

Joshua

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[0 : 00] So, if this is your first time with us, we're going through the summer in Sunday school, we're going through a big picture overview of the big narrative of the Old Testament.

And each Sunday we're taking a little bit of a snippet of a different section of the Old Testament. We started off with creation and fall, Abraham, we talked about the Exodus, and now we come to the book of Joshua.

And to start, I'm going to read two stories, one from the news and one from Joshua, from this page. On the last day of his short life, 10-year-old Sami had something important to say to his friend.

This will be the last time I see you, the boy said. I have a feeling that I will die. His friend, Hussein Hatem, loyally told his mate that he wished he could take his place and die instead.

That afternoon, a group of IS fighters came to the boys' primary school in a suburb on the outskirts of the city of Mosul. They knocked on the door of every classroom. Let them come out, we'll teach them a lesson, the fighters told the teachers.

[1 : 17] Outside in the cement schoolyard, the men held Sami as the rest of the school gathered to watch. Then my friend got really sad. He was all alone, Hussein remembers. One of the men raised his sword and hacked off Sami's head.

They told us to learn like this. This is the way to cut people's heads off, Hussein says. The girls were crying on his body, and I thought, My poor friend. We took his body.

One of my friends carried his head, and I carried his body. We threw him on the garbage pile. Shout, for the Lord has given you the city of Jericho.

So the people shouted, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, and they captured the city. Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

Our world is no stranger to religiously motivated violence. I was 10 years old on September 11th.

[2 : 27] I feel as though, I and my whole generation, feels as though our whole lives have been characterized with this narrative of religious violence. And though we worship the Prince of Peace, we now come to the book of Joshua.

As one commentator puts it, a bloody tale of battle, violence, and wholesale slaughter. A slaughter in which God assists with his mighty acts. The smoke of burning towns, and the stench of rotting flesh, hangs over its pages.

How can we worship such a God? How can we make sense of this story, knowing that we worship the utterly non-violent crucified one, Jesus? And can we dare hope that even in this book, in Joshua, we can find something to teach us today as believers in Christ?

I start this way not to introduce turmoil into your faith, but because this is something a lot of Christians really struggle with, this book.

And if you haven't struggled with it, then part of my hope this morning is that you might understand better why some people do struggle with this.

[3 : 47] And to put my cards out on the table, before I was a Christian, the book of Joshua was a big reason why I didn't want to take Christianity seriously. So this is a big deal.

This is a challenging book for us today. But before we deal with some of these really challenging questions, we first need to understand the book of Joshua on its own terms, in its own context.

How does this book function within the big narrative of God and Israel in the Old Testament? And to do that, we need to think back to Abraham.

A couple of weeks ago, we read in Genesis 15, God made a covenant with Abram saying, to your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, to the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, etc., etc.

The book of Joshua is a story of God fulfilling his promises. Taken on its own terms, this is a joyous narrative of God fulfilling what God had promised 400 years earlier.

[4 : 57] Now, after 40 years in the wilderness, as a result of fearful disobedience that we talked about last week, now finally Israel is finally entering that land that God had promised to Abraham.

Centuries earlier, this is a climactic moment in Israel's history. And most of the book is stories of taking the land violently, or dividing up the land among the tribes of Israel.

And we're not going to read those stories at length. But the first big paragraph of Joshua, Joshua 1, we will read, if you have a Bible, you can turn to Joshua chapter 1.

Because it is... Well, we'll see. Let's read it first. All right.

After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua, the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, Moses, my servant, is dead. Now, therefore, arise.

[6 : 12] Go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, upon, sorry, every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, I have given to you.

Just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness, in this Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the great sea, toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses, my servant, commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

[7 : 25] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. I love that at the end.

Have I not commanded you? And Joshua might be sitting there if he wanted to do some sassy backtalk to God, which he doesn't. He'd say, yeah, you have commanded me. I get it. Be strong and courageous. Because that is repeated over and over in this first section.

There's a mug over at Trinity House that says, be strong and courageous, Joshua 1.9 on it. Sort of plucking that out of the context of what he's being strong and courageous for.

