

Did God Command and Ordain Rape?

Reading through the Old Testament, one might be forgiven for thinking that God commanded and ordained rape.

Numbers 31 -(7) “And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males..... (9) And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods. (10) And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire. (15) And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive? (16) Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD. (17) Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. (18) But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves. 40 And the persons were sixteen thousand; of which the LORD'S tribute was thirty and two persons. 41 And Moses gave the tribute, which was the LORD'S heave offering, unto Eleazar the priest, as the LORD commanded Moses. 42 And of the children of Israel's half, which Moses divided from the men that warred, 43 (Now the half that pertained unto the congregation was three hundred thousand and thirty thousand and seven thousand and five hundred sheep, 44 And thirty and six thousand beeves, 45 And thirty thousand asses and five hundred, 46 And sixteen thousand persons;) 47 Even of the children of Israel's half, Moses took one portion of fifty, both of man and of beast, and gave them unto the Levites, which kept the charge of the tabernacle of the LORD; as the LORD commanded Moses.”

In Numbers 31, it is written that God instructed Moses to command the Israelites to wage war on the Midianites. They were to kill every man, regardless of age, and every non-virgin woman. These non-virgin, traumatised, very young women were forced to become the property of these murderous men – men who had just violently massacred their infant and grown brothers and fathers.

For what divinely inspired purpose were these very young virgin girls reserved?

Were these young girls spared the painful death (that they saw their brothers and fathers die) so that they could learn about the love of Jesus from the Israelites?

It is very unlikely. One must ask, why at least, weren't these girls' baby brothers also given the opportunity to learn about the coming, gentle Messiah predicted in Isaiah 53:9?

Were these prepubescent girls simply going to be forced into slavery to perform household tasks (eg. cleaning, food preparation etc)? If so, they need not have been virgins. In fact, the more experienced, older women would have known more about running a household efficiently than would very young virgin girls. But the Israelite men obviously found that these young girls possessed a very special value as virgins.

I suggest that the only special use that a virgin girl could provide that a recently widowed woman could not have provided, was a guarantee that she was free of sexual diseases.

Why was being free of sexual diseases so important to the Israelite men? One does not have to read too many historical reports of war crimes to see a familiar pattern. In war, the conquered men are murdered, while the women are repeatedly raped – conquered - by the same ‘heroes.’

If we believe that these commands to rape and murder originated with God, then we have a problem. Were these girls ‘divinely’ ordained to be raped by the same men that murdered their families? Even the holy priests and the Levites who worked in the temple, were allocated their ‘share’ of the slave girls. But women were not permitted to enter the temple beyond the outer court. So for what purpose were the young captive girls given to the Levites?

Some readers, might imagine that the situation whereby an Israelite man has sex with a young, unwilling virgin girl does not constitute rape; and that such a forced sexual ‘union’ constitutes a proper marriage. Consider that the girls referred to in this situation are very young – if the girls were not very young they would most probably have been already married or initiated into the sexual rituals and ceremonies which the pagans engaged at about 12+ years of age.

More evidence is found in the Bible to prove that it was not a legal, recognised and legal marriage that was consummated between the war hero and the war victim. ‘Marriages’ between Israelites and pagans were illegal under Mosaic law. After the 70 years of Babylonian captivity, when the Jews returned to Jerusalem, the book of Ezra notes that, when the law was read, the priests and other Israelite men repented of their sin and sent away their pagan wives. If they were genuine marriages, why were these wives, (many of whom were war captives) why were they sent away?

According to Numbers 31, the Israelite men retained very young virgin girls for their own sexual ‘use.’ That such a disgusting practice is considered to constitute a divinely-ordained genuine marriage is an insult to any Christian’s intelligence and I imagine it would be incredibly offensive to many women.

More evidence of the Israelites sexual preference for female war captives, (under God’s supposed direction), is found in Deuteronomy 21:10-14 NAB

"When you go out to war against your enemies and the LORD, your God, delivers them into your hand, so that you take captives, if you see a comely woman among the captives and become so enamored of her that you wish to have her as wife, you may take her home to your house. But before she may live there, she must shave her head and pare her nails and lay aside her captive's garb. After she has mourned her father and mother for a full month, you may have relations with her, and you shall be her husband and she shall be your wife. However, if later on you lose your liking for her, you shall give her her freedom, if she wishes it; but you shall not sell her or enslave her, since she was married to you under compulsion."

Note that the men chose pagan women according to their physical/sexual attractiveness. After the woman was forced to 'marry' (i.e. was raped by) the man who possibly murdered all the males in her family, she was still not safe from abuse. He could 'lose his liking for her' and 'legally' he could send her away and still be 'holy.' Consider the predicament of the young girl.

