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Joshua Overview (Part 1)



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this overview, Steve Gregg discusses the book of Joshua, which covers the history of Israel from the time of Moses' death to the Babylonian exile in 586 BC. Joshua was chosen by God to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land and his leadership and obedience to God's commands were essential in their conquest of Canaan. The book emphasizes the importance of faith in God and the consequences of disobedience, as well as the distinction between God's orders to Joshua and modern jihadist movements.

Transcript

So we're beginning a portion of the Old Testament that the Jews refer to as the former prophets, but which we normally just call the historical books. And from the book of Joshua, we have Joshua taking over where Moses left off, through the book of 2 Chronicles. We have historical narration, some of it doubling back because the books of Chronicles cover the same material in many respects as the books of Samuel and Kings.

But still, it takes us through Israel's history up to the time of the Babylonian exile, which happened in 586 BC. Now, this book commences immediately after the death of Moses, and is probably in the mid-1400s BC, about 1451 or 1452 BC, is probably when Joshua took the command and led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. You'll recall that the first five books, well I should say four of them, beginning with Exodus and going through Deuteronomy, were about the lifetime of Moses.

Moses was born at the beginning of Exodus, he died at the end of Deuteronomy, and those four books pretty much cover his life in ministry, which was 120 years long. It was when he was 80 years old that he led the children of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, and he led them for another 40 years through the wilderness until they came to the edge of the Promised Land. God had promised the land of Canaan to be a gift that God would give to the Israelites, but he gave that promise back centuries before this, about 400 years before this.

He told Abraham that he was going to give this land to Abraham, well to his offspring actually, and these were his offspring. These were Abraham's offspring who had been in

captivity in Egypt and now had come out with Moses and now were being led by Joshua back into the land. Now Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had lived in Canaan, the Promised Land, but they hadn't owned any.

God had promised it to them, but they didn't really take possession of any part of it except one field with a cave in it, which Abraham had to bargain for, and he bought from the Hittites as a place to bury the dead of his family. Abraham didn't have to own any property, he just camped and moved around nomadically until Sarah died, his wife, and then suddenly he had a crisis. What do I do with her body? I need to get a piece of property that's actually mine to bury my wife in, and later Abraham himself was buried there, as was Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob and Leah were all buried in this cave called Machpelah, and it's the only piece of property that Abraham ever owned in the Promised Land, although the whole land was promised to him, but the reason he didn't own it and the reason Isaac and Jacob didn't own it is because the land was already inhabited.

There were already people who thought they owned it, and indeed they did rightfully own it up to that time. They were the Canaanites. They were descended from Canaan, who was the son of Ham, who was one of Noah's three sons, and they had become a very corrupt nation.

It was actually nations. There were like seven Canaanite city-states, kingdoms, that had to be conquered. These were walled cities, and when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived among them, they lived as strangers and pilgrims in somebody else's land, the Canaanites' land, which was called Canaan.

Of course, the Israelites had gone out of the land into Egypt for hundreds of years and had now come back out, but the Canaanites didn't recognize Israel as having any claim to the land. In fact, they never recognized Abraham or Isaac or Jacob having any claim to it, but now the Israelites numbered about three million, and they were ready to be a nation, not just a little family moving around nomadically in the land, and God was ready at this point to give them the land of Canaan. This would require conquering the Canaanites.

They were going to have to, as God put it, drive them out. Now, some people are a little offended by the fact that Israel killed the Canaanites and took their land from them, and especially because in connection with Joshua's battles, there are battles where God said, you know, kill everyone. Don't leave anything that breathes.

Kill men, women, children, and this, of course, is somewhat offensive to our sensitivities, though this was only to be done, of course, if they refused to leave. Now, if somebody said, if the Chinese said to us, we'll give you, you know, six weeks to get out of North America because we're coming in, we probably wouldn't leave. We'd probably put up a fight, and that's what the Canaanites did, and therefore, since God was on the side of Israel in this particular case and against the Canaanites, God allowed Israel to conquer

and to take over that land.

Now, it might seem like it was not very ethical for Israel to go and take these people's land who had done nothing to them, sort of like us coming here from Europe and taking the land from the Native Americans. It doesn't sound very ethical, really, but unlike us taking the land from the Native Americans, Israel was given the land by a command of God. Most nations are taken from whoever was there before by whoever is there now.

Frankly, there's very few nations that have the same people living there now who were there several thousand years ago. The populations of nations shift. There's conquering.

The political boundaries are redrawn and so forth. Even if Israel had not conquered the Canaanites, in all likelihood, the Canaanites would have been supplanted by somebody by this time. I'm not making excuses.

I'm just saying that's how things are. If the Europeans hadn't taken this property from the Native Americans, who knows what would have happened. I mean, that is to say someone else might have done it.

I'm not justifying it. I'm simply saying that's the way history goes. Nations are conquered.

Bad things happen, and the way they stand now is not the way they originally were. But the way other nations are conquered and passed from one people to another people is different because there's no nation that I'm aware of on the planet that God has said to one group, go in and take the property away from those people and own it, except Israel. Israel was a people that God had specifically gifted the land of Canaan to, and the Canaanites, as God indicated, deserved it because they were exceedingly wicked, and archaeology has unearthed many things about Canaanite culture that would certainly shock most of us, even in this permissive day.

They were very sexually immoral. They worshipped idols. They killed their babies.

They sacrificed them to idols and things like that. There's a horrendous culture that God was not going to tolerate any longer. In fact, when Abraham was still living in the land, in the 14th chapter of Genesis, God said to Abraham, your people are going to go away into a foreign land.

