

# The Book of Joshua

LESSON  
TWO

## Victorious Conquest Discussion Forum



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# The Book of Joshua

## Lesson Two: Victorious Conquest

### Discussion Forum

With

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Dr. Jeffrey J. Niehaus  
Dr. Tom Petter  
Dr. Glen G. Scorgie  
Dr. Imad Shehadeh  
Dr. Seth Tarrer  
Dr. Stephen J. Wellum

### Question 1:

**How could a loving God command Joshua to completely destroy the inhabitants of Canaan?**

#### **Dr. Craig S. Keener**

In Joshua, God commands the destruction of the Canaanites, not because it's the ideal. I mean, the ideal is love your enemies and win them to Christ, but obviously that wasn't an option available in the time of Joshua. If they didn't destroy their enemies, they were going to be infiltrated by pagan customs — for example, the killing of babies who were then often sacrificed and buried in urns and so on. We've found the remains of where Canaanites have done that. Also, anything less than total war would not have eliminated them, which is what we see happening. They didn't have total war, they didn't eliminate them, the Canaanites didn't flee, and so those influences did infiltrate Israel... In Genesis 15, God said that this wouldn't happen, the conquest of Canaan wouldn't happen, until the Amorites had become wicked enough for it to happen. At this point it's kind of like a corporate capital punishment that God is executing on this society.

#### **Dr. Imad Shehadeh, translation**

There is a very important question, a very, very important and sensitive question that asks, how should we as believers understand the genocides in the Old Testament... First, for the sake of argument, let's say that the God of the universe has the right to destroy all people. Because all have sinned against God, he has the right, with full justice and without blame, to destroy us. Without exception, there is no one among us who does not deserve condemnation. He has the right to condemn... However, towards evil, he has always been patient. In other words, he waited patiently until the sin of the Amorites was complete. Or to put it another way, if God had punished them before the allotted time, that would have been wrong, or after the time, it would have been wrong. But he is always on time to fulfill his promise to condemn sin and evil... But there is another thing Scripture reveals. The same Holy Scripture that gives us an image in the Old Testament about God's justice and holiness, this same God took on

a human nature and hung on the cross, so that he would, in himself, experience the same punishment that he inflicted on the people of Canaan. He took it by himself, on himself. He is the same God, the same, totally the same... There is a former terrorist who told me this phrase — he came to believe in Christ and told me this phrase — he said, “Terrorists claim that we die for the sake of God, while the message of the gospel is the opposite: God died for us. The situation is quite different.” So, the genocide in the Old Testament is an image of God’s holiness. It only occurred once and allowed us to understand the suffering that he endured, so that this doesn’t happen again, so there will be everlasting life. It’s an image about love, about how much God loves us. He showed us the suffering he experienced in order that we would be saved forever. The wrath was absorbed. The revealed wrath became absorbed wrath through Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!

**Dr. Jeffrey J. Niehaus**

The conquest was a judgment. One can look at those commands, you know, leave no survivors — women and children — show them no mercy. On the human plane that can look like genocide. But the root of that, I think, is to be found in Genesis 15 ... when the Lord promises Abram that in the fourth generation his descendants are going to come back and have this land because the sinfulness of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure. The point there is, then, that the Lord is going to allow the Canaanites to continue to have their life, have their culture, have their distorted religion worshiping Baal and the fertility cult and all the rest of it. The time would come when they were so far gone in sin that they would not respond to God no matter how attractive he made himself to appear, or how clearly it was from what he had revealed that he’s the God you ought to worship. The proof of this is found in Rahab because she can say to the spies, “We all know what Yahweh your God has done to the Egyptians and to Sihon and Og, the Amorite kings.” Well, if they all know that, why don’t they show up in Hebrews 11 as she does on the honor roll of faith? And so, it makes the point that they’re so far gone in sin that their reaction to the Lord will not... I mean, it’s a no-brainer that they ought to affiliate with him. Instead, they’re afraid and they resist, and that’s a sign that their consciences are seared, if I could put it that way. Jesus makes the same point in Luke... He says, “When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth?” And the answer implicitly is “no.” And so, faith is the criterion. When faith is no longer possible, the complete judgment is justified. That was true in the conquest. It will be true at the end of the age. And, as for the women and children and especially, perhaps, you might look at the infants and say, “Well, how can that be right?” We have to agree, I think, with Abraham before Sodom and Gomorrah when he asked the question in Genesis 18:25, “Will not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?” And the answer is “yes.” God knew what those children would have grown up to be if they had been allowed to live. And, of course, the fact that the Israelites did let some of them live and they continued to be a thorn in their sides shows that this was true.

**Dr. Chip McDaniel**

The question of genocide and the account of Joshua is troubling to many Christians because it appears to be, and it is, in fact, condoning the killing of masses of people,

entire wiping away of an entire race within a land. It's probably nowhere better stated or seen in the book of Joshua than in 11:20 where it says,

**The Lord hardened their hearts, that they would come out against Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them and that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them as the Lord had commanded Moses (Joshua 11:20, NKJV).**

