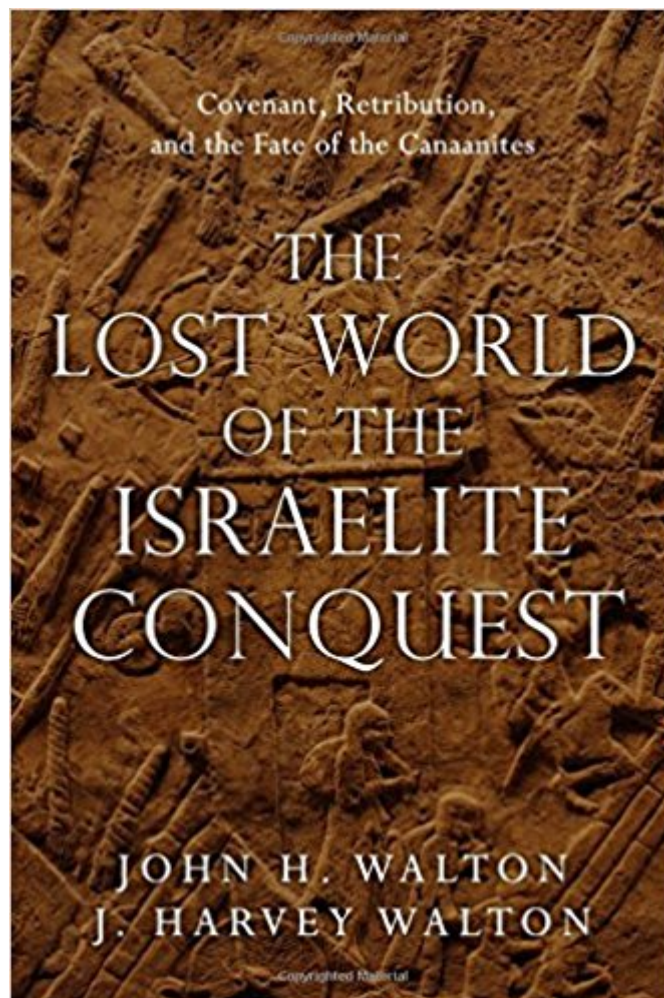




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# **The Lost World Of The Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, And The Fate Of The Canaanites**



## Synopsis

Holy warfare is the festering wound on the conscience of Bible-believing Christians. Of all the problems the Old Testament poses for our modern age, this is the one we want to avoid in mixed company. But do the so-called holy war texts of the Old Testament portray a divinely inspired genocide? Did Israel slaughter Canaanites at God's command? Were they enforcing divine retribution on an unholy people? These texts shock. And we turn the page. But have we rightly understood them? In *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest*, John Walton and J. Harvey Walton take us on an archeological dig, excavating the layers of translation and interpretation that over time have encrusted these texts and our perceptions. What happens when we take new approaches, frame new questions? When we weigh again their language and rhetoric? Were the Canaanites punished for sinning against the covenanting God? Does the Hebrew word *herem* mean "devote to destruction"? How are the Canaanites portrayed and why? And what happens when we backlight these texts with their ancient context? *The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest* keenly recalibrates our perception and reframes our questions. While not attempting to provide all the answers, it offers surprising new insights and clears the ground for further understanding.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: IVP Academic (August 15, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0830851844

ISBN-13: 978-0830851843

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #10,985 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Bibles > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > History & Culture](#) #3 in [Bibles > History > Middle East > Israel & Palestine](#) #17 in [Bibles > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Bible Study > Old Testament](#)

## Customer Reviews

"The conquest of Canaan is arguably the most intractable ethical problem in the Bible, and to date no solution has garnered a consensus. These authors offer a genuinely fresh approach to mitigate the difficulties. Deeply rooted in ancient Near Eastern mores and reconsideration of key biblical

words and texts, the arguments challenge many commonly held ideas. While provocative at times, this book deserves careful consideration." (John W. Hilber, professor of Old Testament, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary)

John H. Walton (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School. Previously he was professor of Old Testament at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago for twenty years. Some of Walton's books include *The Lost World of Adam and Eve*, *The Lost World of Scripture*, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, *The Essential Bible Companion*, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis* and *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (with Victor Matthews and Mark Chavalas). Walton's ministry experience includes church classes for all age groups, high school Bible studies and adult Sunday school classes, as well as serving as a teacher for "The Bible in 90 Days." John and his wife, Kim, live in Wheaton, Illinois, and have three adult children. J. Harvey Walton (MA, Wheaton College Graduate School) is a researcher in biblical studies and has contributed to a variety of publications.

