

## Book Review

*Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament*

**Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.**

(Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2015) 170 pages

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*Tough Questions about God and His Actions in the Old Testament* deals with an important subject and is written by one of the foremost evangelical Old Testament scholars. However, I found it to be one of his weaker contributions. For what seems by the length and style of the book to be the intended depth of the book, I believe it does an adequate job, but it is not impressive, and was somewhat disappointing to me based on Kaiser's other works. Someone unfamiliar with Kaiser and new to dealing with these questions would probably find this book helpful. I would recommend it as a good initial source on conservative biblical answers to these tough questions (by conservative, I mean respecting the authority of the Scriptures as God's Word, given through human language, in historical and cultural context).

Also, surprising to me, because of my respect for Kaiser and Kregel publishers, I encountered several significant proofreading/editing lapses.

Each chapter deals with one question, independent of the other chapters; therefore, it makes the book a very flexible source for a series of Bible studies for groups. Kaiser does credible exposition of key passages for the foundation of each answer. However, on some questions, he goes into more detail on the exegetical arguments than most readers will want and makes some highly disputable

interpretations of the evidence, which weaken his conclusions about the issues. I think he should have laid out the essential points involved in each question and identified the clear assertions of the texts, which have the greatest consensus of understanding. Despite this, I am always blessed by Kaiser's concern for the truthfulness of the Old Testament text and for his scholarly, conservative hermeneutic.

The first chapter on whether God in the OT is a God of love and mercy or of wrath and judgment is a good example of the strengths and weaknesses of the book. It deals with a significant subject in an adequate and insightful manner while also providing biblical references. In my opinion, his strongest point was that he characterizes God by love rather than anger; His anger is just part of His response to a particular evil.

Kaiser does comparable work, in the second and longest chapter, with another complex issue—God's supposed calling for ethnic cleansing of the Canaanites. There is so much that could be said on this subject, but he makes his point fairly well, with some significant scriptural passages and a specific reference to violent teaching in the Qur'an.

Chapters 5, 7, and 8 deal with the subjects of the Law, Satan, and God's knowledge of the future. They present generally accepted

conservative conclusions, but also display various strengths and weaknesses.

In a weak chapter 4, Kaiser expounds the details of Genesis 1-3 in order to prove the incompatibility of evolution with Scripture and, therefore, does not provide an explanation for what is visible in nature. Many conservatives disagree with his handling of Genesis and its implications for evolution, but they receive no mention in the chapter.

Chapter 10 presents a weak explanation for the clean and unclean rules. He does not seem to grasp what scholars in the area propose nor does he develop a coherent presentation of his own view. In the process, he proposes a very controversial, and I would say weak, interpretation of Mark 7:19, which supports his unclear view that Jesus did not eliminate the clean and unclean food laws (pp.163-165).

Chapter 3 on God and deception is helpful, pointing out that intentional deception is not wrong in a situation of life and death, if the other party has no claim to truth from the first party. Chapter 6 provides a good explanation regarding God and polygamy, clearly showing that the Bible did not support it but rather taught monogamy.

Chapter 9 presents the most helpful information on God's view of women, especially women in leadership. His explanation of 1 Timothy 2 is one of the best I have read. I also have never thought about the possible significance of women proclaiming Gods' Word, according to Psalm 68:11, as Kaiser pointed out.

I believe this book has value and could be especially helpful for laymen and those just beginning to deal with these tough questions. However, much of it is unsatisfyingly brief for scholarly minds.