And so, it sounds like a very brutal annihilation of an entire group. The judgment on Canaan was already anticipated in the book of Genesis. In Genesis 9, we have the curse upon the son of Ham, who is Canaan, and he would become ... the father of the Canaanites. We're not sure what that sin was. It appears to be sexual in some way, but there was a curse that was placed upon Canaan. When we fast forward to the time of Abraham we see that God told him that his descendants would own that land, but it wouldn't be given to him or his descendants right away. They would have to go into captivity. They would come out after four generations. Abraham was a hundred years old at the time. Four generations would be four hundred years. Israel was in Egypt, apparently, four hundred years. But the reason that it was going to be delayed is because God said the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full; it's not yet complete. God would allow a time of relative laxness and then at a point in time would judge the Canaanite — another word for that would be Amorite. So, the question isn't, "How can God condone a genocide?" The question is, can the moral governor of the universe — which God is presented as such — does the moral God of the universe have the prerogative to judge sin in a time, and a place, and a manner of his own choosing? We also look to the book of Joshua and we see that there are certain mitigating factors that are a help to us, I think. The first thing to consider about the book of Joshua is that some could have come out and joined the Israelite camp and become true followers of the Lord. They knew what God had done for his people in bringing them out of Egypt. They had the report of the battles on the other side of Jordan. Some of them could have left and joined themselves to Israel, had they wanted to. We also suspect that those who were living in the areas on the outskirts of the cities would have just fled. They would have gone to Assyria; they would have gone to Egypt, some place that would have been regarded as safe. Perhaps Edom might have received them as well. And so, the average, everyday person would be the one who would probably try to flee with his or her family. Those that remained were trusting in their political system. They were trusting in their kings to save them, and these were to be completely destroyed. A further factor, theologically, is that God had determined that the second member of the Trinity would become man, that God would take on flesh, and that has to be through a family. And in order to be the type of family to whom God would display his grace and bring about what we know to be the Messiah, there had to be a separation of these people from all of the other peoples, and so theologically, it makes sense that God would try to eradicate all of the people in the area in order that his people might be a distinct people. Israel sits in a land bridge between Africa, Europe and Asia, and anyone doing business between those entities would have come through or near the Holy Land. They were to be a contrast society. They were to show the glories of their God, and they would serve as the

family through whom God would send the Messiah. And so, God does have the prerogative to choose to judge people. He also wanted theologically to have a people through whom the Messiah would be born.

### Question 2:

## How do we know that God's call to destroy the Canaanites was not just a call for ethnic cleansing?

### Dr. Craig S. Keener

Sometimes people today accuse the book of Joshua of supporting genocide, of wiping out a people as if it were an ethnic cleansing, an ethnic war. But that's not the case at all. You have contrasted in the book of Joshua particularly two figures. You have Rahab who betrayed her people, betrayed Jericho, came over to the side of God's people. She hid the spies on her roof. In contrast with that you have Achan who betrayed God's people, taking the loot from Jericho. In contrast to hiding spies on his roof, he hid the loot under his tent. Rahab saved her whole family. Achan destroyed his whole family because, obviously, he couldn't have hid this under the tent without them knowing and participating in the subterfuge. So, the point is that it wasn't just a matter of ethnicity; it was a matter of loyalty to Israel's true God. Now, Achan becomes, in a sense, a model for what brings judgment among God's people. God's people were holy; they were devoted to the Lord, and when Achan took some of this loot that was spiritually polluted, he brought judgment and others died because of his sin. You see something in Acts 5 where Ananias and Sapphira do something similar and God cuts it off right there. God judges them right there for the sake of his people.

### Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

God doesn't exhibit favoritism to the Israelites over the Canaanites. The evidence for this is Rahab the prostitute. She was one of the people of Canaan, but she received faith and acknowledged the God of Israel. As a result, she and her family were saved from the destruction. At the same time, Achan, the son of Carmi, who broke faith in regard to the devoted things, was a member of the covenant community, a member of the people of Israel, and eventually he received God's just judgment for what he did. Throughout the history of Israel, we see how God punishes Israel many times for rebelling against and disobeying the Lord. So, they received various kinds of God's punishments, either during the Assyrian or the Babylonian exiles.

### Dr. Seth Tarrer

When we look at the Canaanite religion and what was going on, on the ground, so to speak, there are numerous things that we would describe as wicked, things that the Old Testament, things that Israelite ethics and morals would call wrong. Fertility cults were rampant; sexual immorality was common; child sacrifice was common. And underneath all of this, we see there is a resistance to the will of the Lord, a resistance to God as Creator. And so, *cherem* is tied to this notion of creation. The Lord is the creator of all lands, not just the people of Israel and the land that they inhabit at the

time; the Lord is the creator of all lands, and he has designated the ways in which they are to live, the ways in which they can bring peace and justice and righteousness to one another, and the actions of the Canaanites are inhibiting this. There is a resistance to the will of the Lord as Creator. And finally, an interesting point brought up by John Goldingay recently is that the Lord is not so much asking Israel to destroy the Canaanites because the Canaanites have the wrong religion. No, the question is, again, is moral and ethical in nature. What the Canaanites are doing is abhorrent to the Lord. The question of religion has almost always missed the mark because religion, be it Israelite or whomever, has never saved. Religion does not save. It does not now; it hasn't ever. The proper religion was not what caused Rahab to suddenly change her mind. Rahab did not say to the spies, "Oh, your mode of thinking, your theological categories are better than mine. I'm going to convert." It wasn't religion; it was response. The proper response was one of faith. When one looked at what was going on around them, and then one heard the stories that Joshua and the spies told — this is the hand of the Lord, the Lord is the one doing these things — the response of Rahab was one of faith and obedience. This is the response that Israel has always been called to and the response that the world, through Israel, is called to take part in as well.

