

Interpretation & Application – “What does it mean and what am I going to do about it?”**Does the Bible oppress women with its laws and requirements?****From introduction to the Interpretation and Application part of this series**

How should we Christians respond to such accusations? And how are we to respond to alleged Old Testament atrocities, and how do we to reconcile the seemingly different natures of God portrayed in the two testaments?

- ✓ Your God is arrogant and jealous and therefore not worthy of worship even if he did exist. (Nov. 3, 2013)
- ✓ Your God is intolerant of other religions and beliefs... (Nov. 10, 2013)
- ✓ Your God is guilty of genocide and ethnic cleansing and kills innocent children... (Deut. 20:16-18)(Nov. 17, 2013)
- ✓ Your God’s treatment of Isaac (telling Abraham to kill and sacrifice him), is child abuse... (Nov. 24, 2013)
- ✓ Your God requires or rewards human sacrifice. (Dec. 1, 2013)
- ✓ Your God says it is a sin to eat shrimp or to wear clothing made of mixed materials... (Object lesson to teach people to make distinctions between what is holy and what is profane... OT Israel’s civil and religious ceremonial laws are not binding on other nations. OT civil and religious ceremonial laws are not enjoined upon other nations. The OT moral laws are repeated in the NT and are the moral guidelines by which all people should live.)
- ✓ Your God punishes people too harshly ... Uzzah and Hell? (See Sept. 1, 2013 sermon Q&A w/Discussion Question #11: Why would (how could) a loving God send people to Hell? How can a loving God be so full of anger and wrath that He’d send someone to hell forever? And what about those who have never heard about Jesus and Christianity? Will God send them to hell? Read chapter five in The Reason for God: How Can a Loving God Send people to Hell?)
- ✓ Your God is homophobic, even to point of requiring that all homosexuals be killed...(Lev. 18:22 and 20:13) Civil laws of OT Israel have no authority in other nations. In John 8:1-11, Jesus protected the woman caught in adultery. Jesus did not call for the enforcement or application of OT Israel’s civil laws in the first century Roman Empire. He did call for the living of OT Israel’s moral laws.
- ✓ Your God endorses slavery... (Dec. 8, 2013)
- ✓ Christianity causes violence.... (see August 18th, 2013 sermon Q&A w/Discussion Question #10 If religion is such a good thing, why have so many wars been fought in the name of God and religion? The Church is responsible for so much injustice throughout history. So are all religions.
- ✓ Your God oppresses women with His laws and requirements.... (Dec. 15, 2013) (See also JULY 21, 2013 Q&A w/Discussion sermon Question #6: Isn’t the Bible culturally and socially regressive? ...its teachings about women... sexual morality...and what about homosexuality? That sermon focused on how the women in the early church era loved the teachings of Christianity in part because Christianity elevated women’s dignity, improved their treatment and bettered their lives.

Does the Bible oppress women with its laws and requirements? Dec. 15, 2013

Trial of jealousy in Numbers 5:11-31 What is with the witchcraft-like means to determine if a wife had committed adultery, the Law of Jealousy? Was that fair?

1. The Trial of jealousy in Numbers 5 protects women from false accusation.
No humiliation before proud husbands and bias mobs.
 - A. The civil laws of Israel protected women from a husband’s jealous rage or arbitrary threat of divorce to get rid of her cheaply.
 - B. Nothing in the concoction could hurt the woman.
 - C. She was assumed innocent unless a miracle showed her to be guilty. P. 105

¹⁶ ‘Then the priest shall bring her near and have her stand before the LORD, ¹⁷ and the priest shall take holy water in an earthenware vessel; and he shall take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water...

¹⁹ The priest shall have her take an oath and shall say to the woman, “If no man has lain with you and if you have not gone astray into uncleanness... be immune to this water of bitterness that brings a curse; ²⁰ if you, however, have gone astray... and if you have defiled yourself and a man other than your husband has lain with you” ²¹ (then the priest shall have the woman swear with the oath of the curse, and the priest shall say to the woman), “the LORD make you a curse and an oath among your people by the LORD’S making your thigh waste away and your abdomen swell; ²² and this water

that brings a curse shall go into your stomach, and make your abdomen swell and your thigh waste away.” And the woman shall say, “Amen. Amen.”

²³ ‘The priest shall then write these curses on a scroll, and he shall wash them off into the water of bitterness. ²⁴ Then he shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that brings a curse, so that the water which brings a curse will go into her and *cause* bitterness. ...When he has made her drink the water, then it shall come about, if she has defiled herself and has been unfaithful to her husband, that the water which brings a curse will go into her and *cause* bitterness, and her abdomen will swell and her thigh will waste away, and the woman will become a curse among her people. ²⁸ But if the woman has not defiled herself and is clean, she will then be free and conceive children.

2. If a jealous husband accuses his wife of adultery, he couldn't just kill her. The law God gave Moses offered protection and vindication for a falsely accused wife.

