

# OpenTheo

## Joshua Overview (Part 2)



### **Bible Book Overviews** - Steve Gregg

In this overview, Steve Gregg explores the historical debate among Christians about involving in military warfare, citing the early church fathers' views on loving enemies and not fighting wars. He notes that while the Bible teaches that God judges nations, Christians should not necessarily condemn nations for going to war, assuming the wars were not wicked. As for Joshua, Gregg sees him as a type of Christ, bringing a spiritual inheritance through defeating spiritual foes, and stresses that the encouragement and promise of success found in Joshua chapter one belongs to believers today. Gregg also highlights the story of Rahab, who becomes an example of faith with works and emphasizes the importance of remembering what God has done through tangible memorials.

### **Transcript**

We're continuing our introduction to the book of Joshua. I want to just make a few points that still need to be made in terms of application of the book. Certainly, throughout church history, there's been debate about the Christians' involvement in military wars.

Christians have been involved in the military for most of church history. Most of it. The first three centuries, a number of the church fathers spoke very strongly that Christians should not fight in war.

That Christians are to love their enemies and do good to those who persecute them and should not be out killing people. Their view, Justin Martyr's view, for example, was that war is not always wrong. It's just not what Christians are called to be doing.

They believed that Christians have a citizenship in heaven and not a citizenship in an earthly domicile nation. We're like ambassadors in a foreign nation here on earth. If we went to war against Germany, the United States went to war against Germany, the German ambassador would be called home.

Or at least, if he stayed in Germany, he wouldn't participate in the German army or Germany's battles. He's an American citizen, not a German citizen. He's only domiciled in Germany.

Their view was essentially that we are citizens of the kingdom of God, which is not associated with any national entity on earth. We're domiciled as ambassadors, as strangers and pilgrims in various parts of the world where we represent Christ. But the world's wars are not our wars.

And therefore, people like Justin Martyr and a number of other church fathers believe that while Christians can't condemn nations necessarily going to war, assuming that the wars are not wicked wars, I think they would quickly have condemned Adolf Hitler for his wars of aggression. But a defensive war or a war that is not unrighteous, the church fathers did not believe that it was wrong for nations to defend themselves militarily. But they believed that the church in any nation is like a kingdom of priests.

And like the priests did not go to battle. They prayed or they offered sacrifices or whatever, and they sought to have an influence for the favor of God on the nation. Because they knew that the nation would win if it had God on its side.

That a small nation could win if God was on their side, and a large nation could lose if God isn't on their side. That's Christian understanding. That's what Joshua points out too.

And so it was the view of at least all those who wrote on the subject in the first three centuries in the church that Christians really shouldn't be in the military. Now that changed, of course, when the Roman Empire became ostensibly Christian. When Constantine the Emperor became a Christian himself, allegedly, and then the empire became a Christian empire eventually.

Then, of course, the wars of Rome were the wars of a Christian nation. At least so it was viewed. And after all, since everyone in the nation was baptized Christian, who would fight in the wars if not the Christians? So the Christians had to work with that new situation.

And people like Augustine adopted some of Plato's ideas, what's called the just war theory. The just war theory taught that there are some wars that good people, and Augustine thought Christian people, should fight in. And there were wars that aren't good wars that they shouldn't fight in.

And according to just war theory, for example, there were several guidelines, but a war, if a Christian was to fight in a war, they had to make sure it was a defensive war. That is, their country was just defending their own borders against invasion. It should be fought with proportionate force, that is not overwhelming force.

Dropping an atomic bomb, for example, and wiping out a whole city would not be according to just war guidelines. In fact, just war guidelines suggest that non-combatants have to be guaranteed immunity from harm by your side. You can't decide what the other side is going to do to your non-combatants, but you don't want to kill their non-

combatants.

The firebombing of Dresden, for example, might be seen as a violation of those principles. There are a lot of principles that Augustine came up with, and it's come to be called the just war theory. And probably most Christian philosophers today, and Christian theologians, believe in the just war theory, though there are some groups that still believe that Christians shouldn't fight in war.

People like the Mennonites and the Amish, Quakers, and people like that, believe more along the lines of the early church. Whereas most Christians, through most of history, have held that there's appropriate involvement in war, sometimes for Christians. Now, I'm not here to settle that question for anybody.

It's a controversy that has been going on for centuries, and I'm not going to settle it here. I'm not even going to try to settle it here. But I'm going to say that many times people who take the position that Christians should fight in wars appeal to the book of Joshua and other Old Testament wars, David and so forth, who fought in the wars of the Lord and so forth.

And they say, see, God commanded Joshua to fight. God blessed David's wars and so forth. And so it's obvious that God's not against war.

Therefore, Christians should have no qualms about going to war. Well, there may be truth in that. Their position may be correct.

That would have to be tested and established on a different set of arguments than that. Because there is no war in modern times that is parallel to the wars in the Old Testament. There may be arguments that can be made, and may be good ones, for Christians participating in the military in our time.

But one of those arguments is not that, well, God sanctioned wars in the Old Testament, so it's okay now. It may be or it may not be. I'm a little wishy-washy on it myself.

But the truth is, I cannot simply be silent when I hear people using this particular argument, which does not make sense at all. The fact that Joshua was told to fight in war, and the Israelites fought in war under him, and that they fought under David and so forth, is simply not relevant to any war that any nation would have in the days since Israel was dissolved. Israel was the only nation in history that was a political nation and was God's people.