What do I think of John H. and J. Harvey Walton's book published by IVP? Let's plunge into the *Deeper Waters* and find out. Anytime I receive a book by John Walton from IVP, there is cause for much rejoicing. Ever since I read *The Lost World of Genesis One* I have been a major fan of Walton. That book answered so many questions I had had about Genesis 1 as it explored it from a perspective of the Ancient Near East. My rejoicing was apparent when I got this latest book. There have been many books written on this topic and many of them I have enjoyed, but now I have to rethink them. The Waltons bring up problems with hypotheses that we have traditionally used. What if the conquest is not about punishment for sin? What if the wrong approach is to try to look at it from the perspective of if we would call it good or not? What if we've been wrong about all of this? The Waltons want to start by saying that we don't need to bring in our ideas of goodness to the text. For the ancients, much of what was good was that which was orderly. Something could be said to be good if it helped to establish order to the world. The conquest can be seen as a way of establishing order as YHWH prepares to take the land for the use that he had intended it for. They also look at the texts that we use to say that God was doing this for the sins of the people. Sometimes, it is for sins, but these are sins usually committed against Israel, such as 1 Sam. 15. In these cases, it is specifically said that this is what it is for. In all of this, this doesn't mean that we should accept the

Canaanites as just fine people that weren't doing anything wrong. We cannot justify idolatry and child sacrifice for instance, but those aren't the main focus of YHWH. It's different in the NT where in Acts, Paul tells the people of Lystra that God overlooked such things in the past and tells the Greeks that God is now calling everyone to repent. The problem with many of our approaches is that we act like the Canaanites were under the covenant when they were not. God was indeed calling the Israelites to right behavior, but he was not calling the Canaanites to. There was no conversion effort going on. Of course, had the Israelites managed to convince all the Canaanites to join YHWH, there would be no need of the conquest per se, but that is not what was going on. Israel welcomed people who wanted to convert, but they did not aim for that. One area that there would be agreement on is that the term for utterly destroy does not mean in a literalistic sense. Instead, it often refers to an object set aside for a specific usage. This also gets into the concept of holiness. Holiness was not something that people earned. It was something that was conferred on to the people and it could be given to inanimate objects as well. Also, there is relevance for us today with this. No. It doesn't mean we go grab a sword and kill our unbelieving neighbor. Instead, it shows us how we are to really put something to death, our sinful natures. We are to be holy to the Lord and cut off all that keeps us from being holy. We are to be what God has set apart for His use. We are to identify with the new community. I'm really still chewing on a lot of what the Waltons say, but it is a great read and one that really does leave you questioning. I would find the Waltons anticipated my questions many many times. Though some will no doubt disagree with what is found here, all wishing to speak on the conquest period should interact with it. In Christ, Nick Peters

Deeper Waters  
Apologetics

The newest volume in The Lost World series looks to reconcile the long-felt difficulty of the Israelite conquests with the ancient Near Eastern world. The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites by John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton offers readers a captivating exploration that takes the Hebrew Bible seriously in its ancient cultural context and establishes a fresh pair of interpretive lenses for investigating the many important issues involved. The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest "helps [readers] to transcend the shackles of our modern worldview and traditional readings to recapture the text as it would have been understood by the original author and audience" (p. xi). The book contains twenty-one individual prepositions across six major parts: (1) Interpretation, (2) The Canaanites are Not Depicted as Guilty of Sin, (3) The Canaanites are Not Depicted as Guilty of Breaking

God's Law, (4) The Language and Imagery of the Conquest Account has Literary and Theological Significance, (5) What God and the Israelites are Doing is Often Misunderstood because the Hebrew Word Herem is Commonly Mistranslated, and (6) How to Apply This Understanding. Keen readers who are familiar with Walton's work in the series will be able to determine the trajectory of the book's claim by following the titles of each major part (above). The entire book is fascinating. It is unlike any other (seriously) exploration of the conquest narrative that I have ever read. Moreover, the preposition-driven organization of the book makes it extremely easy to navigate knowing what I was going to be reading. Like other books in The Lost World series, there will be some (possibly a lot) therein that the reader will not appreciate concerning the case that Walton and Walton have presented. It's not traditional by any stretch, and for most that should be fine. Walton and Walton have done a tremendous job building their case and bringing the reader to an appropriate place of application. If the reader disagrees with the conclusion here and there, I can guarantee those same readers will still appreciate the amount of detailed work put into this volume. Without giving away the ending, The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest will make you think long and hard about the conquest narrative, and possibly even do a bit of reconsideration in areas you may not even have known needed reconsideration. The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest: Covenant, Retribution, and the Fate of the Canaanites by John H. Walton and J. Harvey Walton accomplishes exactly what it set out to accomplish. It will make you think about how deeply-seated our modern worldview and traditional readings are to our understanding of the Bible. I don't think that Walton and Walton have done much to solve the theological tension of the Israelite conquest narratives, but they have certainly offered readers a plausible explanation to an age-old conundrum. If you have read any of the books from The Lost World series, then I likely don't need to encourage you to grab The Lost World of the Israelite Conquest. Everyone else? Do yourself a favor and start reading this book right away. It will get you thinking about the topic in ways like never before. It comes highly recommended!

A must-read for all, especially for seriously-committed Christian and Jewish believers. The Waltons have explained, in detail, how we have all been misled by incorrect English translations of key terms in Joshua and elsewhere about the Amorites, Canaanites Amalekites and others, and the Conquest itself. The Conquest is NOT what you thought it was. These wrong translations and conclusions drawn from the Conquest have, probably and very sadly, led to very bad actions by Christians in the past: the Crusades, the genocide of native Americans, and the executions of heretics by Protestants

and Catholics in the middle ages, come to mind. I would especially encourage pastors to read this book and then actively reach their congregations the truth about the Canaanites and the Conquest. Of course, this will also require un-teaching them what they think they already know. And children's Bible story books may need fixing as well.

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