

Responding to Hate Mail: 2 Samuel 12:11, Numbers 31:17-18 and the Morality of God

I am genuinely excited to announce that the Bold Apologia podcast has reached a new and encouraging milestone. It has grown in reach and visibility to the point where it is now receiving attention from critics of the Christian faith, particularly from those whom I have identified as internet atheists. One of the more surprising but strangely affirming results of this growth is the arrival of hate mail. While some may see that as a negative development, I see it as a sign that the message is spreading. The truth of the gospel is stirring hearts and minds, even if the initial response is resistance or hostility. When the light shines in the darkness, the darkness often pushes back. But that pushback can also become a powerful opportunity to give a reason for the hope that we have.

Over the years, I have noticed that many objections raised against the Bible and the Christian worldview tend to follow predictable patterns. Frequently, they involve passages from Scripture that are taken out of context and presented in a way that is meant to shock or scandalize. The accusation is often that the God of the Bible is immoral, unjust, or even cruel. These arguments are usually based on a superficial reading of the text and a lack of understanding of the historical and theological context in which the events occurred. When someone unfamiliar with the Bible hears these claims, they can seem persuasive. But when we take time to walk through the Scriptures thoughtfully and honestly, we find that the God revealed in its pages is far more just, merciful, and consistent than the critics would suggest.

In order to make my responses to this kind of hate mail more fruitful, I have decided to share some of them here on the blog. My goal in doing so is not to mock the individuals who send these messages, but to offer a biblical and reasoned response that can serve as both a defense of the faith and an encouragement to believers. I also hope that skeptics who are genuinely searching will find these responses helpful as they consider the claims of Christianity for themselves.

Each of these posts will follow a simple format. First, I will present the message or email I received. After that, I will share my direct response to the objection that has been raised, carefully addressing the Scripture that was misused or misunderstood. In this particular entry, we will be looking at two frequently misrepresented passages. The first is 2 Samuel 12:11, and the second is Numbers 31 17-18. These verses have been cited in an attempt to portray Christianity as a violent and immoral belief system, even going so far as to label it a “blood cult.” My hope is to show that such accusations fall apart when the full truth of the biblical narrative is brought into focus.

Let us begin by looking at the message that was sent.

“Speak For Yourself” From Dan Edwards

I just watched one of your YouTube videos, in which you speak for all atheists.

Let me help you out.

There is one primary book responsible for creating atheists, the Bible. Have you read it?

Do you believe in personal responsibility? Are you guilty of anybody else's crimes?

Let's open to 2nd Samuel 12:11. In the scripture God commands David's wives to be raped for David's sins.

Numbers 31 17 – 18. God commands the Israelites to kill everything including babies children and women and to take the young virgin girls as sex slaves.

These are just two examples of the complete immorality of christianity. I could give you dozens more illustrating your atrocious immoral Christian dogma. I think my point has been made.

This is why I am an atheist. The god of Christianity is a brutal murderous immoral thug.

The god of Christianity murders babies and children and rapes women.

I'm waiting for your apology sir. It's Christians who have an immoral framework. It's Christians who worship a blood cult, build on human and animal sacrifice.

My moral values far surpassed those of your Christian dogma. I would never harm a baby or rape a woman like your God does.

Deal with that sir.

My Response

Dan,

I can see that you're very upset, and honestly, I would be too if I had mistakenly believed that my video claimed to speak on behalf of all atheists. Let me assure you that I'm fully aware that atheists arrive at their conclusions through a variety of reasons. What fascinates me is the energy some devote to refuting the existence of a God they insist does not exist. Even now, you are writing to me to offer passionate refutations of a being you claim is imaginary. No one forced you to send this message, yet here you are, defending atheism, a worldview that is by its nature indifferent to the existence of deities, by pulling verses out of context to mock a faith you do not share.

I will gladly respond to your message, not because you owe me a reply or because you deserve an apology, but because I genuinely enjoy engaging with theology, writing, and these complex topics. Consider this response a labor of love aimed at clarity rather than concession.