They were God's covenant people. God was on their side. And they knew it.

Their prophets told them so. God told them so. And, although he wasn't always on their side, because sometimes he judged them.

He wasn't on their side when the Assyrians came and wiped out the Northern Kingdom. He wasn't on their side when the Babylonians came and took them into captivity, the Southern Kingdom. There were times when God was punishing Israel, and then he didn't walk in and fight.

In fact, Jeremiah the prophet, in besieged Jerusalem with the Babylonians besieging the city, ready to wipe them out, Jeremiah the prophet said, surrender. Told the Jews, surrender. This is a judgment from God.

Don't fight or you'll be wiped out. Surrender and you'll go into captivity and live. Because a prophet of God is able to say, is this a war you should fight in or not? Because in the Bible, wars are judgments that God brings upon nations.

The wars in Joshua are a judgment on the Canaanite nations. The wars that David fought were judgment against the Philistines. Throughout the book of Judges, the war that Gideon fought was against the Midianites and so forth.

And what Samson did was against the Philistines. God was judging these nations. Even the ten plagues of Egypt, which didn't involve war at all, was a judgment on Egypt.

And fire and brimstone was a judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible teaches that God does, from time to time, judge nations. And he even judged Israel when they became rebellious.

And that's why the Assyrians and the Babylonians, respectively, were able to take out the northern and southern kingdoms. War, seen from the biblical viewpoint, is not just something that's justified because one nation wants to take what another nation has. Or even because the nation that's under attack wants to preserve what they have.

The real question is, whose side is God on? And Israel always could know because God sent them prophets. Certainly the prophet Moses made it very clear that God was on Joshua's side and against the Canaanites. David was a prophet too, and he had the prophets Nathan and Samuel and others supporting him in his conquest of the Philistines and so forth.

But as I said, the prophet Jeremiah told Jews, don't fight against the Babylonians. This is God's judgment on you. Surrender.

Now, without a prophet to tell, you wouldn't know one way or the other. Is God on our side or our enemy's side? It's not good enough to just say, well, we're a good country and they're a bad country. From their point of view, they're the good country and we're the bad country.

Everyone thinks their country is the good country. Part of that is due to the fact that our media tells us what we're allowed to know. You never really know all the reasons we

went to war or that someone else went to war because you're not told all those reasons.

Maybe historians will know and be able to tell, but when it's happening, the media tells you what is ever released to the public and you don't know. Basically, you can be sure anytime we're going to war, the government's going to release information that makes it look like we're the good guys. Maybe we are.

I think America is a more moral nation in general than most of the nations that we've fought against. Certainly more moral than Nazi Germany or more moral than Japan, but even then, without a word from the Lord, how do we know that even a wicked nation isn't being used to judge us? Because we too are a wicked nation. Habakkuk lived at a time when the Babylonians were threatening Israel and God told Habakkuk, I'm going to use Babylon to judge Israel.

Habakkuk said, wait, that doesn't make any sense. They're worse than we are. God said, I know, but I'm going to use them to judge you first and I'm going to judge them too.

In other words, all nations in a conflict might be worthy of judgment. That doesn't predict which one God is planning to judge first. You just never know.

For one thing, many Christians felt in the early church that if you went out and fought in the wars of Rome against the barbarians, you'd never know if you're fighting on God's side or against God. Presumably God wants one of those sides to prevail, but how do you know which one? God was not sending Christians out to war because Christians are not a political nation. Political wars are fought by political nations in the interest of those political nations.

When Constantine became a Christian, the Romans figured the Roman Empire is a Christian nation. The barbarians are pagans, so God's on Rome's side. Americans tend to think the same way in wars that we fight.

Although the Revolutionary War, our enemies were Christians too. We were fighting against Christians and we were Christians. In the case of fighting against Hitler, we're fighting against demonic forces, so to speak, but we're not using spiritual means.

The weapons of our warfare are not carnal and we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. We know that many times our enemies are animated by Satan, but Satan is not defeated with guns. Satan is defeated with spiritual weapons, and that's why the early church took a stand against Christians fighting in war.

Now it might sound like I'm arguing against Christians fighting in war. I'm not so sure I would argue against it. I'm simply saying you do not have a sufficient parallel in any modern war.

There is no nation on the planet, including us or including modern Israel, who we can

say, that's God's nation. Whenever there's a war, he's going to be on their side. You could say that about Israel when they were obedient to God and when their prophets were guiding them.

They were a political nation. The church is not. Israel had a government, borders, police force, jails, courts.

They had all the things a political nation has, including political enemies and political wars. They had to defend their borders. The church doesn't have borders.

The church is international. The church is a spiritual fellowship. It doesn't have a political system.

We live under various political systems. We live under a very tolerant political system, tolerant of our beliefs. Less so than it used to be, but still more so than many countries.

But the church has never advanced its true cause by war. It may be that Christians fighting in war might help some other people in a good way, might even help their own people in a good way. But whether they advance the kingdom of God is another question that can't be answered unless we have a word from the Lord.

Is this what God wants to happen? And because God has not sent prophets to tell America or Germany or England or China or Korea or Argentina or any other nation that we know of to go to war and to conduct battle, those wars are all human wars. They're all human wars. The wars in the Old Testament were the wars of the Lord because God had a political nation he was defending against political enemies.

And those kinds of things usually happen through political warfare and God used them for that. And that's what Joshua tells them. But you can't compare that with any war today.

