

# The Book of Joshua

LESSON  
ONE

An Introduction to  
Joshua  
Discussion Forum



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# The Book of Joshua

## Lesson One: An Introduction to Joshua

### Discussion Forum

With

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### Question 1:

**What are some evangelical positions on the authorship of the book of Joshua?**

#### **Dr. Tom Petter**

Well, the question about who wrote the book of Joshua and the traditional answer tying the story of Joshua to Joshua himself is an ancient tradition, and I think we need to respect that ancient tradition. Especially in tribal societies of the ancient past, but also tribal societies all the way up to today, the tribal elders have tremendous authority, and they have tremendous respect, and their traditions, whether oral traditions or written traditions, carry a lot of weight. And so, we need to be respectful of that, both in the ancient context and in the modern context. So, when a text like the book of Joshua has a lot of firsthand accounts with Joshua at the center of the story, we have to pay careful consideration to that. I mean, that's "history writing 101," since Herodotus. Herodotus listens to the accounts of other people, and he says this is what they say about their history. And he's not making a value judgment at times, but he's at least respecting the ancient record of the people and how they view their own history. So, here is ancient Israelite history with a prominent, prominent figure, one who walked alongside *the* covenant mediator for Old Testament times, Moses. He is Moses' right-hand man, and so when he writes down what he has lived out in his whole life — the conquest of the land in Canaan — that carries a huge amount of weight. And so, very early the traditions gelled around the person of Joshua. Sure, there's editorial things going on. Subsequent writers, maybe Samuel — another prominent figure in Israelite history — might have come along and touched up some of the things about Joshua's death. But when there is the covenant renewal at the end of Joshua, Joshua is there. So, why assign the authorship, the composition of these texts, to someone removed so far down the line, like during the Babylonian exile. This casts a great shadow of doubt, and it actually is anachronistic. It doesn't fit with tribal history writing, as we know it.

**Dr. Chip Hardy**

Concerning who wrote the book of Joshua, we have to realize that the book is anonymous first of all, first and foremost. Beyond that, we can see writing that's actually going on in the book. So, we see writing on the stones; we see writing in the book of the law; we see writing of land surveys, even, in the book. So, we see writing happening during the time of Joshua, but there's nothing that absolutely makes us believe that Joshua himself was sitting down writing the book of Joshua... But we do want to take seriously the claims of the book and the claims of the writing in the book and say that where things are being written that they're actually being written.

**Question 2:****What is your evaluation of Martin Noth's theory of the Deuteronomist and the so-called Deuteronomistic History?****Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

Martin Noth's theory about the Deuteronomistic History is just that — it's a theory, which means that it is not absolutely certain, and people will disagree with it, as they have, and they'll modify it, as they have ever since the time he first enunciated it. But, in effect, most evangelicals are right to say that this part of the Bible, that we call often "the Deuteronomistic History," is in fact a unity, but the nature of that unity is very difficult to put your finger on or identify specifically. So, evangelicals had different views of what the unity of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings actually is. It's clear that all of these books depend heavily on the language of the book of Deuteronomy. That's a unifying factor. They draw from it. In fact, they actually quote it from time to time. It's also clear that the theological emphases of the book of Deuteronomy are also evident in those books as well. And so, I often think of the Deuteronomic or the Deuteronomistic History as more or less sort of like a denomination in Israel, sort of like a part of the body there in Israel, where they had a way of speaking, a way of looking at things, a way of talking about things that were definitely oriented toward the book of Deuteronomy. Now, in Martin Noth's view, the book of Deuteronomy itself was actually completed long after the time of Moses — in the exile, as a matter of fact. But the reality is that, as evangelicals, we should not believe that. We should believe that Deuteronomy is the Mosaic basis of this prophetic history that we call the Deuteronomistic History. We call it "prophetic" because it does apply the criteria of the book of Deuteronomy to the historical events that it reports in Joshua and Judges and Samuel and Kings. Now, it applies those theological evaluations in different ways, to be sure, but each of those books relies heavily on Deuteronomy, and in that sense, they have a great deal of unity.

**Dr. James M. Hamilton**

So, scholars have looked at Deuteronomy through Kings and they've seen something that's really there. They've seen that a lot of the phrases that start occurring in Deuteronomy are reused all through Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. There's just a load of language, terminology, concepts, a fund of sort of stock imagery and stock

phrases that gets used and reused across these books. That's really there. The question is how do we explain it? And there's a strain of, I would say, unbelieving scholarship that looks at this and they explain it essentially as propaganda. Their view is that at the time of Josiah's reformation, or renewal, or however we want to describe what King Josiah did, that Josiah got people onto this program and then essentially he invented holy books, or someone working for him invented a whole set of holy books that served as propaganda because they leant ancient, legitimating authority to Josiah's program. And these are people that would think that the book of Deuteronomy ought to be dated to that period, and then, that Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, they were all produced essentially around the time of Josiah in pursuit of his program. That way of looking at the material is basically claiming that the story that is told on the surface of the text is not the real story. The real story is in back of the surface of the text, and the surface of the text is just propaganda. And I think that's a skeptical and uncharitable way to approach this material. A better... A way to approach the material that actually abides by and holds to what the texts themselves claim for themselves would be to look at this material and say, well, the book of Deuteronomy claims, at a number of places, that Moses was responsible for this material, and then these other texts, they all attest to the profound significance of Moses. So, I don't think it should surprise us when we find Moses using all this language in Deuteronomy, and then we find these later authors who come after Moses picking up the language and the concepts that they learn from Deuteronomy and essentially describing the world through what we might call the lens that is ground in the book of Deuteronomy. So, that's the way that I would explain this material. I think there's a better, more biblical way to account for all of this language and imagery that derives from Deuteronomy than the Deuteronomistic hypothesis. I think, more likely, Moses had the profound impact that the texts indicate he had and then later biblical authors were deeply influenced by the way that he described things.