### Question 3:

**What does Joshua 1:5 mean when God promises, "I will be with you?"**

#### **Dr. Carol Kaminski**

You know, right at the beginning of the book of Joshua, as he's now taking over new leadership for Moses, you have this wonderful promise being given that God promises his presence, and it says, "as he had been with Moses." And this picks up a really central theme in the Old Testament, beginning, I guess the background really is the loss of the divine presence in the Garden of Eden and they're banished from Eden. And so, you start to have this promise being given to the patriarchs: "I'm going to" — Abraham, Isaac and Jacob — "I'm going to be with you." And of course, if you look at the background with Moses, the divine presence, tabernacle, absolutely central to the whole book and the whole narrative. And especially you see this in the golden calf story when they build the idol and Moses is interceding and the people have been, you know, worshipping this idol. And God says, "Look, I'm just going to destroy you." Moses intercedes and says, "Please, if you don't go with us it's all over." And he says, "Look, okay, I won't destroy you, but I'm going to send my angel." And then Moses says, "No, no. If you're not with us, we may as well not go out from here." So, and of course, God in his grace and mercy promises to be with them, and this then picks up that underlying theme that God had been with Moses in terms of leading the Israelites, and so you have divine presence with Joshua as a leader. And what immediately follows after that is this emphasis on obeying the commandments of the Lord, which really is, they're kind of working in together, that God promises "I'll be with you" — he's going to give them victory — but they need to be following God's law. That's central to entrance into the land and to conquering the land.



**Rev. Kevin Labby**

“I will be with you” is one of the great promises of God to his people, and of course means that close proximity, that he will be their God, and they will be his people, that he’ll be with them, never leaving them, never forsaking them, that he’ll be working for them. Oftentimes, I think when we hear that, what we’re drawn to is the comfort that, even in the face of our sins and our struggles, God will remain steadfast, even when we’re not. But in this particular context as God’s people were getting ready to take possession of the Promised Land and go up against the Canaanite people — a strong and powerful people characterized by deep generational sin, a group of people that would have been terrifying to many outside that land as they looked in upon it — what God is really promising is that he won’t only be with them, be faithful and steadfast for them, but that he’ll fight for them, and he’ll fight with them. And, of course, we see that in just a couple of chapters as the angel of the Lord appears to Joshua and reminds him that this is not purely an earthly battle between Joshua and the armies of Israel, it’s the Lord of Hosts who is fighting with them and for them and is ultimately going to determine their success. So, it’s meant to be a wonderful reassurance in many ways, but a chief way in which God is reassuring his people in the book of Joshua is that he will fight for them, and in fact, has been fighting for them.

**Dr. James M. Hamilton**

One of the things that we always want to bear in mind as we think about what the Bible means is it’s a good thing to read the surrounding context. And in the immediate context, the Lord had said, “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you.” And I think what’s happening in part here is, back in Deuteronomy 18, the Lord had instructed Israel — he said to them, “When you go into this land...” — essentially what he’s saying is, these other peoples, when they look for supernatural guidance, they seek mediums. They seek necromancers. They have all these means of divination, all these ways of getting supernatural guidance. And the Lord says you’re not to follow any of those practices, but “I’m going to raise up a prophet like you,” the Lord says to Moses, “from among your brothers.” And, in one sense, there’s not a prophet like Moses, Deuteronomy 34 tells us, until Jesus comes. But in another sense, all of the prophets that follow Moses are prophets like Moses. In some cases, they have experiences very much like Moses’ experience when the Lord called him. And that’s the case with Joshua. So, I think, in part, what the Lord is saying is, “Joshua, as I was with Moses, and as I led him, and as I gave revelation to him for the people of Israel, so I’m going to be with you. And as I gave him authenticating signs, so I will be with you.” And then, Joshua has very similar experiences to the one that Moses had at the burning bush at Mount Sinai when he’s told to take off his sandals for the place on which he stands is holy ground. And so, I think the key thing here is that the Lord is continuing the work that he had been doing in Israel through Moses, now through Joshua.

**Rev. Bin Li, translation**

In Joshua 1:5, God said to Joshua: “I will be with you.” This is a great encouragement... He didn’t just face pressure from external circumstances, but from

internal conflicts as well. He had doubts; “Can I really lead these people?”... So, when God said to Joshua: “Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you,” God had already been showing Joshua how Moses had experienced God’s being with him and how to lead the Israelites to run toward their goal. This gave Joshua the confidence to believe that he could continue leading. This message is a great encouragement to me as well. Every time I’m weak, external circumstances are stressful, or when I’m in conflict with those in ministry with me or with the congregation, I think on this Scripture and realize that God’s will for his church is to head toward his mission. This is in his will. So, when I obey him, I will be full of strength. When I believe that God is with me, I can remove a lot of fear and discouragement from within me.

#### **Question 4:**

#### **What was Achan’s sin, and why was it so terrible?**

##### **Rev. Michael J. Glodo**

We read in Joshua about Achan’s sin, holding back some of the spoils of the victory at Ai, and as a result, Israel fails in their next battle because it displeases God so much. So, what was the severe offence that Achan committed that would cause God to be willing to let his people suffer defeat? Well, if we go back to Deuteronomy, and we see in Deuteronomy 13, we see the idolatrous city among Israel in the future, if they follow after other gods, they are to be offered as a burnt offering. And the word for holy war, *cherem*, is used there. So, what holy war is, or what *cherem* warfare is, is a war that is not for the enrichment of the victors as is common state war, but holy war is a type of final judgment that prefigures the final judgment of God in the new heavens and earth wherein those who are not holy and right before God are totally consumed as burnt offerings to him. And so, when Achan held back from the spoils of the battle, he was actually holding back something that belonged to God. He was stealing from God to enrich himself, which is the exact opposite of righteousness. The righteous man gives to God and trusts God to provide for, sustain and support him. Now, what is remarkable about the Achan episode is that it’s repeated in a manner in the book of Acts with Ananias and Sapphira. Scholars have noticed a number of parallels between Achan’s sin and what Ananias and Sapphira did, which tells us this, that a lack of generosity, not being generous to God’s purposes in the Christian community, is tantamount to the kind of thing that Achan did back in the book of Joshua.