In her case a trial must be held to determine guilt or innocence since the facts are in doubt. But since there is only suspicion and no witnesses, how does one go about determining if this woman is telling the truth and that she has remained faithful to her husband? The answer Numbers 5 prescribes is trial by God. The elements of the trial are these: the woman's suspicious husband brings her to the Tabernacle and a Levite priest will then conduct a special ritual as part of the procedure. The ritual consists of the priest writing an oath on a scroll and then washing it off into a cup of water. The water is called holy water in many translations but in fact holy water is the same thing as living water. That is, living water is but water from a moving source like a river, stream, or artesian fountain. Living water is required for all holy priestly ritual, and thus it is called holy water. Then some dust is gathered from the Tabernacle floor and put into the cup of water along with the ink of the letters of the oath. Understand that the key to the letters of the oath is God's name. An oath is not an oath if God's name is not invoked. Note that there is nothing in this mixture that could harm the woman: running water (as opposed to stagnant water) ink from the scroll and some dust from the floor. It probably didn't taste too good, but it certainly could not cause any major harmful effects.

The woman drinks the water and the results will be observable by all. If her thigh wastes away and her abdomen swells, then she is guilty and will never be able to bear children. She was guilty and this is her punishment. If she has no side effects and is able to have children, she was innocent and the children are her reward.

3. This law provides a protection to an innocent wife accused by a jealous husband by providing a means by which her innocence may be vindicated publicly and allows the jealous husband to be guiltless since he has not beaten or harmed (or even murdered) his wife merely because of suspicion.

In Sharia law, a husband is able to punish a wife if he suspects infidelity. Sharia recognizes no protection for the innocent (unlike God's law which is deeply interested in protecting the innocent) and does not provide sufficient evidentiary requirements to prevent miscarriages of justice. In God's law, the Bible, women were protected. By protecting the interests of innocent woman and removing the enforcement from the jealous husband, the Biblical law provided justice to both the husband and wife, justice that is denied in Sharia law.

Impurity after child birth Lev. 12:1-8 (uncleanness after childbirth)

1. Lev. 12:1-8 stipulated twice the time of ritual uncleanness for the birth of a girl (80 days) as opposed to a boy (40).
 - A. New Atheists assume “female inferiority”.
 - B. Students of the Bible read verse 5 and see that the reason is female [bleeding](#), the mother's, and often the daughter's. In the case of female births there were two sources of ritual uncleanness: bleeding by the mother and bleeding by the daughter.
2. WebMD explains that vaginal bleeding with newborn girls “is perfectly normal -- it is caused by the withdrawal of the hormones she was exposed to in the womb.”
3. The New Atheists don't notice that the required purification offering is the [same](#) regardless of the gender of the child.

Levirate marriage: Deut. 25:5-10

Levirate marriage: If a woman's husband dies without having had a son, she marries his brother in order to have a son.

⁵ If brothers are living together (on the same property) and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her.

⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷ However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, “My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me.” ⁸ Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, “I do not want to marry her,” ⁹ his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line.” ¹⁰ That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.

1. OT civil laws said that should a man die without having a son, his brother or next closest relative was required to marry his widow. The son born from that relationship would then carry on the dead man's name and would inherit his property.
2. A man *could* marry his brother's widow to raise up a son for her. It was optional. (Hittite law required it.) The widow benefitted from this and would shame her brother-in-law in the "sandal ceremony" if he refused.
3. The purpose for this was the protection of the widow, who would be without means of support in the culture of the time.

"Moses works within the constraints of his own ancient near eastern culture, wherein the practice of Levirate marriage was common place...Remember the destitution of Ruth and her mother-in-law Naomi at the beginning of the book of Ruth...even within the Mosaic Levirate law one could still work things out in another way...example: Boaz and Ruth." Hanegraaff <http://www.theblaze.com>

God blessed men who had multiple wives, and concubines

That God blesses someone does not indicate His approval of everything they do. Future generations of Christians may look back on and criticize the materialism of this generation, or the immodesty of this generation, or the sexual immorality of this generation. I hope they don't conclude that God approves of greed, immodesty and sexual immorality just because He blesses even though we sin.

1. Polygamy and concubinage happened but it was not God's will.
2. Divorce also happened, was legally regulated, but was not God's will. Jesus said that the law permitted because of hard hearts, but from the beginning it was not meant to be. (Matt. 19:8)
3. Wherever we see God's ideal of monogamy ignored, we witness strife, competition, and disharmony. The OT presents polygamy as not only undesirable but also as a violation of God's standards. OT narratives record all the mess that came from this marital arrangement.
4. God forbade kings to have more than one wife. (Deut. 17:17 ¹⁷ He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.)