### Question 3:

#### When did the book of Joshua reach its completion?

##### Dr. Chip Hardy

The date of the writing of the book is difficult to determine. We see ... that there is evidence in the book of writing during the time of Joshua. However, we also see that there is evidence in the book, internal evidence to the book, which gives some time-depth to the writing. So, the book talks about how "this has been written," and it's that way "until this day," and so we see some evidence of some type of the events happening in the past and the writing about the events at a later point in time. So, if we look at something like the story of Jericho, we see, "it's like that to this day" is there in that story, and so that helps us sort of locate what's going on and what has it been like "to this day." Or talking about the conquest of the Jebusites and saying that "the Jebusites are there *to this day*." And so, I think we can locate the time frame of the writing of the book possibly later, even into the times of the kings, based on what

we know about when the Jebusite city of Jerusalem was conquered. And so, that's some internal evidence to the book. We also see external evidence as well, and that is the linguistic makeup of the book. And so, we see that the writing of the book, the actual written words, don't look a whole lot like the Hebrew we have that we oftentimes call early biblical Hebrew, like from the Song of the Sea, Moses' Song of the Sea, or the Song of Deborah. But we see the writing much more fits into the broader writing that we see in the Old Testament that we oftentimes refer to as the Deuteronomist history... And again, those books we believe are typically dated to around the time of the kings in what we call the Iron Age II time or sometime between 900 and 600 B.C.

### **Dr. Chip McDaniel**

Critics have wanted to assign the writing of the book of Joshua very late in Israel's history, in fact, all of the Old Testament written late in Israel's history, because they would base this on an evolutionary view of the development of Israel's religion... When Israel is developing from a paganism, to their idolatry, to polytheism, and then to worship of one god above other gods, and then finally to monotheism, the worship of only one God, they would say that evolved over time. They do so in part because they deny the miraculous; that is, that they would argue no person can know the future. And that's true — no person on earth can predict the future. But there is a God in heaven who is bringing about the future, and he is the one who can tell certain prophets what will happen in the future. And so, just to say that it cannot be written early because of an anti-supernatural bias seems to me to violate what the Scripture says about itself. When we come to the book of Joshua, we see that when we back up and we ask, what age might have produced this particular book, I think that there are a couple of possibilities before the exile. Israel's golden age was the age of David and Solomon. The silver age was the age from Uzziah to Josiah. And during those times you had relative peace, and you had prosperity flowing into the nation. We know that from, for example, the description of Solomon's temple and the wealth that that brought into the nation. We also know that from Hosea and Amos who talk about the lavish lifestyle of the nation of Israel. So, it's a time of peace and prosperity, and it's during these times that you would more likely have the opportunity to give over to contemplation and to writing rather than fighting all kinds of wars. And I don't think it's a coincidence, I think it's probable that during this time of this early golden age we would see a flurry of literary activity. And so, David is writing the Psalms. Psalm 72 ends with the notion that the prayers of David, son of Jesse, are ended. Probably this was an addition of the psalter, a portion of the psalter that was edited and came out near his death or shortly after his death. We also have Solomon, who is writing, according to the superscriptions, is writing the proverbs of Solomon in 1:1 and more proverbs of Solomon in 10:1. That we might have in the time of Hezekiah another burst of literary activity is suggested in the Proverbs where it says in 25:1 that these are the proverbs of Solomon that Hezekiah's men transcribed. And so, that fits within the idea that we would have an early period of peace and prosperity where writing would be done. We would have a time, perhaps later, before the captivity, when this writing also would be done, and then we know that we had literary activity after the captivity... Of course, there would have been editorial activity in the more than 800

years between Moses and Jeremiah or the 300 years between David and Josiah, because in the course of the development of the language, you've got certain features that have to change. No one today in English literature reads *Beowulf* in the original. In fact, we would even have difficulty reading the authorized version of 1611 in the original script. Styles change. The formation of words change. And sometimes in the Scripture there seems to be evidence of little editorial notes that are put in, and so, we wouldn't want to discount the idea that there would be a prophetic editor, a prophetically inspired editor, who would add certain notes in order to update the material for the people... We might even be able to suggest for the book of Joshua something a little earlier, because in the account of Joshua, it says that the Jebusite was not driven out of Jerusalem and unto this day still remains in the city of Jerusalem. This would have been at a time before David drove out the Jebusite and established it as his capital. So, what we're suggesting is that these earlier books of the Old Testament probably were achieving their final form during the time of the early monarchy as the time of peace and prosperity would have allowed.

