

Getting all we can from Scripture

Men's Bible Study at Park View

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Session 8 - Biblical descriptions seem sub-par?

A main reason we doubt that all Scripture is God's Word: some biblical descriptions seem sub-par.

Example: Exodus 21:20-21 / vv26-27; Deut. 23:15-16

Example: Eph. 5:22-24 / v25

Example: Joshua 10:40 / Jesus

We see much good in the Bible—and much that seems clearly wrong. Should we stop affirming that "We believe that all Scripture is inspired by God" (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, Article 4)?

How horrific was biblical slavery?

How evil was the conquest of Canaan?

As God is moving history toward the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21-22), human partners limit God's options.

In the Bible we see God going with the best doable course of action (i.e., the highest the People of God of that day could reach)—even when it was far below the ultimate, new-heavens-and-new-earth ideal.

God adopted—and even ordained—"compromise-institutions."

God truly had no other possible choice if he was to partner with humans without violating their wills.

eg. Old Covenant

eg. divorce

eg. civil magistrate

Ashtray analogy

Read Scripture as a search for those passages where God injects something new into human history, patiently and graciously nudging us toward the ideal!

Questions for Table Discussion:

Share an idea that struck you during this session.

How comfortable are you with the idea of God accommodating slavery and the conquest of Canaan? What other choices did God have if he was going to choose a clan of humans and begin moving them toward the ideal ethic?

Why did Paul content himself with sowing seeds for slavery's elimination and never explicitly condemn slavery as an institution. Was it because Greco-Roman slavery had good aspects as well as bad? Was it because people who change society need to be out in front of society, part of the "leading edge" of change, but not so far in front that they are so radical they are written off? Was it lack of courage or opportunity?

Can you give some instances of Christians camping at the various biblical texts, saying "these are what God instructed," even when God may want us to journey beyond them toward a more ultimate ethic?

Has your trust and confidence in Scripture increased these weeks? Or only confusion?!