

There are a number of different 'Christianities' based on a number of different 'Christs', and a number of different interpretations of the Judeo-Christian scriptures.

The Jericho Thought Experiment

WARNING: This paper contains the unsanitised version of "Joshua and the battle of Jericho" 1 - the story they teach your kids in Sunday School.

" the 4 year olds all huddle into a corner looking at him with well founded fear, their eyes pleading for mercy. " (see Joshua 6: 20, 21)

WWJD - What would Jesus do in Jericho?

Taking a fundamentalist interpretation of the nature of God from the Old Testament is *totally at odds* with the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and the revealed nature of the Holy Spirit.

The '**Jericho Thought Experiment**' is an unpleasant but useful tool to warn of the dangers of syncretising Christianity with Judaism.

In Dostoevsky's 'The Brothers Karamazov' there is a profound text known as 'The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor'.

In the story we see the compassionate Christ making a brief bodily appearance in the middle ages, raising a poor widow's daughter from the dead.

But his presence and action is totally at odds with the religious powers of the day.

Ivan Karamazov begins his story-

My story is laid in Spain, in Seville, in the most terrible time of the Inquisition, when fires were lighted every day to the glory of God, and 'in the splendid auto da fe the wicked heretics were burnt.' Oh, of course, this was not the coming in which He will appear, according to His promise, at the end of time in all His heavenly glory, and which will be sudden 'as lightning flashing from east to west.' No, He visited His children only for a moment, and there where the flames were crackling round the heretics. In His infinite mercy He came once more among men in that human shape in which He walked among men for thirty-three years fifteen centuries ago.

However in our thought experiment, we will imagine that Jesus has made an unannounced bodily appearance in Jericho at about 1400 BC.

Imagine a soldier in 'God's army' invading Canaan under the leadership of Joshua.

The army is sacking and burning Jericho and Joshua the Commander points this soldier towards one particular building. The soldier runs to it, sword at the ready.

The door is barred from the inside, so he kicks it in.

Inside he finds a Canaanite girl of eighteen, and a dozen or so 4 year olds in her charge.

He pauses.

On the other side of Jordan when they had sacked the Midianites, Moses had let them keep the girls for themselves (Numbers 31:18), but now it was different.

The soldier steels himself with the words of Moses:

Jehovah your God shall deliver them before you, you shall crush them, completely destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. (Deuteronomy 7:2)

With a swift thrust of his blade, the older girl lies dying on the floor, and now the 4 year olds all huddle into a corner looking at him with well founded fear, their eyes pleading for mercy. (see Joshua 6: 20, 21)

At this point Jesus enters the room.

How does the dynamic change?

WWJD?

If you are unfamiliar with the character and mindset of Jesus read- Luke 18:16, Matthew 18:1-6, John 8:3-10

If you are a Christian and have not read all of the Old Testament, you may be horrified by some of the Old Testament representations of God.

Passages thankfully not often quoted from pulpits.

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