But there's a lot here for us to meditate on. After all, fear is what kept Israel from the promised land 40 years earlier.

And God knows how Israel is being tempted now. They're afraid. And God responds accordingly by saying, over and over, I am with you.

[8 : 29] Be strong and courageous. There is a word of comfort for us here in showing us the character of our God towards us. If we have ears to listen, God is not subtle in directing us on how he wants for us to live.

He's not subtle with Joshua, certainly. Be strong and courageous. I mention this because I feel like so often, especially in my generation I've seen, at the seminary and in my time with campus ministry, people can get very anxious about trying to discern God's will for their lives.

And yet, if you open up to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not at all subtle about how he wants us to live. He's not at all subtle about the things that are important to him.

And maybe the issue is that the things that are important to us are not the things that are important to him, at any rate. You can see there's no military advice in this opening paragraph of Joshua.

That's why it's so easy to take a verse out of this and put it on a mug. There's a sense in which, as Nick was preaching last week, Israel is actually, there's a sense in which Israel isn't fighting these battles.

[9 : 48] God is. And so, Israel's success in the coming battles that take up about half the book of Joshua is not contingent on typical military measures like the size of their army or the kind of tactics they employ.

I mean, the first battle they do, their tactics involve marching around it and shouting at the city of Jericho. No, but their success in battle depends on their fidelity to God.

Then, why does Joshua need to be obedient? What is the command that they are being obedient to? Well, I mean, on one level, it's all of the commands in the book of the law, right? But the specific unique command that they're carrying out in most of the book of Joshua is this harem command.

That's a Hebrew word. I'm sorry, please forgive me. But it's difficult to translate words. That's why I have a section on the handout about it. It comes up first a couple of times in the book of Deuteronomy.

And I have a couple of sections there that I'll read from chapter 7 and from chapter 20 in Deuteronomy. When the Lord, your God, brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it and clears away many nations before you, you must devote them to complete destruction.

[11 : 08] That devote to complete destruction, that's the word we're talking about. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. And then later on, in the cities of these peoples that the Lord, your God, is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, but you shall devote them to complete destruction, that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods.

And so you sin against the Lord, your God. So this utterly unique command in the whole Bible is that Israel would devote all the inhabitants of the promised land to complete destruction.

This Hebrew word is harem. You gotta have some phlegm in the back of your throat to say it right. I don't. If anyone actually knows Hebrew, forgive my pronunciation.

And this word is not just go and kill them all, but it involves consecration, the giving over of the captives of war to God.

It's almost like a sacrificial idea. As Israel kills every living thing in the promised land, it's almost an act of worship, which is chilling.

[12 : 25] Chilling. You know, almost an act of worship insofar as sacrifice in Israelite religion is an act of worship. It's just as chilling for Jesus to tell us that we have to fight sin in our own bodies.

We'll get there. Well, it's not, but we'll get there. We'll get there. It's chilling because I'm not perfect. We'll get there. Wait till the last page.

Where was I? I. Yes.

There was something I was going to say, but then I forgot it. So it was clearly not important. Yeah. Okay. So one might, one might say, well, this isn't this command.

If you know the book of Joshua and one of the most famous characters in the book, Rahab, you'll think, well, not actually every living thing is killed in the land.

[13 : 25] Oh, before. Okay. I remembered. Who? Yes. Okay. So if you, if you know the King James Bible, I think it translates this, devote to complete destruction. It says, put the ban on so-and-so.

The idea is that they are to ban these people and objects from ordinary use. You're banning it from ordinary use and to be used exclusively by, by God.

So it's a kind of a consecration almost, which just makes it all the more chilling, frankly. But we'll talk about that. But then one might say, well, what, what about Rahab?

She shows up in chapter two of Joshua. And then in chapter six, it specifically mentioned that she is spared her and her whole family. Um, Rahab cooperates with some Israelite spies, hides them from the, from the authorities of Jericho.

And then her family is spared. Um, well, this shows us that, uh, this is not ethnic cleansing going on in the book of Joshua.

[14 : 30] Uh, it's not that God hates these people groups. Uh, God hates their pagan practices, which includes such things as child sacrifice.