He meant Egypt, and be there for a long time, for 400 years, he said. And then he says, I'm going to bring them back here and take this land because, he says, it's going to be 400 years from now because the iniquity of the Amorites, meaning the Canaanites, is not yet full. So even though the Canaanites were very wicked in Abraham's time, God said, they're not quite as wicked as I'm going to let them go to be before I punish them.

But when the Israelites came out of Egypt, under Moses' leadership, the iniquity of the

Amorites was indeed full. It was time for them to come under judgment, as nations often do come under judgment from God. If we take the Bible seriously, not only the Canaanites, but at different times, the Assyrians, the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Babylonians, even the Israelites came under God's judgment at times because of their own idolatry.

And modern nations may very well come under God's judgment also. The Canaanites are not the only people to come under God's judgment as a nation, but they are the only people that God instructed some other people to come and take their land from them. That's a unique situation because Israel is a unique case, a unique nation.

And so, they could have done that within a very short time after they left Egypt. They actually encamped at Mount Sinai for a year, and then they left Mount Sinai, and it was a 14-day walk to Canaan. And they could have conquered the land within a year after they left Egypt.

But what happened is they sent spies into the land of Canaan, and the spies came back and reported that the land was unconquerable. It was a good land full of produce, flowing with milk and honey, as they said, but it was inhabited by giant and imposing people. And the Israelite spies said, we can't conquer these people.

And so the people, their faith left them. God had promised that they could and that he would make sure that they did, but they didn't believe God. And so they angered God by not believing that he could do that, and he made them wander around for 40 or 38 more years in the wilderness until that whole generation of everyone over 20 years old at the time of the Exodus was dead.

Only Joshua and Caleb had been part of the Exodus itself over 20 years old at the time and also went into Canaan. And Joshua was selected, and Caleb too, to survive because they were the two of the 12 spies that actually brought a good report back and said, listen, it is a dangerous land, but God's on our side. We can easily take it because God will give it to us.

So they were trying to encourage the Israelites to believe at the time when the nation was actually doubting and insulting God, basically. And so God said only Joshua and Caleb are going to survive of this generation. Now, the younger people who are 20 years and younger old at the time when the spies dissuaded the people from going in, that younger generation mostly were still alive now.

And this was 40 years later, so they were 60 years old and younger. In fact, the entire population of Israel was 60 years old and younger at that point because everyone who had been over 20, 40 years earlier, was now dead except Joshua and Caleb who were in their 80s. So this is the background.

And after the 40 years of wandering, Moses really desired, very much desired, to bring the children of Israel into the land, but God wouldn't let Moses do it because Moses had disobeyed God on a particular occasion and had told him, you can't lead the people into the promised land. But God said instead, take your servant Joshua, lay hands on him in front of the people and put some of your authority on him and he'll lead the people after your God. So the book of Deuteronomy records, actually it's in the book of Deuteronomy, records the death of Moses.

He actually did this laying on of hands of Joshua, I believe it was in Numbers if I'm not mistaken. But it was in Deuteronomy that Moses died and then Joshua becomes the leader of the nation for the next probably 25 years or at least the rest of his life. It is thought that the events of Joshua may have taken about 25 years to transpire.

The exact number of years is not given. Now, about Joshua the man, he's actually known by a number of different names in the scripture. He's first named, well not first, but he is early on named Oshea in Numbers 13 verses 8 and 16 he's called Oshea.

Moses gave him the longer name Jehoshua, so it's kind of adding Jeh or Yah before the Hoshea. And Hoshea would mean salvation. Jehoshua would mean Jehovah is salvation.

The name Joshua actually is the same as the name Jesus, has the same meaning. Jesus is simply an anglicized form of the Greek form which has come to us in the New Testament. You take the name Joshua, actually in the Hebrew it would be pronounced more like Yeshua, and you Grecianize it as the New Testament does because it's written in Greek.

You've got Jesus and you anglicize that and it becomes Jesus. But the point is that this man Joshua had the same name Jesus had with the same meaning, which means Jehovah or Yahweh is salvation. So he's called Oshea, he's called Jehoshua in Numbers 13, 16.

It's shortened to Hoshea in Deuteronomy 32, 44. And he's even mentioned in Hebrews 4, 8 and there the Greek calls him Jesus. Actually in Hebrews 4, 8 it's talking about Joshua, but it refers to him as Jesus because the New Testament is written in Greek so it uses the Greek form of his name.

But we call him Joshua and that's what we're going to call him. He's called that also besides these other names. His first scene in Exodus 17, we don't know of him before then, but in Exodus 17 when Israel had come out of Egypt shortly afterwards and before they came to Mount Sinai, they were attacked by a bunch of desert people called the Amalekites.

And it was something that could have wiped out the Israelites, but the Israelites fought back. But there was no guarantee the Israelites could win. This was a fairly even match between these two nations.

So Moses appointed Joshua, and this is the first time we hear of Joshua, to be the commander of the Israelites while Moses and his brother Aaron and another man named Hur go up onto a mountain and Moses keeps his hands in the air while the battle's going on and while his hands are in the air, Joshua and the children of Israel prevail in battle. When Moses' hands became weary and they came down, the Amalekites prevailed in battle. And so Moses' hands had to stay up for the whole battle.

Aaron and Hur on either side of him sat him down on a rock and they held his hands up all day until the battle was won. And Joshua was the one down there on the field leading the people. He was a young man at the time, but obviously must have been chosen because of his capabilities.

We don't know how those capabilities had been seen previously since only a few months earlier he and all his ancestors had been slaves in Egypt. When he would have shown any propensity toward valor, I don't know, during his slave times, but he apparently had skills and maybe a physique and energy and so forth that made it appear that he'd be a good guy to lead the army, and he did, and they won. The next time we hear of him is in Exodus 24, 13, and he is simply mentioned to be the servant of Moses.