And frankly, the just war theory can't be supported from Joshua because Joshua was not told to spare the noncombatants. Joshua was not fighting a defensive war. He was invading people who were leaving him alone.

The Canaanites were quite happy to have Joshua stay where he was. They weren't going to invade him. He invaded them.

This is not what the just war theory says to do. But that's because the Bible doesn't really ever lay out the just war theory. The just war theory is a philosophical concept that started with Plato before there was Christianity at all.

It was brought in by Augustine and later Thomas Aquinas developed it further and it became a normal part of Christian philosophy that if Christians fight in war it should be a just war defined by these criteria. The Bible doesn't give those criteria and on the

occasions where there is war, Joshua's wars for example, they aren't. There's no reference to any of the just war guidelines.

So what I'm saying is I'm not making a statement here about whether Christians should go to war or not. I sometimes think they should in some situations frankly. I won't say which because I'm not here to talk about that.

What I am here to talk about is the book of Joshua and to say that when people have used the book of Joshua to take a side in the entirely different debate of whether Christians belong in the military or not, it is irrelevant. Joshua's wars are irrelevant to that whole question. It may be that that question can be decided on the basis of scripture but it won't be the book of Joshua that answers that question.

It's going to have to be something else. It's going to have to be something Jesus said or the apostles. And Paul made it very clear.

We Christians, our warfare is not carnal. Our armor is not physical. We're not wrestling with flesh and blood.

And Jesus didn't come to destroy men's lives but to save them. So anyway, I'll just say this in case someone thinks I'm arguing for pacifism. I actually believe that loving your neighbors yourself may require you to take up forcible resistance against somebody at some time.

I believe there are times when protecting innocent people is as much a Christian duty as protecting your own children would be. But to what degree war serves that purpose and in what cases it would and what cases it would not is not something that would be resolved without nuance. There could be wars that are justifiable and some that are not.

I don't know. I don't know which ones. Thankfully I'm not at the age where I would be drafted.

And there's no draft at the moment. So it's something that's not a live issue to me today. But it is an issue.

And it's one that I just want to put Joshua in proper perspective with reference to that particular debate which is a live debate in the Christian ethics that have been talked about for thousands of years. All right. I want to say this too.

Joshua is apparently a type of Christ. In more than one way. First of all his name is the same as Jesus' name.

But that's the least way that he's like Jesus. It might seem like the most way. But Jesus didn't fight in wars and so forth.

But Jesus did bring his people into their inheritance. Joshua brought the people of Israel

into their inheritance. Their inheritance was land.

Ours is spiritual. We have a spiritual inheritance that Christ brings us into. He's like a spiritual Joshua.

And he's defeated our enemies. He's defeated the principalities and powers. He's disarmed them and made a show of them openly triumphing over them in his cross.

Christ has defeated the enemy and acquired for us the inheritance that God had in mind for us which is a spiritual one. Joshua did the same thing in the material realm. And in the Old Testament many things that occur in the material realm serve as types of things that are spiritual in the New Testament.

We've already seen that in some of the Old Testament laws Passover for example is a physical ritual. It has to do with something spiritual. Christ's atonement for us.

There are so many things in the Old Testament that are types of New Testament things. I believe Joshua is a type of Christ. I believe his conquest of Canaan and the delivering of Israel into their inheritance is a type of what Christ has done in defeating our foes and bringing us into our inheritance in Christ.

That's to my mind fairly obvious even in Hebrews chapter 4. It seems to be suggested where it's talking about how we are to enter into a rest that Christ has provided for us. And he says because if Joshua had brought the people into that rest which he said he did not there wouldn't be any need to talk about coming into a rest today. He's basically saying what Joshua did didn't do as much as what Jesus is going to do.

Both bring their people into a rest. Joshua brought his people into a certain kind of rest but it's not the ultimate rest that Jesus brings us into. In another sense Joshua is like Jesus in that Joshua is a successor to Moses.

Moses could not bring the people into their inheritance but Joshua could. Likewise Moses and his law and the religion that Moses laid out could not bring Christians into their spiritual inheritance. If righteousness were a matter of the law then Christ died for nothing Paul said in Galatians chapter 2. The law, the Mosaic order could not bring about the spiritual deliverance and the spiritual inheritance that Jesus brings about for us.

So Jesus in a sense is a successor to Moses. Moses was sent first the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Moses couldn't bring the final result that God wanted but Jesus did.

Likewise in terms of the temporal inheritance of Israel Moses couldn't bring them into the land but Joshua could. In these ways I think we can see Joshua as a type of Christ. Canaan itself what is it a type of? The promised land what's that type of? In much hymnody and even classic stories like Pilgrim's Progress Canaan land or the promised



land is sort of seen to be like heaven.

You know the celestial city or something. It's like when we die we go to our rest we go to Canaan go to the promised land. And you know there might be a layer of meaning that in which that would be valid but I don't think it's primarily the meaning of it in the typology of the Old Testament.

Because when the children of Israel came into Canaan it's not really like us going to heaven when we die. When they came into Canaan they still had to fight battles. We're not going to fight any battles in heaven.

They didn't come into a place of unconditional security. They could be invaded and many times were in the days of the judges. They could lose everything and they later did.

Once you're in heaven we're secure. There's not going to be anything you know threatening our living in heaven once we're there. Once you die in other words you've gone past the stage of battles.