We'll get there in a little bit, but God doesn't hate these people groups. And we should expect that because God said to Abraham 400 years earlier, that Abraham and his family would be a conduit of blessing to the nations.

So God doesn't hate all the people who aren't Israel. Um, and that's, and that's why Rahab, even though she lives in Jericho, uh, is, is spared.

Um, now that still doesn't, I don't mean to say that so that we're no longer uncomfortable with what goes on in the book of Joshua. According to the UN definition of genocide, it's still genocide going on in this book.

Uh, it's just not based on ethnicity. It's based on, on religious affiliation. It's still chilling, but we should at least get straight what is going on in this book. It's not that God hates these ethnic groups. Um, and as we look back on Rahab in the book of Joshua as a Christian, um, she is one of the very few women mentioned specifically in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1.

[15 : 40] Uh, so as we look back on Joshua, we can find a seed of messianic hope, uh, even in the morass of violence in this book. Um, even, even though there's a lot in this book that makes us uneasy, uh, that might horrify us.

Nevertheless, uh, God is, is working, uh, working in the midst of this situation. Uh, and, and even in the midst of this situation, we have Rahab, who is, uh, an ancestor to Messiah, um, the, the savior of the world.

Um, and, and Matthew makes sure that we know that. Um, but that, that is really the broad overview of the book. It starts out with, uh, the first 13 chapters or so, all about battles and taking the land.

Then, um, uh, dividing up the land. Um, you know, when you do your Bible in a year plans, that's usually where you, you peter out in Joshua because it's, uh, it's almost like surveying data.

Um, um, but then, and then at the end, there's a, a reaffirmation of the covenant. Um, but then now that, that question from the beginning of how do we make sense of this as a Christian needs to come back on the table.

[17 : 02] Um, how, how do we understand Joshua, uh, and, and particularly the violence in this book, uh, as a Christian? Because it's, it's not just our sort of 20 or 21st century, uh, Western inclinations against, you know, war, uh, that, that make us feel uncomfortable with this book.

Uh, rather we, we can look at the words of Jesus. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your father who is in heaven.

There is an incongruity just within the text, uh, between the violence in Joshua, and, and, uh, the words of Jesus, or at least what appears on the face of it to be an incongruity. Um, so how do we make sense of this book in light of Christ?

Um, first, I think we need to recognize what Joshua is not. Uh, I'd already mentioned this, but this command for this particular kind of warfare, uh, of devoting everything to utter destruction.

It's not a generalized perpetual command, um, for Israel. Uh, it certainly is not a command for us. Uh, but it isn't even a command for Israel in all of their wars throughout the history of ancient Israel.

[18 : 21] Um, um, Deuteronomy chapter 20 has, uh, a bunch of laws, uh, concerning warfare. Um, how, how is Israel supposed to wage war? And the first half of it, you have, um, a whole bunch of regulations about war.

Like, well, if, if, uh, a soldier in, in the war recently got married, uh, well, don't, don't have him fight, have him go home and enjoy, you know, his, his new marriage.

Um, things like that. Or if you come to a city and, and, and besiege it, offer terms of peace to it. Uh, this is how it ordinarily, in almost every war that Israel ever fights, that's how it ordinarily goes.

And we have this specific, uh, and then the latter half of that chapter, you have this specific command for these, this one moment in Israelite history, uh, in the book of Joshua.

Um, it's unique. It is never to be repeated. Um, so I, I started out, that, that's why I almost didn't start with these two stories and one of them about ISIS in Mosul.

[19 : 22] Um, because this is actually the key difference, or one of the, I think the biggest key difference between what is going on in the book of Joshua and religious violence that we see around the world today.

Um, in the perverted ideology of ISIS, there is a perpetual war between them and everyone they perceive to be the enemies of Islam. Um, which, ironically, includes a lot of Muslims, um, at any rate.

Um, but, this is a one-time thing in Israel's history. Christians have killed Christians too, ironically. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

I, I don't mean to cover over that. Absolutely. Absolutely. Um, so that's one thing we need to recognize that Joshua is not, uh, this is not, uh, this is not, uh, a command to go start a crusade and, and say, Deus volt, God wills it.

