

Bible Overview 7 Conquest of the Land: Joshua

What concerns/difficulties do people have today when we read the book of Joshua, all about how the Israelites conquered the Land?

List some:

Because of these difficulties, how do we tend to deal with books like Joshua today?

1) In our personal bible reading

2) In church and denomination

Can you think of any negative consequences this may have for our individual Christian lives and our church life?

List Some:

"Life is war. That's not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief...God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world...life is not war. But most people do not believe this in their heart. Most people show by their priorities and their casual approach to spiritual things that they believe we are in peacetime not wartime. Very few people think that we are in a war that is greater than World War II or any imaginable nuclear war. Few people reckon that Satan is a much worse enemy than any earthly foe, or realise that the conflict is not restricted to any one global theatre, but is in every town and city in the world (and in every heart!) Mission leaders are crying out, "Where is the church's concept of militancy, of a might army willing to suffer, moving ahead with exultant determination to take the world by storm? Where is the risk-taking, the launching out on God alone?"

Let the Nations Be Glad: John Piper p 41-44

"Going to do battle is not how we like to think of our evangelistic efforts. This biblical language does not fit comfortably with our approaches to making Christ known. In many ways the business world has replaced the battlefield as a source of categories for thinking about this work. Gospel work then is not war but commerce: we go to sell a product, not to fight a battle. We are marketers not soldiers. We have merchandise not weapons. We face potential customers not an enemy. We are out to expand our market share or increase our customer base, not to capture, defeat or destroy a foe. We form a business plan not a battle plan. The conflict we face arises from competition in the market place of ideas where our product is not the only one offered, rather than the hostile wiles of an enemy. The language of war, weapons and battle is too extreme for the way we think about evangelism. We are more like advertisers than fighters...just as we should look back to the Old Testament to understand New Testament language of sacrifice, election, redemption and so much more, we ought to see the language of war associated with the Christian gospel against its necessary and clarifying background in the Old Testament" John Woodhouse Commentary on 1 Samuel.

Joshua

Moses' role fulfilled by Book of the Law: Deut 31:24-27, Josh 1:8

Joshua = process of dispossession of Canaanite groups by Israel

1:1-5:15 Crossing into the Land

6:1-12:24 Taking the Land

13:1-21:45 Dividing the Land

22:1-24:33 Serving the Lord in the Land

Joshua 21:43-45:

"The Lord gave Israel all the land which he had sworn to their forefathers...gave them rest on every side...not one of their enemies withstood them...not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed, all came to pass"

Summary demonstrating God's faithfulness to the covenant promises made to Abraham. Yet remember – all things find their fulfilment in Christ so even the 'good times' are partial and temporary

Joshua 24 – hint of things to come – compare Israel's declaration with Joshua's v16,19,22.

This is a good time in Israel's history Josh 24:31– both positive and negative

Biblical Theme - Holy War:

Genesis 3 – struggle between God's kingdom and satan's kingdom, 3:15 anticipates on-going struggle before a final defeat of the serpent (Rev 20:2)

The Fall set the scene for the conflict that followed – man challenging God's right to rule the earth for the sake of his people.

Exodus and the conquest of the land = warfare

Exodus 14:13-14

Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today...the Lord will fight for you, you need only be still"

4 Essential Features of Holy War:

- God the Real Warrior
- The Battle is His
- Israel's enemies were God's enemies
- Israel only had to be faithful to the Lord in order to win

However, remember God's plan of salvation is for all the earth, salvation is possible for those who embrace Israel's God.

Rahab the prostitute – Joshua 2.

Note where it comes in the book of Joshua -

Joshua 2:8-13

- were the people ignorant of the Lord?
- Were they denied the possibility of repentance?

Old Testament: warfare and violence – some comments

- Importance of Genesis 3 (See also Romans 1-3). Because we are sinners – we do not see or understand the seriousness of sin or the holiness of God – the universal sinfulness of mankind

“If you eat – you will die”

Ezekiel 18:20 “the soul who sins is the one who will die”

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death”

- The conquest of the land is not the destruction of innocent people (Genesis 15:16 – the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure)

“The Lord did not bring Israel into the land as invading conquerors, but as avenging angels, the executors of his judgment” (The Unfolding Mystery: Ed Clowney p131)

- The OT is always a shadow of the greater reality to come revealed in the NT. The conquest of the land is a shadow of the far worse expression of God's judgment revealed in the NT. Jesus speaks graphically about the awful, eternal reality of heaven and hell (“It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell” Matt 18:9, “They called to the mountains and the rocks fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come and who can stand” Rev 6:16-17)

- Every expression of judgement also reveals the depth of the suffering of Christ upon the cross, every expression of God's judgment amplifies the suffering of Christ because his death was sufficient to 'propitiate' the wrath of God for the sin of the world

Joshua 5:13-15

Nb Similarities with Moses and Exodus – Joshua 3:14-4:18
Exodus 12:2-3 & Joshua 4:19

Joshua 5:15

Who does Joshua encounter?
What is wrong with Joshua's question in v13?

Group Discussion: Read Revelation 12

Who is the dragon?

Who is he intent on attacking and why?

What does v5 describe?

What is the identity of the woman?

Who are her offspring? (Nb – the difference is best understood in relation to the male child)

Who is the dragon now waging direct war against?

What are the implications of that for us?

"We may find the concept of a holy war difficult to accept, in part because of the way in which Islam has taken over the concept from the Old Testament.... We live however, in the time when God's ultimate judgment is postponed – postponed so that men might repent and receive the mercy of God revealed at Calvary. God gave the sword to Israel to use in his name. Jesus withheld the sword from the church (See Matt 26:52-53, John 18:11, 36)...the theocratic law of Israel as the people of God is continued in the church, but transformed through Christ's fulfilment. Its sanctions are spiritual not physical" (Clowney p132-133)

"Finally be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" Ephesians 6:10-12

"For though we live in the world we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" 2 Cor 10:3-6

Until Christ returns the mission of the church is to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations of the world. This is 'war' that we are called to wage, not with guns and bombs but with the weapons of the Word of God – the gospel, and prayer, clothed not in physical armour but the armour of God.

A New Testament parallel of the book of Joshua – is that of Acts – sent by the Commander of the Lord's army (see Matthew 28) to wage war with the gospel to win, not the land of Canaan, but the world for Christ. The battle is more fierce than that of battle for the land and the consequences are of greater significance.

Because we tend to ignore, overlook or be embarrassed by books such as Joshua, we deprive the Church of Christ of vital teaching, encouragement and challenge about the gospel war.

- It is like the 2nd World War, not the Falklands – we are all involved
- Jesus has won, is winning and will win the war
- Temporary casualties may be great – sacrifice and suffering are 'normal'
- Our great 'offensive weapon' is the gospel, the 'word of God.

The enemy's attention is focussed on:

- Gospel distortion – Galatians 1:6-9
OR
- Gospel silence – Ephesians 6:19-20

Don't be naïve about the enemy – 2 Corinthians 2:11
But – don't fear him Matthew 28:18