He had been the commander of the Israelites when Moses was on the hill praying with his hands up, but he later became Moses' servant, and a humble one at that. He just kind of follows Moses around. He is the one who makes sure that what Moses wants done gets done, including that people stay away from the tent and meeting when Moses is in there.

And even when Moses went up on Mount Sinai, which no one but him was really supposed to go up there, apparently with very few exceptions, Joshua went halfway up the mountain with him, with God's permission apparently, and Moses disappeared into the cloud, and Joshua waited there for Moses for 40 days. For over a month he sat on the side of the mountain waiting for Moses to come out of the cloud, and Moses did come out with the law. Of course, he broke the tablets, and he went back up for another 40 days, and Joshua waited for him halfway up the mountain.

Joshua had no other agenda in life than to be available to Moses to do whatever the man of God needed done. In that respect, Joshua reminds us of Elisha. That's how Elisha got started in ministry.

He was a servant of Elijah the prophet. Elijah was a great prophet, not quite equal, but of a similar rank as Moses in Israelite history. And he called this man Elisha to be his servant, and Elisha is described as the man who poured water over the hands of Elijah.

He's just a humble servant of Elijah. Until Elijah was taken up into heaven, at that point a double portion of Elijah's spirit came upon Elisha, and he became the great prophet. And just as Elisha not only was the servant of Elijah and his successor, Joshua was the

servant of Moses and became his successor.

So whoever would be chief must be the servant first. And sometimes being the servant is what it means to be the chief. But in this case, these famous men, Moses and Elijah, bequeathed their authority in succession to the person who had been simply the one who washed their feet and did servant things for them, as Joshua did for Moses.

He was from the tribe of Ephraim, and he was the man of that tribe who was sent as a spy into Canaan. There was one man from each of the 12 tribes sent, so there were 12 spies that went into Canaan. Numbers 13.8 mentions Joshua was one of the 12 spies of the Ephraimite tribe of Israel.

When the rebellious spies came back and tried to dissuade the children of Israel from going into the land because of the giants, Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, were the ones who tried to talk the people out of their unbelief. And I'd like to just read what they said. It's over in Numbers 14.

When the spies came back and brought the evil report, in Numbers 14.6, it says, But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes. And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, The land we pass through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey.

Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.

So they spoke, of course, words of faith, and it says in verse 10, And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. So by taking Moses' side and God's side, Joshua and Caleb both risked martyrdom. The people were already planning to stone Moses for taking him out of Egypt and putting him in a position to have to face these giants.

And now Joshua and Caleb were outspokenly favorable toward Moses and God, and they risked being stoned to death also. So this is the kind of man that Joshua was. He was a warrior, he was a servant, and he was basically outspoken in a minority opinion in favor of God.

Perhaps we need more people who are willing to be that in a society like our own. Well, of course, he became the successor of Moses. It's in Numbers 27, verses 18 through 23, that God told Moses to lay hands on him, and he did so.

Deuteronomy 31, verses 7 and 8 also tells about this. And now, of course, as Joshua's book begins, Moses has died and the mantle has fallen on Joshua, and now he's got to put his money where his mouth is. He's, you know, 40 years earlier, when he was 40

years old or so, 40-something, he was raring to go and to fight those battles against the giants and go risk everything.

Now he's 40 years older, and God says, now it's time to actually go and face those giants. And the man still has as much faith as he did when he was in his 40s. He's a true hero and an extremely important character.

Though he was not as important as Moses, he certainly was a tremendous addendum to Moses' ministry and one that had to be done. Moses brought them out of Egypt, but he did not bring them into the Promised Land, and that's what Joshua was there to do. The date of entering Canaan, as I said earlier, is probably 1451 or 1452 BC.

The book is probably written about 25 years after the initial invasion. And so we've got the second generation of Israelites after the Exodus. None of the original generation that came out of Egypt or who did so as adults was there anymore except for Joshua and Caleb.

Now Joshua was leading the people. What was happening with Caleb? Well, he was rewarded also. He was of the tribe of Judah, and he was given prime land and a mountain and so forth for his family in the Promised Land.

But Joshua was the military leader, and so he's the one that was appointed. He had started out his career as a military leader in Israel, and that's how he ended it too, as an old man. The writer, whoever it was, was contemporary with the events, at least with that generation, because in chapter 6 and verse 25, the writer said that Rahab was still living in Israel when he wrote.

Now Rahab was one of the people who was rescued from Jericho, the first city to be conquered by Joshua. Because of her faith, she was spared, and we're told in chapter 6 of Joshua, and she's still living in Israel today. Now today would be from the standpoint of the writer.

So the writer is not writing hundreds of years later. This is not some kind of mythology that developed over centuries of being retold around campfires and a bunch of fairy tales and so forth. It's written by somebody who was there, obviously to readers who were there too, which means when we read about the sun standing still in a battle or the walls of Jericho falling down, we're not reading a mythology that you could pull over on some gullible group of readers.

The readers were there. He's writing to the generation of Israelites that actually were involved in these things, which means it's very unlikely that the stories are in any sense fabricated or embellished since the eyewitnesses were numbered in the millions at the time and could have called them on that. So it is a contemporary writer, probably Joshua himself.

It's not known whether Joshua wrote it. Jewish tradition says that Joshua wrote it, and their traditions are not inspired necessarily, but they're well informed. So I'm going to just accept that as a plausible theory, that Joshua is the writer himself.

Now to say that Joshua wrote this is like saying that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible. It doesn't mean that every word in them had to be written by Moses or that every word in this was written by Joshua. Joshua, after all, his death is recorded in the book of Joshua.