No, no, it's not, it's not. Um, and also, our horror at the book of Joshua is not something new. Um, this isn't something we just realized in the last generation or two is chilling.

[20 : 29] Rather, this is something that Christians from very, very early on have recognized is, is an incongruity in, in scripture. Um, and we have inherited from generations of Christians different ways of, of addressing this, this tension in the text.

Um, so, let's look at some of those. Um, but before, before we do that, uh, I should stop for a moment. Uh, are there any questions or concerns so far?

Yeah, Sam? I guess, like, in 1 Samuel, for example, like, uh, when God mansalts the, um, uh, to, to kill, um, a God, right?

Yeah. And destroy the city. Um, like, like, so, so there are examples after Joshua where there is the, the complete kind of, uh, destruction. Um, how, how, how would you square that for, um, this being like a one?

Yeah. Uh, good question. That is the only other, yeah. So, um, there is this episode in the life of King Saul, uh, where, um, Saul is supposed to devote this, this, um, Agagite, or, is the king Agag?

[21 : 40] I think so, yeah. Hmm? Hmm? Um, but this particular king, uh, to destruction, and he instead takes him as a prisoner, uh, and that is, uh, disobedient to God.

Um, I would actually say that's an extension of this, of this command. That, that, I think that's how it's framed in the life of Saul. Um, so I'd say it's actually part of the one and the same thing. Um, yeah.

Um, I used to work for a rabbi and he told me that Rahab was, uh, a Hebrew, was a Hebrew, a widowed wife of a merchant.

So that's why she was saved as well as helping the spies? Um, I think that there's a sense in which she becomes an Israelite. She's sort of adopted in, uh, because of her faith in, we don't see anything in the text suggesting that.

So I, I think that's interesting. Yeah. Uh, it might be a later tradition, but Joshua doesn't tell us that. So I'm not gonna, I'm not gonna go along with that.

[22 : 46] Um, yeah. That's interesting. I've never heard that before. Um, maybe, maybe it's in Talmud somewhere. I, I don't know. Um, that's interesting. Okay.

So first, some helpful, but not quite sufficient. Some helpful, but not all the way, uh, approaches to dealing with the conquest as a Christian. Um, I mentioned these because I think, I think these two approaches are really popular.

Um, and I think they're helpful to some extent. Uh, but I don't think they're, they go all the way. So first, um, this thing called Marcionism. It's named after this guy named Marcion.

Uh, he was a second century, so very early on, right? Second century, uh, Christian thinker. Um, and he saw this tension in the text and he said, well, the God of the Old Testament therefore is evil and a different God completely than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Uh, now, Ecclesiastes is right. There's nothing new under the sun. Uh, you hear this kind of thing all the time today. Um, or even if it's not explicitly stated like that, sometimes we will say, well, that's the Old Testament.

[24 : 02] We don't really care about that. What we care about is the New Testament, which is sort of the same thing. Uh, so his, his teaching was quickly denounced by his contemporaries as, as heresy, uh, because Jesus said the whole Old Testament is about himself.

So, um, we are indebted to this, this Marcion, uh, the second century guy, uh, for recognizing and raising the concern that there is, uh, there is an incongruity here, um, between, uh, the God of Canaanite conquest and the God of Jesus Christ.

Uh, but his solution is not viable, um, because Jesus said the whole Bible is about himself. So, we can't, we can't go along with him. Um, and then some, some Christians, uh, throughout history and especially today I hear this, uh, approach the book of Joshua using what's, what's known as divine command theory.

Um, I, I pulled up this quote from a blog that describes it well. Um, our moral duties are constituted by the commands of a holy and loving God.

Fair enough so far, right? But, since God doesn't issue commands to himself, he has no moral duties to fulfill. He is certainly not subject to the same moral obligations and prohibitions that we are.

[25 : 17] For example, I have no right to take an innocent life. For me to do so would be murder. But God has no such prohibitions. He can give and take life as he chooses. God is under no obligation whatsoever to extend my life for another second.