##### **Dr. James M. Hamilton**

Achan’s sin was that he took forbidden things. He took things that were placed under the ban. And this is one of the disturbing things for people as they read the book of Joshua. They ask themselves, how could it be so bad for him to take this 200 shekels of silver and a bar of gold and a beautiful cloak from Shinar? Why is that such a grave sin? And I think in answering that question, what the issue is, is simply, is God who he claims to be? If the God of the Bible is the Lord of the universe, and if he is more valuable than life itself, then to transgress his commandments is a heinous crime

whose penalty is infinite in magnitude. And I think that this is what we're seeing both in the punishment of Achan and in the putting of the Canaanites under the ban itself. In this, Achan's calculation is something like, "These things matter more to me than the God who has placed them under this prohibition." And for the Canaanites, the sins in which they indulged, they were making a calculation that said, "Our consciences may be bearing us witness — as the law of God is written on our hearts as these Gentiles — but our enjoyment of these things is more significant to us than any pang of conscience that might woo us away from this or any qualms we might have about any of these perversities." And in that calculation they are choosing God's gifts over the giver himself, and that is a crime that is worthy of God's punishment.

### **Dr. Tom Petter**

Achan's sin in Joshua 7 is a big question. Why was it *so* bad? What was it that happened there? And the facts of the case are simple. In chapter 7, Achan got greedy in the fight for Jericho, and then he grabbed a few things for himself, hid it in his tent, and then Yahweh had specifically commanded, don't take any booty for yourself. So, Achan is a tribal leader of the tribe of Judah, which I think bears significance because, of course, Judah is the lineage of David and Jesus. And so, he's a prominent leader in the community. And of course, what happens because of Achan's sin, the whole idea of creating holiness within the Israelite camp — because without holiness there's no victory; It's about holiness, it's about being devoted to Yahweh — and so, when they go onto the next campaign against Ai, they fail. And so, Joshua very quickly realizes, there is what we call "sin in the camp," and that's what prevented them to secure victory like they did with Jericho. And so, they have a system of finding out who it was, and it goes through the tribes, and then the clans, and then the families, and then it comes down to the "*bayith ab*" in Hebrew, which is "house of the father," and it's Achan's house that's being singled out. And then finally Achan fesses up, and then they take a very drastic measure of committing Achan and his family to destruction, *literal* destruction — *cherem*, that word — "committed" devoted to destruction." So, here is the contrasting picture. You have chapter 6 of Joshua where a Canaanite prostitute and her household is saved from *cherem*, saved from destruction, and then, the prominent leader of the tribe of Judah and his household are committed to destruction. And the lesson is a *powerful* one. Very early holiness and *cherem* are two-way streets. It doesn't matter, you could have all the right pedigree being a member of the tribe of Judah. It didn't protect; that didn't protect him. What he needed to be... On whose side are you, holiness or unholiness? So, a person with zero credentials like Rahab, and then a person with full credentials within Israel like Achan, and then who gets saved and who doesn't has everything to do with holiness.

### Question 5:

## What does the book of Joshua teach us about God's character as a warrior for his people?

### Dr. Seth Tarrer

By the time we get to the part of the Old Testament in which we read about Samuel and the crowning of King Saul and King David, a common title for the Lord is “*Adonai Sabaoth*,” or the “Lord of Hosts,” or the “Lord of Armies.” However, backing up to the book of Joshua, we get to witness narratively in the text how the Lord earns this name. He’s brought Israel out of Egypt, and now he engages with Israel as an active combatant on the side of righteousness in the purification of the land of Canaan. In 5:13-15 in the book of Joshua, Joshua meets this mysterious figure, this figure known as “the commander of the Lord,” and when Joshua encounters this figure, this figure has a drawn sword. This is an interesting component of the story because, in other ancient Near Eastern accounts of encounters with divine hosts, swords are also raised. There is an account from the *Annals of Ashurbanipal* in which Ishtar is met with a raised sword, and the raised sword is interpreted as a sign of encouragement, encouragement that, “I am with you, and I will fight on your side.” However, the response of the mysterious character, this commander of the armies of the Lord, is puzzling because when Joshua asks on whose side this commander fights, a third option is given: “I don’t fight exclusively for you, nor do I fight for your enemies. I fight on the side of the Lord.” Now, this is an example in which God, as warrior in the book of Joshua, poses to us — the reader in the modern world — a very pertinent and timely question. And Douglas Earl has helpfully described the ways in which three perspectives are maintained in the book of Joshua. There are the side of the Canaanites, there is the side of the Israelites, and then there is a distinct third perspective — this is the side of the Lord; this is perfect justice and righteousness. However, we’re apt to conflate us as being on the side of the Lord, over and against them, that is, the “enemy.” And so, Joshua is continually at pains to require us to properly realign ourselves with the right side, the side of the Lord, the side of justice and righteousness. And so, when we talk about God as warrior, God was never straightforwardly for Israel on Israel’s terms. God was for Israel on *his* terms. And God was never unreservedly against the Canaanites — witness the salvation of Rahab and her family. God was against the Canaanites in the degree that they were continuing in willful resistance to his will, oppression and immorality... We push this question even further to the final book of the New Testament. We read in Revelation 19:11:

**Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war (Revelation 19:11).**

So, this image of God as warrior fighting on behalf of his people is now brought to its completion in the book of Revelation where Jesus comes, eschatologically, on a white horse, fighting injustice the same way that the Lord refused to fight for Israel on

Israel's terms. He always fought on terms of justice and righteousness. And then in chapter 21, we witness the inheritance that we receive as God's people. The inheritance of Israel was the Promised Land. However, in the New Testament this is again taken up in another register. The inheritance is no "thing" to be attained. It is Jesus. The warrior becomes the inheritance. Our warrior king is in fact our inheritance, and in him we enjoy renewed heaven and earth and a heavenly city.