Clearly he didn't write his own death, just like Moses' death is recorded at the end of Deuteronomy, and he didn't write his own death. In fact, whoever wrote it had lived a little while after Moses died because the end of Deuteronomy says, since Moses died there has not yet arisen a prophet like unto Moses. And that sort of epilogue to the life of Moses may have been written by Joshua himself.

But we have a similar epilogue or record of the death of Joshua. And then, after that, there's a record of the death of Eliezer, the priest at the time, son of Aaron. Now it is thought by the Jews that Joshua wrote most of the book, but that the book of Joshua was written by, that is the death of Joshua was written by Eliezer, the priest, and the death of Eliezer was written by Phinehas, the priest.

This is the tradition. It's entirely plausible. There are no conflicting traditions that are worthy of consideration, frankly, and so we'll just accept this as the default theory about the writing of the book of Joshua.

Now the book divides into two halves. It actually divides into four parts, and we'll talk about all four parts, but there's a major division at the halfway point. There's 24 chapters in Joshua as the chapters are divided in our Bibles.

And the first 12 are about the conquest of the land, which is the main action of the book. The last 12 chapters are largely made up of who got what property, which tribe got which parcel, what the boundaries were. So from this city to that city, you draw a line, and from there to there and from there to there.

It kind of describes geography and which tribes and which families got which pieces of property. That's, I have to admit, not the most interesting material for us to read. It's like reading genealogies with names that people will never know and never hear of again.

People mention only once in genealogies. After 20 or 30 of those on a list, you start thinking, is this even worth reading? And arguably it may not be at times. Maybe just skipping over some of that stuff wouldn't hurt.

But the latter half of the book is mostly given over to that kind of thing, a description of who got what property. So you've got the distribution of the land in the second part, and so most of the interesting stuff in Joshua is in the first half of the book. That's where all

the action is.

In the last few chapters, we have, in chapter 23 and 24, Joshua's farewell address, which is inspiring. As he was about to die, he gave a speech just like Moses did. The Book of Deuteronomy contains the speeches that Moses gave just before he died.

That's what the Book of Deuteronomy is. It's the speeches of Moses just prior to his death. The last two chapters of Joshua serve sort of the same purpose.

Before he died, Joshua wanted to encourage the people to avoid idolatry and stay faithful to God. That's where you hear him say, choose this day whom you will serve, and as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord, and so forth, those inspiring exhortations. That's how the book ends.

But from chapter 13 to 22, there's not an awful lot of interesting stuff. That doesn't mean you shouldn't read it. I'm just forewarning you.

If you're going to be reading the Book of Joshua after we have this introduction, I hope you will. I'm hoping that some of the things I'll share here tonight will be, will serve to make your reading of the book more profitable, but I don't have very many interesting things to say about the division of the land, and that's going to be a pretty big chunk of the book in the second half of the book. But there's a lot of great stories that Sunday school children and biblically literate people are familiar with, in the first half of the book especially, where God worked wonders to give them the land of Canaan, apparently against enemies that, without God's help, could have defeated them.

As the spies had said 40 years earlier, these people, many of them were giants. Not all of them. There were giants in the land, but not all Canaanites were giants.

There were Anakim, there were Nephilim, we're told, the spies said so. But most of the Canaanites were not giants, but some of them had iron chariots. Israel didn't have any kind of war equipment like that.

You know, these people were warlike people. Israel had been slaves for most of their life, most of their history, frankly. And so they were really up against pretty daunting odds, but God was on their side.

And many times they won simply because God worked a miracle, miraculously knocking walls down or doing those kinds of things, miraculously causing the day to go longer with the sun stopping in its motion. These were the things that, and sending hail at the same time, that killed more people than the swords of the Israelites killed. So this is clearly the record not only of the exploits of Joshua and the Israel armies.

This is a record of God giving Israel the land. The Israelites had to participate. There were wars to be fought, and the people had to be involved.

But really the battle was of the Lord, and the victory was of the Lord. It was God who gave them the land. And if you look at a summary statement at the end of chapter 21, Joshua 21, verses 43 through 45, this is pretty much a summary of the whole book.

And it's given in the perspective that we're expected to have about it. Joshua 21, 43 says, So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which he had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The Lord gave them rest all around, according to all that he had sworn to their fathers, not a man of all their enemies stood against them.

The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.

Now when you read the histories of other nations and their battles and their conquests, Alexander the Great, for example, or even the American Revolutionary War, whatever, you read about the heroism of soldiers and armies and leaders and the greatness of their exploits. And there are a great number of great exploits and great leaders in world history. But this is not this doesn't say Joshua gave them the land.

He was the leader. But it's the Lord that gave those verses I just read. They say the Lord gave Israel.

The Lord drove out the people before them. The Lord fulfilled his promise. Not a word that the Lord had promised failed to come true.

So we're reading about history, which in a sense you could read the same events without any reference to the Lord, but it wouldn't make much sense because there's things that happened in this history that don't happen naturally. There are miracles. And one way to make it very clear, and God did make this very clear, that it's not Israel's strength that does this, is that when there was sin in the camp, which was undisclosed in the case of Achan, who had stolen a golden wedge and a Babylonian garment of things that were supposed to be dedicated to the Lord.

No one knew about it but him and his family. They were hidden in his tent. But when Israel went to battle against a small nation, a small city, Ai, no one but Achan knew that there was sin in his tent.

But Israel was defeated soundly by this inferior force. And when Joshua prayed, God said, well, there's sin in the camp, and take care of it. So they took care of the sin, and they went back and they defeated that city quite handily.