If he wants to strike me dead right now, that's his prerogative. And then he goes on to say, God has that prerogative with the Canaanites as well, to kill them all in a moment. Uh, so in that view, if we're uneasy about the Canaanite genocide, it's what it is, by the UN definition.

Uh, we are actually in the wrong and need to be corrected. Uh, in this view, God is morally perfect and unquestionable even when God kills the innocent because God has no moral duties, no moral obligations.

Um, in the way that I framed that, I've probably tipped my hand how I, how I feel about it. But there is, there is a lot of good here. Uh, having a heart that trusts, I, I think I've said something like this a couple of weeks ago with Abraham in Genesis 22.

Having a heart that trusts God's commands, uh, and actions is a good thing. Um, there are commands of Jesus that don't make sense to us sometimes. Uh, whenever the gospel intersects with the culture, there are going to be things in the culture that the gospel affirms as good, good, and then also things that the gospel rejects as not quite right.

[26 : 41] Um, and, there are things in that latter category that, that don't make sense to us in, in, in the teachings of the Lord. Uh, and it's good simply to trust that God knows better than we do.

Um, that, that heart of, of trust and faith is, is a really good thing. And this kind of perspective of whatever God commands, whatever God does is good simply because it's God fosters that kind of heart posture.

Uh, and I do think that, that's a good thing. Um, but then there's also precedent for us to grapple with and question God's actions, God's justice.

Um, I, I'm afraid that this perspective can make us, uh, to put it perhaps provocatively, too deferential to God. Um, because we have the, the, we have the story of Abraham, uh, in, in Genesis 18.

God says to, to Abraham how he's going to destroy the city of Sodom completely. Um, and Abraham says in response, shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?

[27 : 46] Abraham saying, this seems really unjust, God, for, for you to be killing everyone in Sodom. Are, are you going to kill the innocent with the guilty? Surely not. You know, far be it from you, God, to, to do that.

Uh, and that's our father Abraham saying this. Um, under divine command theory, there's no, there's no, under this perspective that we're talking about here, there's no place for questioning God's justice, for grappling with God's justice.

Um, Abraham, under this perspective, was wrong for, for, for saying this to God. Um, but the text doesn't tell us that. The text doesn't suggest that Abraham was doing wrong there. Uh, my concern is that a faith that does not permit questions is not a faith that lasts very long.

Um, we need, there needs to be a place in, in the, in the spiritual life to really grapple with difficult things. And also, if we're made in God's image, then our moral intuition is not to be completely discounted.

Um, we have an intuition that genocide is a bad thing. That's a good intuition, especially because it's, it's reinforced by the commands of Jesus. Um, and also, um, non-Christians share this intuition of ours.

[29 : 01] It's moral law. It's written into everybody's heart. Exactly. Yeah. You shall not kill. Exactly. Exactly. Right. Uh, so, the, the guy who, who, um, that quote that I pulled is, is from this Christian apologist who's, who's somewhat well-known.

Uh, I knew about him before I was a Christian. Uh, and that perspective of his really turns people away from considering the Christian faith. Um, so on a sort of practical evangelistic kind of a, kind of a note, uh, we, we should affirm when non-Christians have a moral intuition that is in line with the gospel and, and not try to, to say, actually, everything that God does is just even when it seems like it's unjust.

Um, we, we should, we should affirm someone's disgusted something like the Canaanite conquest. Um, okay.

So, I'll stop for, for questions because that was perhaps a little heavy. Um, so, yeah. Um, um, um, um, um, I, I, I wonder if, if one casts this, um, uh, this, this view, divine command theory, in such a way that one thinks that God could simply assert things, moral things, arbitrarily.

Uh, I, I don't think that that, and that's, that's, oh my goodness, this bears no relation to our moral intuitions at all. It cuts completely against the grain of our moral intuitions.

[30 : 44] Uh, I don't, I don't think that that's what, at least with John Hare and some of the foremost proponents of this, uh, because God's commands are tied up with his will and his character.

Uh, so, it's not as if they're going to be anything that's completely arbitrary. In fact, they will always be in line with his perfect righteousness and perfect holiness. Uh, so, this sense of arbitrariness wouldn't, wouldn't really fit.

