

How Do We Reconcile The God of the Old and New  
Testament?

Exodus 34: 1-14

A recent poll shows that 42% of Americans believing that "people of faith" are part of the problem in our world.

-Barna Poll

## The Complexity of Scripture

(v.5-7) Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. 6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

## Deuteronomy 20:16-18

“Only in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite, Amorite, Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord your God”

The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction

—Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*

# HOW WE APPROACH THE COMPLEXITY OF SCRIPTURE

The Fictional Approach

The Whirlwind Approach

The Wrestling Approach

A healthy approach to God and scripture require us to wrestle with the problem passages in the Bible.

# PRINCIPLES FOR WRESTLING WITH PROBLEM PASSAGES OF THE BIBLE

Beware of interpreting ancient terms in modern connotations

Wrestling with the text requires us to pay close attention to  
genre



I believe that our approach to such problem texts should be one of 'wrestling' rather than 'solving'...Such texts are wounds that must be kept open.

—Alastair Roberts

## Distinguish between Description and Prescription

I've found there are two kinds of R-rated movies. Some deliberately delight in gratuitous vice to degradingly stimulate the viewer (think *Fifty Shades of Grey*). Others deal honestly with gritty realities to confront us with hard features of our fallen world (think *Saving Private Ryan*). I would suggest Scripture's "R-rated" nature is of this second sort: it confronts us with life east of Eden, not to tantalize us, but to confront us with the truth of our predicament, and the God who cares enough to seriously engage...

—Joshua Ryan Butler, *Skeleton's in God's closet*

## Distinguish between Description and Prescription

First, just because the Bible mentions something, doesn't mean it condones it

Secondly, sometimes the way things are described offers an implicit critique

Finally, Recognize the "redemptive movement" at work in Scripture, where God patiently sows seeds of cultural transformation that take time to grow to fruition

The character of God, while progressively revealed, is consistent throughout Scripture

Hebrews 1:1

Long ago God spoke to the fathers by the prophets at different times and in different ways. 2 In these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son.

Colossians 1:15

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

The cross is the fullest revelation of who God is

(v.10) Then the Lord said: “I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you.  
11 Obey what I command you today.