But you see, they were not incapable of being defeated. It's not as though Israel was militarily an unstoppable force. A relatively small city could defeat them when God was not on their side, when there was sin in the camp that was not dealt with.

But when they were on God's side, when they were righteous, they beat all their enemies. And not one man was able to stand against them, it says. Not one man of all their enemies stood against them.

Now, this should not be thought to be saying that all their enemies were killed. True, God had told them through Moses to kill everybody. But although Israel was generally obedient to God, in general, they weren't 100% obedient to God.

They did allow some nations to remain. Apparently, after they felt like they had subdued a city, instead of wiping out all the people in it, they would allow, obviously, the remnant of the people who didn't seem to be a threat to them to continue to live peaceably among them. Now, we might say, well, that's a good thing.

That's even a better idea than what God had. God said, wipe out women and children and don't let anyone live. So it seems like the Israelites were really more merciful than God.

Well, God was not stupid. Moses had told them, if you let these people survive, they will corrupt you. You'll be attracted to their religion.

You'll be drawn into the wicked things they do, and then I'm going to punish you like I'm punishing them before you. He said in Leviticus, if you do any of those abominable things the Canaanites do, I'll make sure the land vomits you out. God knew that if they let Canaanites stay, that those Canaanites would corrupt Israel.

And sure enough, that happened. There never was a time in Israel's history after Joshua's day where Israel was totally free from the corrupting influence of the Canaanites, and sometimes that corrupting influence totally dominated their culture. And it was that culture, that idolatry, that eventually caused the northern tribes to be wiped out completely and permanently in 722 BC, and then the southern tribe to go into captivity for 70 years.

This was judgment that God brought upon Israel because they did the same things the Canaanites had done. In fact, the prophets sometimes said, you do worse things than they did. But God warned them that if they let the Canaanites stay there, it'll corrupt them.

Now, I want to point something out about this where there's a difference between the new covenant and the old covenant. In the new covenant, we're not told to wipe out unbelievers, even though they're doing horrible things. There probably are some people who think that they're doing God a service, who would like to make laws that would execute homosexuals, for example, or abortionists, or people who do evil, horrible things.

Well, Jesus would say to those people, you do not know what spirit you're of. There was a

time when Jesus and his disciples were trying to go through Samaria looking for lodgings, and the Samaritans wouldn't have anything to do with them. And James and John said, Lord, shall we call fire out of heaven on them like Elijah did? And Jesus said, you don't know what spirit you're of.

The Son of Man didn't come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Jesus didn't come to wipe out the heathen. He didn't come to condemn the world, but that the world through him should be saved, it says in John chapter 3. This is not the same kind of situation.

You see, in the new covenant, there's a new power, the power of the Holy Spirit given to believers, which transforms them and enables them, I should say us, to live lives with supernatural dynamics. That's what the Holy Spirit is. He's supernatural.

He's not nature. He's supernatural. He's God.

And that's why you see in the life of Jesus, in the life of the apostles, healings, miracles, demons cast out everywhere they went, because there's this supernatural dynamic in the new covenant people of God. In fact, Jesus would be able to touch unclean things like a leper or a woman with an issue of blood or a dead body. Now, under the Jewish law, if you touched a leper or a woman with an issue of blood or a dead body, you would be made unclean because those things were unclean.

You have contact with them, you become unclean. There was no defense against the infectiousness of uncleanness under the ceremonial law. But Jesus was bringing a new dynamic, a new power into the world.

And he could touch an unclean thing and it would become clean. The transfer went the other way. He'd touch a dead body, they become alive.

Touch a leper, they become clean. Touch a woman who has an issue of blood or she touches him or even his cloak and she becomes clean. She is healed.

That is to say, these miracles were showing that there was a spiritual dynamic introduced by the coming of Christ and the kingdom of God. That was totally different than that which was available to people before Jesus came. In the Old Testament, Jesus had not yet come.

Though the Jews were God's people and many of them believed in God and tried to please him, they didn't have the power to be in contact with the unclean without becoming corrupted themselves. The unclean would always infect the clean by contact. And that's what the ceremonial law was trying to communicate by saying, you touch an unclean thing, you become unclean.

Of course, that's about ceremonies, but when it comes to real moral issues, when a

person doesn't have the power of the kingdom of God, the power of Christ in them, contact with the world is a defiling thing. Even Christians who don't walk in the spirit are often corrupted by their contact with the world. And the Jews certainly would be and were.

God knew that. There was no way for the Jews to remain faithful to God in the midst of a people who had all these alluring, tempting, sensuous religions that involved mainly sexual orgies, for the most part, is what Canaanite religion was about. That kind of stuff is attractive to carnal people.

When God's saying, no, you'd be holy, you'd be pure, lots of people, most people aren't naturally inclined to be holy and pure. They're more inclined to draw toward gods that will let them do whatever they want. That's why the Christian religion itself has been corrupted so much by people who would rather have a religion with a gospel that lets them do more of what they want to do.

It's not the true gospel, but it's the gospel that's often preached in churches today, because people want a religion that doesn't make demands upon them. That's human nature. Those who surrender to Jesus Christ are then inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

And born again, and are receiving a new nature. Peter says in 2 Peter, we are partakers of the divine nature. 2 Peter 1, 4. That divine nature enables us to be in contact with the world without being corrupted by it, if we're walking in the spirit.

But that's an if. We don't always walk in the spirit. And if we don't, we better stay, better keep clear of the world.

You don't want to go walking places you're not supposed to go in contact with things that are tempting to you. But if you're walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, you can be in the world and not at all be of it. You can have contact with the world, and the world is made better by you, rather than you made corrupt by that contact.