You've gone past the stage of possibility of losing what you've gained. And in Hebrews chapter 4 verse 3 it's talking about that rest. It says we who believe do present tense enter into that rest.

Not will but we do. When we believe in Christ. When we completely trust in what he has accomplished instead of in our own works.

When we rest in his finished work as it were. As he himself offered one sacrifice for sins and sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10 actually contrasts that with what the priests in the Old Testament do.

They stand daily offering again and again and again and again more sacrifices that can never finish the work. Jesus offered one sacrifice of himself that finished the work and he sat down. Why? That's a restful position.

Why? Because the job's done. Just like when God finished the creation after six days he rested on the seventh day. Why? Was he tired? No he's just finished.

It was done. The work was done. Nothing more to do.

The rest was not giving God a chance to catch his breath after a hard week. The rest was simply a way of saying nothing more to do here. I can just sit back and watch it now.

Look at it. Enjoy it. So God rested on the seventh day and Jesus offered the sacrifice that finally brings about the atonement of mankind.

And then he sat down and rested. When we trust in his finished work we enter into his rest. And we cease to think that we can or must earn our salvation by anything we would

do.

By any works of our own. We cease from our own works. It says that in Hebrews 4.9. He that enters into his rest has ceased from his own works.

And in Hebrews 4.3. We who believe do enter that rest. It's not so much a reference to heaven. It's a reference to a certain state of spiritual repose.

Of trust. I've just been at a place where I trust God for everything now. I'm not trusting me for anything.

I'm trusting God. The place where God becomes everything and we rest because of trust in him. That's the Christian norm.

Not all Christians find it. A lot of Christians seem to be wandering in the wilderness still. But because they're aimless.

Restless. Like the Israelites were in the wilderness. But when they came into Canaan they did settle.

They settled and when they were obedient to God they were secure. And so that's what I personally think the rest represents. Not so much the end of our life.

But the end of our striving. And our resting in the finished work of Christ. Now I want to run real quickly through several of the early chapters.

Remember I said the first 12 chapters are the ones that have all the action. The latter half of the book is really distribution of land and things like that. Not much going on there.

But in the first several chapters there's quite a few stories related to the conquest. I just want to run through and I'm not going to read these chapters. I'm just going to make passing reference to some of the things that I think are lessons that we can gain.

And as you read these chapters yourself you can see and maybe the Holy Spirit can give you some insight. Beyond what I would share about it. One lesson.

I'm only going to take one lesson from any chapter I look at here. Rather than try to get all the lessons from the chapter. In chapter 1 Joshua is now ready to lead the children of Israel into the promised land.

They're still not in it. They have to cross the river Jordan to get there. But God is speaking to Joshua as he previously spoke to Moses.

And he's commissioning Joshua. And he says in verse 5. Speaking to Joshua. Speaking to Joshua.

To the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Now. That was probably very encouraging to Joshua.

Since he had been mainly not the leader before but the follower of Moses. Now Moses was dead. Now he's given a job to go and face giants.

And lead the people who had been very ungovernable under Moses. And no doubt he had questions whether they'd be as ungovernable under him. He didn't have an enviable job.

God says no worries. You just stay faithful to what I told Moses. Make sure that his words don't depart from you.

And I'll make you successful, prosperous in what you do. Because I will be with you wherever you go. Now not every promise that God gives to a person in the Bible.

Is applicable to Christians. For example when God told Abram. You know through your seed I will bless all the families of the earth.

I can't take that promise God made to Abram and make it a promise to me through my children. God's going to bless the whole world. I mean maybe he would but that's not.

He would say that that promise he made to Abram belongs to me too. Or the promise he made to David. That one of his seed would you know have an eternal kingdom.

And would rule forever. I don't think God's going to make that promise to me or to you. There are personal promises God made to some people that just don't belong to everybody.

Even some of the things Jesus said in the upper room to the disciples. Probably apply to them as apostles. Rather than generically just things to the Christians.

When he said to them for example not in the upper room but elsewhere in Matthew 19. He says you 12 have been with me from the beginning. Therefore in the regeneration you shall sit on 12 thrones and judge the 12 tribes of Israel.

Well that's spoken to 12 guys who had been with him from the beginning. 12 of them who had sat on 12 thrones. That's not to me.

There are promises that God makes to some people that aren't to everybody. What about this one? Well we might not really know whether this one was for us or not. Except the New Testament quotes it and says it is.

And the quotation of it is found in Hebrews chapter 13. And we can see therefore that what is said here to Joshua. We can read it and say that applies to me.

Because the writer of Hebrews assumed that to be true. An inspired writer. Hebrews 13 verse 5. Let your conduct be without covetousness and be content with such things as you have.

For he himself has said I will never leave you nor forsake you. Now the quotation is from Joshua 1.5. It's what God said to Joshua. I will never leave you or forsake you.

The writer of Hebrews says you can be content with whatever you have because God has said. By implication he said to you I will never leave you nor forsake you. Now God didn't say that to me.

He said to Joshua and I'm not Joshua. But the writer of Hebrews sees this as a command. Not a command a promise.

That apparently every Christian reader can take that as a promise to himself. And that's very helpful. I actually I've told this story before.

It actually had a tremendous impact on me at the time. Back in probably 1981 or 82 I would imagine. I was an elder at a Calvert Chapel in Santa Cruz California.

And I was an elders meeting and a guy called on the phone called the house we were at. And asked for me. I don't know how he knew I was there or that the elder for meeting.

