

# HOLY WAR

## Part 14 of Foundations 260 - OT. Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

Peter Foxwell. Cornerstone Church. May 24, 2026.

### WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Today's teaching is focused on "holy war."

- It's a controversial and potentially confusing concept.
- How can we reconcile a loving and gracious God with a God who destroys nations?
- We can, but first we need to know what God is like. What is his nature?

### DEUTERONOMY 7

Israel was massed on the border of the Promised Land.

- Moses gave them last-minute instructions before entering the Land.
- The instructions contain three insights into God's nature.

Read Deuteronomy 7:1-11.

#### 1. GOD IS JUST - verses 1-5

The Land was occupied by people who rejected and replaced God.

- Their religions demanded evil practices - child sacrifice, bestiality, etc.
- So, God instructed Israel to "completely destroy them" - verse 2. The phrase points to this being an offering to God - an act of holy war.
- The passage offers two reasons:
  - Verse 4: "They will turn your sons away from me to worship other gods."

- Verse 6: “For you are a holy people belonging to the LORD your God.”

**So, because God is just, he demanded destruction.**

- He judged the evil-doers and set things right.
- Would we want a passive, unjust God who winks at evil?

## **2. GOD IS LOVE - verses 6-8**

**How did Israel become God’s holy, chosen possession?**

- By love (verse 8). God loved them, rescued them, and gave them the Land.
- Yes, God loved the world, but he had special love for Israel.
- Why?

**Today, God loves the world, but has special love for his church.**

- He has blessed the church and, out of his pure love, has adopted its members into his family (Ephesians 1 and 2).
- Why?

## **3. GOD IS FAITHFUL - verses 9-11**

**God is faithful, so he keeps his promises.**

- He promised the Land to Abraham’s descendants (Israel).

*Exodus 6:8 (CSB) I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.*

*Deuteronomy 7:1 (CSB) When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and he drives out many nations before you ...*

- It’s God’s nature to be faithful. Nothing can derail his purposes (Numbers 23:19).

# THE “PROBLEM” OF HOLY WAR

**How can we reconcile a Holy War that destroys nations with a just, loving, and faithful God?**

- Because God is loving and faithful, he withheld judgment against the seven nations for hundreds of years (Genesis 15:16) before keeping his promise and giving the land to Israel.
- Because God is just, he took action against an evil culture.

**Here are some ways of looking at it:**

- It was war. Nations fight. God works through human actions
- “Completely destroy” was hyperbolic. The nations were actually dispossessed, not destroyed.
- Wicked people deserve judgment. A final Judgment Day is coming.
- Clearing the land of evil cultures preserved Israel and paved the way for the Savior, Jesus Christ.

## ONE MORE THING

**1400 years after the conquest of Canaan, God waged another holy war.**

- A war for the entire universe, fought against sin and the devil, by Christ and his Cross, for the worldwide church - people from every nation who turn to Jesus in faith.

**That holy war reflected God’s nature:**

- God’s love sent Jesus into the world (John 3:16).
- God’s justice was satisfied at the Cross (Romans 3:21-26).
- God’s faithfulness saved us and gathered us into the church, his loved, holy possession (1 Peter 2:9-10).

# PERSPECTIVES ON HOLY WAR

This week's small group questions are at: [www.famousgod.com/groups](http://www.famousgod.com/groups)

Why did God command the destruction of the Canaanites?

If you've ever read Deuteronomy 7 and felt troubled, you're not alone. God commanded Israel to destroy the Canaanite nations completely — and that's a hard thing to sit with. So what do we do with it?

First, remember that this wasn't random violence. It was in line with God's nature. The Canaanites had practiced child sacrifice, sexual immorality, and idolatry for centuries. God had actually waited 400 years (Genesis 15:16) before bringing judgment — a remarkable display of patience.

Second, this was God's judgment, not Israel's personal war. Just as God judged Sodom and later judged Israel herself through Assyria and Babylon, Canaan's destruction fit a consistent biblical pattern: when a society's wickedness reaches its full measure, God acts.

Third, it served a bigger purpose. God was protecting the family line that would eventually bring us Jesus. Without a clear separation from Canaanite religion, that mission could have been derailed.

Finally — and this is crucial — this command was never meant to be repeated. Christians today don't fight physical holy wars. Our battle is spiritual (Ephesians 6:12), and our weapon is the gospel.

These were unique, historically framed events pointing forward to the final judgment that Christ himself will one day bring (Acts 17:31; Romans 2:5-8; Revelation 20:11-15). How will we survive that Day? By taking shelter in Christ, the Savior.

Don't delay; turn from yourself and your sins, and turn to Jesus in faith. "Jesus, forgive me, remove my guilt, and restore me to the Father."

Written with AI assistance.