Just like Jesus. Jesus could touch the unclean, and they became clean. We who have the life of Jesus in us are capable of, as a community, as a body of Christ, touching the world, the corrupt world, and making it better.

And that's why, that's exactly what Christianity has done. Everywhere it's gone. Every place in the world outside Israel was pagan, before Christianity got there.

And Christianity has improved societies everywhere. That's where hospitals came from. That's where schools came from, for the most part.

I mean, there were pagan schools, but they, I mean, giving all children an education, was a Christian idea. Christian, giving rights to older people, who are no longer productive, or to little children who are vulnerable. Those are Christian ideas.

Helping the sick is a Christian idea. That's why when Mother Teresa came to Calcutta, and no Christians had really ministered there before her. Calcutta, India, was Hindu, and all the lepers and sick people were lying in the gutters.

No one would help them. Why should they? Hindu religion says they deserve it. It's their karma.

You don't help people get around their karma, because if they don't pay off their karmic debt this time around, and obviously they have some bad karma because they're dying in the streets, well, don't interfere with that, because if you do, they'll just have to come back and go through it again. Let it run its course, and then they'll be better off. That's what Hinduism would teach.

Mother Teresa comes in, she's a Catholic, but she's got a Christian worldview, and she doesn't agree with that. And she helps the people. And now, even India has, and other pagan nations, which are still pagan for the most part, have had an elevated compassion for the poor and things like that, that a Christian started.

Missionaries, in many cases, are the ones who brought social change for the better. Certainly it's where women's rights came from. It didn't come from Hinduism or Buddhism or Islam.

It didn't even come from tribal religions. The equality of women is a Christian idea. It's Christianity's contact with the world that makes the world better.

But Israel's contact with the pagans would not make the pagans better, it would make Israel more corrupt, because they did not have the dynamic of the New Covenant life that is given to us in Christ. So, while we do read of commands to obliterate all the infectious influence in Canaan, and it's a little severe to our minds, there's a reason for it. The Canaanites are already lost.

Why lose Israel too, by letting the Canaanites infect them? And that's just, that's God's prerogative. That's how God chose to do it. But it's, of course, the battles of Canaan have bothered lots of people.

But actually, the Israelites didn't kill the Baalav. And the surviving Canaanites, in many cases, were, as God said, they would be thorns in their sides and pricks in their eyes. They were a moral danger to Israel.

And unfortunately, that danger was realized only too often in Israel's history. Now, I said the book divides into two parts, but we can divide it into smaller parts. There's four parts to it.

The first five chapters are really just about Israel entering the land. That's before they do any fighting. They cross the Jordan River.

They meet up with, Joshua meets up with somebody who describes himself as the captain of the Lord's host, an angel, apparently, or Jesus. They receive instructions. They circumcise themselves, because they had failed to do so during the 40 years they wandered in the wilderness.

They kind of caught up on things with God. They set up a camp. And then, in chapter 6, they begin their onslaught.

They attack Jericho. And Jericho is defeated in chapter 6. In chapter 7 and 8, there's the battle with Ai. They lose it in chapter 7, and they win it in chapter 8. And then in the later chapters, we have more or less whole regions being conquered, the south and the north in separate campaigns, and the central area, too.

And there are a number of battles recorded. Some of them are summarized, and some of them we have some interesting details given about. But you have, therefore, the entering of the land in the first five chapters.

You have the conquest of the land in chapters 6 through 12. You have then the division of the land in chapters 13 through 22, and chapters 23 and 24 are the final discourses of Joshua just before he died. Now, I mentioned that many people are offended by the Canaanite Wars because of the, you know, take no prisoners kind of approach to it, the scorched earth policy, we could say, that Joshua was told to follow.

He didn't. Apparently, they did sometimes. In some states, in others, they didn't, because when it was all done, they had in fact subdued the land.

And as it says in there, no man of their enemies continued to stand against them. That didn't mean none of their enemies survived, but none of them were opposing them. Sometimes there are people who say, Israel never possessed all the land that God promised, and therefore, that's a future thing that has to happen.

It's very common to hear people say that, you know, the land of Israel is never, Israel's never given all the land that God said he'd give them, and so there must be something in the future where they will, maybe the millennium or something like that. But the Bible says they did possess it, all the land, not one thing God promised came, failed to come true. But when you read in the book of Judges, at the beginning of Judges, the next book, there's whole areas where we're told the Canaanites were not driven out.

They weren't driven out here, they weren't driven out there, they weren't driven out here. And therefore, those who say that the promises never have been fulfilled and therefore should be in the future to Israel, they say, see, they didn't conquer it. It tells us right there, these people were not conquered, these people were not conquered.

No, but we're told they did defeat them. They didn't drive them out, but they, it's like, you know, there's Indian reservations in America. Would someone say because there's

still areas where the Indians still have their society separate, that the Europeans didn't in fact conquer North America? I think they did.

I think we recognize that the area was conquered. That doesn't mean we annihilated all the former inhabitants or that they don't still have their enclaves where they're permitted to live peaceably and so forth among us. But, and I'm not saying we did a right or wrong thing, I'm not evaluating the ethics of what we've done, I'm just talking about what the situation is.

The North American continent was conquered by Europeans. That doesn't mean there's no survivors of the original natives of the area. And same thing in Israel.

Israel was conquered. Those that survived were in enclaves in villages and cities that were letting Israel live there and didn't try to fight them anymore. None of their enemies stood against them and therefore they took the land and they possessed it.

But some people say, isn't that pretty much the same thing as jihad? I mean, how is Old Testament God any different than Allah in the Quran? Aren't these wars of the Old Testament just like jihad in the Quran? Well, no, they're different in many ways. Not the least of which, and if this was the only way they were different, it'd be enough, is that Joshua's wars were ordered by the real God. Now, of course, someone's going to say, who's not a Christian, well, the Muslims would say that their wars were ordered by the real God too.