It wasn't necessarily declared that we're having a meeting there. But he was a guy who had given prophetic utterances in the church on a number of occasions. Now I'm a little skeptical of prophetic utterances a lot of the time when I hear them.

I've been in enough charismatic meetings. In fact I've been in charismatic circles for almost 50 years now. That's well long enough to become skeptical about prophetic utterances.

Because an awful lot of charismatic prophecies. They just don't really wash out. They don't really come true.

They aren't necessarily credible. And if you've been in charismatic circles long enough heard enough prophecies. You begin to have a little suspicion.

I know why Paul said to the Thessalonians do not despise prophecies. Because there is after a while a tendency to do so. And you have to be warned not to do so.

Well this guy had given some prophetic utterances in the church. I didn't know him personally. But I knew who he was.

And he was one of the guys, and there were very few, who every time he prophesied the church it struck me as that sounded authentic. Just sounded like it was probably really the word of the Lord. I was not sure.

But so many times when I hear prophecies I could just immediately judge that's not from God. But that wasn't the case when he prophesied. He was credible.

Though I didn't know him. I said, Steve, I'm calling you because the Lord has given me a word for you and a scripture for you. And he didn't tell me at all what scripture it was.

And as soon as he said it my mind said Joshua 1.9. For no particular reason. I don't know why it did. I hadn't been thinking about that scripture.

I hadn't read it recently. But when he said I have a scripture for you and a word for you from the Lord, my mind said Joshua 1.9. And I didn't think too much about it until he said it's in Joshua. Which I thought was interesting.

Now what was even more interesting is he hadn't looked it up before he called me so he had to look it up while I was waiting. He said it's in Joshua. So I hear the pages flipping.

Then after a while, it's in the first chapter. And he's kind of scanning. I thought, why didn't he look this up before he called, you know? And he was scanning and he was looking for it.

He said it's right around here somewhere. And I said, is it by any chance verse 9? He said, yeah, that's part of it. He says verses 5 through 9. I thought it was kind of interesting because Joshua 1.9 had come to my mind without the man giving a clue of any part of the Bible that he was going to allude to.

But then he said Joshua chapter 1. And when I suggested 9, he said, yeah, that's part of it. And it is true. It's part of the same paragraph.

And I thought you can see the content of it. It's very encouraging. And it was a real encouragement to me.

And I tended therefore because I felt God had told me the reference before the guy did that I should listen to the word he had for me too. You know, God was trying to overcome my natural skepticism about prophetic words that I often have. And I won't tell you what the word was, but it was also very encouraging.

And I was very much inclined to take it seriously and not merely as a flattery because of the way I felt God had confirmed to me the scripture that he had for me. But, you know, for God to say this word is for you, the Holy Spirit can tell you that. But in this case, the Holy Spirit told the writer of Hebrews that it's for you.

What he said here to Joshua is for you. Why? Because even though Joshua is a type of Christ, not a type of you, and he, you know, Christ fought the battles, we fight the battles too. We're also involved in fighting a spiritual battle over the territory on our own soul, for one thing.

And also over the territory of the world, because we're sent out to confront the kingdom of darkness and to defeat it with the gospel. We're supposed to spread the kingdom of God against the opposition posed by the enemy. So we're involved in a spiritual warfare.

And therefore, I think, as we read Joshua, although as I said, I don't think Joshua gives us any information about us fighting in the military for or against. I think it can be seen as a spiritual type of our spiritual battle, because we are involved in that. We are wrestling against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age and against spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places.

We are seeking to take the gospel in places where there's opposition and where it is a spiritual war. We're not bringing physical weapons to it. That's why missionaries don't go with guns into the jungles.

They're not going to kill anybody. They're going to die, if anything, bringing the message, because their weapons are not carnal but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds and casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ. That's our warfare.

And the warfare of Israel in conquering the Lord's enemies and taking their inheritance is no doubt intended to be a type for us of our own spiritual battle and our own attempts to lay hold on that rest in our own life, which is opposed by principalities and powers. But you see at the very beginning of the chapter, there's this encouragement in the battle that you're going to succeed if you're not afraid, if you're not dismayed, if you've got the promise the Lord is with you in this. This is the Lord's battle.

The Hebrew quotes it as belonging to us, a promise to us. It makes me think, okay, we're moving into a book that applies to us. If the very first chapter contains a promise to the warrior of success, and that promise is said in the New Testament to belong to us, then the war must be ours too.

But it's a different kind of war. It's a spiritual war. In chapter 2, we have the story of Rahab and how that she was a part of Jericho.

She was a citizen of Jericho, a Canaanite country that had to go down, a walled city, and that she took the side of God's people. Two spies of Israel went in to check out the city. I'm not sure why they had to do that, since God would have knocked down the wall supernaturally, but they did anyway.

I'm not sure why they had to send the 12 spies into the land earlier. It would have been better if they hadn't, I think. But the truth is, they sometimes wanted to have some advance notice of what they were about to face.

And when the spies were detected, she hid them. She took the side of Israel, or of

Israel's God, instead of her own pagan people. And she let them go safely.

Now, the Bible in the New Testament twice tells us that Rahab in this is an example of faith of the right sort that produces good works. You'll see it in Hebrews chapter 11, and verse 31, which says, By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies in peace. Now, we're just told that she didn't perish when the rest of the people did.

She survived. She was saved. Why? Because of her faith.