Uh, so, and, um, I think we're, we're going to be inclined to be suspicious of anything that doesn't go with our intuitions anyway.

So, as Christians, I do think that we, we do want to be inclined to be more suspicious of our own moral instincts than the clear commands of God.

Uh, I'm afraid it turns the sail into the wind of this culture to give them even more reason to be suspicious of God's clear commands.

[31 : 53] Uh, and, and, uh, you, you helpfully and rightly say, uh, well, gee, we, we ought not to be too deferential to God. Um, yes, he invites us graciously to process, and he indulges us for the sins.

But at the end of the day, they're right. The, the God of the universe will always do right. And if we don't see it as right, then that is our moral failure.

And, and, it might be, there will certainly need to be a process, but that's a process that's part of our sanctification. Hmm. He says, it is, my thoughts aren't your thoughts, my ways aren't your ways.

Yeah. So, I, I certainly, uh, this is not, what, what I put here is, is almost certainly, I, yeah, it's not the best representation of this divine command theory.

It's the sort of street level, what you see on the street. Um, but John Hare is brilliant. Uh, yeah. Um, yeah. Yeah. I, I, I would want to be careful not to suggest that someone who is grappling with, with something like the Canaanite conquest is morally failing.

[33 : 09] Absolutely. Yeah. Um, so, that's something I'm very careful about. Sure. Um, but I might, this might just be because I'm this 21st century postmodern millennial, uh, who only came to faith like five years ago and maybe I am morally failing.

That, that is actually, no, I'm, I'm serious though. Um, yeah. I have no problem with, uh, what you say, you're outraged by the, I'm not out, I'm outraged by what ISIS is doing.

Yeah. And about what the Khmer Rouge did and what the Nazis did, but I'm not offended at what Joshua did to the Canaanites because it was God telling him what to do.

Yeah. And part of my hope for this morning by putting those two stories at the beginning together is that I would rattle some cages and say, actually, maybe we should be outraged about this a little bit. Maybe we should at least see that this is something very uncomfortable.

Um, yeah. Because there isn't, on the face of it, nothing really all that different between what the Nazis or what ISIS is doing and what Joshua does.

[34 : 13] The Israelites deserve to die and the Canaanites deserve to die. And the whole generation that before they went into the promised land, they all died off. God has no problem.

He's impartial. He's not respect to other persons. We all deserve to die. Yeah. And that is a good note as well, that, um, just as God drives the Canaanites out of the land.

Uh, you know, several generations later, God turns around and said, actually, Israel, now you're just as bad as they were. I'm going to turn around and use Assyria and Babylon to drive you out of the land.

Uh, so yeah, that, that is, that is a good note. God is no respecter of persons. Uh, that, that's got to be a King James idiom, isn't it? At any rate. Okay.

Yes. Just a question. How would we deal with this if we as Christians were, instructed to follow these same instructions today? Uh, I wouldn't be a Christian.

[35 : 14] It wouldn't happen. Yeah. It can't happen. Uh, if, if we were instructed to do these same things today, then, if that were the case, then the Christian faith would be evil. It's not the case.

The Christian faith is not evil, but, yeah. We have his final testament. There isn't any extra words. The, the, the climactic revelation of God.

the, the, the clearest picture of who God is, is Jesus. Jesus, who was utterly nonviolent. Jesus, who, rather than call in angel armies to defeat the Romans who were crucifying him, said, Father, forgive them.

They don't know what they're doing. Um, so, no command like this would, would come now. Yeah. Um, I, I do, I do want to get to what I think are some really much more helpful perspectives on, on, I, I want to land on something positive rather than just saying maybe this isn't quite sufficient.

Um, okay, so we already alluded to this. Uh, the conquest is divine judgment. Uh, this is, I think, uh, the, the, the Old Testament's own perspective on, on, um, on what's going on in Joshua.

[36 : 29] Uh, in Deuteronomy, uh, I have a footnote. In Deuteronomy 9, uh, Moses says, not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations, the Lord your God is driving them out from before you.