I'm not talking about claims, I'm talking about facts. The God who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt proved himself to be the real God. He had promised to do it hundreds of years earlier.

He did it supernaturally, wiped out the superior force of Pharaoh, worked miracles for Israel all through their history, and gave every reason to be believed to be the real God. Now, what exactly did the God of Islam do to prove that he's the real God? Nothing. There were no miracles done through Muhammad.

There were no miracles done, actually, in the founding of Islam in the Middle East. It was done militarily, and one might say it's an amazing thing, how these Arabs adopting the views of Muhammad were able to subdue so many regions in so short a time. It's a very amazing thing.

True it is, but there were no actual miracles. There's no proof that they had a God on their side. After all, in every war someone wins.

Someone's tougher than their enemies, and there's every reason to believe that Muhammad had a tougher fighting force, and that would certainly explain everything in terms of the success of Islam. That explanation would not work for the success of Joshua. And again, what Joshua did was something that was predicted prophetically for hundreds

of years before, and then it was brought about miraculously.

I would say that the Christian or the Jew who says these wars were God working through his agent Joshua has a tremendous advantage over a Muslim saying that the Muslim conquests of the regions they've conquered are the works of God, the creator God. There's no proof of that. There's plenty of proof of God's agency in these.

And if someone says, well, how do we even know that these Old Testament stories, that these miracles occurred? Well, Jesus believed they did. If someone says, well, why should we believe him? Well, we're in another world altogether now. We believe Jesus because he's the son of God.

Why do we believe that? Because he rose from the dead, because he raised dead people himself, because he worked miracles, things Muhammad never did. The witness of Christ is supported by all kinds of supernatural phenomena, not least of which is his own resurrection. He said he was the son of God.

Muhammad never claimed that about himself. It's a good thing, too, because he couldn't show any evidence that he was. Jesus made the claim and didn't show the evidence that he was.

The Christian who believes that Jesus is the son of God can then believe everything else Jesus believed, including the law and the prophets, which to Jesus included the book of Joshua. And therefore, Jesus believed the Old Testament is true. And unless Jesus is false, then the Old Testament is true.

So really, when it comes down to it, what's the difference between the wars of Islam and the wars of Joshua? One of them is God ordered Joshua to do what he did. We don't know who ordered Muhammad to do it, but we might have some suspicions, given the kind of fruit of what he did. It may well have been the devil.

You know, Muhammad did believe that he was demon possessed before he believed he was a prophet. He had fits and seizures and things like that. He was convinced, Muhammad was convinced that he was demon possessed.

It was his wife who persuaded him that he was not demon possessed, but that he was chosen to be a prophet. And then later he started the Islamic religion. I have a feeling he was right before.

But the point here is, if God orders a military campaign, that makes all the difference in the world. Because God owns everything. Everyone was created by God.

Everyone is owned by God. God has the right to dispatch and dispense with people however he wishes. He has the right, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of the earth.

If he wants to take this property from these people because they offend him, and give it to another people and give them a chance to offend him, which is what Israel ended up doing. But God can do what he wants. That's the main difference.

But there's other differences too. And that is that jihad to the Muslim involves, at least when Muhammad was alive, and at certain times in history since then, involves giving people an opportunity to convert to Islam or die. And there's no particular geographical limit on this.

Islam wants that to happen in the whole world. They want to conquer the whole world, and the most radical Islamic people, which follow the Quran most faithfully, because the Quran teaches this, they think that every person who's not a Muslim should be put to death. Or, in certain times in Muhammad's life, he said they could be put under a tax.

But in most cases, that tax is only a short-lived peace between Islam and the other religions, and eventually conversion is required. The point I'm making is, God never told Israel to go out and convert the world by the sword. He didn't even want them to convert the Canaanites.

He just wanted the land cleaned out. Now, Canaanites could convert, Rahab did, and she was spared. But there was no offer made.

This was not an evangelistic campaign that Joshua was on. It was a judgment of God on a society that had become so corrupt that God couldn't tolerate it anymore. That's not the same issue as trying to convert people around the world to a religion by threatening to kill them if they won't convert.

God has the right to determine how people die. Sodom and Gomorrah was a society like the Canaanites. In fact, it was the Canaanite cities themselves, but God took care of them earlier.

But God has every right to do that. Fire and brimstone from heaven to wipe out the Canaanites. That wiped out men, women, and children, didn't it? Did God have the right to do that? Of course he did.

How about the flood? Didn't that wipe out men, women, and children? Who did that? That was God. Did he have the right to do it? Absolutely. God has the right.

He never does anything wrong. So if he wants to wipe out a civilization by a flood or by fire and brimstone or by the swords of the Israelites, that's his business. Fortunately, he hasn't authorized Christians to go out and kill anybody with a sword, and any Christians who think they should are not listening to Jesus.

They don't know what spirit they're of. But in the Old Testament, Joshua, acting under the command of God, was doing God's will in taking vengeance on the Canaanites. And

so these were God's prerogatives.

And when people tell me, you know, they have trouble with the Old Testament God, he seems like a monster because he wants to wipe people out and so forth, my answer is I don't have an answer for you that you'll accept because you're not on God's side. Everybody is on one side or the other in the conflict between sinful man and God. The world is in rebellion against God.

That means there's two sides. You can be on God's side or on his enemy's side. And if your sympathies are with his enemies, there's nothing I can say that will make these wars seem okay to you.

If you're on God's side, it's easy. God has the right to do what he wants to do, and he never does anything wrong. Therefore, whatever he did was right.