Your argument rests on a highly selective reading of ancient texts that ignores their historical, literary, and theological contexts. Let us consider the passages you highlight: 2 Samuel 12:11 and Numbers 31:17–18. These texts, when examined within their original settings, are not normative moral prescriptions for Christians today but rather descriptive narratives embedded in specific historical circumstances.

Take 2 Samuel 12:11, which appears within the account of King David's grievous sin against Bathsheba and Uriah. In this passage, the prophet Nathan delivers God's judgment: "I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun." This is not a divine endorsement of sexual violence, nor does it portray God as orchestrating immorality. Rather, it is a pronouncement of judgment within the covenant framework of Israel's monarchy. God is declaring that the very structures of David's own household, corrupted by his abuse of power, will be the means by which discipline is carried out. The fulfillment of this prophecy takes place when Absalom, David's son, publicly takes David's concubines during a coup, not as a result of divine command, but as part of the tragic unraveling of David's kingdom due to his sin. God's role is judicial, not participatory in the evil act. He is not the author of sin but the sovereign Judge who allows natural consequences and human choices to bring about discipline and correction. The purpose is not humiliation for its own sake, but the exposure of hidden sin and the upholding of divine justice. Extracting this verse to portray God as cruel or immoral is a gross misrepresentation of the text and ignores the broader biblical themes of repentance, mercy, and restoration that follow David's confession and God's forgiveness.

Similarly, Numbers 31:17–18 must be read against its ancient Near Eastern backdrop. This passage is part of a narrative concerning the Israelites' conflict with the Midianites, a war narrated in the language of total warfare typical of that time. The commands recorded in this text, which include the killing of certain groups while sparing others, reflect a military action sanctioned for that particular historical context. The language is hyperbolic, common to ancient war narratives, and is not intended as a timeless moral prescription for peacetime conduct. To take these verses at face value as evidence of an eternal divine character is to commit a false equivalence by equating a historical account of warfare with modern ethical standards.

Furthermore, your approach employs a strawman tactic by reducing Christianity to these problematic passages, ignoring the rich, evolving tradition of moral and ethical reflection that has developed over centuries. Christianity, as lived and understood by millions today, is centered on the life, teachings, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a message that emphasizes love, forgiveness, and redemption. To characterize the faith solely by a handful of violent narratives from its ancient roots misrepresents its core teachings and overlooks the transformative interpretations that have emerged throughout history.

A key concept that illuminates this dynamic is progressive revelation. This idea holds that God's character and will are not revealed in full all at once but unfold gradually throughout the biblical narrative. The early portions of Scripture reflect the cultural and historical contexts of ancient societies, where norms were very different from those of later times. As humanity evolved, so did the understanding of divine truth. This unfolding reaches its apex in the teachings of Jesus, who embodied love, mercy, and justice. His message redefined moral imperatives, transforming the believer's relationship not only with the divine but also with one another. The recognition that every individual is created in the image of God became a cornerstone for a more inclusive and just moral framework, one that directly challenged practices that dehumanized people, such as slavery.

History offers tangible evidence of the impact of this evolving moral vision. In the early church, Christians embraced a radical notion of equality. Drawing on Jesus' teachings and the Apostle Paul's declaration that in Christ there is neither slave nor free, early believers began to challenge the rigid social hierarchies and oppressive practices of their time. As the centuries passed, voices within the Christian tradition (during the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and beyond) continued to question the moral legitimacy of slavery. Thinkers and mystics inspired by the redemptive message of the Gospel argued for the inherent dignity of every human being, planting the seeds of dissent against systems that dehumanized individuals.

During the Reformation, reformers not only addressed ecclesiastical abuses but also critiqued social practices that were intertwined with traditional authority, including slavery. Emphasizing personal conscience and the moral imperatives of love and equality, they reinterpreted Scripture in a way that contributed significantly to the moral discourse over the following centuries. In more recent history, Christian abolitionists such as William Wilberforce, inspired by a Pauline understanding of the Christian moral vision, played pivotal roles in dismantling government-sanctioned slavery in the West. Their efforts were grounded in the belief that the evolving revelation of God's character demanded the recognition of every person's inherent worth; a belief that ultimately reshaped Western ethical and legal norms.