**Dr. Sherif Gendy, translation**

Asking about how to learn or what to learn about God's character as a warrior for his people in the book of Joshua is an important question because from the beginning of the book, in chapter 1, we see God giving instructions to Joshua to prepare for the war and prepare the people for the war. Here we see God as the military leader, the commander-in-chief of the army, the marshal who lays out the strategies for his people. Not only this, we also see through the entire book and through the wars in which Joshua led the people, we see God's authority and sovereignty over the events. And we see that every step the people took was by an order and clear instruction from the Lord. So, not only did the Lord call Joshua to prepare the people, but he also was the one who laid out the plan and instructed the people on how to move. Additionally, we see the Lord himself fighting for his people. The Lord is the military leader, the warrior who leads his people in victory, because he has the mighty hand over all the events. Victory was related to the obedience of the people. When the people disobeyed the Lord — like what happened with Achan the son of Carmi — we see that there is punishment and condemnation because of disobedience. It's important to the Lord, as a fighting warrior, that his people be committed and consistent in their obedience, loyalty, and faithfulness to him. So, because God is the leader and Lord over events, victory is guaranteed, even if the people disobey, because the Lord corrects this disobedience. Once more, he comes to assert victory, and victory, as I said, is related to the obedience of the people and their faithfulness and loyalty to the Lord. The image of God's character as a mighty warrior is repeated in various places in the Bible. One of the best and most magnificent texts, or the most comprehensive text that shows the image of God as a warrior, is found in Revelation, the book of Revelation, when it talks about Christ who is sitting on a white horse. In his second coming, he is coming to launch a war against the ungodly, among either angels or human beings, and he will accomplish the victory he inaugurated on the cross, and he will provide this victory to all his faithful followers who faithfully obeyed his commands. As a result, because the Lord is a warrior, he is just, he never oppresses, and victory is always guaranteed through the Lord, because he is the military leader who puts strategies in place and accomplishes them by his mighty hand, which has the absolute authority.

**Dr. Tom Petter**

In the book of Joshua, God's character is manifested in many ways, and one of the traits of God, as a warrior, is a wonderful lesson for all of us — for the people then and for us — that God is characterized as a divine warrior. And of course, Joshua, you have to read Joshua in light of the exodus, and what happens during the exodus. And what happens during the exodus is that Yahweh manifests himself as the divine

warrior. It's in Exodus 15 when he has conquered all the armies of Egypt through their passing through the waters there, it says, "Yahweh is a man of war." So, that's one of his titles as divine warrior. And so, that's picked up in the book of Joshua. But how does he wage warfare? That's the key to not just exodus and the book of Joshua but throughout Israelite history, the high points being David and the Philistine, Goliath. How does Yahweh wage warfare for his people? And it's always through unconventional means. And so, this, of course, prepares us for the way Jesus, the divine warrior — the manifestation of Yahweh on earth as the divine warrior — how does he wage warfare, and how does he conquer the mightiest of his enemies: Satan, sin and death? Right? The three: Satan, sin and death? How does he conquer the mightiest of his enemies? It makes Pharaoh look like a small insignificant opponent compared to Satan, death and sin. And just like Pharaoh was conquered through unconventional warfare means, it's not like the Israelites came up with twelve hundred chariots, so a massive main battle tank of the ancient world — six hundred chariotry of Pharaoh versus twelve hundred of the Israelites. That's not how the victory was secured. It was a mighty act of Yahweh, God's intervention, that a bunch of slaves defeated the most powerful army of the ancient world. David, same thing, he shows up in the field of battle, he's just a shepherd boy with a stick and a couple of stones and a sling, and he defeats the mighty Philistine completely adorned in full battleware, invincible, giant. And Jesus does the same thing. He's going to conquer by being a servant unto death. And boy, is there is a lesson there for us. In the time of Joshua, the conquest was all by God's hand — walking around the city seven times; what is that going to do? This is not warfare; this is worship to Yahweh. And that's how we wage warfare today. So, when Paul says in Ephesians 6, we don't wage warfare through conventional means of flesh and blood but spiritual means. This is not just a New Testament idea. This goes right back to the exodus, Joshua, the rise of David, and then throughout the time of the monarchy. And then, of course, this speaks to us. How do we wage warfare? We don't wage warfare through the sword. We secure God's victory and God's kingdom through spiritual means.

### **Question 6:**

**How does the book of Joshua emphasize God's supernatural power to defeat his enemies?**

#### **Dr. James M. Hamilton**

The book of Joshua emphasizes God's power to defeat his enemies by showing the fulfillment of many of the promises that God made to Abraham. For instance, right at the opening statements of the book, in Joshua 1:3, the Lord says to Joshua:

**Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given ... you (Joshua 1:3).**

And this is reminiscent of the way that the Lord told Abraham to walk through the length and the breadth of the land. And then there's a statement in Deuteronomy 11

where the Lord basically makes that promise to the people, that “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I will give to you.” And so, there’s this reality in Deuteronomy 7 where the Lord tells Israel that they are going into the land, and there are these seven nations in the land, all greater and stronger than Israel. So, you’ve got this one little nation, Israel, and they’re going to enter this land inhabited by these seven different people groups, all of whom individually outnumber Israel. And Israel is going to conquer them all. So, you have that reality, which comes to pass; this is exactly what happens in the book of Joshua. And then you also have things like what happens at Jericho where, by obeying the Lord’s instructions and encircling the city, the walls of the city fall down, and the people are put to rout. And the point being made in the book of Joshua is the same point that was being made at the exodus, and in many ways it’s the same point made at the anointing of David as king and in the way that God chooses people even down to this day. And that point is that God chooses the weak things of the world and the things that are not, to bring to nothing the things that are... So, at the exodus, you have this one little nation that’s enslaved, and God humbles the superpower of the day, he brings Pharaoh to his knees, and he liberates the people of Israel from Egypt. And then when Samuel goes to anoint one of the sons of Jesse king, Jesse so disregards the possibility that David might be the anointed that he doesn’t even bring him in from the pasture. And all the sons of Jesse pass before Samuel, and Samuel is forced to say, “The Lord hasn’t chosen any of these. Do you have any more sons?” And of course, David is out in the pasture and they send for him. And in the same way today, the Lord is choosing the weak things of the world. And this is what’s happening in the book of Joshua as this one small nation, outnumbered by all her foes, is brought into the land and conquers them all, subdues all the lands.