And a person who's a believer in God and on God's side automatically takes God's side, and there's no more rational thing a person could do than take God's side. What kind of fool would think they know more than God? But those who are in rebellion against God, they're simply taking the side of the world in rebellion against God, and nothing's going to make them happy. Nothing's going to make them say, yeah, I guess God has the right to wipe us all out.

If they believe that, they'd come over to his side. The truth is, everybody who challenges us about the rightness of what Joshua did here, and that challenge is out there. Every atheist writer brings it up.

They are people who simply are not on God's side. And I don't have anything to say that will satisfy them until they decide they want to come over to God's side, and I'll be glad to talk to them about it. If you're on God's side, I think I can give you some explanations that might satisfy somebody who's on God's side.

But I'm not going to try to win somebody over to God's side by explaining why God did this. This is not an evangelistic book, and the errand of explaining why and what was going on with these wars is not an evangelistic errand. It presupposes that there is a God, that he's right, and that when he brings judgments, it can be nothing but a righteous judgment.

And that's what Joshua presumes, that's what I presume as well. We have to remember, too, when they say, well, but babies, how, killing babies, they're certainly innocent. I would say this, babies are innocent, and God knows it very well.

And there's hardly anything that can be better for an innocent person, frankly, if God so chooses, than for him to take them home before they have to suffer anything in this world. Everyone's going to go to die. Everyone's going to die and face God.

Those who die in infancy and face God have nothing to worry about. Adults who die and face God may have something to worry about, depending on what happened during their lifetime, the choices they made, the position they took, the stance they took for or against God. There may be something to worry about there.

And by the way, there's a great deal of suffering, whether they make good choices or bad. A lifetime is a lifetime, a human lifetime is a lifetime of suffering, trials, hardships. A child who's taken in childhood by God is a child that spared those things.

Now, that's not just me reasoning. That's what the Bible itself says, although the Bible says the same thing about righteous adults when they die young. Over in Isaiah chapter 51, and certainly this, 57, excuse me, 1, this statement would be true of righteous adults or innocent children.

Isaiah 57, 1 says, The righteous perishes, and no one takes it to heart. Merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. And he says, He shall enter into peace.

They shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. He says there's righteous people who die, and people who are thinking straight about this realize what they're being spared is the evil that's coming. Living in the world is to face lots of evil, possibly to succumb to it, and possibly to participate in it in a way that brings judgment on yourself too.

Those who are adults who don't succumb to it, if they die, they're taken away from this evil world. Infants who die are taken from this evil world too. Now, a very stupid unbeliever, and there are very many of them, of course, just as there are stupid Christians, but a very stupid unbeliever will say, Well, then you've just given us an excuse to go out and kill babies, because you said it's a good thing for them to die.

No, it's a good thing for people to die in the will of God. Since God forbids murder, it's not the will of God for us to murder them. But in a war that God had sanctioned, and there haven't been many of them, by the way, that's another thing different than jihad.

Israel was not allowed to do this with all their enemies, only the Canaanites, and then later the Amalekites, because the Amalekites had attacked them. But apart from that, God never authorized this kind of killing, even for Israel to do. There are very unusual cases in the Old Testament.

They are not the standard, whereas jihad is the basic pattern for faithful Islam. So, I mean, we're not looking at the same thing. Yes, some things are the same.

People die. In jihad, people die by the edge of the sword. In Joshua's war, people die by the edge of the sword.

It has that in common. But in that respect, it's no different than anything else. People die other ways, too.

People die in their beds. People die in accidents. People die of criminal assaults.

People die in bombings. People die in all kinds of ways. But one thing they all have in common is they all die.

If Joshua had not killed any Canaanites, they'd all have been dead now for thousands of years. The issue has got to always be, from the Christian's point of view, one of eternity. Did God do that which was best for people from an eternal perspective? If there were innocent Canaanites who died, well, they're happy about it now.

And they've been happy about it for a long time. In fact, the baby's probably happy that they didn't grow up to be Canaanite pagans. That they died while they were still on good terms with God, instead of later dying on bad terms with God.

It's not a good thing to die on bad terms with God. Now, anyone who's a skeptic is not going to buy anything I'm saying. That's okay with me, because I'm not trying to appeal to skeptics in this talk.

I'm simply trying to say the Christian worldview sees God's prerogatives in this matter as unchallengeable. Not just because he's bigger than we are, but because he's right more often than we are. Many times we can see that he's right, but there are some occasions where we're not so sure why he's right.

Just like children can't always tell why their parents' choices are right, even when they are the right choices. Children always think they know as much as their parents. And people critical of God often think they know as much as him.

In this, they prove themselves to be among those I call stupid unbelievers. Anyone who thinks he's as smart as God is about as stupid as a person can be. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And he that does not fear the Lord doesn't have the beginning or the middle or the end of wisdom, any part of it. So, this is simply a declaration that there is significant difference. Entirely different.

The jihad of Islam and the wars of Joshua, which are so often compared and equal to each other in the eyes of atheists and skeptics. But that's because the atheists and skeptics don't believe there is a real God. And that's a foolish assumption they're making, which they can't prove.

Those who are more open to the evidence realize there is a God. And the real question is, did God say to do this or did he not? If he did, you know, the controversy is settled. If

he didn't, well, then all bets are off.

Christians believe and Jesus believed that God did take the side of Israel in the time of Moses and Joshua and give them the land. And so, that's where I stand as well. Now, we're going to take a break here just for a few minutes so you can stretch and get something to drink, go to the bathroom.

We'll come back for probably a shorter time, second session. And I want to kind of go through some parts of the book and bring out some points that I think would be a shame for you to miss.