This historical trajectory demonstrates that progressive revelation is not merely an abstract theological concept but a dynamic force for social transformation. It shows how an evolving understanding of divine truth can lead to profound moral and ethical shifts. Early biblical texts, when isolated, might appear to endorse harsh practices by modern standards, but when understood as part of a larger, unfolding narrative, they give way to a transformative call to love, justice, and mercy. A static, decontextualized reading like the one you offer fails to capture the dynamic, historical evolution of divine revelation that has not only deepened our theological understanding but has also contributed to tangible improvements in society, such as the abolition of slavery.

Finally, your argument is fundamentally flawed because it isolates and decontextualizes passages from a vast and complex corpus of literature, reducing them to so-called proof texts that purportedly define the moral character of Christianity. This selective reading ignores both the historical context of the texts and the dynamic interpretive traditions that have emerged over centuries. In doing so, it commits several logical fallacies, including cherry picking, strawman reasoning, false equivalence, and an appeal to emotion, which render your critique neither intellectually honest nor theologically sound.

A sound approach requires understanding that the Bible is a collection of texts written in various genres and contexts, each demanding careful exegesis. Isolated verses from ancient narratives, particularly those born out of the brutal realities of warfare or ancient societal norms, cannot be taken as eternal moral commands. Instead, modern Christian ethics emerge from a comprehensive reading of Scripture, one that acknowledges the historical realities of the past while embracing the redemptive and transformative message of Jesus Christ. This dynamic process of progressive revelation has not only enriched theological thought but has also been a powerful catalyst for social change, as evidenced by the gradual abolition of practices such as government-sanctioned slavery in the West, which we can thank hard working Christians for.

You are more than welcome to consider these perspectives not as an attack on your beliefs, but as an effort to engage ethically with the historical, theological, and ethical complexities of the scriptures you hastily ripped out of context. My hope for you is that you can move beyond sensationalist readings and toward a discussion that honors the depth of Christian thought, which despite your hate mail, embodies a God of love, justice, and mercy.

Adam Parker, Host of the Bold Apologia Podcast

“Proclaiming Christ to listeners through apologetics, theology, and the proclamation of the Word of God.”

Takeaways and Conclusion:

As we come to the end of this response, I want to speak not only to the arguments presented but also to the heart behind them. Dan’s message, though filled with anger and sharp accusations, reflects a deep wrestling with the nature of God and the problem of evil. While the language he used is confrontational, the questions he raises are not unfamiliar. Many people have struggled with the same passages, the same ethical challenges, and the same doubts about how a good and just God could allow or command certain things. These are not easy topics, and I do not claim that a single article can fully resolve all the tension they create. However, I do believe that when Scripture is studied carefully and approached with humility and a desire for truth, it reveals a God who is consistently just, deeply merciful, and always redemptive.

If you are a believer reading this, I want to encourage you to remain anchored in both truth and grace. The world does not need louder arguments or more heated debates. It needs the light of Christ to shine clearly through the lives and words of His people. When we are met with hostility or misunderstanding, our goal should not be to win an argument but to represent Jesus faithfully. He was full of grace and truth. He answered difficult questions, but He also wept for those who rejected Him. He corrected falsehood, but He also had compassion for those who were lost and broken.

With that in mind, I invite you to join me in praying for Dan. This is not a call to pray from a place of pride or self-righteousness, but from a place of love and sincere hope. Pray that his heart would soften. Pray that his questions would not drive him further into bitterness, but instead lead him toward truth. Pray that he would come to know the God he currently rejects as the holy, righteous, and merciful Father revealed in Jesus Christ. Even the very Scriptures he now mocks have the power to reach his heart and transform his life.

God is not intimidated by questions, and He is not shaken by anger. He is patient. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. That includes Dan. That includes every skeptic and critic. That includes anyone who is sincerely seeking, even if their search begins with hostility. And it includes every one of us, for we were all once far from God.

May our response to criticism always be marked by a firm stand in truth, a humble posture of heart, and a genuine love for those who do not yet know the hope we have in Christ.



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