### **Pastor Ornan Cruz, translation**

In the book of Joshua, God fights the battles. God is the one who defends his people. God is the one who fights the enemies. Just looking at the battle of Jericho is enough because this was no ordinary battle. It wasn’t being fought in the common patterns of war. In fact, lots of people who saw the Israelites walk might have thought that they were ridiculous. We, on the other hand, can talk about faith and obedience, and about Joshua who obeyed God and a people that followed God in obedience. In effect, Joshua had to go to the battlefield, and the people had to go to the battlefield, but it was demonstrated on that day, and for the future, that God is the one who gives victory. God is the one who fights for his people, who made the walls fall down, who handed his enemies into the hands of those who saw them as so great and powerful that they thought they couldn’t face them, the ones that, years before, the spies had said, “We are like grasshoppers compared to them.” In 5:13, Joshua has the opportunity to see a sensational scene of a man with a drawn sword. He asks him, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” And the answer is magnificent. He said he had come as a prince of Yahweh to fight. Joshua knelt down and worshiped. He was seeing a revelation of Christ himself in the New Testament. It was being demonstrated that God is the one who fights for his people. In 23:8-11, when Joshua is reminding the people about the things God had done, he’s telling them that there will be such a blessing from God that, “One man of you puts to flight a thousand

[enemies],” because God is with you and, just as he said, he will fight for you. The whole book, from beginning to end is talking about a people who obey, a people who need to follow God, but a God who fights, a God who gives victory.

**Dr. T. J. Betts**

The book of Joshua has a wonderful way of showing God’s power and his giving victory to his people. I think that it’s actually seen before any fighting takes place as they, at least, go into the Promised Land. If you remember, when the spies went to Jericho and they met with Rahab, Rahab says that all of the people in Jericho, their hearts had melted. They were afraid because they had already heard of how God had been giving victory to the children of Israel. So, God’s reputation, in and of itself, was bringing about victory by his own power apart from anything that Israel had done yet. And this also comes to place when the children of Israel cross the Jordan River. When they cross the Jordan River, once again, they get across and the text says that the Canaanites heard of their crossing the Jordan River on dry ground and again their hearts melted. And this is all God’s work before any shot was fired in the Promised Land. And then, of course, I think what’s most clear, and we see this elsewhere, but especially in the aspect of Jericho, that they march around the city several times and then blow their horns and the walls come down. Again, this shows a work of God, a miracle of God, that God, the angel of the Lord himself, has gone before them, is fighting for them, and the Lord gives them victory. And this victory, though, is based upon their obedience to him. And so, when they get to Ai, we realize Achan has sinned against God, and God sees this disobedience, and so they lose at Ai, which tells me that it’s not really Israel that’s winning this victory, but it’s the Lord who is doing this, and as long as they’re obedient, the Lord is giving them victory. When they’re disobedient, he’s not. So, it’s really God’s power that is doing this.

**Question 7:**

**How was Jesus victorious over the enemies of God’s kingdom in the inauguration of God’s kingdom?**

**Dr. D.A. Carson**

Well, first of all, the most crucial victory is in the cross itself so that he defeats Satan. The accuser of the brethren, as it were, cannot come along and say, “Oh God, you can’t possibly put up with that miserable lot. You say you’re so holy and yet you’re having dealings with creeps like them who are idolaters and inconsistent and self-lovers, and they don’t love you with heart and soul and mind and strength, their neighbors as themselves. You really must condemn them all, blot them all out.” But, in fact, Satan is silenced because Christ has paid for the sins of his own people. In that sense, the crucial battle has been fought and won. And that’s why, for example, in Revelation 12, the saints respond to the accuser of the brethren, they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. They overcome Satan — described metaphorically in Revelation 12 — they overcome him by the blood of the Lamb. And, so, that battle has already been won. But, like Hitler toward the end of World War II, when he could



see that the war was over, he didn't quit. He was filled with fury because he knew his time was short. That's what is said of Satan. So, Satan is more virulent now, and every time the gospel advances, more people are converted, righteousness is established in individual lives, in the local church, in any sort of subculture, that is already an ongoing defeat of Satan and of all those who love darkness. And the ultimate trajectory toward the ultimate victory is when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he will reign forever. And that's the way the Bible ends up in Revelation 19–22. Yet, at the same time, this is also a victory over evil people who want to undermine the kingdom of God, or overthrow the moral order, or disdain Christ, and so on. The point is that the trajectory has been set in place so that, as Philippians 2 puts it, every knee *will* bow, every tongue *will* confess that Jesus is Lord, and the fundamental victory has been won. That's still got to be worked out in some respects. It's being worked out in the lives of many who do, joyfully, by the power of the Spirit, bend the knee. But everyone will bend the knee on the last day. So, the gospel of the kingdom is already demonstrating its transforming power in overcoming the hosts of darkness, the darkness of the human heart . . . in anticipation of what is yet to come.