#### **Question 4:**

#### **What genres of writing can be found within the story of Joshua?**

##### **Dr. Seth Tarrer**

The question of genre in Joshua is one that has excited a lot of people because when we necessarily ask the question of genre we're asking, "What kind of writing are we reading? What does this thing purport to be? How does it want us to read it?" Which then leads us to, "What kind of questions should we put to the text?" When we look at the text of Joshua, we initially see a narrative that is fast-paced — conquest, destruction, success, failure, intervention by God, miraculous events — in the first twelve chapters of Joshua. Then the text seems to shift gear. It doesn't shift out of narrative genre; however, the narrative becomes much slower paced. We see a lot of lists, we see administrative language and rhetoric, and we see what appears to be an accounting of the people of Israel as they moved into this new, previously unheld land of Canaan... So, the question of genre, then, has been answered by several as being, the book of Joshua's primary genre is something called the "conquest account," a genre that comes to us from the ancient Near Eastern world, a genre in which a charismatic leader leads a people to take possession of a previously unheld land, and under the helm, or under the leadership of a deity. While this is helpful heuristically, I think in seeing some of these similarities, three major differences appear when we compare Joshua to these other ancient Near Eastern accounts, conquest accounts that come to us from the ancient world. The first is that the siege account that we have in ... Joshua chapter 6 of Jericho is unlike anything that's come to us from the past before. So, in some ways, to say that this necessary component of siege is in Joshua; therefore, it's similar to everything that's come before, Joshua 6's siege is intended to display the mighty power of God, not the siege brilliance of the army... The second major difference that sets Joshua apart from other ancient Near Eastern accounts is the use of this word "*cherem*," the word for "ban," the ban that



God has placed over and against the Canaanites, that they would be consecrated to utter destruction. This word *cherem* appears in very little literature outside of the Old Testament anywhere from the ancient Near Eastern world. It appears in a ninth century Moabite inscription called the *Mesha Stele*, or the *Mesha Inscription*, in which the Moabite king, with the power of his god Chemosh, puts Israel to the ban. It also appears in a Ugaritic infertility incantation, which obviously doesn't carry the same resonance as it does in the book of Joshua. And then it appears in a Sebaean text whose date is under question. And so, the term itself is not clearly comparable. Thirdly, or finally, in ancient Near Eastern accounts of conquest accounts, the genre of conquest accounts, there's almost a Quentin-Tarantino-esque level of violence and slaughter in which the protagonists revel in the destruction, the blood, the body count, the skulls piled up. And we don't find that in the book of Joshua. Instead, what we see is a modest account of the destruction of a city and its inhabitants and its possessions to the Lord.

### **Rev. Kevin Labby**

When you read through Joshua you'll see a few different genres of writing. The first one is really historical narrative. It's an exciting book to read as we read God's unfolding work in allowing his people to take possession of the Promised Land. There are conquests, there are battles, there are tensions within the camp as God's people struggle with sin and its consequences and then are reassured of God's restoring work through repentance. In the middle of the book of Joshua, we see the distribution of the land, beginning and then continuing to the end as God's people lay hold of the land and then distribute it among the various tribes of the nation of Israel. A final aspect of the book of Joshua, might be described as genre, is that of speeches. As Moses left God's people with speeches to remind them of his faithfulness — his desire for them in the future, their past waywardness and how God's grace met them in their sin — Joshua has that speech element as well in which he calls God's people to remember that it's by grace that they've been chosen, and it's through obedience, grace-born, love-born obedience, that they've been able to accomplish what they have accomplished to date, but that more of the task remains in the future, and so, a call to future obedience and future trust in the Lord.

### **Question 5:**

#### **What is the overall literary structure of the book of Joshua?**

### **Dr. Richard L. Pratt, Jr.**

Old Testament books that are primarily narrative will indicate how they're to be divided by interpreters in a variety of ways. Sometimes it has to do with major shifts in the characters of the story. Now, when you think about the book of Joshua, that's really not a major issue there, because Joshua is the main character throughout, from chapter 1 all the way to the end. Sometimes you'll have major shifts in setting, and you have some of that in the book of Joshua, to be sure. But another way in which books will often show how they're to be divided as we interpret them is by major

temporal gaps or shifts in time, and that's more of the clue that we find in the book of Joshua, because the book of Joshua has several places where it says, now there is a significant temporal reorientation I want you to have here. And so, when you take that approach to the book of Joshua, you find that the first twelve chapters are more or less within one basic frame of reference or one basic time period, and that's when Joshua has inherited the mantle from Moses and is leading the people of Israel into battle. But in 13:1, we find that the text gives us a statement about the fact that Joshua's very old now, which is a major temporal break. And so, chapters 13–22 are oriented toward that timeframe within Joshua's life — a temporal change that takes place in the book... And then 23:1 also refers to a temporal gap. It speaks in terms of "after a long time had passed and Joshua was very old." This, too, then indicates that we're in another part of the book of Joshua, a later time than the second part. So, when you think about how the book of Joshua is divided up into its major sections, it has primarily to do with these kinds of temporal notices that appear in 13:1 and in 23:1.

**Dr. T. J. Betts**

The overall structure of the book of Joshua is pretty simple, actually. From chapters 1–5 we see them entering into the land. From chapters 6–12 we see the actual conquest of the land. And then from chapters 13–22 we see the allocation of the land, where the different tribes are divided up and people receive their inheritance. Then we have an epilogue at the end where we have chapters 23 and 24, where Joshua gives his farewell speech and really exhorts the people to be faithful to the Lord.

**Dr. Greg Perry**

At the opening of the book of Joshua we have this wonderful affirmation of Joshua's leadership. God tells Joshua that he will be with him just as he was with Moses before him. And this serves as a wonderful table of contents, really, for the entire structure of the book. So, in verses 2-5, where he says, "Every place where you set your foot I will give to you, just as I promised before," that story is told in chapters 1–12 about the conquest of the land, how they go in and they win the battle for Jericho and Ai in the center. And then they move to the south and then to the north and they take the land. And just like God promised that he would give the land to Abraham's descendants, he does so. And then in verse 6, at the beginning, he says that "You'll lead the people to inherit the land," and that is really about the story that's told in chapters 13–22 where, just as the Lord had legislated in the book of Numbers, he's going to give certain portions of the land to each clan, to each tribe. And then at the end of that opening encounter between the Lord and Joshua, he says, "Don't let the book of the law depart from you, but meditate in it day in and day out. Be strong and courageous and I will be with you just as I was with Moses." Well, this gets at something very crucial for the ability of God's people to remain in the land, and that is that they must be faithful to the covenant, to the Lord who brought them out of Egypt and who gave them the land. And so, those last two chapters, chapters 23 and 24, are really a story of covenant renewal where Joshua leads God's people to renew the promises that they have made to the Lord based on the promises that God has now kept to them by giving them the land.