Um, God is using Israel as an agent of divine, judgment. Uh, just as, as I already mentioned, just as God will later on use Assyria and Babylon as an agent of divine judgment against Israel, which we'll talk about in a few weeks.

Um, so Leviticus 20 suggests that the worship of Moloch, uh, an Ammonite God included child sacrifice. That's pretty chilling. Child sacrifice is incredibly rare in the ancient world because children, you invest a lot in them, right?

The parents in the room now. Um, child sacrifices is an unbelievably evil thing, even, even within the context of the ancient world. It just doesn't happen. Um, and yet, it seems, uh, if we are to believe Leviticus, the word of God, um, that the worship of Moloch included that.

Um, and so if this is God's judgment against the Canaanites and we're horrified at that, then as challenging as this is to say, I think our response ought to be, uh, remembering that Jesus says he will judge the whole world at his return.

[38 : 03] Um, as we say in the Nicene Creed, he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. Um, and, God is not capricious in his judgment.

It's not just that God woke up one morning and thought, these Canaanites are really getting on my nerves. I'm gonna, I'm gonna have Israel kill them all. Uh, no, we're told, uh, in Genesis 15, uh, so God says to Abraham in Genesis 15 that it would be 400 years before his offspring inherited this land.

One might wonder, why 400 years? Why not just give him the land now? Well, God's rationale, uh, that, that he says in that chapter is that the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

It seems that God is patiently waiting for centuries with the hope that, that the Amorites, one of the, the, one of the Canaanite groups, um, would repent, it seems.

uh, 400 years of patience. Um, that, that's, to me, uh, a stunning picture of, of God's long suffering.

[39 : 19] Um, and this is, this is what we see incidentally, this is, this is what God is doing now too. Um, in 2nd Peter, uh, towards the end of the letter, Peter writes that the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, that is, his promise to come in judgment, um, as some count slowness.

But is patient towards you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. This is what's going on in, in that old story. God, God is patiently waiting, in hope, that, that the Canaanites would repent.

400 years. So God is not capricious in this judgment. Um, so, But he waited generations before Noah, and there was no change. Sure.

Yeah. Yeah, God is not, God is not cruel and capricious in his judgment, but, but is patient, wishing that all should reach repentance. Now, one might say, in response to this judgment perspective, which I, which I maintain is, is the Bible's own perspective on this Canaanite conquest, one might say, what about the Canaanite infants?

They're killed too. Young and old, we're told. Um, now, I, I confess, I don't have a great response. Um, infants, one thinks, they're, they haven't done anything.

[40 : 41] You know, they're not. Yeah, maybe, maybe, yeah, maybe if you're changing diapers, uh, maybe you, maybe you might feel that way, but, uh, you know, at least my conscience cries out in, in, in, in outrage over, over the, the slaughter of infants.

Um, so, I confess, I don't have a super great response to this, but, it does seem to be the case that the Bible has a much, has a different perspective on guilt than, than we do in the contemporary West.

Uh, a much more communal perspective on guilt than, than we typically have. Um, as one of our pastors will be preaching out of, out of Exodus 34, later this summer, um, when God, you know, goes by, uh, Moses, uh, and, and sort of discloses his name to him.

Uh, the Lord, the Lord, God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, but then also at the end of that, uh, visiting the iniquity of the fathers and the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

Um, this is a, to our modern Western ears, very strange. And yet, uh, this seems to be the perspective, or at least one of the perspectives on, on a kind of corporate communal guilt, um, in, in the Old Testament.

[42 : 05] Um, then one might say, isn't this awfully violent? Uh, don't we worship a God of love? Um, you know, a God of love is not going to execute violent divine justice, right?

Uh, I'd say that is, uh, a very kind of, um, middle class Western kind of, uh, thing to say, frankly. Um, God's judgment, even violent judgment, is not incompatible with his love.

Uh, but rather, it is actually good news for the poor and oppressed. Uh, the, the victims of violence and injustice. Um, one theologian, uh, New Haven's very own Miroslav Wolf, uh, writes, uh, one could argue that in a world of violence it would not be worthy of God not to wield the sword.