### **Dr. Constantine Campbell**

God is victorious over his enemies through the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. In the death of Christ, by dealing with human sin and paying the penalty for sin, he has overpowered sin and, therefore, the power that sin might have over us. Once sin is dealt with, then the power of death is conquered because sin and death work together. Sin is kind of like the stinger that death has, and once it stings you with sin, once you sin, then you are subjected to death, and you belong to death. But if you break that stinger, as Jesus did on the cross, then death can no longer hold you. It's like a toothless viper, or a spider whose fangs have been broken off. And so, what follows after the death of Jesus is the resurrection of Jesus, which is the vindication of his right standing with God and that sin has been conquered. And his ascension to God's right hand is described in the New Testament as the final sign that he is victorious over his enemies, not only sin and death, but the authorities, powers and dominions as mentioned, say, in Ephesians 1. They are under his feet now; they're already conquered. Nevertheless, they still exist, and so, at the end of Ephesians in chapter 6, we see that believers do spiritual warfare with them, but we battle with a team that's already lost, and we are just waiting for the final siren to sound, and then the game is over. We already know we're on the winning side.

### **Dr. Glen G. Scorgie**

The final conquests that are necessary for the perfection of God's kingdom remain ahead, but they have begun, and they were decisively inaugurated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. And we get some clue to what the inaugurating assault on the enemies of the kingdom looks like when we consider the text from Isaiah that he chose to speak from in the synagogue in Nazareth when he launched his earthly ministry. One of the decisive enemies of the kingdom of God is the rulers of darkness and the principalities and powers that do not give up their turf without a fight. Jesus launched a massive assault on them. And the New Testament celebrates, really, the

intimidation that the greater strength of Jesus Christ created in the powers of darkness. And what this means to believers is that we are no longer under the dominion of fear, fear of evil spirits, fear of death, fear of the control of the bondage to sin. All of these things were, in the inaugurating ministry of Jesus Christ, assaulted in a decisive way, and began then the dismantling of the structures of injustice and deceit and lies that perpetuate the forces of darkness and their stranglehold on human nature. He spoke truth; he assaulted the gates of hell himself, and then empowers his liberated followers to continue that assault on the road to complete victory.

**Dr. Stephen J. Wellum**

In Jesus' coming, it's very clear that the New Testament says that he inaugurates God's kingdom. God's kingdom is rooted and grounded in the Old Testament. Indeed, it goes all the way back to Adam as a vice-regent who is, as representative of the human race, is to rule over God's creation, and indeed all of us as human beings are to do that. But because of sin, he does not do that. Sin enters the world, which then becomes not only that which is transmitted to all of us, but also in Scripture is described as a power, as a domain. Sin leads to death so that in our lives we ultimately die because we are sinners before God. It means that we are now under God's judgment because of our sin before God. And it also means that, as a result of sin, the ruler of this world, tied to Satan and his realm, is that which we are now under his power and rule. We're part of his kingdom, not the kingdom of God. And as you work through the Old Testament, the Old Testament anticipates the saving reign of God breaking into this world, that God himself, in and through his Messiah, will accomplish that saving reign and defeat the kingdom of Satan. He will defeat the powers of death. He will do that through, ultimately, the payment of sin and our restoration and reconciliation with God. Now, when it comes to the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Christ now comes as the second Adam. He comes as the Lord himself, fully God, fully man. He is the one who, in his ministry, brings the kingdom to pass, not only in his teaching, but his miracles, but supremely in his cross, where sin then is dealt with first and foremost. The power of sin, the penalty of sin is removed. It's paid for. Death, then, is defeated, evidenced in his glorious resurrection and ascension and pouring out the Spirit. The realm of Satan now over us is now defeated as we are now transferred from Adam to Christ, from the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of the ruler of this air to that of the kingdom of God. And in all these ways — through the life, death, resurrection, ascension, the pouring out of the Spirit, the inauguration of the kingdom, which is now here, yet we await its consummation in the future — he has defeated the powers. He has defeated sin, death, the Evil One, and we are now victorious in Christ.

### Question 8:

## How should Christians interpret Old Testament commands for Israel to engage in divinely-sanctioned holy war?

### Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation

Asking about how we as Christians should interpret Old Testament passages describing God's command for Israel to engage in holy war is a very important question. In general, I can say that there are two types of commands in Scripture. There are general commands, which are for all people living in any time and place, such as "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," "You shall not murder," "You shall not commit adultery," etc. This type of command is repeated several times in the Old Testament and also repeated and mentioned in the New Testament. But the other type of command is specifically designed for certain people in a certain period of time. The passages in the Old Testament that talk about holy war are the other type of command. These commands are specific to a certain people to accomplish a specific goal in the history of redemption. The commands to launch wars against other peoples in the Old Testament were particular to Israel and were related to a certain period when God was leading the people, through Joshua, to conquer and settle in the land. These commands are not for all people whenever and wherever they are, because they aren't mentioned anymore in either the Old or New Testament. There isn't any other place where God commands his followers to launch this type of war against unbelievers. This doesn't happen again in the Bible. Also, it's important to know that Israel in the Old Testament was a kingdom under the direct authority and sovereignty of God. Israel was implementing God's commands as his representative on earth. Through this role, Israel was executing God's direct mission to launch a holy war against the Canaanites. So, such a mission was specific to the kingdom of Israel under God's sovereignty during a specific period in the history of redemption. We have to keep in mind that God alone has the right to give and take life. He also has the right to use secondary causes to accomplish his purposes and execute his justice. Concerning these wars, God used Israel as a tool in his hand to accomplish his will towards these pagan peoples. These wars were condemnation against them and their behavior for worshiping other gods. So, through it, God was revealing his judgment against them... As I said, such commands were not repeated again to Israel. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob didn't possess the land by launching wars against its inhabitants. And after returning back from the exile, Israel restored the land without waging a holy war like the one that took place during Joshua's time. Such wars and commands are not to be repeated. They were specific to a certain period in history in the book of Joshua. And it's crucial to interpret the text within the historical context in which these events took place.