But James tells us about her too, and even more about her faith. Because in James chapter 2, and verse 25, it says, Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? That's what happened in Joshua chapter 2. She was justified by works? Well, that whole second half of the chapter 2 in James is talking about how faith without works is dead. He's not talking about works without faith.

These are works that spring from faith. You're justified by faith, but not a faith that doesn't have works. A faith that doesn't have works isn't a living faith.

The devil has a certain kind of faith that doesn't have good works. It's not a saving faith. The devil's not saved.

He believes everything you believe about God. In fact, he probably has better doctrines than you do, because he knows the truth. He's heard it.

He sees it. He's seen God. You haven't.

He saw Jesus. Heard him speak. The devil knows everything and believes everything you do.

About God and truth. He just doesn't obey it. He just doesn't surrender to it.

He just resists it. He does not have good works. And what James is arguing is there's a kind of faith that saves and a kind of faith that doesn't.

The kind of faith that doesn't make a difference in your life doesn't make a difference to God either. Why should your faith make a difference to God if it doesn't make a difference to you? The faith that saves is a faith that makes you obey. Rahab's faith is given notice in Hebrews and in James.

And James points out specifically, but Hebrews mentions this too, that she did the right thing. A very risky thing, by the way. She was a traitor to her nation.

And the police were at her door. The police came to her door and said, where are those spies that came in here? She was hiding them in the house. If they'd searched the house

and found them, she'd be hung or beheaded or something.

And she knew it, but she said, I'm going to take the side of the people that are left. And fortunately, the police believed her. And so the spies escaped, and so did she.

But her neck was on the line, and she said, I'm going to take the side of these people, not my people, because these people are God's people. She said, we heard what your God did to the Egyptians. That's the God.

I want to be on his side, not on the side of my people's pagan God. So her faith saved her. It was a faith that actually caused her to do the right thing at great personal risk.

That's faith that produces works. And so Rahab's story in chapter 2 of Joshua is a picture of faith and works, and it's brought out by the New Testament as such, which means an example for us all. In chapter 3 is when they actually cross the Jordan River.

Just like the Israelites had to cross the Red Sea in escaping Egypt, they had to cross the Jordan River at flood time to enter the Canaan. Jordan was the eastern boundary of the land. The Jews, Israel, was on the eastern side of the Jordan.

They had to get to the western side to invade the country. But it's never easy to cross a river in ancient times. They didn't have the technology we do, and they didn't have bridges and so forth for it.

And it's especially hard at flood time. But God told Joshua to have the priests take the ark and to step in the water. And when they would step in the water, then the river would be dried up, sort of like the Red Sea had.

And so sure enough, they took the ark and they started walking into the river. It hadn't stopped. It was flood, but they started walking into it anyway.

Kind of looked like a stupid thing to do, but God told them to do it. And when they took those steps, it says as soon as their feet were in the water, the river stopped. It was blocked somewhere upstream.

God blocked it for a while, let them cross over just like he let them cross the Red Sea. But he didn't just stop the river first and then tell them, okay, you can see it's safe, go ahead. He told them to start walking across the river while it was still flowing.

Well, there's no visible evidence that the river was going to stop. Nor had they ever seen a river stop. Their parents had seen the Red Sea split, which is not exactly the same thing as a river stopping.

But the point is, they had to just believe God and move forward. If they had kept walking and the river didn't stop, they'd be swept away. But this is showing the need to trust God even when you don't have all the ducks in a row yet, when everything hasn't really



opened up yet.

If God gives you instructions, you do it. You don't worry about whether it's going to work out or not. That's God's problem.

Your problem is to do what God says. If God doesn't stop the water and you wash away and drown, that's God's problem, not yours. You have only one obligation, that's do what God said.

When you step out in the direction that God says to step, you'll often find that God takes his part seriously. And he recognizes what his part in the deal is. We walk by faith, not by sight, but we have to walk.

Having faith, we need to move forward in obedience to God. And when we do, then we see God act. We see God do things that he wouldn't do if he didn't obey and didn't believe.

And we see that happening in chapter 3. Chapter 4, once they pass through the river, God told them to get 12 stones out of the river and build a memorial on the other side of the river, on the west side. And that was to be a memorial to them of when God stopped the river and got them across. What principle is there here? I think it's don't forget.

God actually had them build from time to time these memorials, these Ebenezers. That are just piles of stones that were to commemorate a special occasion. And it actually says, when your children say, what's this pile of stones here for? They're supposed to say, oh, well, this is here because these stones actually were in the middle of the river at one time.

We brought them out when we were walking through on dry ground. These stones remind us that when we couldn't have crossed the river, God stopped the waters. And we crossed over and God, you know, gave us this land.

So they actually had a tangible, visible memorial to that. And I'm not sure how that would apply in everyone's situation, but I know that there's many things God has done in answer to prayer to me that I've forgotten. I hate to say it.

I've had far more prayers answered than I can remember. I sometimes think I'd like to write down, you know, a history of my living by faith, as I have for 48 years. And all the times when there was no money, there was no idea where the money was going to come from, and then it came.

In my mind, I have, you know, a dozen or more notable cases that I can rattle off because they're so memorable, but it's happened hundreds of times. I've lived for half a century without any guaranteed income. I've raised five children.

I live debt-free. Everything I need is provided, but not much more. I've traveled.