**Question 6:****How might the book of Joshua have impacted the original audience of the book?****Rev. Kevin Labby**

The original audience of the book of Joshua would have been greatly encouraged on the one hand to know that God's plans and purposes for his people had been accomplished in such stunning way, that God had been faithful to them in the past and would have been, perhaps, challenged to see his past faithfulness as a pledge of his future grace. That would certainly have been one of the intended purposes of Joshua in writing. But another aspect of Joshua's blessing to the original audience would have been the reminder that all that Joshua's generation enjoyed came through obedience, and that as they stumbled along the way, God was faithful to forgive, but that God was using their obedience as a means by which they would lay hold of the promises that he had for them by grace. And so, I think the original audience would have been greatly challenged by that in the face of their struggle to obey and would have seen, as the nation of Israel declined, an increasingly starker comparison between the generation in which they lived and the generation of Joshua before them. Hopefully, that would have been a call to obedience and repentance. Sadly, we know, looking at the book of Judges that it wasn't, at least right away.

**Dr. Chip Hardy**

On a fundamental level, the impact of the book of Joshua on the audience would be for them to see the holiness of God, the character of God rightly. And then secondarily from that they would be able to see what their relationship to God would be and how would they live in light of that relationship.

**Dr. Tom Petter**

Well, the original audience of Joshua would have been impacted by the materials in a number of ways, but it's not just the original audience. There is a timelessness to what Joshua teaches, the book. But the original audience, of course, is tied to the time of writing, the composition question. So, of course, some people would throw that all during the Babylonian period or even later, exilic/post-exilic period... I think it makes a lot more sense to have an audience to the book of Joshua that is connected to the time, first the account by Joshua himself, maybe the editorial hand during the early monarchy... This seems to be the best way of looking at this text because it's a statement of Yahweh's faithfulness. And it's also an exhortation to finish the job that even Joshua himself could not finish. The conquest is incomplete and certainly Judges alludes to that all over. And so, when you put the context during the time of the early Iron Age, at the time of the transition to the monarchy, early monarchy, the exhortation is, "Look what Yahweh has done. He was faithful to his promise." Joshua 23 ... where it says very clearly that Yahweh was faithful to all the promises made to Abraham, that he gave them the land, but the people were unfaithful. They were kind of sleeping on the job and not fulfilling what Yahweh said they should do. So, it's an exhortation to finish the job to the audience, and I think maybe to the early kings, you

know, it might not have been lost. We don't know that, but David certainly took that to heart because what's the conquest of the land if you can't conquer the place of Yahweh's inheritance, like Exodus 15 says? And the place of Yahweh, where he is going to dwell with his people in this sacred space, the Holy Land, is the hill of Jerusalem ... not Mount Sinai; it's Mount Zion. And so, here you have all this conquest of the land, but the prize is not taken. So, I think Joshua, the book, really serves to the Yahwists, the precious few during the time of the Judges, to say, "Hey, we've got to finish the job." And then of course, the whole covenantal faithfulness — "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord" — that's the ongoing challenge that Joshua presents to all the Yahwists, including the New Testament Yahwists, that we ought to put Yahweh first, Jesus first — covenantal loyalty.

### Question 7:

## Why did God command the destruction of the Canaanites in the book of Joshua?

### Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

One of the most difficult questions in reading the Old Testament is the question of why God commands Israel to destroy the Canaanites... It's one of the great mysteries of Scripture *why* God does something like this. But I do think there are certain principles within Scripture leading up to the early stages of the book of Joshua that give us some ideas of why God does command the destruction of these peoples. And the first is just the true deep consequences of the Fall and of sin, that when Adam and Eve are ejected from the Garden, part of the curse is death. Death is God's judgment on those who sin and rebel and reject him. So, death is a necessary requirement of judgment. And when we come to the flood in Genesis 6, there's a sense in which the flood is the necessary normal outworking of God's judgment on humankind, so that when we consider the life that we have, life is a grace, and life is a gift. In a fallen, broken, sinful, rebellious world, the ability and the freedom to continue living is a gift of God's mercy. So, we come to the beginning of Joshua and the conquest of the Promised Land and God commands, or demands, the death and destruction of all living creatures in the land of Canaan. And on the one hand, this is a stunning, shocking move by God. On the other, it's the natural, necessary outworking of the rebellion of humanity against God. So, death is a necessity for justice. That's one way in which I can begin to understand what's going on there. Another thing that I find helpful is that if you think of the people of Israel as a young, tender plant, and they're being transplanted out of one country into another. And the Canaanites were famous for their idolatry, for their pagan superstition, and for the recklessness of their religion. And I think, in one sense, what God is doing is he's clearing the land of brambles and briars, and he's creating a fertile space for his people, his covenant people to be transplanted and to grow. And we see this in the later history of Israel as they do plant themselves in this land, and they don't obey God's command to destroy the inhabitants. The idolatry of the people infects the people of Israel like a virus, and

so, you have Israel turning to the idolatries of the Canaanites in large part due to their disobedience in refusing to clear the land.

**Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation**

The question of why God commanded Israel to destroy the people of Canaan in the book of Joshua can be summarized in the following points: War against Canaan was God's judgment over these peoples because God told Abraham in the book of Genesis 15 that "the iniquity of the Amorites [was] not yet complete." The "Amorites" is an expression used in the Old Testament for all the peoples who were living in Canaan, and here God was revealing his intention to judge these nations. Another important point is that it was to protect Israel from mixing with these nations and worshipping their idols. It was also to cleanse the land from which Israel would become the light to the nations. One more important point is that the command to destroy the Canaanites was only related to the nations within Canaan. Regarding the nations outside of Canaan, there are very clear instructions that Joshua should not fight against them, but rather offer them peace. We read about this, for example, in Deuteronomy 20... Another important point is that the wars against Canaan and the destruction of the Canaanites was not an authorization for jihad. This was not for all times and places. On the contrary, these were very specific commands related to a specific time during the history of redemption. We have to understand the role of these wars in the context of God's revelation of the history of redemption, which reaches its climax in the person and work of Christ. This war played a role in preparing for the work of Christ in the unfolding of the history of redemption. So, it's not a license to wage wars of total destruction against unbelievers for all times and locations. Also, these wars were not repeated, not afterward in the history of Israel or even before these wars. God never repeated his command for Israel to completely destroy certain people or certain nations. It was only for the days that Israel was to conquer the land and settle in it during Joshua's time. The last point is that in this war — in the destruction of the Canaanites — the Canaanites were evil, so it was a small picture of God's greatest judgment, which will be in the last days. God will execute his just judgment on all the people and nations that rejected salvation through Christ. So, this war was like a small picture or type of a more horrific war that God will accomplish over the evil angels and the evil people who rejected salvation through Christ.

**Dr. Tom Petter**

Well, the question why God called Joshua to destroy the Canaanites in the book of Joshua is probably one of the most difficult questions in all of the Old Testament for people to answer because, if you put it this way, it's like this: It's Yahweh talking to Joshua — and Yahweh is, of course, the incarnate Jesus, and you probably had a quiet time with him this morning — and so, the same God said, "I want you to go destroy men, women, children, chickens, goats, sheep, everything," let's just say with the town of Jericho. There are other towns, but complete destruction. And the word, the technical word is "devoted to destruction," right? Devote this city to destruction. And there's a Hebrew word tied to that. It's called *cherem* ... that is probably always the biggest question that we have when we read Joshua. It's like, wow, this is intense,

and it was the will of God, and all that. And I think that the way to answer that is to go back to the basics of the land belongs to Yahweh... Yahweh has a universal claim on the land. It belongs to him, like the whole earth. It is a universal claim. And Yahweh is holy. But Yahweh wants to dwell with his people because he wants to redeem them from their unholiness, but he has to dwell with them. That's his desire, to be among his people. So, you see the clash — the holiness of Yahweh versus the unholiness of the people. And in this case it's the Canaanites. But you've got to set that story over a larger backdrop... Is it just the Canaanites who are unholy? No. It's everybody. From Genesis, we know that the Fall affected everybody. All the descendants of Adam and Eve have been impacted. And to this day, this continues; the unholiness that we carry in the face of a holy God is a perennial problem. So, we shouldn't single out the Canaanites because we're all unholy. And it's very clear in the book of Joshua that holiness is something that Yahweh has, and if someone is on his side, they're going to be on his side because they have become holy themselves, by Yahweh's means. By Yahweh's means. You look at the conquest of Jericho; what is the conquest of Jericho... It's just a ritual. There's no warfare there. They're just sanctifying themselves by walking around the city with the priests, the trumpet and the ark, and so they're sanctifying the site because it's preparing for Yahweh's holiness to come down. And Yahweh's holiness is not arbitrary, because he is making that message of judgment known in advance to the Canaanites inside Jericho. They have a chance to be saved from Yahweh establishing his holiness. They have ample times. They have the whole time from the time they leave Egypt for forty years and then the conquest in Transjordan of Heshbon, the city of Heshbon. They have heard all of it. How do we know that? Because of that woman prostitute that says that; "We have heard. We know what's coming." But she's the only one in her family that responds to that call to repent. So, Yahweh, the "unfairness" of Yahweh, it has to be mitigated. Actually, there is no unfairness because they've had the call to turn from unholiness to holiness and they have chosen not to take it, except for that one person in the city of Jericho. And that one person is actually saved. And so, yeah, the destruction of the Canaanites, it's the death and violence caused by sin. It's the extent of how our sinfulness has impacted the world. It's very, very sad. And let's finish with one more point on this, because that's the main point. Don't assign blame to Yahweh, because Yahweh himself took that death and violence on himself at the cross. He took that *cherem* upon him. He became *cherem* for us so we wouldn't have to face that destruction, those of us who have put our faith in Jesus. So, the claim of unfairness by God? No, he took that upon himself so we wouldn't have to be *cherem* and devoted to destruction ourselves. And when that hits home and you realize, I'm a Canaanite. If it wasn't for the grace of God, I am a Canaanite devoted for destruction, and it was only by the grace of God and the mercy of God in Christ that I've been spared. And our message is to proclaim that message of salvation, that the whole world is *cherem*, the whole world is unholy, and we go and proclaim a message of salvation, and we hope we're going to have a whole bunch of Rahabs responding to the message.