### Rev. Michael J. Glodo

I think one of the most difficult questions that Christians face when they read the book of Joshua is how they should take the passages commanding Israel to fight holy war. And it's very important to start with a good understanding of what holy war *was* and *wasn't*, but also to understand how radically the new covenant, the fullness of

time, the coming of Christ has changed our response. So, holy war in the Old Testament represents the prosecution of God against unrighteousness and idolatrousness. It is a prefiguration of the final judgment, and it's not because Israel is intrinsically more holy than the Canaanites, but because the Lord has taken them to himself and redeemed them. Now they are to act according to God's purposes, to suppress and eliminate idolatry against God and great moral wickedness that existed among the Canaanites, such as child sacrifice and other things. But when we come to the new covenant, we realize that in the fullness of time, as all things, as the mystery becomes known in the full light of the revelation of the New Testament, we read that while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us. Apart from any action or provision on God's part, we are the Canaanites. But God has then, in Christ, put us to death so that, in fact, we are called to further die to ourselves to live to Christ. And then, we are called to prosecute God's purposes in the world, but as Paul says in Ephesians 6, in Christ, our war is not against flesh and blood, but against the powers and the principalities and the spiritual forces that are at work against God. And so, the way God's holy army prosecutes holy war today is by self-sacrificing, loving those who persecute us, blessing them, loving our enemies, and it is in that way not only that we fulfill the law of Christ but that we win others to Christ. So, we prosecute holy war today by the tools of the gospel, the proclamation of the good news that Christ has died for sinners and that all who would put their faith and trust in Christ can be reconciled to God and no longer be at enmity with God, no longer to be alienated to God, but be reconciled to God. But it has to be through the ethical witness of God's people, the church, living out God's righteousness, and even more, the self-sacrificing love of God's people for those who do not know the Lord, because we can do more for those who do not know the Lord today than Joshua could. Joshua could only carry out God's final judgment, but we can bring the good news to those who are apart from God so that they can belong to the Lord and be part of his people.

### **Dr. Dan Lacich**

When Christians look back on the Old Testament, especially looking at things like Joshua and the conquest of the land and God's call to actually go and conquer, we can do one of two things very badly with that passage. One is that we can try to just explain it away and ignore it altogether and say, "Oh, well, that was then and that's really not anything to do with us on any level," or we can become very nationalistic with it and become almost militaristic in our demeanor with people. And I think what we need to really look at with Joshua and the conquest of the land is to understand that was a specific time and place for the nation of Israel to occupy the land at that time. And since the new covenant and the coming of Christ, God's kingdom goes beyond national geographic borders, it goes beyond people groups, and it's a kingdom as Jesus himself said is not "of this world," and we're not wrestling with flesh and blood, but it's a spiritual battle. And so, the weapons of human warfare are just not appropriate for Christians to use on any level when it comes to expanding God's kingdom. And I think we need to expand that, not just to the actual weapons of warfare, but even our demeanor of us against them, and we're going to conquer them in some other way. It's really about the expansion of God's kingdom through the

gospel, through the good news of what Christ has done for us, as opposed to us conquering someone else.

### **Question 9:**

### **How will Jesus' victory over his enemies and deliverance of his followers be complete when he returns?**

#### **Rev. Michael J. Glodo**

When Jesus returns, we see the completion of his victory, and we see the benefits that his followers gain at that time. The New Testament picture is really one that begins even as early as Psalm 2 where the nations conspire against the Lord and his Anointed One, but blessed are those who take refuge in the son, who kiss the son, but over his enemies he will rule with a rod of iron. And so, at the end of the New Testament, particularly in the book of Revelation, we see the risen Christ, the one who was dead but now is alive forevermore. He's the slain and standing Lamb next to the Father in Revelation 5, and his victory means the complete conquest of all the enemies of God's people and his. But that victory will be achieved in two ways: through gospel conquest, meaning gathering all those for whom he died to himself, and also the utter defeat and eternal punishment of those who remain opposed to him at his coming. And as we live as Christians, looking for that victory to be completed, we have to remember we don't always know the difference. In fact, we never know for sure the difference between those whom Christ will conquer through the gospel versus those who he will conquer with the rod of iron, which is why our battle is not against flesh and blood but against dark forces and why we preach the gospel instead of bear the sword for the name of Christ.

#### **Dr. Sean McDonough**

When we think about Jesus coming again and winning his final victory, we don't want to think simply in terms of Jesus overwhelming his enemies by what the French would call *force majeure* or just raw exercise of power. In Revelation, it talks about the sword coming out of Jesus' mouth, and that is surely the sword of the Word, the sword of justice, that final judgment is as much about exposure as anything else. And likewise for the saints, particularly in the New Testament context, vindication is one of the chief themes. They've gone on believing in Jesus and gone on turning the other cheek and loving your enemies and doing all these other things while the world says this is complete foolishness. So, at the judgment, all things are made clear, all things become transparent, the truth will out, and that will be good news for the saints and bad news for the wicked whose wickedness consists precisely in resisting Jesus and his message.

#### **Dr. Glen G. Scorgie**

I think we have every right to dream of that day when the kingdom of God is fulfilled in its entirety, and our experience of life, restored and renewed life, will be what God intended for us. In many ways, the journey back to the completion of God's perfected

kingdom is a journey back to Eden, to linking back to what we lost in the Fall and perhaps making it, not only equal to that in a restored way, but better than ever. Jesus came to save us from sin, and that full restoration will involve a complete liberation from the guilt of sin, which we experience by justification now, deliverance from the power of sin, which we will continue to struggle with to some degree in this life, and most of all, it will involve a complete deliverance from all the consequences of sin, which is a category that encompasses not just death but all the dysfunction, all the pain, all the woundedness that is our human plight in this life flawed by sin. So, what we look forward to is a comprehensive restoration project, a complete salvation from the guilt, the power, and the comprehensive consequences of sin — back to Eden through Jesus Christ.

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