Because she saw her family violently murdered, she is suffering post-traumatic stress disorder. Because she was 'forced' to marry her family's murderer, she is depressed and possibly injured and pregnant, but definitely stressed and afraid. She is living in a foreign land. She possibly does not understand the Hebrew language. Her possessions are claimed by her captives, so she has no financial independence. She is a slave and in fact, a sex slave. Finally, after some time, her 'husband' doesn't find anymore delight in that girl and she is turned out of his house. Where can she go? She has no family left to return to for support. She has no method of going back to her homeland. As she is unaccompanied and alone, there is no guarantee of safe travel even if she tried to walk 'home' to her destroyed village. If she survives, this abused girl would likely develop an intense hatred for the Israelites and their religion. Is this a divinely inspired situation?

And again, rape is condoned in Deuteronomy 20.

(10) When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it. (11) And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee. (12) And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it: (13) And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword: (14) But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee."

In Judges 4 & 5, again, we see that the pagan virgins are 'divinely' taken – two damsels for one man - as spoils of a 'divinely' commanded war. The prophetess Deborah sang a song of jubilant celebration and praise to God, after Jael, another woman, drove a spike through her enemy's head, winning the war.

(Perhaps the Israelite woman was motivated to win the war, knowing full well the reward that awaited the married women who were unfortunate enough to be found on the losing side. The pagan enemy would likely kill her, as she had reduced value to them, not being a virgin).

4 "And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. ... 6 ...Hath not the LORD God of Israel commanded, saying, Go ...7... I will deliver him into thine hand..... 1Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying, 2 Praise ye the LORD for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. 30Have they not sped? have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two..."

Did God also ordain and organise that the war heroes should have two extra (unwilling) wives? If so, He must have ordained and organised rape as He is credited with winning the battle and directing the spoils of war.

In Zechariah the prophet claims, in his understanding of the vision, that it is God who brings the enemies to rape the backsliding Israelite women. Of course, it was not God who inspired the rapes, it was the God's evil enemy who inspired rape in the minds of their men whom he, Satan, controlled. However, the prophet, in his limited conception of God, credited God with sending the raping enemies instead. Of course, we don't say that the prophecy was false and throw out the baby with the bathwater, but we can understand that the prophet did not correctly describe just who was sending the enemy. God withdrew His protection from Jerusalem and Satan sent his evil agents. As in Job's misunderstanding, he also claimed that God was sending afflictions on him, (Thou He slay me, yet will I trust Him), but the reader is told that it was Satan who caused all Job's woes. God has been misunderstood by the OT prophets and Zechariah demonstrates that in chapter 14.

Zechariah 14:1-2 NAB

"Lo, a day shall come for the Lord when the spoils shall be divided in your midst. And I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for battle: the city shall be taken, houses plundered, women ravished; half of the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be removed from the city."

Exodus 21:7-11 NLT

When a man sells his daughter as a slave, she will not be freed at the end of six years as the men are. If she does not please the man who bought her, he may allow her to be bought back again. But he is not allowed to sell her to foreigners, since he is the one who broke the contract with her. And if the slave girl's owner arranges for her to marry his son, he may no longer treat her as a slave girl, but he must treat her as his daughter. If he himself marries her and then takes another wife, he may not reduce her food or clothing or fail to sleep with her as his wife. If he fails in any of these three ways, she may leave as a free woman without making any payment. (Exodus 21:7-11 NLT)

Did God ordain selling women as sex slaves? Did He ordain that sex slaves could be passed from one man to another at their whim? The abused woman had no option to give or to withhold her consent. She had to have sex with any man, who was regarded as her owner, in the same way that a farmer might organise the mating of his cattle. That is not a marriage relationship. It is not a permanent arrangement 'until death us do part.' It is not based on mutual love and consent. It is therefore, rape.

My position is that in the Old Testament, it is claimed that God commanded these heinous acts, but these representations of God's character were often faulty. The evidence is found in Jesus' own words. He said, "By their fruits you will know them."

Rape is not a fruit of the unselfish, loving spirit of God. Rape is sexual violence against women. It is sexual sin. All sexual sinners and murderers will be excluded from heaven, along with the fallen angel who inspired such acts and passed them off as being 'commanded by God.'

God ordained marriage –not rape.

There is something amiss with the Old Testament representations of God. If not, then your god condoned, organised, ordained and commanded the rape of little girls and he founded a sexist society.

In stark contrast, Jesus elevated and honoured women in society.

I don't worship a god that sanctions rape, but a God who, in the person of His Son, uplifted all humanity - men, women and little children of all sexes and all races.

How do all the women feel about this?

Were these rapes or not?

Did God command them or not?