**Dr. Carol Kaminski**

Well, the destruction of the Canaanites is a really difficult issue in the book of Joshua, and I think a lot of people have problems with this in the Old Testament. I think it's got to start with understanding that we worship a holy God. And we see this certainly in the flood story where God is the judge of the whole earth and he is a holy, righteous God, so that's got to be the beginning of it. And it's very interesting, when you look at God giving the land to the Israelites, what you do see is he gives, of course, the laws in the book of Exodus and talks about his holiness, but what you find in Leviticus 18, 20 in particular, is there are a series of laws to do with issues of sexuality and issues of idolatry, and God tells the Israelites, "You're not to do this." And then he says, "because people of the land have been doing these abominations," and God actually spews them out of the land, which is really strong language, but it's underscoring his holiness. So, that's an important background. And then if you also look at the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy then says, "When you go into the land" — of course, they're at Moab, they're about to enter into the land — and says, "there are seven nations that you are to destroy." Deuteronomy 7, Deuteronomy 20 talks about laws of warfare. And really, the issue is that the Israelites are about to enter into the land, and the problem is if they worship the idols of the land. The Canaanites, of course, are worshipping idols, there is sexual immorality going on, all these kind of things, and so there is a lot at stake for God's people. And so, one of the pieces is, as they enter into the land, they have to destroy these seven nations. That's part of the warfare as they enter into the land.

**Question 8:**

**How does the New Testament apply the imagery of warfare in the Old Testament to its original audiences and to believers today?**

**Dr. P. J. Buys**

The New Testament mainly sees the battles and the wars of the Old Testament as part of the massive battle between God and Satan and between God's people and Satan trying to destroy God's plan. So then, it is also applied to Christians nowadays who are, in the same way, part of the same battle, if you think of Ephesians 6, that your struggle is against the evil forces of Satan, and that Christians must put on the full armor of God to be able to stand firm in this battle.

**Dr. Stephen J. Wellum**

The theme of warfare is important in Scripture, but it's often controversial in our day. You have to very carefully think through how the Bible applies warfare imagery both in the Old Testament era and the New Testament era. As we think of the whole counsel of God, and as specifically how the New Testament authors look back on the Old Testament, and think through how the warfare now applies to us as believers, it does so in light of the fulfillment that has come in Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, under the old covenant, it's important to see that Israel is a theocracy. They're given a specific land, a specific role to play in the nations. As they go into the Promised

Land, God commands them to engage in warfare, to execute God's judgment, to remove the nations from the land. That is for a specific purpose — to create a holy people, to allow for the coming of Messiah, to execute God's judgment upon sin — I mean, a whole variety of purposes that are given to us. As we come to fulfillment in the New Testament, the church isn't exactly the same as Israel. It doesn't function like a theocracy in exactly the same way. We don't have a certain geography and a piece of real estate that we are controlling and having geographical borders and this type of thing. We are a spiritual people. We're part of God's kingdom that is international. His kingdom has broken into this world in Jesus Christ. We are people of that kingdom, yet we don't engage in the warfare in exactly the same way that it is under the old covenant. Yet, the New Testament does apply warfare imagery to us. It first applies warfare imagery in Christ. Christ is the one who is *true* Israel. He is the one who takes Israel's role and fulfills that. He is the one, in his coming, that defeats the powers. He engages in warfare against Satan. You see that in his life and ministry. On the cross, he defeats the power, Satan, sin, death — a number of ways that the warfare imagery is applied. It then comes over to us in and through to him. We are to engage against the principalities and powers with spiritual weaponry, not arms and this type of thing that you would have, say, as maybe tied to Israel of old. We are to put on the whole armor of God — Ephesians 6. We are to engage in warfare under the role of our king, our Lord Jesus Christ. Warfare imagery will be picked up when Christ comes again. He will execute judgment. We aren't to do that; he will do that for us. But we then live as his people in between the times waiting for that second coming. So that, as you think of warfare imagery from the Old Testament to us, it has to be very, very carefully applied. For the most part, it's christologically defined. He is the one who takes up that war. He is the one that defeats our enemies. He, on his cross, wins victory, and we then live in light of that victory. We put Satan under our feet. We engage in spiritual warfare. We do not pick up the weapons of this world, say, 2 Corinthians 10, where Paul says we don't engage in that kind of warfare, but we fight against Satan and all of his sinful and evil deeds as we await the coming of the Lord Jesus who will finally, in judgment, put sin and death down, defeat Satan, as he has done, and it'll be consummated, and we will then have the victory with him.

### **Dr. Chip McDaniel**

The New Testament reminds us that, as New Testament believers, there is a horrible judgment that's going to take place in the future that involves God judging all the peoples of the earth. In language, this is very reminiscent of the book of Joshua. God is going to judge eternally those who do not accept the Lord Jesus Christ. But, as believers, we're also told that our struggle is not against flesh and blood. It is not a physical battle; it is a spiritual battle. And so, in Ephesians 6, we have the whole armor of God to do spiritual tasks such as taking the gospel to other nations. Our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. We also have 2 Corinthians that tells us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; they're not physical. They are spiritual, to the pulling down of strongholds, and in the context those strongholds are those teachings that run counter to the teachings of the word of God so that the proper proclamation of the Word of God and our own personal piety are the spiritual warfare in which we're to engage in the New Testament era.



**Question 9:****What are some ways that the theme of victorious conquest in Joshua applies to present-day Christians?****Dr. Greg Perry**

At the time of Joshua, the church and the nation, the state, were together in the people of Israel. What we see in the New Testament when Jesus commissions his witnesses to go out among all the nations is that now God's people are distributed among every nation. Now, Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that we're engaged in this spiritual battle against principalities and powers and rulers and authorities, and that to engage this battle, we'll need to put on Christ, put on the full armor of God. But he reminds us in 2 Corinthians 10 that our weapons are not fleshly, they're not carnal, but they're spiritual; they're mighty through God. And so, just as God's people in the Old Testament were engaging spiritual powers that were behind these nations, God's people still engage spiritual powers, but the weapons of our warfare are the means of grace, the Word of God, and walking in the Spirit as we evangelize and tell the story of the good news to all the nations.