Many cases, once what I needed, once I paid the bills, there was not a dollar left. I've traveled cross-country by faith at times where I put my last dollar in the car's gas tank, not knowing when I'd get another bit. I'm ministering from place to place, but I didn't charge anything, so I didn't know if I'd get money.

I'd just drive to my next place, and before I'd leave, I'd receive a gift or something that would be enough to get me how much gas, enough to get to the next place, and no more. I would get to the next place on fumes, without a penny in my pocket. I'd put the last penny in the gas tank at the last place I filled up, and I didn't know how far that'd take me, but it took me exactly, in one case, it took me to the very door in Worcester, Massachusetts, the door of the house I was going to, where the people who invited me to speak were living.

I had their address. I was on the freeway looking at my gas tank for miles and miles and miles, and I don't have a penny. I can't put anything in this tank.

I just got to get there. We got off the freeway, found the address, I pulled up and stopped in front of the house, went in and visited. When I came out, the car wouldn't start.

The tank was totally empty. Even putting gas in didn't work. I had to put ether in the carburetor to get it going.

I got there literally on fumes. But that happened again and again and again. This kind of thing is happening, if I say hundreds of times, it's no exaggeration.

But I don't remember them all. I wish I did. I wish I'd kept journals.

I wish I had memorial stones reminding me of every single time. Because you need to remember what God has done, because there's going to be new challenges you're going to have to trust him for, and if you forget what he's done, you're going to have the same challenge to your faith for new crises. If you remember what he's done, the new crises don't seem like a bad thing.

When David was going to go out and face Goliath, everyone else was afraid to do it. He wasn't afraid to do it. Why? He said, well, because I was watching sheep and a lion came out to get the sheep, and I killed it.

And then a lion came out, a bear came out to get the sheep, and I killed it too. He said, God who delivered me from the mouth of the lion and the paw there is going to deliver me from the Philistine too. I've been here and done that.

I've seen God come through in situations like this. This is just God's way of doing things

with me, and I've got no problem believing him for this one. The more you can remember what God has done, the prayers he's answered and so forth in the past, the more you can have faith for praying for things that haven't happened yet.

And so to tell them, set up these stones and tell your children about it. They're going to say, what are these stones here? Well, tell them what I did. You don't want to forget what God has done, and yet you do.

There's so many times when even unbelievers probably have had their prayers answered, so that they just can't help but say, there is a God. But then they forget it. I mean, it's almost a cliché how many Satan, not Satan, but atheists say, or Christians who used to be atheists say that when they were atheists, they said, God, if you get me out of this, I'll serve you forever.

And then he did, and they didn't. And they got saved later on, but they didn't, they forgot. Because we forget so easily.

And so to have tangible memorials that remind us of what happened so we don't forget is something God told them to do in this case, which is no doubt a good principle for us in all of the times that we don't want to forget what God has done. In chapter five, I just want to make this point that at the end of the chapter, before they invaded Jericho, the day before, Joshua saw an armed man standing outside his camp whom he recognized to be apparently a divine being or certainly superhuman. And Joshua went out to meet him and said, are you for us or for our enemies? And the answer was no.

That doesn't seem like the right answer. If I was eating at your house, and I said, do you prefer Brussels sprouts or spinach? I said no. You really want me to pick one or the other, right? I mean, it's a question, it's not a yes or no question.

But Joshua said, are you for us or for our enemies? The man said no. I'm not for you or for your enemies. He says, I'm here as the commander of the Lord's host.

Now most Christians believe this was Jesus in what we call a pre-incarnate theophany, an appearance of Christ before his incarnation. At the very least, if it wasn't Jesus, it was an angel or something like that. It was whoever was leading the armies of angels, really.

And he said, I'm not here to take sides on a national basis. I'm here just to fight God's battles. Now it happened that God was on Israel's side in that particular battle.

Later battles, sometimes he wasn't. But in other words, the question is, whose side is God on? I brought this up earlier when it comes to questions about modern wars. Whose side is God on in any given war? How do we know? Well, God's not on the side of any nation.

He's on his own side. He's on the side of his own principles and his own agendas. If we're

on his side, then that ends up working right.

The real issue here is not that God was on Israel's side, but they had to be on his side. And then, of course, things would go well for them in the battle. Because the angel who is the commander of the angel said, I'm not here on your side.

I'm on God's side. I lead God's armies. I'm fighting his battles.

You want to be on his side? Then I'll be on your side too. Because you'll be on the same side we're on, the angels. And so we have to remember that God isn't necessarily on America's side.

Or even on modern Israel's side or any nation's side. He's on his own side. God has his own kingdom, his own agenda in the world.

The real question is, are we on his side or not? If we want his assistance, we have to be on his side. Don't ask him to come over on ours. He's not interested in the petty agendas of earthly kingdoms.

He's interested in his own kingdom, which is eternal and forever and global. And so the real question is, is our nation on his side or not? That's really a more relevant question. In chapter 6, we see Jericho is defeated.

There's lots of lessons could be learned from that. But the main thing I would point out is that Rahab and her family were saved, which is an example of Gentile salvation. Rahab, as it turns out, ended up being in the genealogy of David and of Jesus.

Here she was a Canaanite prostitute. But because of faith, she who was neither moral initially, she probably repented of that, nor Jewish, became somebody through whom God brought the Messiah into the world. She's in Jesus' lineage in Matthew chapter 1. She's in David's lineage too.