"Not everything biblical characters do or say necessarily are to be emulated," Nettelhorst

Bride Price: (paying the girl's father for her hand in marriage)

1. The groom's family giving money to the bride's family in OT Israel is not buying a wife any more than the present day dowry system in India where the bride's family gives the groom's family money is buying a husband.
2. The New Atheists fail to recognize their own Western consumer driven cultural perspective when they say that the Bible says you can buy a wife like a mule.

Even Wikipedia understands this! Bride price, also known as bride wealth, bride token, is an amount of money or property or wealth paid by the groom or his family to the parents of a woman upon the marriage of their daughter to the groom. (*Compare* dowry, which is paid to the groom, or used by the bride to help establish the new household, and dower, which is property settled on the bride herself by the groom at the time of marriage.) purpose: the protection for the wife should her support (either by death or divorce) cease.

"This gift given to the bride's father (often several years worth of wages) compensated him for the work his daughter would otherwise have contributed to the family. The marriage gift – preserved by the husband throughout the marriage – also served as security for the wife in case of divorce or her husband's death. In fact, the bride's father would often give an even larger gift of property when the couple married." Copan, p. 117

Women as the spoils of war (Deut. 20:13-14; 21:10-14)

¹³When the LORD your God hands the town over to you, use your swords to kill every man in the town. ¹⁴But you may keep for yourselves all the women, children, livestock, and other plunder. You may enjoy the plunder from your enemies that the LORD your God has given you. (Deut. 20:13-14, NLT)

¹⁰"When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take them away captive, ¹¹and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and have a desire for her and would take her as a wife for yourself, ¹²then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. ¹³She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother **a full month**; and after that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴It shall be, if you are not pleased with her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes; but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her. (Deut. 21:10-14)

Option 1: After that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴It shall be, if you are not pleased with her (that is you change your mind about marrying her so you have decided that you do not want to "go

in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife”), then you shall let her go wherever she wishes; but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her (by taking her captive and shaving her head). (Deut. 21:10-14)

Option 2: After that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. ¹⁴ It shall be, if you are not pleased with her (that is you married her but have changed your mind and now do not want to be married to her anymore), then you shall let her go wherever she wishes; but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her (by marrying her and divorcing her). (Deut. 21:10-14)

1. Whatever the meaning of this legislation, "The humanitarian tone of it is unique in the ancient world". *James Burton Coffman Commentaries*.
2. The civil laws of OT Israel did not permit the rape and mistreatment of female captives.

Rape laws (Exodus 22:16-17, Deut. 22:23-29)

These laws cover many scenarios related to rape and infidelity, and all protect the woman and secure her well-being. Read *Is God a Moral Monster* p. 119-121. The law being argued over is Deut. 22:28-29.

²⁸ If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, ²⁹ then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days. (NASB)

²⁸ Suppose a man has intercourse with a young woman who is a virgin but is not engaged to be married. If they are discovered, ²⁹ he must pay her father fifty pieces of silver. Then he must marry the young woman because he violated her, and he may never divorce her as long as he lives. (NLT)

²⁸ If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, ²⁹ he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

1. The 'rape' that is talked about here is a case where a relationship between a young man and woman got out of hand, and her pressured her into it.
2. Rape was a capital crime. Boys who pressured the girl were quickly made the man of the house w/serious responsibilities, especially if the girl became pregnant.
3. This requirement that a "rapist" marry the violated woman was enacted in order to protect the woman whom he defiled with his sexual advances.

"His act has rendered her (in OT Israelite society) unacceptable as a wife for others...So this law was designed to indicate responsibility in the sex act for the person in a patriarchal context where women had little power and where the women if left to the event would be on her own." -Bock

4. The idea was to protect the woman and discourage sexual immorality. By marrying her, the "rapist" was accepting the consequences of his actions, paying her father the bride price and taking on the responsibilities of a husband to provide protection and security. And he could not divorce her.

No female priests

1. OT civil law forbade and protected against the practices of ANE pagan religions all of which involved sexual immorality, temple prostitutes, fertility rites, etc.

Sexual immorality and perversion were deified in the religions of the ANE. Israel was expressly forbidden to imitate these practices.

2. Gen 1-2 points us to the ideal view of women, and indicates male-female ontological equality, both being the image of God on earth.
3. OT law protected women and elevated their status in the world of that time.
Gen. 1:27; Gen 2:24; Ex. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Prov. 20:6; Prov. 18:22; etc.
4. The key NT passages on women's roles in family and ministry (Eph. 5; 1 Peter 3; 1 Cor. 11:5 and 13; 1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15) indicate that God intends men to lovingly lead in their households and in His household, the Church.

Roles are different. Husband –wife, government- governed, parent-child relationships express roles, not value, worth or dignity. Women are free to and encouraged to use their spiritual gifts for His kingdom, they just need to be careful not to usurp the God ordained authority of their husbands at home or their elders at church.

Message

The Bible affirms, respects, and protects the worth and dignity of women.