**Dr. Tom Petter**

Well, the theme or themes of victorious conquest in the book of Joshua and the application to the Christian life are so deep. They run so deep throughout the book of Joshua on so many levels. But I think that the primary one, the principal one is, of course, the theme of victory and the theme of territorial expansion, territorial hegemony — that means “control” — the sense that “the earth is the Lord's and everything in it,” like the psalm says. And so, the theme of spiritual warfare from a new covenant perspective, it is so strong because, of course, in the new covenant we don't go about with swords in hand, destroying those who don't follow Yahweh. We don't do that. But we do have a mandate from Matthew 28 to go into the whole world and establish, or proclaim the gospel, the good news that Jesus saves us from all sin, from the premise that the whole world belongs to him. So, it becomes a nice connection with Habakkuk 2 where it says that the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea — so this multi-territorial expansion, the establishment of Yahweh's ownership of the land, because that's the theme of Joshua. See, the Canaanites think the land belonged to them. It doesn't belong to them; it belongs to Yahweh. Yahweh has a legal right to that land. It doesn't even belong to the Israelites; it belongs to Yahweh. And Yahweh is holy. If we had time we could talk about Joshua 5. Right before they go into Jericho, that mighty angel commander appears to Joshua, and what does he say? “This land is holy. Take off your sandals.” It belongs to Yahweh. It doesn't belong to you; it doesn't belong to the Canaanite. It belongs to Yahweh. And so, you're a steward of my holiness as you take the land from the unholy Canaanites. And then, of course, the shoe is on the other foot, or the sandal is on the other foot, because when the Israelites turn unholy, then Yahweh will also push them out. But, of course, in the new covenant, this sense of the holiness of the land is carried out through us who are filled with the Spirit, filled with the holiness of God *in Christ*, and then we go out, and we proclaim the holiness of God in

Christ, all because of Jesus' holiness, not ours. It's all of this wonder of the gospel that, left to ourselves, we're not holy, but we are holy in Christ, and so that territorial conquest, now we have ambulant holiness vessels, all of us individuals and as the church, and we spread throughout the land throughout the world now. The land is no longer the eastern Mediterranean seaboard; it's the whole world. It is a beautiful model of conquest, but it's a conquest no longer through violence and death because that was fulfilled when Christ died at the cross. It's conquest with service and sacrifice, and that's what we're called to do.

**Rev. Sherif Gendy, translation**

The theme of victorious conquest over the land of Canaan in the book of Joshua is very important to us as Christians today for several reasons. First, conquering the land was a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham in the context of the covenant. God fulfilled these promises by his mighty hand through Joshua and the army of the people of Israel. But the other important thing for us as Christians is that, in the victory of Israel over the people of the land of Canaan, we see the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his covenant, and we see God's hand going before Joshua and the army in triumphing and winning over the people. For us, this means an important thing, because, in Christ, we always walk in Christ's triumphal procession. God leads us in this triumph. Just as Joshua led the people in their war against the Canaanites, who exemplified the ungodly on earth at that time, Christ did the same thing on the cross. He triumphed over his enemies — Satan and his followers — over evil and over sin. This gives us, his followers, the privilege to walk, always, in Christ's triumphal procession.

**Rev. Kevin Labby**

The theme of victorious conquest in the book of Joshua applies to Christians in a couple of different ways. One is we need to remember that everything happening in the book of Joshua is according to promises made by God to his people centuries before, and everything happening in our life today is according to promises that have been uttered by God in times past. And so, what we see at work in our lives today is according to God's plan and purposes, rooted, even, in eternity past if we remember the words of Paul in Ephesians when he speaks about God loving us from before the foundation of the world. So, what we do need to see in our lives is God's plans and purposes being worked out. The second thing we could say is that there's an assurance that even though these promises and laying hold of them is conditional, that God takes the conditionality upon himself. In the book of Joshua, we see a pattern of foreshadowing, a type of the kind of obedience necessary to take possession of the land that God has promised, to take possession of the inheritance. It's absolute obedience that God desires and demands of his people. Now, of course, that creates a tension for us as Christians because we know that we don't have perfect performance before God. But thankfully, our "Joshua," Jesus Christ, fulfills for us the law's righteous demands. He fulfills the conditions, and so, he is the one that leads us into the inheritance that he deserves. We, of course, by God's grace are co-heirs in Christ. We have been reckoned with him, his righteousness imputed to us, our sin removed

by his atoning sacrifice at the cross, and so what he has secured through his obedience is now ours by grace through faith.

### **Question 10:**

#### **How does Jesus fulfill the theme of warfare against evil in the inauguration, continuation and consummation of his kingdom?**

##### **Dr. Philip Ryken**

If you read through the story of the Old Testament people of God, time and time again they needed a warrior to defend them, and the greatest warrior of the people of God is God himself. And so, when you have the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, he is the victor over the Devil and over all his works. And you see that in so many ways in the Gospels. You see it, first of all, just in the ministry that Jesus had of power over the demons who were opposing the work of the kingdom of God and the way that he was able to cast out those demons and put them in their place. Or perhaps most supremely, the fight that Jesus engaged with the Devil himself in the wilderness in resisting all of his temptations. But all of that was only a prelude to the cross itself. And the Scripture is very clear that the works of the Devil are put to death through the cross so that that is the place where Jesus Christ worked out his ultimate victory over the Evil One and all his works — the cross, of course, with the resurrection, which proved that the saving work of Jesus was accepted by the Father. And the Devil ultimately will be fully defeated, but the victory of Jesus Christ is already won through the cross and the empty tomb.