If God were not angry at injustice and deception and did not make a final end to violence, God would not be worthy of our worship. True. I, I think Wolf is right.

Um, Psalm 96, uh, cries out in, in joy. The, the trees clap for joy, um, because the Lord is coming in judgment, uh, the psalmist writes.

[43 : 22] Um, for, for the poor and oppressed who are the real audience of the Bible, they're, they're the real model readers of the Bible. Um, God's, God's judgment is a, is a good thing.

It's good news. Uh, it means that, that the oppressor will not and the final calculation win. Okay, real quick. Um, also, uh, I, this can be brief because Nick basically preached this last Sunday.

Um, conquest is an allegory for the Christian life. Uh, this is a really old perspective. Um, I, uh, you can look at, there's this fourth century monk that I'm really fond of and he talks about these seven nations as, uh, an, sort of allegorically representing seven different kinds of sin and, uh, that's a little, that's a little bit of a stretch.

But, uh, this is an old perspective. Uh, and ultimately it's rooted in Ephesians 6. Um, where we see that our enemies are not flesh and blood. Uh, and yet, the Christian is to fight a battle, but not against flesh and blood, not against human beings, but rather against, uh, sin, against the spiritual forces that choke out human flourishing.

Um, just as Israel is commanded to, to, uh, utterly destroy the Canaanites, so also Christians are commanded to utterly kill sin. Um, Joshua is a challenging and even horrifying book, but there is a good word for us here as Christians.

[44 : 50] Uh, we are not to toy around with sin. Um, if we read Joshua alongside Ephesians 6, we are not to toy around with sin. Uh, we are to destroy it to the last man. Uh, if I'm audited by the IRS, which I, I won't be, because only the wealthy are, right?

But, um, if, if I say to them, yeah, I was honest on 90% of my tax return, but then in that last 10%, I committed tax fraud. They won't say, yeah, okay, that's fine.

You know, 90% is, is good enough. No, I'm gonna, I'm gonna get written up for tax fraud. You don't toy around with sin. Uh, you destroy it to the last man. Um, in order that just as God plants Israel in the land of promise, so also we might enjoy the eternal rest promised to us in Christ.

That, I think, is, is one of the, uh, if we read Joshua alongside the New Testament, one of the ways that we can read this profitably as Christians. Uh, there's like two minutes for final questions.

Uh, two minutes isn't enough, but, yes. So when you pray that kingdom come, thy will be done, without praying for the established world. Right. Right.

[45 : 58] Yeah. There's something that comes to mind is thinking about following this in the context of eternity like in young, for example, um, as Christians, we hope that because we believe in Christ now and we're tuttling as our God of Savior, that in eternity we're spending it.

And anyone who rejects him, you're going to eternal nation. And so God, eventually there's that huge, even more scary judgment beyond the massacre. And so, like, he's going to believe that God is being created from his death and that he's a just God.

If people that are innocent die at this end of the world, in his justice and his wisdom, you will have a way to judge them in eternity such that the right judgments will still be their end.

It's what I mean. Children, I mean, I don't have the answers, but if innocent children die now, what happens beyond, you know, how does God judge that? And his in the midst of the healing, probably have a good job.

And, like, even prior to having men kill other men, God wiped out their entire earth with a flood because essentially people were singing and all of that.

[47 : 10] Another uncomfortable part that I just skipped completely. Yeah. So, he chose to wait in that way. And in this other context, he chose to wait in this book. Eventually, he's choosing to do it, it turned out of hell.

So, like, in his justice, it's not just in a good sense, like, good people will have good stuff. So, people who sin also have the consequence, but all the in-between that they don't understand, it is just hate.

Yeah. And that is actually good news for the oppressed. Yeah. All right. It's 950. That's when I'm told to say that.

So, let's pray. Lord Jesus, you say that you will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. Lord, help us to think about that rightly and let us fear, lest any one of us should seem not to be entering into this eternal rest.

But also, Lord, give us hearts that trust your justice. Give us hearts that rejoice in knowing that the oppressor will not have the last word, but that you will put the world to rights.

[48 : 28] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.