also the only just Judge of sin ([Isaiah 13:11](#); [26:21](#); [Psalm 99:8](#); [Proverbs 11:21](#); [Amos 3:14](#); [Zephaniah 1:12](#); [Romans 2:12](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:6](#)). When people commit evil, God has the right and authority to carry out His punishment, and sometimes the only fitting punishment for the crime is death ([Genesis 2:17](#); [Leviticus 20:1–17](#); [Proverbs 11:19](#); [Romans 1:32](#); [1 Corinthians 11:29–30](#)).

The Bible clearly states that “the wages of sin is death” ([Romans 6:23](#)). God told Adam and Eve that, if they disobeyed His orders, they would die ([Genesis 2:17](#)). By the time of Noah’s Flood, humans had grossly violated their place in God’s order, once again stepping far beyond the limits God had marked out for them ([Genesis 6:1–4](#)). The flood was God’s divine punishment upon wicked people. Sin had become so widespread that God needed to reassert His lordship and give humanity a fresh start and another chance to obey Him.

Because we are not God, we do not have the right to end a human life except on certain exceedingly rare occasions permitted by God.

....

According to [Mosaic Law](#), God sometimes prescribed the death penalty for crimes other than murder ([Exodus 22:18–20](#); [35:2](#); [Deuteronomy 21:18–21](#)). Although these stipulations of capital punishment may seem harsh by today’s standards, in context, they helped keep the Israelites pure and set them apart from neighboring pagan peoples. God’s holy standard contrasts sharply against the depravity of sin and the degree of its destructiveness on society. Like the rest of the law, those regulations were fulfilled in Jesus Christ and are no longer legalistic obligations for God’s people ([Matthew 5:17](#); [John 1:17](#); [Romans 10:4](#)). Today, the only morally justifiable conditions for killing another person involve matters of [self-defense](#), the [death penalty](#) for the crime of murder, and killing in wartime.

Source: Got Questions: Why did God order the killing of people in the Old Testament?
<https://www.gotquestions.org/God-order-killing.html>

It is important to remember that, while God is a God of love, He is also a holy God, separate from sinners and perfect in righteousness, justice, and purity. The powerful seraphim are pictured as flying and calling, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty” ([Isaiah 6:3](#)). Judgment against rebellious and indifferent sinners is inevitable, apart from repentance, “for the wages of sin is death” ([Romans 6:23a](#)).

God had endured the idolatry, child sacrifice, and moral corruption of the original inhabitants of the land of Canaan for centuries. When He gave the land to Israel and ordered the destruction of the Canaanites it was both judgment on a people hardened against God and protection for Israel lest they be drawn into the corrupt life of the land’s inhabitants.

Our difficulty with these acts of judgment is closely associated with our failure to comprehend the purity of God and the sinfulness of mankind, including ourselves. According to the Bible, we all deserve not only physical death but eternal punishment—apart from the death of Jesus as our substitute. Our only hope for escaping the wrath of God is through repentance from sin and by faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord.

...

Because God is just, He cannot excuse sin or act somehow as if it did not exist. But because God is also loving, He does not want us to have to endure the punishment we deserve for our sins. We do ourselves no good by thinking we have a greater sense of justice than God Himself.

Source: Billy Graham Evangelical Association: Answers: I'm troubled by Old Testament stories about God destroying or ordering the destruction of whole cities. Isn't God a God of love?
<https://billygraham.org/answer/im-troubled-by-old-testament-stories-about-god-destroying-or-ordering-the-destruction-of-whole-cities-isnt-god-a-god-of-love/>

3. False Distinction

One reason this problem has persisted is that many Christians aren't comfortable with God judging people; they draw a distinction in their minds between the God of the OT and the non-violent, peaceful Jesus of the NT. However, this distinction is an artificial one, Jesus regularly denounced others and threatened judgment. He took a whip and drove moneychangers out of the temple (Jn 2:15). Never mind what he said in Matthew 18, ". . . whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." So this distinction between God in the OT and Christ in the NT falls flat on death ears. Christ didn't downplay the texts depicting judgment and for modern Christians doing so actually skews the image of Christ.

Source: Cross Examined: Keeping the Slaughter of Canaan in Context
<https://crossexamined.org/keeping-the-slaughter-of-canaan-in-context/>

4. Problems with objecting the slaughter of the Canaanites

- 1- *Objections like these do not refute Christian theism; this objection is simply an argument against Biblical inerrancy (a non-essential doctrine) nothing more.*^[3]
- 2- *The Canaanites were wicked (on par with ISIS) and ripe for judgment.*
- 3- *The battle was primarily about the land as there was no command to "hunt the Canaanites down to the ends of the earth."*
- 4- *The Bible is clear that all of the Canaanites were not executed.*
- 5- *These commands could well have been figurative speech (i.e., "our football team is going to kill your team!")*^[4]
- 6- *Objections like these support premise (2) of the moral argument for God's existence (Therefore, God exists).*
- 7- *Lawmakers have the ability to issue different commands to certain individuals in extreme circumstances.*
- 8- *If God really did issue these commands to kill people, whom did God sin against? Who is He accountable to?*
- 9- *Given God's property of omniscience and perfect intelligence, God makes the best decision in every scenario and situation. God would know what would happen if He did not issue the commands to destroy the Canaanites.*
- 10- *Flight 93 and WWII atomic bomb examples demonstrate that it is not always wrong to issue commands where innocent lives are taken.*

Source: Cross Examined: Ten Problems with the Canaanite Objection
<https://crossexamined.org/ten-problems-with-the-canaanite-objection/>

5. Other considerations:

Summit Ministries: How Do We Understand Violence the Old Testament?

<https://www.summit.org/resources/videos/how-do-we-understand-violence-the-old-testament/>

Summit Ministries book: *Is God a Moral Monster?: Making Sense of the Old Testament God*

<https://store.summit.org/Is-God-a-Moral-Monster> NOTE: I have not personally read this book, but I am a big fan of Summit Ministries and therefore trust that this would be a good read. I might purchase it myself.

Frank Turek video: Does the Old Testament Command the Stoning of Children?

<https://www.facebook.com/drfrankturek/videos/2447346702171927>