##### **Dr. Stephen J. Wellum**

The church has an important role in warfare in terms of the application of Christ's work. As we think of it, we just have to put a few pieces in place before we get to the point of how we actually do that. The first thing that must be said, just as the basic foundation, is that anything we talk about in terms of our engaging with warfare, sin and evil, Satan himself, is only because of what Christ has done. He comes as the one who wins the war. He's the one who defeats sin. He's the one who defeats death and the Evil One. Now, by virtue of our relationship to him — so, as we are brought into faith union with him by the Spirit — we are transferred from the kingdom of the Evil One to the kingdom of the Son, already in us. Warfare has been won by Christ, and the power of the Evil One, his rule and domain over us, has been defeated. So that, in becoming Christians, there already is an engagement with the Evil One, *in Christ*, and all that he has done. Now, as we then live for him, as we then take the gospel to the nations, the gospel proclamation, as the Spirit of God takes what we say and applies it to people's lives, spiritual warfare is engaged so that, as people become believers, as the Spirit of God brings new life, as they are brought to faith union in Christ, sin and death is defeated in them. The Evil One's power over them is defeated. Habits that we have tied to our fallenness, lifestyles, ways of thinking, ways of living, that is defeated. There is ongoing growth in our Christian lives in terms of sanctification. All of that is seen as part of the defeat of sin and evil, and it's a warfare that goes on in

our Christian lives. As we then take the gospel to the nations, we not only see people become believers, but we see, then, the effects of the church as we live our lives, pushing back the borders of evil and sin, having an impact as salt and light in the world, that, in some sense — tied to God's common grace as well as saving grace, particularly common grace — sin is restrained, and Satan's work is restrained. All of that comes through the work of the church, the preaching of the gospel, taking the gospel to the nations as we see men and women and boys and girls delivered from sin and death, coming to faith in Christ, lives changed, Satan's power broken. That is part of the ongoing ministry of the church through the preaching and teaching of the gospel.

**Dr. Miles Van Pelt**

The topic of warfare in the Bible, perhaps especially in the Old Testament, and God's judgment and his wrath and how that's going to unfold and what it's going to look like in the end times is a big topic... But in the New Testament, we have two different ways in which this theme is developed. The first is with Jesus. He comes as a divine warrior to wage war on sin, but this time not on the sinner but on sin itself. He is, in some sense, the victim here. He becomes the one who receives the full wrath of God rather than the one who brings wrath. Now, sinners escape the wrath of God at the end by hiding themselves or being united to Christ as those who have experienced that judgment in Christ. So, when Christ comes, he's going to come with his people, and he's going to come and wage war on those that have not repented, are not united to him in faith. And so we get these pictures of warfare, in some sense, at the flood, with Israel and the Promised Land, even with Assyria and Babylon waging war on Israel, as pictures of this eschatological judgment. But they're all pictures of, really, what Christ has undergone for us as well. So, there are two pictures: One, God's grace — that he has undergone that warfare and wrath and experienced its curse for us. But also, there's God's justice. He's coming back, and any of those who aren't united to him will experience that same judgment.

**Question 11:**

**In what ways does the Holy Spirit empower us for spiritual warfare?**

**Dr. K. Erik Thoennes**

I think the first thing the Holy Spirit does to empower us for spiritual warfare is to make us aware of the spiritual realm. We tend to gravitate toward just what we can see and feel. But to become aware that there is a spiritual realm that we engage in and have a battle within is so important. So, he makes us aware of the spiritual realm in the first place. He gives us conviction of sin. As we overcome sin in our lives, the first thing is to be aware of that sin, and then he empowers us to overcome sin. Also, to lead us to prayer and engage the battle at that front is vital in his role in our lives.

**Dr. Glen G. Scorgie**

The Holy Spirit plays a very vital role in the Christian's engagement in spiritual warfare. One of the texts of the New Testament relevant to this is the one that says that God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and self-control. This is a very profound and succinct insight, I believe, into the ministry of the Holy Spirit, because anyone who is engaged in ... spiritual warfare will attest that the immediate emotional response is often fear — fear of peril, fear of intimidation, fear of defeat, a strong sense of discomfort and vulnerability. That's where the Holy Spirit comes in, because to counter that, there is a spirit who brings to us a divine authority and a power that is actually not of us but more than equal to face the challenge. So, having done all, to stand. Often, when we feel threatened, we become very un-Christ-like. When we're under threat, we snarl like an animal trapped. And I don't think it's any accident that there's a necessary ministry of the Holy Spirit to sustain a gracious tone of equipoise when you're dealing with spiritual warfare and some of the nasty opponents that you will encounter... To be able to navigate that kind of challenge without anger and wrath and mean-spirited speech, is a work of the Spirit who is a spirit of power and love. But I love that last little insightful addition; he is also a Spirit of self-control, because under the duress of spiritual warfare, the great temptation is not to fight always, but to flight, to flee, to run away, to cut and run, and to lose it in every sense of concentration on the truth, emotionally; and the Spirit comes alongside as the spirit of self-control. Now, there are many other functions of the Holy Spirit, vital functions in spiritual warfare like purging us of the sin that leaves us vulnerable so that we can go into it holy, put the armor on, so to speak, a spirit of discernment and all that. But that simple little verse, "God has not given us a spirit of fear but a spirit of power and love throughout, and a sound mind," not going to give way to frightening and ridiculous speculations but rooted in anchored in the truth. Sound mind, self-control, beautiful.

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