She was the grandmother of Ruth. I'm sorry, not of Ruth, but of Boaz, whom Ruth married. And so here's a woman who was not part of the Israelite nation.

Now, the whole story is about the Israelites. The whole story is about God blessing Israel, giving Israel the land of the Canaanites. It's all about God's favor on Israel.

And here's a Gentile who's not a good woman and not an Israelite. And yet she's now part of Israel. She becomes part of Israel because any Gentile could become part of Israel.

God was never a racist. God never accepted or rejected people on the basis of who their ancestors were, what country they belonged to, what race they were of. God is only interested in who's on his side, who has faith.

And that's why Hebrews 11 and James both mention Rahab's faith. She was spared because of that, despite being a Gentile. And of course, the whole Old Testament and New Testament emphasize this very thing.

There's lots of Gentiles in the Old Testament and the New Testament who are part of God's people. And once they do, God doesn't even remember what race they were. It's not a matter of race to God.

It's a matter of faith. Chapter 7 and 8 is about the battle against Ai. The main thing to note here is that the nation of Israel was not able to win against even an inferior foe, Ai, a small city, when there was sin tolerated in the camp.

There was a sin committed. It was covered up. It didn't just hurt the sinner and his family.

It hurt the whole nation. The nation lost like 36 soldiers in that battle who didn't even know what the guy had done. They were innocent, but the nation is... the fate of the whole nation is impacted by individuals and their sins.

And I think that this is true also of the church. When the church tolerates sin, it loses its battles. Even people who aren't involved in the sin are weakened by it.

Sufferers all suffer, Paul said. And so it is that when there's sin tolerated in the church, that the church, the power of the church, and the victory of the church, you know, evaporates. It's neutralized.

And so the idea that God is so intolerant of disobedience that one man's sin brings about disaster on the whole nation tells us that God is not... you could just look at the average and say, well, most of you are doing good, so I'm going to give you... you know, bless you. He wants the whole nation, he wants all of his people to be obedient to him. And when one is not, it damages the fate or the well-being and the fortunes of the whole church.

We have other things here. I'm not going to go into detail. Chapter 9, I do want to mention this.

Chapter 9 has the story of the Gibeonites who deceived Joshua into thinking that they were not Canaanites. They were, but they came dressed in worn-out clothes, worn-out shoes, they had moldy bread in their donkey bags, and the donkeys looked worn-out too. And they looked like they'd traveled a long way, but they really were just near neighbors.

Joshua didn't know enough about who all lived in the land at this point. He was a newcomer there himself. And they said, we come from a far away country.

We just want to, we heard about you and the great things your God's doing, so we just

want to make a pact, a mutual non-aggressions pact with you. In fact, we will be your servants. And Joshua was told not to make any treaties with Canaanites.

That was part of what God told him not to do. But he was persuaded that they weren't Canaanites. They were Gentiles for sure, but they said they came from a far away country, not in Canaan.

So what it specifically says in Gemariah, and Joshua did not consult the Lord about it. Joshua didn't inquire the Lord about it, so he was fooled and he made this covenant with them. Now it turned out three days later, he discovered that he'd been fooled, that they were Canaanites.

But now he made an oath that he wouldn't hurt them. Well, he said, well, you have to be our servants. But already that was a subnormal situation because God had said, I don't want you to keep the Canaanites as your servants.

I don't want you to make treaties with them. And so Joshua was kicking himself, but there's nothing he could do. He had to keep his word.

Certainly we see here as in other places in Scripture, when you make a promise, you keep your promise. But even more so, you better be careful not to make promises too quickly. In this case, when you're doing the Lord's work as he was, and all of us who are living the Christian life, that is the Lord's work, need to be consulting God about things, not just listening and believing what people say.

The Gideonites fooled Joshua, were specifically told because he didn't consult the Lord. He figured the evidence was good enough. He could take these people's word for it.

Their bread was moldy. They obviously had traveled a long way, but they hadn't. And so it's clear that God's leaders certainly need to be talking to God about strategy, about relationships, about everything that's involved in the well-being of the kingdom of God.

And consulting the Lord rather than moving forward on a hunch or even on what looks like a well-established proof of something can be disastrous. But once that promise had been made, Joshua was not free to break it. It's like Jephthah who swore to God to sacrifice whatever came out of his house, and then of course grieved over it, but kept his promise.

This is the kind of, the Bible teaches you make an oath to God, you keep your oaths. And he made an oath. You're supposed to have integrity.

The people of God shouldn't make ill-advised promises, but we should keep the promises we make, which should make us very cautious about making commitments, especially long-term commitments. Marriage, partnerships, and things like that, that Christians should be entered into very cautiously, consulting the Lord. Because once you've made

those commitments, you've made them.

And they can be something you're kicking yourself about later on, as Joshua did in this case. There's of course more. Most of the main stories we've kind of alluded to here already, and there's a lot in the verse that's not part of the stories.

But I expect that as you read Joshua, I hope that you'll have some of these concepts in the back of your mind, so that God can speak in the front of your mind about specific details and things, and maybe applications that I would not think to bring up, but which God will. That's the idea. When we have these talks once a month here, the idea is to give you enough background about a book that when you come to read it, it doesn't seem unfamiliar.

It seems like you've got sort of a grasp of what's going on here. But it's your own reading of the book and meditation on it that's going to feed you. Not what I say here will feed you, but what you find in the scriptures themselves.

But I'm hoping that these things will be helpful as a beginning to your approach to the book of Joshua.